



# Digital Discipleship

6 Steps to Thriving Church Community



Since 1992, Faithlife Corporation has grown from a couple of programmers in a basement into the largest developer of Bible study software and a worldwide leader in multilingual electronic publishing.

Today, Faithlife is proud to have built the world's first integrated ministry platform, which houses everything church leaders need to engage and disciple their communities online. No matter your role, [Faithlife's integrated ministry platform](#) is the robust tech stack you need to do the critical work of the church.

Best of all, as the makers of [Logos Bible Software](#), we built the entire platform around Scripture, so you can always keep the main thing the main thing.

One platform. One login. Infinite possibilities.

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# Introduction

You can't hack your way to a stronger spiritual life—growing in your relationship with God happens over months, years, and decades. It's discipleship: the process by which we learn more about God and begin to live in a way that's consistent with what we believe about him.

Discipleship is impossible without Christian community—that's one of the reasons the Church exists. To overstate the point, we can't practice the "one another" commands without one another.

Churches around the world fulfill Jesus' call to make disciples (Matt 28:18–20) in different ways, and we have a lot to learn from each other. But now, with the prevalence of technology (not to mention a supercomputer in every pocket), we have new avenues for everyday discipleship. That's where this guide comes in.

How can a church create a healthy digital discipleship journey? The six steps you'll soon see can help you identify who your church is positioned to serve, how you can reach them where they're at, and how you can help them develop into committed, growing disciples. And we'll show you how you can do all of these using Faithlife's integrated ministry platform—the robust tech stack you need for thriving digital discipleship.



# Step 1: Discover

## From Strangers to Known

Does your discipleship process start the moment someone walks through the door? If so, you're late. People are finding your church in a handful of different ways, and if you're not ready for them, your discipleship journey is broken before it even starts.

In this first step, your goal is to move someone from being a stranger to becoming known to your church. It's a little early for house visitations (don't you dare), but it's the right time to create a welcoming online and offline presence for potential visitors.

To start building your church's discipleship journey, list the ways a person can find your church. Include your church website, social media, links from your denomination or affiliations, ads, and anywhere else you can think of.

Next, ask yourself what actions someone can take once they find your church and before they ever step foot in your building. They can email you, message you on social media, or fill out a form on your website.

The only thing you need in this phase is this person's name and a way to follow up with them. (If they want to give you more info, great! If not, don't force them.) This can only happen when you include simple contact forms on the pathways above to collect that person's name and email address at the very least.

# Things to do during this stage

## **Create personas for your church**

A persona is simply a rough outline of a person, like a college student, a single parent, or a blue-collar worker. Each persona should be based on a group of people who call your church home, and it should loosely represent the majority of people who fall in that category. You should answer some basic questions about each persona, such as:

- **Where does this person live?**
- **How do they spend their days?**
- **What's their family like?**
- **What does this person care about?**
- **What is this person afraid of?**

God has led your church to this particular place and time, and your job is to figure out who your church is uniquely equipped to help. Creating personas helps you identify those people and the most effective ways to reach them.

Make a list of three to five personas you want to make an effort to reach. You can even give them fictional names and a short description if you want. This will come into play again shortly.

## **Make sure your website is up to date**

How will they believe if they haven't heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? These are great questions posed by Scripture. However, we may want to ask one more question in the digital age: How will they find the preacher without a church website?

A church website is the digital front door to your church. It's one of the simplest ways to be found by people who are looking for a new church, and yet, many churches don't take the time to regularly update their site and/or make sure it even has all the relevant information a visitor might need.



Spend some time on your site. If you don't have one, if it's totally out of date, or if it's not built responsively (so the content automatically adjusts to all screen sizes), build a new one quickly on [Faithlife Sites](#), and you'll never have to worry about site updates again. That's because Faithlife Sites updates itself. (We'll explain more of this magic later.)

You'll also want to include a Contact Us page on your website. Include your church address, phone number, and a simple form people can fill out to ask questions.

We cover church website basics in our guide, [Church Websites 101](#). Some extra tips about writing personas are in there, too.

### **Start blogging**

Search engines like Google highlight fresh and relevant content. One of the easiest ways to keep your site full of fresh content is to blog every week.

Some of you are likely overwhelmed by the thought of blogging, but listen: start simple. Just post your sermon notes once a week and link to your newly published sermon audio or video.

Easy peasy. You can work your way into the rest over time.

### **Make sure your website is optimized for SEO**

In addition to blogging, it helps to tell search engines what your site is all about. Make sure all of your main website pages are optimized for SEO (search engine optimization). We cover everything you need to know about SEO for churches in our upcoming guide, *SEO for Churches: Everything You Need to Know to Get Found Online*. You can find this guide (when it's live) and many others on our [Ministry Resources Hub](#).

### **Create a social media plan**

Again, you don't have to do anything elaborate here, but social media is a great opportunity to not only reach your immediate community but also expand your reach to new people who might be looking for a church.

When you're thinking about where to use your church group on Faithlife versus social media, consider your audience. If you're trying to build out your internal community, subgroups, and discipleship programs, Faithlife is a great fit. But if you're trying to reach newcomers or potential visitors—or if you're running ads—social media is the better fit.

