



From Welcome to Belonging

Designing Gospel-Centered Enculturation Pathways for New Attendees

MINISTRY LAB · GCC CARIBBEAN CONFERENCE 2026

CARE – ACTS 20:28

New Attendees Are Always Being Formed

Every new person is learning something from your church.

What you value

What you assume

What you explain

What you ignore

Who belongs

What's next

ACTS 2:41-47



The Biblical Picture: Added and Formed

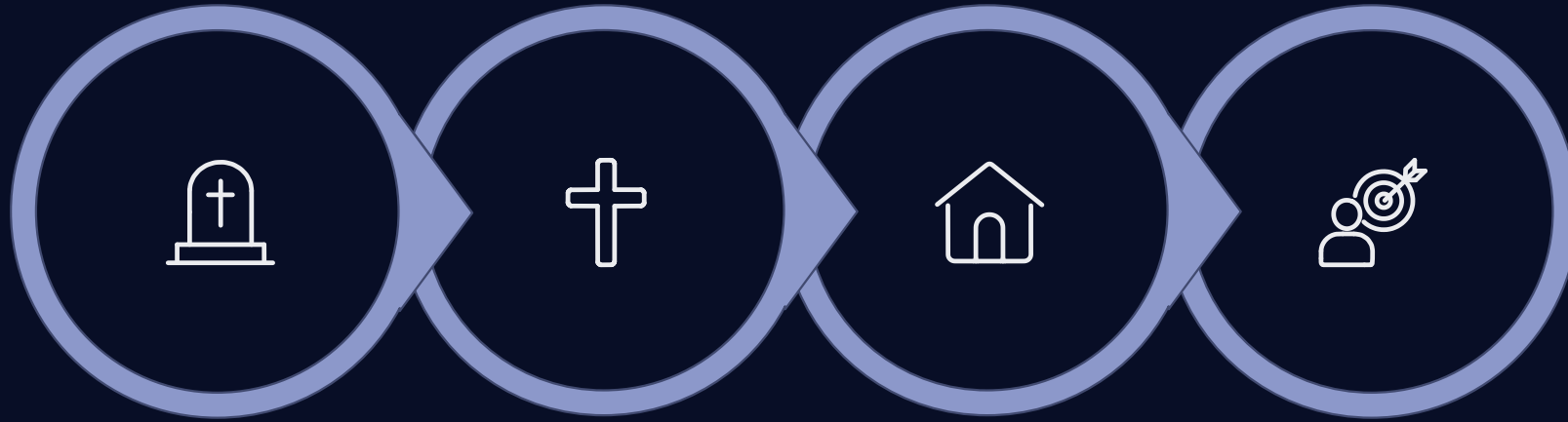
- Received the Word & Baptized
- Added to the church
- Devoted to teaching, fellowship, bread & prayer
- Formed into visible witness

What Do We Mean by Biblical Enculturation?

The **Spirit-dependent, Scripture-guided** process by which people are welcomed, taught, shepherded, and formed into the gospel-shaped beliefs, practices, relationships, rhythms, and mission of a local church.



From Death to Life to Household to Mission



Dead in Sin

Made Alive

God's
Household

Equipped for
Mission

Ephesians 2 · Acts 2 · 1 Peter 2 · Colossians 3 · Ephesians 4 · Matthew 28

Not Every New Attendee Starts in the Same Place

The Unbeliever Needs

- Gospel clarity
- Spiritual awakening
- Patient explanation
- Prayerful care
- Faithful invitation to Christ

The Believer Needs

- Doctrinal clarity
- Relational belonging
- Shepherding connection
- Discipleship
- Mission alignment

The 6E Enculturation Pathway



The 6Es tell us *what* we are designing.

The 6Es Are Biblically Anchored

Encounter	Visible love, welcome, holiness, impartiality
Explain	Gospel proclamation & understanding
Engage	Personal pursuit, listening, guidance
Establish	Teaching, prayer, doctrine, obedience
Embed	Household, body, fellowship
Equip	Ministry, maturity, mission



Encounter

What do people experience first?



Website & Social Media

Parking & Entrance

Greeters & Ushers

Children's Check-in

Worship Atmosphere

Service Clarity

☐ **Scripture Check:** Does this reflect visible love, holiness, welcome, and impartiality?

Explain

What do people need interpreted?

The Gospel

Scripture's
Centrality

Communion &
Baptism

Membership &
Small Groups

Pastoral Care

Children, Youth & Next Steps

☐ **Scripture Check:** Is the gospel clear, or are we relying on church language and assumptions?



E3

Engage

How do we personally pursue and care for them?



Learn their name

Listen to their story

Notice needs

Ask thoughtful questions

Offer prayer

Connect them to a person

Follow up within 24–72 hours

☐ **Scripture Check:** Are we personally noticing and caring for people as shepherds?



Establish: What Foundations Need to Be Formed?

For unbelievers:

- God
- Sin
- Christ
- Cross and resurrection
- Grace
- Repentance and faith
- Scripture
- Prayer

For believers:

- Doctrine
- Membership
- Church covenant
- Discipleship rhythms
- Prayer
- Accountability
- Mission

☐ **Scripture Check:** Are we forming people in Word, prayer, doctrine, obedience, and new life?



5. Embed: Where Do They Belong?

Embedding happens through:



Small Groups



Discipleship Groups



Men's Ministry



Women's Ministry



Youth & Young Adult Ministry



Seniors' Ministry



Intergenerational Fellowship



Mercy & Outreach Ministry

☐ **Scripture Check:** Are we helping believers become part of the household and body, not just attenders?



