

How to Launch STEPS in Your Church

STEPS is a 13-session discipleship process that equips churches to identify the causes of personal brokenness and to appropriate the power of the gospel through a biblical recovery process.

This guide will overview the progressive stages needed to investigate the content as a leadership team and to implement STEPS in your church.

Exploring STEPS

Before you begin to implement STEPS in your church, explore STEPS on your own. Begin with the following:

1. Purchase one STEPS Bible Study Kit, which includes one DVD set, one Leader Guide, one Mentor Guide, and one Member Book.
2. Work through the Member Book on your own by watching the DVD segments and by filling in the blanks in the book for each video session.
3. Identify key staff or church members you can lead through the Member Book, discussing responses to the “Going Deeper” questions and filling in the blanks as they view each video session. You will serve as the group leader and mentor for each member in this round of training. This training will also provide you an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the health and needs of your leadership team.
4. Assess the STEPS process and determine whether it is a good fit for your church culture and whether you believe God is leading you to implement this gospel-centered recovery and discipleship process.
5. Launch STEPS, using the four-stage implementation process described on the following pages.

Implementing STEPS

STAGE 1: Understand the purpose and process of STEPS.

1. STEPS *is not* a traditional 12-step program; it is process of healing.
2. STEPS *is* an intentional, gospel-centered discipleship process for everyone, though it is primarily intended to serve as the foundation for a recovery ministry.
3. STEPS will strengthen the church as a redemptive community where broken people are accepted as those who can be redeemed and restored through the gospel of Christ.

STAGE 2: Identify, enlist, and train individuals for each role in STEPS.

1. Champion
2. Ministry facilitator
3. Mentors
4. Small-group leaders
5. Participants
6. Bible study groups and ministry groups

STAGE 3: Calendar and conduct the STEPS semester.

1. Calendar the STEPS semester.
2. Purchase STEPS resources (DVD sets, Leader Guides, Mentor Guides, and Member Books)
3. Conduct the STEPS semester.
4. Understand and implement best practices when conducting the STEPS semester.

STAGE 4: Evaluate the STEPS semester and enlist more participants.

1. Evaluate the experiences from the previous semester.
2. Intentionally incorporate participants in existing Bible studies and ministry groups in the church.
3. Encourage leaders, mentors, and recent group members to identify and invite other people to participate in STEPS.
4. Encourage STEPS participants who have shown maturity to consider serving as mentors and/or group leaders in future STEPS semesters.

STAGE 1

Understand the purpose and process of STEPS.

1. STEPS is not a traditional 12-step program. STEPS is a process of healing for individuals who—

- are broken and know it;
- are broken and do not know it;
- know people who are broken.

Churches need to be equipped to minister to people with varying degrees of brokenness. Church members and leaders must continually reorient themselves to the impact and presence of brokenness in their own lives, in other individuals, in their neighborhoods, and throughout the culture.

Church members and leaders must continually remind themselves of the sufficiency of Scripture and the sufficiency of Christ to bring freedom from addiction and all other forms of sin and suffering.

2. Understand that STEPS is discipleship. It is an intentional, gospel-centered discipleship process for everyone, though it is primarily intended to serve as the foundation for a recovery ministry.

STEPS is designed as an intensive discipleship strategy that consists of leading participants through Bible study and reflection, one-on-one mentoring, sharing in small groups, and a large-group teaching session. The objective of STEPS is to help people grow in their relationships with the Lord by experiencing the transformational power of the gospel.

STEPS allows participants (who acknowledge and address their brokenness through the message of the gospel) and leaders (who are experiencing sanctification through Jesus) to connect with growing believers, engage with the gospel, and introduce basic concepts of biblical counseling.

STEPS is more than just a time of teaching. Discipleship is teaching, modeling, applying, and walking in the truth God has revealed about who we are and about Himself.

- 3. STEPS strengthens the way the church functions as a redemptive community. Broken people can be accepted as they are, wherever they are on their spiritual journey, but can then be encouraged to move closer to Jesus, finding freedom from sin.**

STEPS focuses on connecting people to and through the ministries of the church.

Investigate the principles and process (best practices) for using STEPS, as modeled by The Village Church, by viewing websites and resources from LifeWay and The Village Church.

A STEPS semester is 13 weeks of gospel-centered mentoring during which members complete daily Bible readings and assignments, dialogue with mentors, participate in small groups, and attend large-group teaching sessions. Following each 13-week semester, leaders and mentors will help individuals who have completed STEPS to connect with ongoing Bible studies and ministries in the church.

Part of the reason people fled to traditional 12-step programs is that there was a gospel famine in the church. Churches had become gatherings of dead religious activity, organized in a way that said, “We don’t have a place for sinners.” When you don’t welcome sinners, you don’t welcome Jesus.

Michael Snetzer

- 4. In addition to the introductions provided in the printed materials, more information is available on how STEPS has been successfully implemented at The Village Church. Listen to or read an additional STEPS introduction (transcript or audio file) by Michael Snetzer:**

http://media.thevillagechurch.net/steps/transcripts/201308281030FMWC21A_SAAA_MichaelSnetzer-Steps-Introduction.pdf

- 5. Make a prayerful commitment to connect broken people with the gospel and to make disciples by implementing STEPS.**

STAGE 2

Identify, enlist, and train individuals for each role in STEPS.