If you're not sure which is best, you can use both in the same way until you get a feel for what works. Regardless, your church group on Faithlife and mainstream social media accounts are a strong one-two punch for online engagement.

### **Create a midweek or weekend event to attract new people to your community**

Churches have a million ways to host events, and most of them are great. You can host ESL classes, community events, or even run your own Bible study. Think about the needs in your community and what sort of event you could run to fill a void or need. Any way you decide to do it, you'll want to build a page on your church website with an optional sign-up form for the event and make sure to list each occurrence on your church's events page. And if you have room in your budget, we recommend running ads for the event. Midweek and weekend events are a nonthreatening touchpoint for people who may not be quite ready to dive in on a Sunday morning.

## **Key tools and products to use at this stage**

### **Events Tool**

Inside your church Faithlife group, you can create events from your calendar. Use the events tool to create public events you'd like to invite the general community to attend. You can push those events to your website and also link directly to those events via social media. Additionally, you can create a registration form for any event on your calendar with just the click of a button.

## **Faithlife Media**

Tie all of your digital environments together with beautiful graphics. Use the built-in editing tool to edit each graphic on the spot before you download it.

## **Faithlife Sites**

As we mentioned above, Faithlife Sites is the church website that updates itself. Whenever you create new events, sermons, and more in the integrated ministry platform, you can automatically push those things to your website. No duplicate work necessary.

## **Faithlife Sermons**

If you record your sermons, services, or live stream, you can add them to Faithlife Sermons where you can tag and organize them, add nice covers (using media you customized), and publish them to your website, group, and more. Sermons on your website and social media are a great way to engage people who might be looking for a new church.

## **Social Media**

Use the social media platforms of your choice (Facebook is a great place to start) to spread your message further externally. Share your website, blog, and sermon links. Run ads to drive traffic to key events and high attendance weekends if you have the budget. Social media is great for reaching new people. But once you've reached them, you'll want to pull them into your church's Faithlife group where you can continue to engage with and nurture them with Faithlife's full suite of discipleship tools.

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# Step 2: Attend

## Known to Attended

What happens once you get a potential visitor's contact info? Your goal here is to get someone to attend a service, but you don't have to wait for them to show up to start building a relationship with them.

There are lots of ways you can roll out the welcome mat for people, and we'll get into some of the most effective ones below.

## Things to do during this stage

### **Set up an email welcome sequence**

People don't give just anyone their email address. So when they do, it means two things: they trust you, and they're interested in what you have to say. Don't waste the opportunity by sitting on their email addresses.

You can create a short four-email sequence that welcomes people to your church and warms them up to visit one of your regular services. Here's one example of an email sequence you can use:

- 1. Thanks for joining our list**
- 2. Got questions about our church? Find answers here**
- 3. Visit this Sunday**
- 4. Join our church's group on Faithlife to keep getting updates**

### **Create a "What to Expect" page on your website**

If you can show people what to expect during a service, they'll be more likely to visit your church.

We recommend building a “What to Expect” page on your website. You can include a short (1–2 minute) promotional video, an example bulletin, and a short explanation of your church’s preaching and musical style. Drop in some photos, too, so potential visitors know how people dress. And don’t forget to explain what’s available for kids during the service.

If you live stream your service, let visitors know where they can go to attend a service online (this will give visitors a great idea of what to expect when they attend in person).

### **Build some long, informative pages on your website**

Search engines like Google are set up to prioritize websites that have a handful of pages with long, focused copy. By “long,” we’re talking around 1,200 words, give or take. You don’t have to come up with pages like these on the fly, though.

Does your church have a position statement on a tough theological topic? Do you have a written explanation on what you believe about baptism? Can you post your entire statement of faith? How about your sermon transcripts? Those are four examples of longform content that can help your church website get noticed on Google. (Whatever you do, don’t make your “What to Expect” page your long page!)

### **Set up retargeting ads**

A retargeting ad is a simple way to get your invitation to attend church back in front of website visitors who have navigated away without taking action. If you have the budget, you can set up Facebook retargeting ads for the people who hit the “New Here” and “What to Expect” pages on your website. You can also retarget those who attended your live stream (if you have one). You can suppress the ads from going to your regular attendees by uploading an email list of your attendees. That way, you only spend money on those who are truly visitors. Use the ad as a creative follow-up invite to church on Sunday.

## **Encourage your members and regular attendees to invite people**

Word of mouth is your church's most powerful asset when it comes to reaching new people in your community. But inviting people to church can be daunting. That said, here are a couple of ways you can make it easier for your members to invite friends and neighbors to church:

- **Create a short (60–90 seconds) video with your pastor inviting people to church and post it on social media.** It doesn't need to be flashy, but it does need to be professional. Members can share the video on their social profiles with a personal invitation.
- **Print business cards with your service times and location.** Members can keep them handy and give them away anytime there's a good opportunity.
- **Assemble seasonal gift bags members can leave on a neighbor's porch.** You can include anything you want to—just make sure they're gifts that a new or unchurched person might want.

