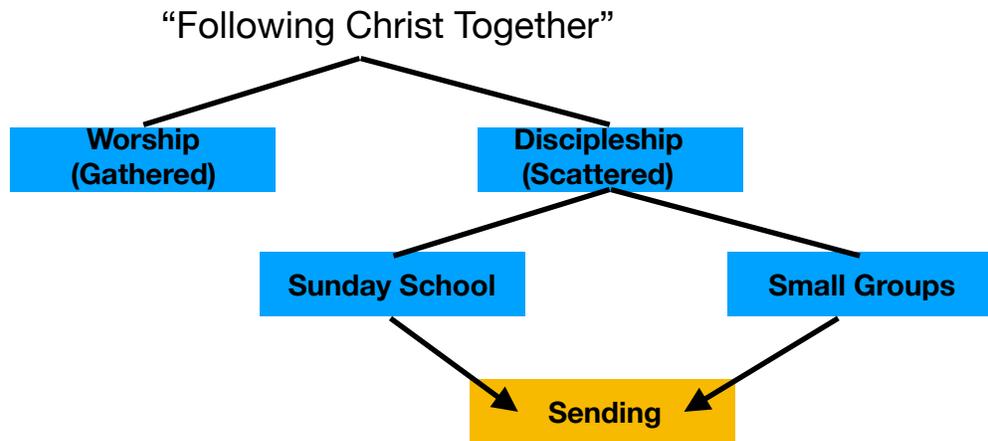


Valley Presbyterian Church

222-M Overview



Following...

We are heading somewhere.

Relational, Intentional, Organic, Missional

Following Christ...

Following Christ means growing in the three vital relationships:

- 1) Intimacy with God
- 2) Community with Believers
- 3) Influence with Outsiders

Following Christ Together...

Small Group Essentials:

- 1) Christ: Think, “Following Christ Together”
- 2) Community: Promote Participation
- 3) Care: Cultivate Relationships
- 4) Competencies: Use the tools given to us for life and godliness
- 5) Character: Know the Wins for Small group leaders.
- 6) Continue: Look for ways to help promote growth: new groups, leaders, etc.

Small Group Essentials:

1) Christ: Think, "Following Christ Together"

We never "get beyond the gospel" in our Christian life to something more "advanced." The gospel is not the first "step" in a "stairway" of truths, rather, it is more like the "hub" in a "wheel" of truth. The gospel is not just the A-B-C's but the A-Z of Christianity. The gospel is not just the minimum required doctrine necessary to enter the kingdom, but the way we make progress in the kingdom.

We are not justified by the gospel and then sanctified by obedience, but the gospel is the way we grow (Gal. 3:1-3) and are renewed (Col. 1:6). It is the solution to each problem, the key to each closed door, the power through every barrier (Rom. 1:16-17). It is very common in the church to think as follows. "The gospel is for non-Christians. One needs it to be saved. But once saved, you grow through hard work and obedience." But Col. 1:6 shows that this is a mistake. Both confession and "hard work" that is not arising from and "in line" with the gospel will not sanctify you-it will strangle you. All our problems come from a failure to apply the gospel. Thus when Paul left the Ephesians he committed them "to the word of his grace, which can build you up" (Acts 20:32).

The main problem, then, in the Christian life is that we have not thought out the deep implications of the gospel, we have not "used" the gospel in and on all parts of our life. Richard Lovelace says that most people's problems are just a failure to be oriented to the gospel-a failure to grasp and believe it through and through. Luther says, "The truth of the Gospel is the principle article of all Christian doctrine. . . . Most necessary is it that we know this article well, teach it to others, and beat it into their heads continually." The gospel is not easily comprehended. Paul says that the gospel only does its renewing work in us as we understand it in all its truth. All of us, to some degree live around the truth of the gospel but do not "get" it. So the key to continual and deeper spiritual renewal and revival is the continual re-discovery of the gospel. A stage of renewal is always the discovery of a new implication or application of the gospel-seeing more of its truth. This is true for either an individual or a church.

-Tim Keller, "The Centrality of the Gospel"

Notice on our diagram above, from "Following Christ Together", all the ministries of the church stem. Worship, Discipleship, Missions, Outreach, VBS, etc, all come from a desire to follow Christ.

This is why the action for this first essential is **THINK**. Think, "Following Christ Together." In your small group planning, studies, activities, how is Christ central? How is what you're doing and planning promote the idea of following Christ together?

2) Community: Promote Participation

Community is a place where people have a sense of belonging. We want to be relational, organic, intentional, and missional as we help provide a community for people to belong. This is why the action for this essential is **PROMOTE**. We want to be actively trying to get people involved in groups and activities, and when they are in groups, participating in them, for the sake of “Following Christ Together.”

What do we mean by providing a consistent atmosphere:

What do we mean by relational?

What do we mean by organic?

What do we mean by intentional?

What do we mean by missional?

What is the difference between the communities we are trying to cultivate at Valley and any group of people getting together?

3) Care: Cultivate Relationships

Our desire is that as we “Follow Christ Together”, communities will be forming, and the outflow of this will be the ministry of care.

Late at night and something goes wrong, who will be someone’s first call? Our hope and desire is that it will be people in their small groups. Already in the life of our church we have experienced small groups caring for one another. Sometimes the pastoral staff and session didn’t even know caring was going on until it was the crisis was over. This is huge! People in community caring for one another.

The action for this essential is **CULTIVATE**. When a consistent atmosphere is given where people feel like they can “Follow Christ Together,” care will be a product of these deepening relationships. Cultivate means that we are intentionally looking for ways to help the relationships in our communities to grow deeper, resulting in care for one another.

4) Competencies: Use the tools given to us for life and godliness

Peter says that we have been given all things needed for life and godliness. We want to be equipping our leaders and groups with the tools needed to help “Follow Christ Together.” This is done in several ways. Through official training, through exposure to helpful materials over a broad range of topics by means of handouts, emails, etc, through care and community offered for Small Group Leaders, etc.

The action of **USE**, means that we are growing in the ability to put into practice what God has given his people to help us live life and grow in godliness.

Discipleship: Preventative
Shepherding: Acute

How do you know? What are ways to know when someone needs shepherding?

5) Character: Know the Wins for Small group leaders.

We want people to be growing in godly character. This means that they are growing in the three vital relationships. By knowing what the “wins” are for Small Group Leaders, it helps us know and identify growth of godly character:

Are you growing in the three vital relationships?

Are people growing in the three vital relationships?

Are you helping provide a consistent environment for people to “Follow Christ Together”?

By **KNOWING** these wins, it helps us celebrate as God grows his people!

Remember, Character reveals itself in your decisions made when no one else see or knows. What you do in secret reveals your character.

The Win's For Small Group Leaders:

- 1) Leaders are growing in the three vital relationships.
- 2) The group members are growing in the three vital relationships.
- 3) An environment is being created where the members can “Follow Christ Together.”

6) Continue: Look for ways to help promote growth: new groups, leaders, etc.

We always want to be looking for ways to promote new growth. The action word for this essential is **LOOK**. We want to keep an eye out for people that would be good leaders and/or hosts for new small groups in the future. By being proactive, we can identify and equip new leaders to help promote growth as the Lord gives us opportunity.