1. Champion

STEPS requires the strong support of the pastor, who leads other staff, deacons, or elders to engage church members and leaders with this strategy. Someone needs to be a champion for the process. An ideal champion may be someone who has experienced redemptive recovery and wants others to have the same experience. This person understands the impact of the gospel on broken lives.

The champion may or may not necessarily be the facilitator. This person should exhibit the following traits.

- The champion understands how the gospel relates to the process of reaching and restoring broken people. This person helps the church identify and strengthen the ways it intersects the gospel (through worship, small groups, and intentional discipleship) with the lives of believers who are being sanctified and with broken people who need recovery.
- The champion is passionate about seeing God at work to restore people through the gospel. A champion follows God's command to make disciples who are intentional followers of Christ. This person helps the church strengthen ways to connect people with the groups and ministries of the church.
- The champion understands the key components of STEPS.
 - A large-group teaching time is a key component of STEPS. All participants will gather each week of the semester to hear the content and to fill in blanks in key statements drawn from the video teaching.
 - A facilitator will lead the large-group teaching experiences.
 - Small groups are key components of STEPS. All participants in Bible study groups are on a journey to connect the power of God's Word and the power of the gospel to their lives. Small groups are designed to help nurture a person's relationship with Christ, with other Christ followers, and with people who are on a journey of recovery. STEPS participants will be encouraged to connect with ongoing and/or short-term groups designed to help them grow as followers of Christ.

- Small-group leaders are a key component of STEPS. All participants will experience time in groups of 6 to 12 participants (of the same gender) who are discussing and identifying with the session's content.
- Mentors are key components of STEPS. All STEPS participants are assigned to work one-on-one with a mentor throughout the 13-session semester. Mentors have gone through the STEPS experience (large-group teaching and small-group discipleship), including the assessment experience. A key benefit of the STEPS process is that people who are being sanctified have the opportunity to disciple others, including broken people.
 - The mentor's role is to nurture and disciple participants to show them how to live and model how to be mentor.
- Broken people are key components of STEPS. Receive people in their brokenness and journey with them in large and small communities as they discover and apply biblical truth and are disciplined in the power of the gospel. Point people to recovery through the power of the gospel and through the influence of gospel-centered worship and relationships.
 - STEPS participants will engage with large-group teaching, small-group discussion, mentor relationships, and personal Bible study. In addition, STEPS participants will connect to the church through other Bible study and ministry groups to further grow in maturity as followers of Christ.

2. Facilitator

The facilitator is responsible for leading the large-group experience in each session. Content is based on the DVD segments. The facilitator leads the group to view the related video teaching for the week's study or teaches the content for that session. Likewise, content can be taught and supplemented by downloading (or listening to) scripts from The Village Church website. The 13 sessions last approximately one hour each.

The facilitator needs to be familiar with STEPS Leader Guide and STEPS DVD set.

3. Mentor

Mentors are believers who have faithfully completed the necessary training for STEPS and have developed sufficient maturity to disciple someone else. During weeks 1–4 and 8–12 mentors will work one-on-one with participants to discuss the personal Bible study. During weeks 5–7 mentors will work one-on-one in the assessment process.

A mentor needs to be familiar with STEPS Mentor Guide.

The Significance of Mentors and the Assessment

- Mentors are the primary disciple makers in the STEPS strategy. They will meet with their assigned participants for an average of one to two hours during the week to discuss the “Going Deeper” questions and/or assessments.
- The assessment takes place during weeks 5–7. Assessment provides a time to reflect on and write about specific sins, situations, and relationships that may be robbing a person of the freedom available in Christ. The assessment is vital to the STEPS process. It is crucial for mentors to be available to the assigned participant who is relating to and working through the assessment. The assessment is provided in the Mentor Guide as well as in the Member Book.

Phase 1: Examine the fruit of a person’s thoughts, actions, and beliefs.

Phase 2: Confess and pray.

Phase 3: Expose roots that are causing sinful fruit in their lives.

Phase 4: Replant truth and renounce lies.

Phase 5: Encourage faithful action. Mentors will encourage participants to move toward reconciliation, community, and obedience.

4. Small-Group Leader

Small-group leaders are responsible for shepherding and fostering biblical community as participants apply the gospel and engage in discipleship.

Each person entering STEPS needs to be in a biblical community. During the first hour of each week's group session, participants are divided into small groups by gender (no larger than 12 participants). These groups begin with prayer, after which the group leader guides discussion based on the weekly homework and/or assessment.

A small-group leader needs to be familiar with STEPS Leader Guide.