## **Establish a welcome team**

Visiting a church for the first time is intimidating. For someone who hasn't been to church in awhile (if ever), it's almost crippling—they're asking questions like, "Am I dressed okay?" and "Can I sit down now?"

In addition to your "What to Expect" page, you need a welcome team (some churches call it a hospitality or connection team—the terminology is up to you). Volunteers on this team are the first faces visitors see, and they should be a visitor's first friend at your church. But welcome team volunteers don't have to wait until the doors open to start serving. You can enlist them to help you follow up with people who give you their information in Step 1.

# Key tools and products to use at this stage

## **Faithlife Group Communication**

Using your church's group, you can share digital bulletins and collect digital connection cards from those checking out your church. Then, Faithlife makes it easy to send follow-up texts or emails to people who express interest in your church. And once they join your church group (usually after they've visited a few times), you can set up more specific welcome sequences to guide them toward the next steps at your church.

## **Faithlife Proclaim**

Visual appeal helps make a great first impression on your visitors. When they walk in, they'll be looking not only at your welcome team's smiling faces and your church's facilities but also at your church's digital presentation. With Proclaim, you and your team can easily create beautiful welcome slides, announcements, song slides (with typo-free lyrics imported with a click), and sermon slides. Plus, Proclaim allows you to easily record your sermons and automatically add sermon audio to your Faithlife site.

## **Digital Signage**

Digital Signage helps create that visual appeal mentioned above. With Faithlife, it's easy to set up signage on your screens or spare TVs in your building. Dress up your screens with welcome messages, Bible art, and Bible trivia you can use as is or customize with Faithlife Proclaim.

## **Faithlife Sermons**

Preaching prayerfully prepared sermons—then making them easily accessible online—can encourage that first visit and repeat attendance. Find sermon outlines and illustrations to help you build your sermons with Faithlife Sermons, plus archiving that helps make sure you never lose them. You can create your sermon transcript, then send it to your church website.

## **Faithlife TV**

Faithlife TV is a Christian video-streaming service, but it's also a place where you can share your church's video content. You can add your church's live stream to Faithlife TV, for instance, so guests can attend a service from home and get more comfortable with you before visiting in person. You can also share the link to your church's Faithlife TV channel in emails, social media, your website, and your bulletin.

## **Faithlife Media**

Not every design will end up on an announcement slide, and that's where Faithlife Media comes in. You can find thousands of professionally designed stock images and backgrounds, resize them when you need to, and add your custom message. All the design is done for you.

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# Step 3: Connect

## Attended to Belonging

When does a person go from a church visitor to an attendee? There's no hard and fast rule—you could say it's when they've attended a certain number of times or when they take a step toward joining a small group.

But the transition is actually an internal one: it happens when a person begins to feel a sense of belonging. They start thinking and talking about “my church” and see it as a safe place to grow in their faith.

In this step, you want to help people feel like there's a place for them at your church. It's hard to track since it all happens without external markers. But your visitor engagement and follow-up strategies can guide visitors into true connection. We'll lay out some suggestions on how to do this below.

## Things to do during this stage

### Create an email follow-up sequence

You're not seeing double! We talked in Step 2 about creating an email welcome sequence, and we're including it here, too, for a crucial reason: emails hit the sweet spot of being effective without being too invasive for guests.

Sure, you could rely on texts or snail mail, but not everyone loves getting texts from organizations—especially ones they're only checking out. And snail mail? Well, it can be effective, but only when it's not your primary method of communication.

You can create a short four-email sequence that welcomes people to your church and invites them to take the next step toward belonging. Here's one example of an email sequence you can use, starting from someone's first visit:

1. **Welcome and thanks for visiting**
2. **Join us again this Sunday**
3. **How to get involved (small groups, Bible studies, etc.)**
4. **Free gift**

[\(You can see a more in-depth explanation of how this works here.\)](#)

### **Give a welcome gift**

Having a gift available for guests is a small but thoughtful way to let visitors know you expected them—and you're glad they're worshiping with you.

This gift doesn't have to be fancy—just make sure it's actually a gift, okay? Please don't make a CD of recent sermons or something obviously low-quality and call it a gift. To a visitor, that just means you're awfully proud of yourself. Some good examples of visitor gifts:

- **A pound of coffee or a gift card from a local vendor and a mug with your church logo**
- **A DVD of a Christian kids' show or a kids' Bible**
- **A beautiful journal and a pen with the church logo**

You can also include a short note from your pastor along with a list of upcoming events.

While some churches put a Bible in visitor gift packets, we don't recommend it unless most of your first-time visitors don't own one yet. Instead, you can make printed Bibles available for free throughout your building with signs saying anyone who wants a Bible can have one. You can also invite people to download the free Logos Bible app to their smartphones.

## **Train your welcome team for the buddy system**

The welcome team we talked about in Step 2 is especially important when it comes to belonging. Because—think about it—can you really feel like you belong somewhere before you have a few friends there?

