

## How Effective is Your Assimilation Process?

While many churches implement a number of systems to help them manage the metrics that help them carry out their mission, assimilation often gets lost in the shuffle.

But assimilation, the process through which we forge interpersonal connections, plays a critical role in creating disciples. Assimilation – by fostering intimate relationships and interactions – lays the foundation for meaningful emersion in the church, and subsequently, intentional discipleship.

Assimilation begins with a person's first visit to your church and ends when that person becomes connected to and engaged with your church. But it is possible, however, for someone to join a church without ever truly making a connection.

But you can't steward someone without a relationship. Assimilation connects people to your church through relationships – so a church that does assimilation well will also create strong disciples.

So churches employ a variety of systems designed to help them carry out their mission because while assimilation is all about human interaction, systems help us identify and connect with real people and develop a growing relationship with God.

Assimilation includes four basic processes:

**Hospitality:** Do you leave the door open for guests of your home to walk in, or do you greet them at the door and warmly welcome them into your home?

Church hospitality is much the same. Feeling welcome is due largely in part to feeling comfortable and familiar – and first-time visitors don't know how to find the restrooms, check their kids into the nursery, or get to the worship center.

And there are two ways to deal with hospitality – passively and actively. Passive hospitality provides directional signs and information for newcomers that make navigating the church easier.

But active hospitality calls for action. It welcomes newcomers with people available to greet and help anyone entering your doors.

**Information Gathering:** When churches gather information, they often pleasantly find that they had more visitors than they realized.

And while hospitality is hard to quantify, gathered information is easy to measure. Churches that gather information will fuel their ministry opportunities and make each person feel more valued and known.

So with accurate metrics, a church can not only know their attendance numbers, but also the number of new visitors and recognize changes in the attendance patterns of their returning congregants.

Think of it like this: If hospitality is the heart of your system, subjective and qualitative by nature, then information gathering is its head, objective and quantifiable – and actionable with follow-up.

**Follow-Up:** Following up and following through is an intentional process that gives life to information cards. It's recognizing what people need, when they need it, and provides you the tools and insight to connect with them intimately. It will also help identify opportunities for pastoral ministry.

Follow-up helps the pastor engage individuals when they need pastoral ministry through information gathering that provides the dates, milestones and prayer requests that connect people when it matters most.

**Connection:** Many churches confuse attendance with connection. People who feel intrinsically connected to their church – that they are valued and that they matter – are people ready to delve deeper into their relationship with Christ. Connection marks the end of assimilation and the beginning of discipleship.

People often connect to church when they develop meaningful relationships, and helping them connect at a deeper level in your church creates opportunities for responsibility and ownership.

Because when people feel that their church is intimately invested in them, they are more likely to sacrificially and intimately invest in their church – becoming members, givers, servers and volunteers, and ultimately, intentional disciples.

Every church – of every size – must have a process that supports a fully functioning system to ensure no one gets lost, left out or overlooked. Because while no data should ever be more significant than the people it represents, that data facilitates assimilation. And the more powerful your assimilation process, the more powerful your church will be.

When guests – new and returning – arrive, take care to treat them as you would a guest in your home – thoughtfully, warmly and with a comforting joy that acknowledges the value of their presence.

Because ultimately, we as church leaders are responsible for the people who come through our doors. And as a godly leader, when you help ready a heart to be receptive to God and He is allowed to infiltrate everything they do, you are cultivating intentional disciples and stewarding the people God has brought through your doors to serve Him.

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Want to learn more about an effective assimilation process? [Connect with an Auxano Navigator today.](#)

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