5. Participants

- Broken people include those experiencing addiction, abuse, relational conflict, anger, or passive or active responses.
- Broken people include those in and out of prison as well as those who have never been to prison.
- Broken people include wealthy or poor business owners as well as employees, successful people as well as “failures.”
- Broken people include those who have been caught as well as those who are hiding and running.
- Broken people include young and old, men and women, married, divorced, with families, alone, and with or without children.
- Broken people can be leaders as well as followers. Broken people include those who cannot follow or lead.
- Broken people include those who have never heard the gospel, those who have responded to the gospel, and those who teach the gospel.

6. Bible study groups and ministry groups

Identify and prepare Bible study groups and ministry groups in the church to help assimilate participants through gospel-centered worship, community, service, and multiplication. Make sure STEPS participants have a place to engage with others after they complete STEPS.

STAGE 3

Calendar and conduct the STEPS semester.

1. Calendar the STEPS semester.

- Make a commitment to discover, connect with, and minister to broken people through STEPS.
- Engage church members and leaders in prayer for STEPS.
- Establish dates for training and for the STEPS semester.
- Enlist and train leaders.

2. Purchase resources for leaders and participants. These resources will be used to train leaders in the principles and practices of STEPS and to engage participants with biblical truth during each semester.

- STEPS Leader Guide—one copy for the champion, one copy for the facilitator, and one copy for each small-group leader
- STEPS DVD set—one set for each large-group facilitator
- STEPS Mentor Guide—one copy for each mentor
- STEPS Member Book—one copy for each participant

3. Conduct the STEPS semester.

- Invite and register participants. Assign each participant to a mentor of the same gender. Each semester you can accommodate only as many participants as you have mentors available and ready to serve.
 1. Participants need to be assigned to mentors. (The mentor may or may not be a participant's small-group leader.)
 2. Participants need to be in a community (a small group during the semester and then an ongoing Bible study or ministry group in the church).
 3. Participants need to commit to participate in all sessions throughout the semester.
- Engage participants each week in daily Bible study and reflection (STEPS Member Book), one-on-one mentoring (STEPS Member Book and STEPS Mentor Guide), sharing in small groups (STEPS Leader Guide), and participation in a large-group

teaching time (STEPS Member Book, STEPS Leader Guide, and STEPS DVDs). Allow an hour for small-group time, followed by an hour for large-group teaching time. Allocate time for mentors to meet for one or two hours each week with their assigned participants.

- Conduct the introductory session (optional)
- Conduct weeks 1–4 (Laying a Foundation)
- Conduct weeks 5–8 (Assessment)
- Conduct weeks 9–12 (Faithful Action)
- Conduct the celebration service (an opportunity for participants, mentors, and leaders to testify about ways the Lord worked through this process)

4. Implement best practices when conducting the STEPS semester.

Answer the following questions according to your church's situation.

1. Where will you identify and invite specific participants to be part of STEPS? Identify the number of participants you can accommodate, based on available mentors.
2. How will participants connect to community and to the church after STEPS?
 - Small groups/Bible studies
 - Missions/ministries
3. How will you measure success?
 - Organizational issues: How many leaders? How many participants?
 - How many participants are willing to become mentors after the semester?
 - By the questions participants ask during and following the semester?
 - By the ways participants struggle to embrace and be transformed by the gospel?
 - Are participants moving in the right direction?
 - Are participants becoming oriented to Christ in ways they had not before?
 - What do leaders and participants believe about discipleship?
 - Collect stories of individuals and groups from mentors, small-group leaders, facilitators, and the champion of STEPS.
 - Ways individuals are being transformed by the gospel
 - Ways individuals are experiencing recovery
 - Ways Bible study or ministry groups are connecting with and engaging participants and others who are broken

STAGE 4

Evaluate the STEPS semester and enlist more participants.

1. Evaluate experiences from the previous semester.

Identify participants who have developed sufficient spiritual maturity to serve as small-group leaders and/or mentors and to disciple future STEPS participants.

After mentors have gained adequate training and experience, STEPS can become the foundation for ongoing recovery groups that regularly meet to minister to people with specific needs.

- What are we learning from the stories we are collecting?
 - Ways mentors, small-group leaders, facilitators, and champions are seeing life change in others and are growing in their own faith
 - Ways individuals are being transformed by the gospel
 - Ways individuals are experiencing recovery
 - Ways Bible study or ministry groups are connecting and engaging with participants and others who are broken

2. Intentionally incorporate participants in small-group Bible studies and other discipleship or ministry groups in the church.

- How will participants connect with community and the church after STEPS?
 - Specific small-group Bible studies
 - Missions or ministry opportunities
 - Inviting others they know who are broken
 - Worship
- Strengthen Bible study and ministry groups where STEPS participants connect. Plan what you will do when broken people come. Anticipate that you will need to start new Bible study and ministry groups to accommodate new people who have participated in the STEPS semester.
- Pray for and seek three kinds of people:
 - We are broken, and we know it.
 - We are broken, and we don't know it.
 - We know people who are broken.
- Pray for those who are suffering because of personal sin, others' sin, or a sinful world.



3. Encourage STEPS participants to identify other broken people to participate in STEPS.
4. Encourage STEPS participants to consider serving as mentors and/or small-group leaders in future STEPS semesters.