



Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches

Christian A. Schwarz

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Acquaint yourself with NCD principles by reading this book. Natural Church Development presents research from around the world showing how eight quality characteristics appear to be shared by healthy, growing churches.

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Jeff Noble says

Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches by Christian A. Schwarz (?)

MrWalterN says

For the most part, I enjoyed this book. It is helpful for me to read research and models such as those contained in this book from time to time to challenge my current thinking. With that said, at times Schwartz seems to over-extending his natural/organic metaphor for church growth. In some ways, he also appears to become overly fascinated with his research and resultant system. Still, overall, a good - and quite quick - read.

Brian says

I read this book for my Master's class on Church at Wheaton college. The basic idea is that quality churches grow. Schwartz and his team researched 1000 churches in 32 countries on 6 continents. They found 8 quality characteristics that together help a church grow. They also discovered that if a church was above 65 quality index on all of them that the church grew in every instance. The qualities were the best part of the book. From there it went downhill for me. I would like to see the survey to measure the quality of my church & ministry.

Stephanie says

Interesting and should be applied. Long and boring and technical.

Jon Barr says

This was a challenging read. At first, I found it too jargon-laden. That feeling never really faded, but I began to enjoy it much more when the author introduced the statistical analysis.

My biggest takeaway: rather than focusing on either your strengths or working to improve your weaknesses, USE your strengths to improve your weaknesses.

Joseph says

Ugh. School book.

Ryan Fisher says

This was a really good book although it got overly technical in the middle. The research and premise are very solid though and make it a great resource for church coaching and overall health/design. It starts and ends very strong.

David says

The best of the worst part of Church Health. Very well done research using a HORRIBLE set of assumptions. They did their science right, they just didn't do their thinking right.

So basically it's how to be a "perfect church" according to the authors' ideals. Nothing about the poor, nothing about the future. Just the same, basic 8 values.

ENOUGH!! Stop publishing this stuff! Thousands of dollars and hours spent trying to make churches be the kinds of churches the authors want to go to. Geesh!

Justin says

I'm split on this one. I'm pretty convinced by the ideas and the research. It's an awkward read, though, partly because it's jargon-laden and partly because everything is split into two-page chunks. Schwarz could have spent more time developing his ideas, giving examples, etc. Part of the solution for a healthy church is to, of course, work with his company and products. It doesn't feel slick -- these programs seem to be genuinely useful for churches that can't analyze large survey data or the like -- but it's a little off-putting, and would have felt more appropriate as an appendix.

Zee says

The Ukrainian version needs HEAVY editing - basic spelling mistakes are present.

Also, the book authors did a great work on collecting so many responses. However, they completely ignore the cultural contexts of the churches, therefore the information is seriously skewed. For example, you can't simply say that 82% of churches that are declining and bad quality have educated pastors, and those churches where only 42% of pastors are educated are of higher quality and on the rise. This doesn't take into account, for example, African countries where education is simply impossible at times, yet the churches are growing and Christianity is on the rise. Meanwhile, in Europe, where generally people are more educated, pastors are

also educated, yet general religiosity is on the decline because people have access to way too much information.

Dale Mcmillian says

Hard Read

Tung says

Schwarz is the founder of an international organization that assists churches in growing. Unlike other books that state their methods, and claim them to be both biblical and universally effective, his organization takes a very statistical approach. Using a proprietary survey instrument, Schwarz surveyed tens of thousands of churches (both healthy and unhealthy, growing and declining) and analyzed the data to determine what characteristics were common among growing, healthy churches. He found 8 major characteristics – ranging from holistic small groups to empowering leadership to inspiring worship services – and then organized those characteristics to some underlying growth principles, and to a growth spiral (essentially a process of continuous improvement). As someone with a background in qualitative and quantitative research, I found Schwarz's methods and analyses very interesting. The way he described his findings was very methodical and data-driven – something most church growth books lack. Unfortunately, the entire book is a very shallow read. Schwarz only describes his characteristics, principles, and processes at a very high level. Clearly the goal of this book is to get you interested in his organization's total consulting package. He repeatedly refers to the NCD survey and training and program, but does not provide the full details. Unlike most Christian books that give away their secrets and methods in the hopes that they inspire churches and church leaders, and expand and impact the kingdom of God, this book hoards its knowledge. This approach turned me off completely. Unique approach, but too shallow a read to recommend.

Brian King says

Well, the book does seem to have some truths in it, but my problem is that it seems like a 128 page infomercial for other Christian Schwarz products. They want to sell their tools for measuring the 8 areas and they want to see their tools for each of those areas along with leader guides, etc.
