

2025 State of Discipleship

What Predicts Higher Spiritual Maturity?

Lifewayresearch

Methodology

- The online survey of 2,130 Protestant churchgoers was conducted March 19–26, 2025 using a national pre-recruited panel
- Respondents were screened to include those who identified as Protestant/non-denominational and attend religious services at least once a month
- Respondents could complete the survey in English or Spanish
- Quotas and slight weights were used to balance gender, age, region, ethnicity, education, and denominational affiliation
- The completed sample is 2,130 surveys
- The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error from the panel does not exceed $\pm 2.21\%$ This margin of error accounts for the effect of weighting
- Margins of error are higher in sub-groups

Average Score for each Signpost

Signpost	Mean Score
Seeking God	78.5
Obeying God and Denying Self	75.1
Serving God and Others	73.1
Exercising Faith	71.6
Bible Engagement	69.8
Building Relationships	64.0
Living Unashamed	61.0
Sharing Christ	54.8
Total Discipleship Score	68.1

Regression Methodology

- Stepwise regression analysis was run to determine what set of variables best predict higher scores in each signpost and in individuals' overall discipleship score
- Negative regressors were removed to allow for a more actionable model. These positive variables are the lists of all predictors shown in this report.
- Additional models were run to find an r-square close to the original model but with fewer items. This analysis produced the most essential predictors shown in this report (listed in order of loading in this stepwise regression model)
- Note: Multiple regression analysis creates a predictive model. Each predictor is significant in the presence of the other predictors. The predictive accuracy of the model (r-square) depends on all items in the model.

How is this helpful for church leaders and disciple-makers?

Church-wide (or ministry-wide) emphasis

While all of the biblical principles that relate to questions on the assessment should be taught, it is wise for leaders to only create a larger emphasis around **one** area at a time to encourage changes to be established.

Picking one from an essential list ensures you are emphasizing something that has been impactful on growth in that signpost or overall discipleship scores.* This narrow focus allows for more discernable impact. Growth in one signpost typically benefits other areas as well.

After an emphasis, choose another item on the essential list and emphasize that. Over time you will want to address all of these.

*Statistically these are the best candidates for such an emphasis, but always pray about these decisions. These models are strong, but statistics do not show how God has worked in ways beyond this study.

How is this helpful for disciples?

Provides a starting place

The large number of biblical questions in the DisciplesPath Assessment can feel overwhelming. Giving attention to any of these is a step toward things Jesus taught. This analysis shows disciples several practices that are ideal starting places* to grow in individual signposts or overall discipleship.

Pick one

Disciples who want to take an intentional step to grow closer to Christ in one area should pick one from a most essential list that you think you can easily incorporate into your daily living. Focus on that for a season.

*Note: Most predictors are actionable things you can start today. A few refer to past events or the cumulative effect of an action that are not actionable. If you have not yet confessed your sins and accepted Jesus Christ as your savior, have a conversation with a leader at your church about doing so today.

Signpost I – Engaging the Bible™

All Predictors

- Reading the Bible more often
- Study the Bible more often
- Set aside time for private worship, praise, or thanksgiving to God more often
- Listen to or read teaching about the Bible more often
- Confess my sins and wrongdoings to God and ask for forgiveness more often
- Pray for the spiritual status of people I know who are not professing Christians more often
- Express praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is more often
- Pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ more often
- Answer I will go to Heaven because... “I have confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my savior”
- Listen to podcasts or sermons from other churches
- Regularly use and follow a Bible reading plan

This model has an R-square of 0.7027 in predicting the score for the Engaging the Bible™ signpost.

Signpost I – Engaging the Bible™

Most Essential Predictors

- Reading the Bible more often
- Pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ more often
- Express praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is more often
- Answer I will go to Heaven because... “I have confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my savior”
- Study the Bible more often
- Set aside time for private worship, praise, or thanksgiving to God more often
- Regularly use and followed a Bible reading plan

This model has an R-square of 0.6942 in predicting the score for the Engaging the Bible™ signpost.

Signpost II – Obeying God/Denying Self

All Predictors

- Study the Bible more often
- Set aside time for private worship, praise, or thanksgiving to God more often
- Confess my sins and wrongdoings to God and ask for forgiveness more often
- Pray for the spiritual status of people I know who are not professing Christians more often
- Express praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is more often
- Pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ more often
- Make a decision to obey or follow God with an awareness that choosing His way might be costly to you in some way more often
- Answer I will go to Heaven because... “I have confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my savior”
- Regularly attend church during your teen years
- Read a book (in addition to the Bible) about increasing your spiritual growth
- Feel like you have a home church
- Maintain a personal prayer list

This model has an R-square of 0.6057 in predicting the score for the Obeying God/Denying Self™ signpost.

