

Next/First Steps Pathway



Purpose

Your new member class should do more than explain church membership, it should launch people into a life of discipleship, mission, evangelism, and service. This is where culture is shaped, vision is shared, and disciples are sent.

Format Ideas

All groups at the small group layer serve the same mission, and that mission should be clear in the name whether your church uses terms like: Sunday School, Small Groups, Life Groups, Community Groups, etc. What matters is clarity. Use one consistent name to reinforce shared purpose and avoid confusion or competition. This strengthens unity in the small group layer of our Disciple-Making Environments, which include:

Step 1: Pre-Class Videos (1-3)

Sent before the in-person gathering to cover

- The church's mission, vision, and values
- Basic doctrinal beliefs (e.g., from the Baptist Faith and Message 2000)
- Denominational, associational, and state alignment (e.g., Southern Baptist Convention and Tennessee Baptist Mission Board)
- Overview of the Cooperative Program
- A welcome from the pastor and key leaders

These videos offer consistent, repeatable content to save time and maximize relational moments during the in-person session.

Step 2: In-Person Class (Relational & Practical)

Suggested Agenda:

- Welcome and Icebreakers (connection-driven)
- The Gospel Story and Your Story
 - Invite participants to share their testimony or write it out.
- Disciple-Making Environments
 - Large Gatherings (Worship)
 - Small Groups (Community)
 - Micro Groups (Accountability)
 - Personal Walk (Devotion)
- Serving Opportunities
 - Include a spiritual gifts assessment.
 - Offer immediate ways to connect and serve
- Mission and Evangelism Focus
 - Share how the church reaches the local and global community
- Commissioning Moment
 - Pray over new members and celebrate them taking their next step

Key Components to Include

- Testimony Submission
 - Helps equip members to share the Gospel.
- Spiritual Gifts Discovery
 - Helps match people to service areas.
- Ministry Matching
 - Have leaders available to connect new members on-site.
- Clear Next Steps
 - Join a group, serve, attend a mission event, or invite a friend..

Relational groups are not recruited or promoted like sign-up sheets. They grow through on-ramp events, such as Group Launch Sundays, or relational invitations from volunteers, leaders, or ministers, as a next step. Remember, lonely people don't raise their hands, so groups must be made accessible and personal.