

Discipleship Pathway

DEVELOPING A PROCESS TO GUIDE A NEW BELIEVER TOWARD
FULLY DEVOTED CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Part 1: What Is a *Discipleship Pathway*?

- A **process** to move a person from being a new believer in Jesus to a **fully devoted** church member who serves and disciplines others for Jesus.
- Each step is a **deeper** commitment.
- Each step progresses toward **maturity**.



Part 1: What Is a *Discipleship Pathway*?

- 1 John 2:12-14 ~ Maturing spiritually is similar to maturing physically
 - Spiritual **children** have come to Jesus and experienced the Father's love in the forgiveness of sin
 - Spiritual **youths** have grown stronger and are starting to see victory in their battles
 - Spiritual **parents** have a deep relationship with God and are reproducing their faith



Part 1: What Is a *Discipleship Pathway*?

- Unhealthy habits can hinder growth
- Followers of Jesus can become stuck and never spiritually reproduce (Hebrews 5:11-14)
- A pathway encourages healthy growth and movement toward maturity



Part 1: What Is a *Discipleship Pathway*?

- A pathway is not a **program** but the overall structure or process in which your church programs exist with the aim of spiritual maturity
- Only **5%** of churches have a pathway
 - On average, these churches are more vibrant
 - Approximately 80-85% of churches have plateaued or declined



Part 2: Why Develop a Pathway?

- It helps to create membership **expectations**
- It provides clear steps of **involvement** aimed at spiritual growth
- It provides a unifying **vision** for ministry and programs centered on spiritual growth
- It provides the backbone for an **effective** purpose statement



Part 3: The Biblical Basis for a Pathway

Consider Jesus's ministry (Gospel of Luke)

- Jesus taught the Gospel to crowds (4:14-15)
- Jesus called some to closely follow (5:1-11, 27-32)
- Jesus selected 12 for a deeper investment and ministry involvement (6:12-16)



Part 3: The Biblical Basis for a Pathway

Consider Jesus's ministry (Gospel of Luke)

- Jesus trained and sent out the 12 for ministry (9:1-6)
- Jesus trained and sent 72 more (10:1-20)
- This continued until Luke 24 & Acts 1
 - Jesus commissioned his disciples and gave the Holy Spirit so they would make more disciples



Part 3: The Biblical Basis for a Pathway

- Jesus used a pathway to equip others
 - Jesus called, trained, and sent
 - The disciples responded, learned, served, & shared
 - For Jesus, the training deepened with time
 - For the disciples, the commitment and ministry increased with time



Part 4: Developing a Pathway

- First, **involve** other leaders and church members (creates buy-in)
- Second, determine and define the **priorities** of the church (3 to 6 big categories)
 - What does our church do?
 - What makes our church unique?
 - Who does our church serve?
 - What do fully committed members look like?



Part 4: Developing a Pathway

- Third, **order** the priorities from lesser to greater commitment
- Fourth, **define** pathway steps based on these priorities
- Fifth, **determine** which programs or ministries fit into each step



Part 4: Developing a Pathway

- Sixth, state the pathway **simply** and communicate it often
- Seventh, create a means to **move** a person from one step to the next



Part 5: Developing a Pathway (Example)

First Church of Somewhere

- Typical medium-sized community
- Church averages 100 people in worship
- Church has various programs and events for people of all ages
- Pastor Bill Smith

Part 5: Developing a Pathway (Example)

Step 1: Involve Others

- Pastor Bill Smith presents a vision for a pathway to the church leadership and asks for input from members
- The church decides to form a vision team to work with Pastor Smith

Part 5: Developing a Pathway (Example)

Step 2: Determine and Define Priorities (What does First Church do?)

- Sunday Worship & Sunday School
- Awana, Youth Group, and Children's Church
- Ministry Teams
- Discipleship Teams (evangelism and mentoring)

Part 5: Developing a Pathway (Example)

Step 2: Determine and Define Priorities (What does First Church do?)

- 3 to 6 Big Categories
 - Worship
 - Serve
 - Make Disciples
 - Fellowship (Sunday School)

Part 5: Developing a Pathway (Example)

Step 3: Order Priorities (Commitment Level)

- Usually there are **fewer** people involved when the commitment level increases
 - Worship (100)
 - Fellowship (80)
 - Ministry Teams (40)
 - Discipleship Teams (20)

Part 5: Developing a Pathway (Example)

Step 4: Define Priorities as a Pathway

- First Church wants people to first attend worship, second engage in Sunday School for fellowship, third serve on a ministry team, and fourth serve on discipleship team

Worship → Fellowship → Ministry Teams →
Discipleship Teams

Part 5: Developing a Pathway (Example)

Step 5: Match Programs to Steps

Worship

Sunday Morning, Children's Church

Fellowship

Sunday School, Youth, Awana

Part 5: Developing a Pathway (Example)

Step 5: Match Programs to Steps

Ministry Teams

Ministry Teams (Awana Helpers, Youth Workers, Worship Team, Prayer Team, Shut-in Team)

Discipleship Teams

Awana Teachers, Youth Teachers, Mentoring Teams, Evangelism Teams

Part 5: Developing a Pathway (Example)

Step 6: State & Communicate Pathway

- First Church decides to focus on 4 ideas: Gather for Worship, Connect in Fellowship, Serve Needs, and Disciple Others
 - A fully committed member is a person engaged in each step
 - Summarized with 4 words: Gather, Connect, Serve, Disciple

Part 5: Developing a Pathway (Example)

Step 6: State & Communicate Pathway

- First Church's members have adopted this as their pathway
- First Church prints the pathway in their bulletin and newsletter, and explains it on their website
- First Church designs their purpose statement to reflect the pathway

Part 5: Developing a Pathway (Example)

First Church's Purpose Statement: "We exist to make the love of Jesus known as we gather for worship, connect in fellowship, serve needs, and disciple others."



Part 5: Developing a Pathway (Example)

Step 7: Move People to the Next Step

- First church has an introductory new members' class where they explain the pathway and the expectation for members to gather, connect, serve, and disciple

Part 5: Developing a Pathway (Example)

Step 7: Move People to the Next Step

- First church creates three transitional classes
 - Grow class (teaching basics of spiritual growth and emphasizing Sunday School involvement)
 - Serve class (helps members discover spiritual gifts and presents opportunities to serve through ministry teams and programs listed in Step 5)
 - Disciple class (trains people to evangelize and be spiritual mentors)

Part 5: Developing a Pathway (Example)

Step 7: Move People to the Next Step

- These classes are offered at different times throughout the year to help members grow and become more committed

Part 6: Let's Practice!



your turn!

Part 6: Let's Practice!

Involve Others

Who are some other leaders or church members you can include for input?

Part 6: Let's Practice!

Determine and Define Priorities (3 to 6)

Part 6: Let's Practice!

Order the Priorities from Lesser Commitment to Greater

Part 6: Let's Practice!

Create a Pathway Based on These Priorities

Part 6: Let's Practice!

Determine Which Programs Fit Each Step

Part 6: Let's Practice!

State the Pathway Simply

Part 6: Let's Practice!

Move People to the Next Step

What programs or ministries exist or need to be created to help people move from one step to the next?