Signpost II – Obeying God/Denying Self

Most Essential Predictors

- Confess my sins and wrongdoings to God and ask for forgiveness more often
- Express praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is more often
- Pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ more often
- Set aside time for private worship, praise, or thanksgiving to God more often
- Answer I will go to Heaven because... “I have confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my savior”
- Study the Bible more often
- Pray for the spiritual status of people I know who are not professing Christians more often
- Maintain a personal prayer list

This model has an R-square of 0.5964 in predicting the score for the Obeying God/Denying Self™ signpost.

Signpost III – Serving God and Others

All Predictors

- Get involved in ministries or projects that serve people in the community not affiliated with your church
- Study the Bible more often
- Set aside time for prayer of any kind more often
- Set aside time for private worship, praise, or thanksgiving to God more often
- Pray for the spiritual status of people I know who are not professing Christians more often
- Express praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is more often
- Pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ more often
- Serve someone who you knew could not repay you more often
- Have been discipled or mentored one-on-one by a more spiritually mature Christian meeting at least once a month for several months to help your spiritual development
- Read a book (in addition to the Bible) about increasing your spiritual growth
- Feel like you have a home church
- Maintain a personal prayer list

This model has an R-square of 0.3644 in predicting the score for the Serving God and Others™ signpost.

Signpost III – Serving God and Others

Most Essential Predictors

- Pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ more often
- Set aside time for private worship, praise, or thanksgiving to God more often
- Get involved in ministries or projects that serve people in the community not affiliated with your church
- Pray for the spiritual status of people I know who are not professing Christians more often
- Serve someone who you knew could not repay you more often
- Maintain a personal prayer list
- Express praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is more often
- Read a book (in addition to the Bible) about increasing your spiritual growth

This model has an R-square of 0.3512 in predicting the score for the Serving God and Others™ signpost.

Signpost IV – Sharing Christ

All Predictors

- Study the Bible more often
- Pray in a group with other Christians more often
- Pray for the spiritual status of people I know who are not professing Christians more often
- Pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ more often
- Attend a worship service at your church more often
- Share with someone how to become a Christian more often
- Share my faith story with someone more often
- Have discipled or mentored one-on-one a less spiritually mature Christian one-on-one, meeting at least once a month for several months to help that person's spiritual development
- Read a book (in addition to the Bible) about increasing your spiritual growth
- Read a commentary or book teaching more about what's in the Bible
- Listen to podcasts or sermons from other churches
- Participate in a Bible study group that includes personal study outside the group meeting
- Maintain a personal prayer list

This model has an R-square of 0.7411 in predicting the score for the Sharing Christ™ signpost.

Signpost IV – Sharing Christ

Most Essential Predictors

- Pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ more often
- Share my faith story with someone more often
- Have discipled or mentored one-on-one a less spiritually mature Christian one-on-one, meeting at least once a month for several months to help that person's spiritual development
- Study the Bible more often
- Participate in a Bible study group that includes personal study outside the group meeting
- Read a commentary or book teaching more about what's in the Bible
- Share with someone how to become a Christian more often
- Pray for the spiritual status of people I know who are not professing Christians more often
- Read a book (in addition to the Bible) about increasing your spiritual growth
- Pray in a group with other Christians more often

This model has an R-square of 0.7363 in predicting the score for the Sharing Christ™ signpost.

Signpost V – Exercising Faith

All Predictors

- Regularly attend church for more years
- Set aside time for prayer of any kind more often
- Express praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is more often
- Make a decision to obey or follow God with an awareness that choosing His way might be costly to you in some way more often
- Answer I will go to Heaven because... “I have confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my savior”
- Have been baptized

This model has an R-square of 0.3180 in predicting the score for the Exercising Faith™ signpost.

Signpost V – Exercising Faith

Most Essential Predictors

- Regularly attend church for more years
- Express praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is more often
- Answer I will go to Heaven because... “I have confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my savior”
- Set aside time for prayer of any kind more often
- Make a decision to obey or follow God with an awareness that choosing His way might be costly to you in some way more often

This model has an R-square of 0.3138 in predicting the score for the Exercising Faith™ signpost.

Signpost VI – Seeking God

All Predictors

- Study the Bible more often
- Set aside time for prayer of any kind more often
- Set aside time for private worship, praise, or thanksgiving to God more often
- Confess my sins and wrongdoings to God and ask for forgiveness more often
- Pray for the spiritual status of people I know who are not professing Christians more often
- Express praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is more often
- Pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ more often
- Make a decision to obey or follow God with an awareness that choosing His way might be costly to you in some way more often
- Answer I will go to Heaven because... “I have confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my savior”
- Have been baptized
- Feel like I have a home church
- Regularly use and follow a Bible reading plan

This model has an R-square of 0.8203 in predicting the score for the Seeking God™ signpost.

Signpost VI – Seeking God

Most Essential Predictors

- Express praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is more often
- Set aside time for private worship, praise, or thanksgiving to God more often
- Pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ more often
- Answer I will go to Heaven because... “I have confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my savior”
- Study the Bible more often
- Pray for the spiritual status of people I know who are not professing Christians more often
- Confess my sins and wrongdoings to God and ask for forgiveness more often
- Feel like I have a home church

This model has an R-square of 0.8168 in predicting the score for the Seeking God™ signpost.

