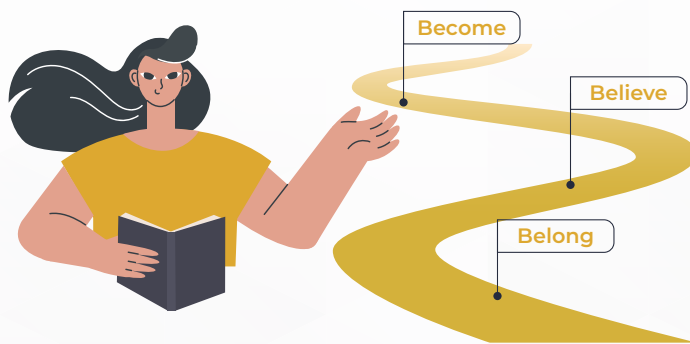




WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

Christian discipleship is the disciplined habit of thinking and acting in Christ. Discipleship is growing closer to Christ and more like Christ and deeper into Christian community with other believers.



» There can be
no Healthy Church
without discipleship «

The Faith Avenue facilitates discipleship within the life of the local congregation by creating spaces where disciple making and spiritual growth can be nurtured and where community is built through relational and spiritually formational activities.

[Faith Avenue Framework](#) ↗

WHAT IS A DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY?

A discipleship pathway is a framework that guides the intentional discipleship of the local church community.

Belong-Believe-Become is a basic discipleship pathway that is used in GCI to guide the development of localized/contextualized discipleship pathways. [GCI Discipleship Pathway](#) ↗

Too often, we can believe the “end goal” of a discipleship pathway is to “become a Christian.” As the Belong-Believe-Become discipleship pathway tells us, the discipleship journey does not end at “believe” or at “become.” If discipleship is about being transformed in Christlikeness, the season of becoming is an ongoing journey throughout the life of a disciple. Discipleship does not end when we begin to follow Jesus – this is when it truly begins.

Let’s take a closer look at how developing a contextualized discipleship pathway can support the intentional, lifelong becoming of disciples in Christ.

DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY FOR LIFELONG DISCIPLESHIP




Eun K. Strawser, in her book *Centering Discipleship* shares the observation:

“...we live in a day and age where the means and the methods have become confused with the end. We often equate a person’s growth with the tool they used. If a person has taken a class on discipleship, we count them as discipled. If someone has acquired a wealth of scriptural knowledge, we assume they have a personal relationship with God. If someone has made a private decision about their faith, we move on to the next person to be baptized. Again, while these methods may assist in the process of discipleship, they are not indicators of discipleship. The only way to know for sure that people are growing and being discipled as followers of Jesus is to look for fruit.”


Strawser suggests that one way of moving beyond a checklist or methods-oriented approach to discipleship is to include marks of Christian maturity in our discipleship pathways. In other words, what does fruitfulness look like? What might we see as we are continually transformed in the likeness of Christ?

“We have to keep in mind that the goal of discipleship and a discipleship pathway has nothing to do with completing an assignment or providing programming for increased head knowledge. The goal (and measure) of a discipleship pathway is how people are maturing into the likeness of Christ.”

Consider her process below as a tool for developing a local discipleship pathway.

Essential	Tool	Mark of Maturity/ Fruitfulness
 <p>What is an essential of discipleship in your local congregation?</p> <p>Choose 5-7 discipleship essentials that express the character and ministry of your local congregation. Consider using your vision, mission, and core values as a guide in establishing discipleship essentials.</p>	 <p>How are people being equipped in this discipleship essential?</p> <p>What common tool(s) is being used? Is this tool replicable so that we can create a community of disciples making disciples?</p>	 <p>What does maturity look like for this discipleship essential?</p> <p>Choose 2-3 markers you are looking for that would demonstrate a person is bearing fruit in this discipleship essential.</p>

Examples:

Essential	Tool	Mark of Maturity/ Fruitfulness
Missional Living	BELLS (church hack) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciple begins to develop meaningful relationships with neighbors • Disciple spends consistent time in the neighborhood
Ministry Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team-based ministry • Spiritual Gifts Inventory • Apprenticeship Square • Mentorship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciple is able to identify skills and giftings • Disciple joyfully contributes their voice and gifting to the life of the local congregation
Telling the Story of Jesus	Worship Calendar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciple can use the seasons of the worship calendar to tell the story of Jesus and his ministry
Participation in Spiritual Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retreats • Connect Groups • Social Events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciples grow rich and healthy relationships within the life of the church • Disciples develop organic disciple-making and mentoring relationships

The Essentials

Discipleship pathways provide frameworks to support intentional and effective discipleship within the life of the local congregation. Developing a local discipleship pathway that considers not only methods of discipleship but fruits of discipleship is one way to nurture the practice of life-long discipleship.