

PROGRAMS OR PATHWAYS?

A weekly idea, program or perspective on reaching new people in your community

As we start this new church year, many congregations begin with a whole variety of programs for the fall. I have visited many churches in which the bulletin has this long list of study groups, mission opportunities, fellowship dinners, etc. This is usually followed by a number of announcements encouraging me to attend all of these activities. If anyone actually tried to go to all of these events they would be exhausted by early October!

The assumption many churches make is that if we just offer enough programs and get people really busy with them, that they will grow as disciples. In *Move*, a book by Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, 1000 congregations were studied around the issue of spiritual growth. Their findings were that **offering many programs does not equal spiritual growth.**

Churches that are helping people go deep in their faith in Jesus Christ offer clear discipleship pathways. Many parishioners and many newcomers to our churches need to know "*what is the next step I need to take to be a follower of Jesus?*". Healthy churches help people examine where they are on their faith journey and then have practical steps, mentors and groups to encourage people toward full discipleship.

So please take a look at what your church calendar looks like this fall. Are we keeping people busy, or are we building women and men of faith who are growing, using their gifts that God has given them, and making a difference?

Blessings on a fruitful start to your new church year.

With grace and peace,

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