Ideally, your visitors will meet members of your welcome team early on—and team members will become visitors' first friends. One way to encourage that from the onset is to prepare your welcome team to use the buddy system. Here's what we mean:

- **You can produce a short one- to two-minute video that coincides with the season or a new sermon series and features lots of people in your church.** (Just make sure to get parents' permission before filming kids.) You can also print and mail a postcard to anyone who visited your church in the past year and keep extras on hand for members to share with friends and neighbors.
- **Does a visitor want to check their kids into your kids' ministry?** Instead of pointing out where to go, walk them over and introduce them to the kids' minister or whoever's checking in kids. If the kids' ministry doesn't have anyone scheduled to walk families to their kids' classrooms, welcome team members can do that, too.
- **Give your guest a quick tour of the building, especially if it's confusing.** Show them where to find the sanctuary, restrooms, and coffee station.
- **Invite a new person to sit with you through the service, especially if they came in by themselves.**
- **Introduce the visitor to committed members or small group leaders in their area (but definitely don't pressure them to join).**

Think of it like this: How would you treat a friend or neighbor who came to church with you? Do that, and you'll help people feel wanted and welcomed.

## **Remind your church often: hospitality is everyone's job**

Welcome teams are immensely helpful for churches, but sometimes an unintended consequence is that people don't feel like they need to welcome guests. Wrong! We can't tell you how many times a visitor

joined a small group simply because they met a member who sat near them in service.

The best and most straightforward way to correct this is by talking about it. Remind your members in your regular emails (especially before high attendance services like Christmas and Easter), special members' meetings, and even during your weekly gathering. You can also share articles on the topic in your church's Faithlife group to spark discussion.

Romans 15:5–7 is a powerful passage that gives the church a good reason to welcome people into your gatherings—Jesus welcomed us, and we get to share that with others.

### **Have clear next steps for visitors**

Your visitors shouldn't have to dig to find answers to their questions or to learn how to get connected. It's your job to make it as easy as possible for people—especially those who don't yet know Jesus—to learn more about what you believe and how to get involved.

One way to do that is to add an “I'm New” section to your church website navigation that answers the question, “What does it look like to be connected at your church?” You don't need to talk specifically about stages (unless you want to), but you ought to list your church's on-ramps. For many churches, that includes things like:

- **Join a small group**
- **Attend men's or women's Bible study**
- **Bring your kids to youth ministry**
- **Join a care ministry group (new moms, single parent, grief, etc.)**
- **Come to a new member class**

As you list out your on-ramps, make sure to explain how a new person can get involved. The simplest way to kill two birds with one stone: create individual subgroups for each ministry in your church's Faithlife group so anyone interested can easily jump in or learn more.

For the new member class, you'll want to create a separate page on your website with information about the next membership class as well as a

simple form for people who are curious about becoming a member. Make it clear that neither signing up nor attending the class commits someone to membership, but that it's the best step to learn more about your church's beliefs, distinctives, and ministry philosophy.

And since COVID-19 has changed how we do church, it's always a good idea to think through how you can offer all of these things digitally, too. Consider using a subgroup for people who are new and looking to learn more about your church. You could run a weekly meet-and-greet or new member class using the group video chat. Find ways to connect those who are with you online to more meaningful, face-to-face relationship-building opportunities as soon as possible.

### **Create opportunities for newer attendees to give a first-time gift**

We'll discuss giving in much greater detail in the next stage, but for those who are still learning about your church and getting connected, receiving a first-time gift is a critical moment. While people in this stage may not be fully committed to your church or ready to become a regular giver just yet, they are usually inclined to give toward a particular cause or special offering. Make sure you are occasionally providing an opportunity for your church to support a missionary, local shelter, etc. Spend a few minutes talking about this ministry before you take the offering, and help connect the dots between giving and the practical outpouring of the gospel through these ministries. These offerings provide teaching moments about generosity and how money helps build the kingdom—plus, they're opportunities to bring new people along in their giving journey you don't want to pass up.

## **Key tools and products to use at this stage**

### **Faithlife Group Communication**

At this point, you'll want to make sure people have joined your church's Faithlife group. It's essential to have one communication hub for your church where everyone can stay connected, build relationships, and find service opportunities. Group members can share prayer requests, RSVP to

events, send private messages and video chat with others, and more. And since you can create unlimited groups for free, each class or small group can have their own group on Faithlife.

### **Faithlife App**

Download the Faithlife app for instant access to your church groups from anywhere, and encourage your attendees to do the same. Rather than scrolling through their usual feeds the next time they're stuck in the checkout line or at the doctor's office, they can go to their Faithlife groups for prayer requests, Bible reading, discussion about a recent sermon or Bible study, etc.

### **Faithlife Giving**

New people generally start giving to your church in this phase. They aren't often regular givers yet, but they may make a gift every so often. You don't have to ask people to give here, but you should make it quite easy. With Faithlife Giving, people can quickly set up one-time or recurring gifts, split gifts across funds, and even give via text. It's as easy as it gets.

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# Step 4: Volunteer

## Attended to Committed

People can attend a church indefinitely without becoming active members (and sadly, some do), but they'll miss out on a deeper level of community and growth. Attendees watch from the sidelines with no responsibility, while members are actively involved in the work of the church.

In short, members are committed.