Signpost VII – Building Relationships

All Predictors

- Currently have regular responsibilities at your church
- Study the Bible more often
- Pray in a group with other Christians more often
- Pray for the spiritual status of people I know who are not professing Christians more often
- Pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ more often
- Attend small classes or groups for adults from church such as Sunday school, Bible study, small groups, Adult Bible Fellowships, etc. more often
- Have been discipled or mentored one-on-one by a more spiritually mature Christian meeting at least once a month for several months to help your spiritual development
- Read a book (in addition to the Bible) about increasing your spiritual growth
- Feel like I have a home church
- Participate in a Bible study group that includes personal study outside the group meeting
- Maintain a personal prayer list

This model has an R-square of 0.7748 in predicting the score for the Building Relationships™ signpost.

Signpost VII – Building Relationships

Most Essential Predictors

- Pray in a group with other Christians more often
- Pray for the spiritual status of people I know who are not professing Christians more often
- Attend small classes or groups for adults from church such as Sunday school, Bible study, small groups, Adult Bible Fellowships, etc. more often
- Pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ more often
- Currently have regular responsibilities at your church
- Study the Bible more often

This model has an R-square of 0.7598 in predicting the score for the Building Relationships™ signpost.

Signpost VIII – Living Unashamed

All Predictors

- Regularly attend church for more years
- Set aside time for prayer of any kind more often
- Express praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is more often
- Make a decision to obey or follow God with an awareness that choosing His way might be costly to you in some way more often
- Answer I will go to Heaven because... “I have confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my savior”
- Maintain a personal prayer list

This model has an R-square of 0.2585 in predicting the score for the Living Unashamed™ signpost.

Signpost VIII – Living Unashamed

Most Essential Predictors

- Regularly attend church for more years
- Express praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is more often
- Answer I will go to Heaven because... “I have confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my savior”
- Set aside time for prayer of any kind more often

This model has an R-square of 0.2513 in predicting the score for the Living Unashamed™ signpost.

Total Score

All Predictors

- Regularly attend church for more years
- Currently have regular responsibilities at your church
- Read the Bible more often
- Study the Bible more often
- Set aside time for prayer of any kind more often
- Set aside time for private worship, praise, or thanksgiving to God more often
- Pray in a group with other Christians more often
- Confess my sins and wrongdoings to God and ask for forgiveness more often
- Pray for the spiritual status of people I know who are not professing Christians more often
- Express praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is more often
- Pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ more often
- Attend small classes or groups for adults from church such as Sunday school, Bible study, small groups, Adult Bible Fellowships, etc. more often

This model has an R-square of 0.7356 in predicting the score for the Total Score.

Total Score

All Predictors *Continued*

- Make a decision to obey or follow God with an awareness that choosing His way might be costly to you in some way more often
- Share my faith story with someone more often
- Answer I will go to Heaven because... “I have confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my savior”
- Read a book (in addition to the Bible) about increasing your spiritual growth
- Listen to podcasts or sermons from other churches
- Feel like I have a home church
- Participate in a Bible study group that includes personal study outside the group meeting
- Maintain a personal prayer list

This model has an R-square of 0.7356 in predicting the score for the Total Score.

Total Score

Most Essential Predictors

- Pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ more often
- Express praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is more often
- Read the Bible more often
- Pray for the spiritual status of people I know who are not professing Christians more often
- Set aside time for private worship, praise, or thanksgiving to God more often
- Answer I will go to Heaven because... “I have confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my savior”
- Attend small classes or groups for adults from church such as Sunday school, Bible study, small groups, Adult Bible Fellowships, etc. more often
- Feel like I have a home church
- Maintain a personal prayer list
- Confess my sins and wrongdoings to God and ask for forgiveness more often
- Make a decision to obey or follow God with an awareness that choosing His way might be costly to you in some way more often
- Study the Bible more often
- Read a book (in addition to the Bible) about increasing your spiritual growth
- Currently have regular responsibilities at your church
- Set aside time for prayer of any kind more often

This model has an R-square of 0.7288 in predicting the score for the Total Score.

Which Actions Are Most Essential for the Most Signposts

- Pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus Christ more often (6)
- Express praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is more often (6)
- Pray for the spiritual status of people I know who are not professing Christians more often (5)
- Study the Bible more often (5)
- Answer I will go to Heaven because... “I have confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my savior” (5)
- Set aside time for private worship, praise, or thanksgiving to God more often (3)
- Regularly attend church for more years (2)
- Read a book (in addition to the Bible) about increasing your spiritual growth (2)
- Maintain a personal prayer list (2)
- Set aside time for prayer of any kind more often (2)
- Pray in a group with other Christians more often (2)
- Confess my sins and wrongdoings to God and ask for forgiveness more often (2)