



EIGHT STEPS TO CHRISTIAN MATURITY

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Church-movers are focused on making a difference in society – a real difference. We believe that if we move our church, we change the world. Why? Because the church changes people. And people, as ambassadors of Christ, shape our neighborhoods, cities, and nations.

When I say “move your church,” I don’t mean move the building. And I don’t mean move the weekly gathering, either. I mean move the people. Move the whole body, and individual members of the body. Eventually, they’ll move others, who move others, and so on.

Okay, but move them where?





We move specific people from the darkness of sin to the light of Christ. The apostle Paul said we turn people “from darkness to light” ([Acts 26:18](#)). Ultimately, God does this through us ([Colossians 1:13](#)). We move them from the left to the right (not politically, but spiritually). We move people from ignorance and unbelief to saving faith and repentance (conversion). Then we move them from immature Christianity to mature Christianity ([Colossians 1:28-29](#); [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)).

We move people by consistently sharing ourselves with them ([1 Thessalonians 2:8](#)). Paul commands those who have tasted the mercy of God to persistently and intentionally weave themselves into other people’s lives.

“Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. . . . Be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.” - Romans 12:10, 12-15

And we move people by continuing to share Jesus with them, even after their conversion, “speaking the truth in love,” so that the body of Christ grows and is built up, shaped, and transformed ([Ephesians 4:15](#)) – so that it is moved.

Eight Moves Toward Christian Maturity

There are different ways of conceptualizing and articulating steps for moving people toward saving faith in Jesus, and then further into Christian maturity. This article takes its cues from The Trellis and the Vine.

The Bible gives all kinds of instructions, examples, and pathways to help move Christians with various backgrounds and personality types to engage more fully in the Great Commission. I like this approach because it simplifies the process for me, making the steps clear and practical. When I walk through the stages and think of particular neighbors on my block, I’m rebuked for complacency, and inspired to initiate in trying to move them toward Christ.

Take whatever you find helpful, and create categories and pathways that mobilize you to actually love and disciple your neighbors – Christian and non-Christian.

1. Contact

Meet your neighbors and remember their names. Learn how to specifically love and care for them. Learn the basics of who they are: name, what brought them to your neighborhood, family details, occupation, and key relationships.

Embrace the small talk and surface-level conversation – not just to be polite, but to love them by getting to know them.

2. Converse

Get into the habit of asking good questions to generate meaningful conversations. Learn the art of drawing people out. Many only ever experience small talk, and rarely enjoy any kind of meaningful conversation. Let them know you’re the kind of friend willing to go deeper. Share your life and be vulnerable first. Invite them to share more of themselves by sharing more of yourself.

Small talk usually repeats the same familiar lines over and over. “I’m fine.” “Did you watch the game last night?” Though important, this is all in the realm of “contact.” In conversation, we’re going beyond mere factual statements on the surface to what we each think and feel – ultimately to new levels of vulnerability. Dialogue at deeper levels displays the beginning of a more meaningful friendship. This takes time, good listening, thoughtful questions, and being vulnerable and open ourselves first.



3. Community

This move can come before or after the next one (sharing the gospel). Community and gospel really undergird and influence this whole sequence, but the two are unique enough to make them their own steps.

As your neighbor (or coworker or classmate) learns you are a Christian and begins to have meaningful conversations with you, introduce him to your Christian community. That should be your church family. Jesus taught that people will know that the Father sent him by our unity with one another ([John 17:21, 23](#)). And Jesus tells us that people will know we are his disciples by our love for one another ([John 13:34-35](#)).

But those apart from Jesus will not see our love for one another and our gospel unity in the midst of our differences without being exposed to our shared life as a church. (I'm not primarily referring to your church services but to the informal moments of friendship). So, find ways to bring them into your community.

When they come around, edify and minister to your church family like you would if your non-Christian friends were not there. Just be you. Don't put on a show. Be edifying. Love one another. They will see something noticeably different from what they're used to. They'll witness a heavenly love. They'll get a little taste of the powerful effects of the gospel. No other community on earth shares life like the Christian church.

4. Gospel

If you have had meaningful conversations with your (now) friend and introduced him to your community, he has probably heard the gospel already, at least in small ways. He has probably heard a few sentences here and there about Jesus – his life, death, and resurrection – and what he means for you or your church family.

At some point, sooner than later, we need to clearly explain the gospel to others and call them to respond. What is the gospel? You might tell the story slightly different than me, but if you don't know how to tell it, you can read how I explain the good news to non-Christians. Whatever approach you use, choose one concise way to share the core message of the gospel.

Around this time you can offer to read the Bible with them, which will open up more gospel conversations.

5. Convert

If they have understood the gospel, call them to trust in Jesus Christ and turn from their sin. Faith comes by hearing the message about Christ ([Romans 10:17](#)). The flip side of faith in Jesus is repentance – abandoning faith in ourselves, our sin, our righteousness, our old way of pursuing life and happiness.

When someone repents from selfishness and sin and trusts in Jesus, he is converted. So, tell him to call on the name of the Lord ([Romans 10:13](#)). If converted, he has been transferred from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of the Son ([Colossians 1:13](#)). He is a new Christian.

Now what?

6. Commit

Jesus never wants our faith in him to stay private. Truly trusting and following Jesus will be public. It's made public initially through baptism ([Matthew 28:19](#); [Acts 2:38-41](#)) and formally committing ourselves to Jesus Christ's body, the church.

So, help the new Christian go public by joining a gospel church through baptism, and to stay public through active church membership (expressed regularly in the Lord's Supper).



7. Grow

If the person is a committed member, you need to help him grow in conviction about what the Bible teaches and in character (how he lives). Teach him the Bible and theology ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)). Most of all, continue to proclaim Christ to him. The apostle Paul proclaimed Jesus by warning and teaching people with all wisdom, laboring and striving for their joy with God's divine strength ([Colossians 1:28-29](#)).

Continuing to disciple the convert with the Bible and theology will strengthen his conviction. Rebuke and correct him. Teach him to obey everything Christ commands ([Matthew 28:20](#)). Teach him to rebuke, correct, and restore you, as well. These interactions will strengthen his character as he kills sin and loves God more and more in practical, everyday decisions.

8. Go

Growth in Bible knowledge and personal holiness is never enough. We must (and get to) serve others. Jesus tells us to go make disciples. So, teach him to go and help others move to the right.

Train him to contact, converse, invite into community, share the gospel, convert, commit, and grow others in the church and in the neighborhood. He will train others to go do the same. The more he does that, the more he moves to the right into Christlike love and maturity. And the more he matures, the more the church is moved to the right – and the more lost people are moved into the church.

You probably know different people all along this path. Name them. Try to determine where they are in this process and where they need to move next. Encourage them toward maturity. Pray for them to move to the right. Invest yourself in helping them. Make a difference where you live by moving your church somewhere new.