But for some, making that decision isn't as easy as you'd think, and it can be hard to convince attendees to take that leap of faith. In this step, you want to help regular attendees understand why it's crucial to join a church, what the Bible says about being part of a local fellowship, and how being connected and serving will benefit them—then communicate it in as many ways possible. And with Faithlife's integrated ministry platform, it's easy.

## Things to encourage attendees to do at this stage

### Join the church

There's something beautiful about committing yourself to a particular group of believers. Paul wrote that the believers in Macedonia "gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us" (2 Cor 8:5). Biblically, it's the natural next step after putting faith in Jesus.

But for some, that decision takes time. And often, you'll need to build trust and answer deeply personal questions before someone will make that commitment. Here's a few ideas to help attendees make the decision to become part of your church community.

### **Teach them why church membership matters**

Even longtime believers might not have a clear, biblical understanding of why regularly meeting with a group of like-minded people is vital. And fortunately, the Bible is not silent on the topic.

The writer of Hebrews says, “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (10:24–25). It’s not always easy to follow Jesus. Being part of a local church provides encouragement to press on toward a common goal: to win the promised “heavenly prize” (Phil 3:14 NLT).

In other words, God did not intend that we be alone on the journey.

Paul, too, writes about the importance of being part of the body of believers. In Ephesians 4:15–16, he says we are to grow up into Christ who is the head, “being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part . . . for the building up of itself in love” (NASB).

This picture of the Church as a knitted-together body of believers serving the Lord and each other is a clear (albeit implied) New Testament teaching. Each member works together for the overall growth of God’s Church.

All the Bible’s analogies for the Church make this point: we are one. Each person acts as a powerful witness to Jesus—but we stand or fall as part of one body.

### **Let your congregation speak for you**

Stories and testimonials are an organic way to communicate the exciting things God is doing in your congregation. A testimonial is like a long review of your church from someone connected and happy.

You can do this through live and video-taped testimonials during services, or you can publish them to your website and include them in emails, blogs, and newsletters. You can even encourage people to share short testimonies of their time at your church—an “elevator pitch” of sorts that tells why they love their church community—and ask permission to post on your website, social media, and even in your church group for visitors and members to see and enjoy.



### **Help attendees feel connected**

One reason people don't join a church is because they don't feel like they fit in. Your job is to help them feel connected before they make the decision to commit, and it needs to be spelled out everywhere, in both printed and digital material.

Make sure attendees know about upcoming events where they can meet others from the church. (This is why you want everyone to join your church's Faithlife group as early as they're willing to.)

Most importantly, make sure to send follow-up communication after events.

With a clear connection process, your yet-to-be members will be more prepared to move from "I'm attending" to "I'm committed."

### **Encourage them to volunteer**

Once a person says, "I'm in!" it's time to move them into practical ministry. Communicate volunteer expectations from the beginning as part of your church's DNA on your website and in follow-up emails.

Churches that do so are less likely to be continually scrambling for volunteers. (There's nothing more stressful for a children's coordinator than finding out the nursery is understaffed fifteen minutes before service begins.) Make sure members know that serving is not only rewarding but a commission from God: "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (1 Pet 4:10 NIV).

Sometimes this involves a solid ask. Jesus didn't just teach about serving others (Mark 10:35–45), he also modeled how to recruit disciples: face to face. He prayed first (Luke 6:12–13), then verbally challenged them.

"Come, follow me" (Mark 1:17).

Jesus gave the disciples a vision to reach the world—some "eternal motivation" (in this case, through the metaphor of fishing for people).

Scripture says, “And they left their nets at once and followed him” (Matt 4:19–20).

And his model for inviting disciples into ministry is, well, the best.

A personal invite (or sometimes a challenge) is often what makes the difference between a member watching on the sidelines and an actively serving participant in the church.

### **Fill out a gifts assessment**

You don’t want people to serve where they are uncomfortable or not using their gifts. For example, asking a creative person to count the offerings . . . that’s a recipe for disaster (and burnout).

That’s where a spiritual gifts assessment comes in handy. Many churches find them to be a powerful tool to identify people’s gifts and match them to service opportunities. There are tons of online spiritual gifts assessment tools that make it fast and easy for members to discover how they are gifted and what areas of service bring them joy. Though each is slightly different, they are based on Romans 12:6–8, 1 Corinthians 12:8–10; 28–30, and Ephesians 4:11. The assessment will help members understand how God has gifted them and ensure where they are serving is the right fit.

And once each person has identified their gifts, they can update their profiles on Faithlife so you can keep them informed about ways they can serve. (This works for personality profiles, too—both are easily searchable on Faithlife.)

### **Become a regular giver**

A person’s spiritual growth is tightly connected to their generosity (Luke 16:10–13; Matt 6:19–21). Paul talked about it often (1 Tim 6:8–10, 17–19), and the book of Acts describes how the early Church modeled generous living (Acts 2:42–47).

The Bible says we are to give gratefully, cheerfully, and generously (2 Cor 9:6–15), sacrificially (Rom 12:1–2, 8), locally (1 Tim 5:17–18), and regularly (1 Cor 16:1–2).

