



EQUIPPER

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Greetings disciplemakers:

This issue continues our exploration of **the disciplemaking pathway**. This multi-step structure is a tool that churches use to help people journey **from union to communion, making disciples with Jesus**. We encourage churches to have in place a disciplemaking pathway that is simple, balanced and accessible.



Journey Church
from union to communion
Belong • Believe • Become

To illustrate what that looks like, we are examining the disciplemaking pathway used by a congregation named *Journey Church*. Their pathway has three simple steps: **Belong • Believe • Become**.

Last time, we looked at step one: **Belong**. Here the congregation participates in what Jesus is doing to *seek the lost*. It does so by helping its members share God's love with the unchurched. The goal is helping unchurched people *experience* the gospel, which declares that, in Jesus, God loves them, wants them, accepts them and forgives them.

This time, we look at step two: **Believe**. Here the congregation participates in what Jesus is doing to *nurture believers*. It does so by helping those who are turning to God become rooted deeply in the person and priorities of Jesus.

Churches have many ways to nurture believers. Of great importance is administering to them the sacraments of Baptism and Communion. See page two for an article that looks at the meaning of Communion in the light of the Trinity.

Churches also nurture believers by "baptizing" them in the assuring truth of Jesus (Hebrews 10:22; 1 John 3:1). They do this by preaching and teaching the gospel in church services, Bible studies and small groups. The gospel is the Apostle's word, conveyed in Scripture (the written word), to testify about the Living Word, Jesus. Consider these questions: Is our teaching faithful to the gospel? Is it delivered in ways that connect the gospel with the lives of both new and established believers? For ideas about a narrative (story-telling) approach to teaching the Bible to children (and it works well with adults!), see http://www.echothestory.com/pdfs/CM0110_ShapedbyStory.pdf.

Churches also nurture believers by providing accessible ways for them to participate in the worship and fellowship of the church. Consider this question: Is our worship and fellowship helping new believers relate to God and to his church, or does it place obstacles in the way, proclaiming, *You are not welcome here?*

For resources related to *seeking the lost* and *nurturing believers*, see the strategy section of the *Ministry Development* website at <http://www.wcg.org/MinDev/>.

-Ted Johnston
CAD communications and resources

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Communion in the Light of the Trinity by Ted Johnston & Jonathan Stepp

The word “communion” is often associated with the Lord’s Supper. This sacrament of the church points to two stunning realities: The triune communion of God himself, and the communion of God with us.

In the first instance, communion is the living reality of God’s own triune nature as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The three Persons of the Godhead have always existed in perfect, loving communion with each other. *Communion is what God is.*

In the second instance, communion is our inclusion in the triune communion in and through Jesus Christ. By becoming human on our behalf, the Son of God brought all humanity into *union* with God. When people become believers, they enter into *communion* with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. *Communion with God is our eternal life.*

But there is a problem. Human beings, even as believers, are not capable of fully sharing in the divine life of the Father, Son and Spirit. Our response and participation in this gracious communion with God remains woefully inadequate. Communion is a two-way street with mutual communication, sharing, and openness. Yet our fallen human nature is not capable of this mutuality. Like Adam and Eve, we hide in the bushes. And even though God shares all that he is with us, we hold back from sharing all that we are with him.

How then is communion with God possible? Only in and through the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is here that the theology of Jesus’ *vicarious humanity* is so critical to our understanding of who God is for us, and who we are in him. Here we learn that the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, is not just “speaking God,” he is also “listening man” and “responding man” (Andrew Purves in *The Crucifixion of Ministry*, p. 81). In the communion that the Son has with our humanity, he not only ministers to humanity the things of God, he also ministers to God the things of humanity (Athanasius in *Against the Arians*, 3.39; 4.7.)

As the Divine Man, Jesus fully and perfectly carries out with us and on our behalf, *everything* required of us to be in perfect and righteous communion with the Father, in the Spirit. In Jesus’ love, grace and power, we not only grow in the grace of Jesus and in knowing Jesus, we will never be apart from him.

It will forever be by virtue of our communion with the glorified incarnate Son of God, that we stand with Jesus, through the Spirit, in communion with the Father.

This is the gospel—the stunning truth taught by the Apostles. And this truth defines the meaning of the church’s Communion service. When we, as the body of Christ, partake of the bread and cup at the Lord’s Table, we are vividly reminded that in *every* aspect of our Christian life, we rely not on any obedience or righteousness of our own, but solely upon the grace of God incarnate in Jesus Christ.

When we share Communion, we are reminded that the Son of God is forever in communion with us. The Communion service of the church is our participation together in Jesus’ death and resurrection for us. And just as the bread and the wine become part of our physical bodies, so too we, by grace, partake spiritually of Jesus Christ in his body and blood. In the Communion service, we experience and are nurtured by the presence of the crucified, resurrected and ascended Jesus, who makes us one with the Father, in the Spirit.