Once a person calls your church their home, encourage them to look at their income and make a decision to give regularly, whether weekly, biweekly, or monthly. But first, help them understand why giving is a joy and a blessing:

- **When we give, we resemble God who is a giver**
- **When we give, we worship God by putting him above ourselves**
- **When we give, we partner with God in the work he is doing**
- **When we give, we remember everything we have is a gift from him to begin with**
- **When we give, we trust that God is our Provider**

Money can be a significant roadblock to spiritual growth. Giving acknowledges God's ownership of everything a person has and that they trust him. It not only communicates the person's commitment to the church, but it's a beautiful act of faith that leads to growth in Christ.

All of that said, before asking any new person to give, make sure your church is stewarding its resources well and has a transparent view into how money is being spent. If you don't get this part right, your church may end up feeling manipulative, slimy, or legalistic.

## **Key tools and products to use at this stage**

### **Faithlife Groups**

Faithlife groups makes it easy to schedule volunteers and keep track of who is good at what. You can add custom tags to people, and your congregation can even add their personality profiles to their record for you to see.

### **Calendar**

Encourage participation in church events and help people stay in the loop by planning as far in advance as you can, then adding events to your church calendar inside your Faithlife group. (When you do, it automatically updates the calendar on your Faithlife site.) When members install the

Faithlife mobile app, they can access your Faithlife group and calendar from anywhere. Faithlife also has unlimited subgroups, and each subgroup has its own calendar, too, which ladders up to the main group's calendar. So, if your church choir wants to add an event, they can add it to their subgroup calendar. And if the church choir needs the main sanctuary and 15 chairs, they can book those resources at the same time they create the event.

### **Newsletter**

Faithlife's integrated ministry platform includes newsletter features in two places: from within your Faithlife website and your Faithlife church group. They're easy to create, formatted for both desktop and mobile devices, and auto-send to your subscribers once published. Use them to share prayer requests and testimonials and announce upcoming events. You can even schedule an introductory newsletter to auto-send to new members and followers upon joining your church group or individual service groups.

### **Digital Bulletins**

Using Faithlife's integrated ministry platform, you can automatically generate digital bulletins, an easy way to help attendees feel connected to the community. From the digital bulletin, members can download contact or calendar information, fill out connection cards, take live surveys, or learn about upcoming events. They'll post to your Faithlife church group at the scheduled date and time, but with Faithlife's integrated ministry platform, you can also set your bulletin to auto-publish to your website.

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# Step 5: Learn

## Committed to Growing

Your members might be serving their hearts out, and that's great. But none of that matters if they also aren't engaging with God's Word, growing in their knowledge of him, and applying what they are learning. In short, this step involves discipling your members to know and love Jesus more.

Weekend services are excellent places to disciple your people, but in this step, you'll want to equip them to regularly and consistently study the Bible themselves. They'll tend to lean on you for biblical teaching and thus their spiritual growth—which is good and biblical. But if they don't feel like they can open God's Word on their own, something is missing.

The goal here is to teach your congregation how to self-feed, that is, how to study the Bible, pray, find answers to theological questions, and more. Faithlife's integrated ministry platform makes that easy—you'll have all the tools you need to help your church engage with the Bible outside of regular church services.

## Things to encourage members to do at this stage

### Join a small group or Bible study

Bible studies are a great way to train people to open God's Word for themselves. In a sense, it's similar to coaching—you gather a smaller group to offer more direct encouragement and feedback. And an added perk: Bible studies are a huge way to build deep relationships, find accountability, and grow in community. This could be a midweek Bible study based on your sermons or one based on a video course in Faithlife's

integrated ministry platform—the options are endless.

Bible study and small group leaders can create a Faithlife group as a safe, private place for group members to stay in touch, share biblical insights and prayer requests, join a video chat, or watch biblical teaching. Within the group, leaders can distribute digital books and calendar one-time or repeating events—like start and stop dates or even social get-togethers—with one-click RSVPs.

### **Participate in group discussions**

Faithlife makes it easy to share teaching and encouragement with your congregation throughout the week. You can write an article or a blog post, publish it to your church group's feed, and encourage members to participate in a conversation to unpack a topic or verse further. Your group also has a unique feature just for discussions. Try posting a weekly topic and see what happens. This feature works in subgroups, too!

### **Hop in a shared reading plan**

Shared reading plans help people stay accountable to daily reading and track their progress. Logos allows people to join a preset reading plan like “21 Days on Prayer” or “14 Days on Hope” and learn from others who have joined the plan. Everyone can engage the text together using the Community Notes feature and start some good conversation around the Word. Plus, you can jump in the conversation and offer guidance and even set times to video chat about a reading plan.

Once someone connects to a reading plan, they can access it in the Logos desktop or mobile app, on the web at [app.logos.com](http://app.logos.com), or in your church group.

### **Watch videos on Bible-based topics**

Your Faithlife Equip subscription gives everyone in your church access to Bible-based videos on Faithlife TV. From kids' shows to Bible study curriculum from David C Cook to video courses from pastors and seminary professors, your members can watch edifying, encouraging content. The shows on Faithlife TV are great for family movie nights or personal study. You can recommend videos through Faithlife TV, which will display in a dedicated space for your church on Faithlife TV, or from within your church

group or a blog post. Your church members will have immediate access to the content you believe best fits their needs and interests.

### **Dig deeper in personal study**

God tells us that if we search for his wisdom and understanding “like silver . . . and search for it as for hidden treasures,” we will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God (Prov 2:3–4). There’s nothing more exciting than digging into Scripture and discovering one of those treasures—a spiritual “aha” when God shows us a truth in a new way.

No doubt you want that for your congregation, too!

But that takes a bit of work, and most people don’t have access to piles of Bible dictionaries and commentaries and lexicons—or even know what they are. That’s why Bible software like Logos is so great. Faithlife Equip unlocks powerful resources to your entire church, such as the *Lexham Bible Dictionary*, the Faithlife Study Bible, and other Bible study resources. Members can instantly find information on biblical people, places, objects, miracles, parables—the list is endless.

### **Begin building a theological library**

With Faithlife Equip, everyone in your church gets access to powerful Bible study tools and hundreds of digital books. But they aren’t limited to just those resources. You can add resources to your church’s library in bulk, or you can invite your members to pick up the free books we offer each month on the Logos and Faithlife Ebooks websites. Those books are a great start to a substantial theological library. Your members can read from desktop or mobile, meaning they’re never far from a good book.

## **Key tools and products to use at this stage**

### **Logos Bible Software**

Faithlife Equip gives everyone in your church access to powerful Bible study tools and 260+ digital books—including commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and more. It’s like a personal study assistant to guide them in understanding Scripture accurately and fully. They can do a Bible study

workflow that will give them step-by-step instructions for doing basic Bible study or go all-in and learn a biblical language like Hebrew or study apologetics and world religions. Interactive media like “An Empty Tomb” and “Who Killed Goliath?” brings first-century culture to life and turns Scripture from black and white to technicolor.

### **Faithlife Study Bible**

Included in Logos is the Faithlife Study Bible, a powerful resource to help your church find their place in God’s story. Rich layers of notes, over 400 photos, videos, and infographics, and the Lexham English Bible—a clear, modern translation of the Bible—remove barriers to understanding so people of any level of knowledge and experience can pursue enriching study. Plus, it comes with *Connect the Testaments*, a built-in reading plan for a whole year. Your members can explore the text from any device, anytime.

### **Faithlife Ebooks**

Faithlife Ebooks puts books for Christians and church staffers within reach. With a free book each month, Faithlife Ebooks makes Bible guides, devotionals, and Christian living books within reach for everyone. And because every book that you get through Faithlife Ebooks is available in the Logos mobile app, your theological library stays in one central location.

### **Faithlife TV**

With Faithlife Equip, your members can tune into thousands of hours of seminary-level Bible teachings, documentaries, dramas, kids’ shows, and more. Anyone in your church can watch from their phone, iPad, laptop, or Smart TV. You can also use it to share your church’s video content.

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# Step 6: Share

## Growing to Going

How do you know when someone is really “in”? It’s not when they join, or even when they start leading—it’s when they start telling others and inviting them to come, too.

Think back to John 4: when the woman at the well finally understood who Jesus was, she went home and brought others with her to hear from him.

Your church doesn’t have the power to save, but you have a message worth sharing—and the gospel is “the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16).

Such good news demands four things from you:

- **Preaching the gospel in all your words and actions (and programs)**
- **Encouraging your congregation to evangelize and invite people to church**
- **Building on-ramps for new people to be discipled**
- **Training leaders so you can disciple the people who come to your church**

In this section, we’ll talk about ways to train and empower your members to share the gospel wherever they are.

## Things to do during this stage

### Teach on evangelism and apologetics

It’s not enough to tell your congregation they should know something

about apologetics and be ready to share it with curious friends. You need to teach and model this for your members. A few ways you can do this:

- **Host a one-night event, movie night, or a short weekly class.** You can go through a book together or build your own course—either way, having focused and interactive time to talk about evangelism and apologetics is invaluable.
- **Invite people to share their testimonies.** Nothing is more motivating for evangelism than hearing how it made an eternal difference in someone else's life.
- **Encourage small groups to go through a video evangelism or apologetics course together.** When you have Faithlife Equip, your members have access to thousands of hours of Logos Mobile Education course videos—including several courses on this very topic. The videos are broken into short segments, so it's easy for groups to watch and discuss them together.
- **Preach about evangelism and apologetics.** Anytime you talk about these topics, you'll want to cover both why they matter and how people can live them out.

### **Assemble outreach teams**

Each church's outreach teams look a little different based on the demographics of your area and the ways your church is uniquely equipped to help (this is another place your church's personas come in). For some, this looks like having prison ministries or adopting a local school. For others, it could look like a street evangelism team or ministry to kids in low-income housing.

The best way to get groups like these started is by partnering with someone in your congregation who's passionate about a specific group of people. If you don't have the right person to take charge of an outreach team, you should pray and wait for God to bring the right person. In many cases, a poorly-led ministry is worse than no ministry at all. You can also consider partnering with another local church or ministry until you can build an outreach group of your own.

If your church doesn't have any outreach teams currently, don't rush it.

Start praying that the Lord will open doors to the right ministry with the right people from your church. And once you find people to lead outreach, work with them to write a strategy document outlining the team's goals, desires, and methods. That way, everyone is on the same page from the beginning.

Once the team is formed and formal, you can create a group for them on Faithlife and mark the team lead as a group admin. That way, you can encourage others in the church to join the outreach team—and they'll know who to talk to when they have questions.

### **Create shareable events, campaigns, and content**

Your members don't have to be leaders (or potential leaders) to move into this phase. You can nudge people toward sharing the gospel by giving them opportunities to share about your church. Three ways you can do this:

- **Host an event on an interesting or controversial topic.** Things like parenting seminars or Q&As on tough theological issues tend to attract people who don't go to your church (and some who don't go to any church). Create an exciting invitation and encourage your members to bring people who might be interested.
- **Run a short campaign.** The calendar gives you three campaigns ready to build some church marketing around: Christmas, Easter, and back to school. You can produce a short one- to two-minute video that coincides with the season or a new sermon series and features lots of people in your church. (Just make sure to get parents' permission before filming kids.) You can also print and mail a postcard to anyone who visited your church in the past year and keep extras on hand for members to share with friends and neighbors.
- **Share content people outside your church are looking for.** The simplest way to do this: blog posts. You can enlist strong writers at your church to write short devotionals (600–800 words), suggestions for community outreach, and even insights that didn't make it into last week's sermon. When you share content like this in your church's social media accounts, it's easy for people to share with their followers—which helps you reach people you probably wouldn't reach otherwise.

## **Develop leadership training classes**

Whether you're a pastor, church admin, kids' minister, or lay leader, one thing is certain: you can't do it all. God designed the Church so that the burden of ministry doesn't rest on any one person's shoulders.

It's one thing to say and believe that's true, but it's something else to look around your church and ask, "Who can lead? How can I empower them to lead?" We talk more about who belongs in leadership training in our free guide, [How to Identify and Empower Church Leaders](#), so here we'll look specifically at leadership training classes.

One rubric you can use for leadership training is found in Paul Tripp's book, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*. The four categories he lays out are: love, know, speak, do. Your training should be aimed at helping potential leaders love and know those they minister to, speak the truth in love, and do what's right (apply the truth to everyday life).<sup>1</sup>

You can create a leadership training group inside your church's group on Faithlife and add books and courses as part of your curriculum. (You can buy just about any title for digital distribution to your small group by calling the Logos sales team. When you tell them which group you'd like the books to go to, they'll unlock the books to each person's library.) You can also create video curriculum on Faithlife TV using your sermons or Mobile Education course videos. Each course is broken into short segments, so class participants can watch them at their own pace.

## **Delegate ministry opportunities to qualified leaders**

So you've got trained, committed leaders. You know what comes next—you share the work of ministry with them. Where do their particular gifts and passions overlap with needs in your church? That's the place to give them responsibility.

You don't want to give someone too much responsibility too fast, though. It's a sure recipe for both burnout and losing the vision. You can begin by handing off a few tasks at a time. Start small, and as leaders prove themselves reliable and capable, you can give them more leadership.

<sup>1</sup> Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2002), 111–112

(Again, check out our free leadership guide to get into more ideas.)

If you're not sharing leadership yet, here are a few places where you will need more leaders (if you don't already):

- **Small groups**
- **Bible studies**
- **Men's and women's ministries**
- **Worship ministry**
- **Kids' and student ministries**
- **Care ministries (specifically for felt needs)**
- **Communications**
- **Facilities (yes, even your facilities leaders should be trained!)**

As people are trained and empowered, create their ministry group on Faithlife and set them as admins. It'll make recruiting a team easier—and it'll help them create sustainable ministry structures.

## **Key tools and products to use at this stage**

### **Your Faithlife Profile**

Sign in at [faithlife.com](https://faithlife.com) or from your mobile app, and you'll have access to all your Faithlife groups, your calendar, messages, Faithlife Giving, and more. You can post an announcement, publish a newsletter, or skip over to any part of your Faithlife ecosystem (e.g., Faithlife Sermons). For almost anything you need to do with your Faithlife, you can start here.

### **Digital Asset Manager**

A digital asset manager is just a fancy term that means all your files are stored and accessible on the cloud. That is, when you create an image in Faithlife Media or upload a PDF, your entire team within Faithlife can easily find and use it where they need to. If you make a slide in Proclaim, you can add it to a Faithlife group without exporting it. This is particularly helpful when we're talking about delegating work since delegation leads to lots of collaboration.

# Pulling It All Together

So you've seen how digital discipleship can bolster the work your church is already doing. What's next?

Everything you've read above is something that happens inside Faithlife's [integrated ministry platform](#)—the first of its kind. One church tech solution contains everything you need for ministry—not just for today, but for whatever tomorrow brings, too. With a single login, your entire church can connect, engage, and grow together online. Every Faithlife product comes with [free support 365 days a year](#), so you can start using Faithlife right away.

**[See how Faithlife Equip helps churches like yours thrive.](#)**

**To learn more or to schedule a demo,  
visit us online at [faithlife.com](https://faithlife.com).**

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