6. Equip: How Do They Join the Mission?



Equipping believers to effectively serve God's kingdom involves developing them across several key areas:



Formation

- Doctrine & Character
- Spiritual Gifts & Maturity
- Pastoral Care & Accountability



Service

- Availability
- Ministry Fit & Training
- Safeguarding



Mission

- Local Outreach
- Global Impact
- Multiplication

☐ **Scripture Check:** Are we preparing saints for ministry, maturity, multiplication, and mission?

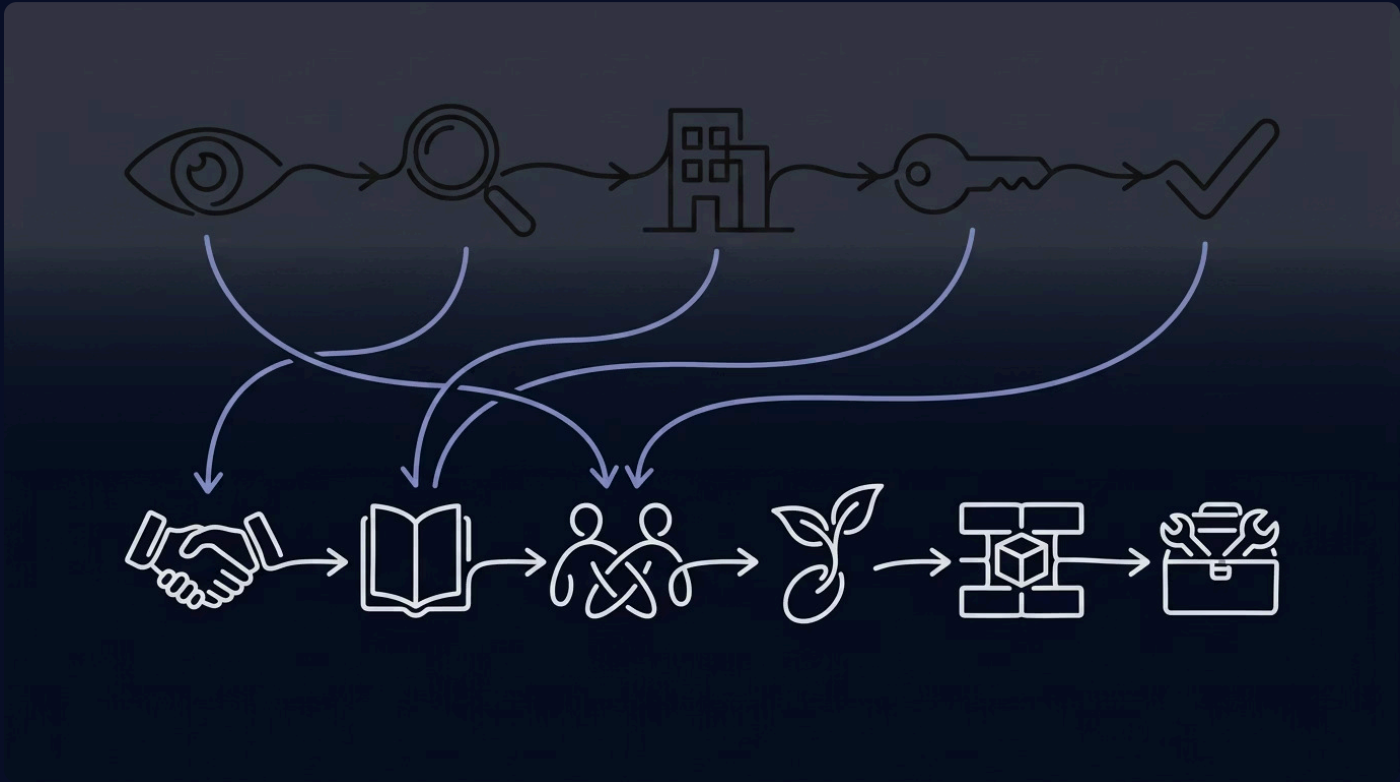
How We Design the Pathway



□ Shepherding Design Thinking tells us how to build the 6E pathway.

Design Method Mapped to the 6Es

The Method and the Pathway Work Together



Design Step	Main Question	6E Connection
Discern	Who are we caring for?	Encounter, Engage
Diagnose	Where are they getting lost?	All 6Es
Design	What pathway should exist?	All 6Es
Deploy	What can we begin soon?	Start with Encounter, Explain, Engage
Debrief	What are we learning?	All 6Es

Activity 1: Discern and Diagnose Through Persona Mapping

In your group:

1. Choose or receive a persona.
2. Discern their needs.
3. Diagnose where they may get lost in the 6Es.
4. Apply the Scripture Check.

Group Roles

- 6E Keeper
- Scripture Anchor
- Newcomer Advocate
- Gospel Clarity Watcher
- Shepherding Lens
- Contextualizer



Newcomer Personas

Choose one:



Marsha — unbelieving visitor



Angela — transfer believer



Shemar — teen or young adult



Andre and Lisa — family with children



Jason — new believer



David — returning churchgoer



Mrs. Clarke — older adult newcomer



Natalie — wounded former church member

Discern and Diagnose

Discern

- What are they feeling?
- What are they fearing?
- What might they misunderstand?
- What are they hoping for?
- What is their spiritual starting point?
- What biblical truth should guide our care?
- What is their next faithful step?

Diagnose

Where might they get lost in the 6Es?

- Encounter
- Explain
- Engage
- Establish
- Embed
- Equip



Scripture Check: What does the Bible say about this person's need?

Newcomer Personas: Detailed Overview

Understanding the unique journey of each newcomer is crucial for effective enculturation.

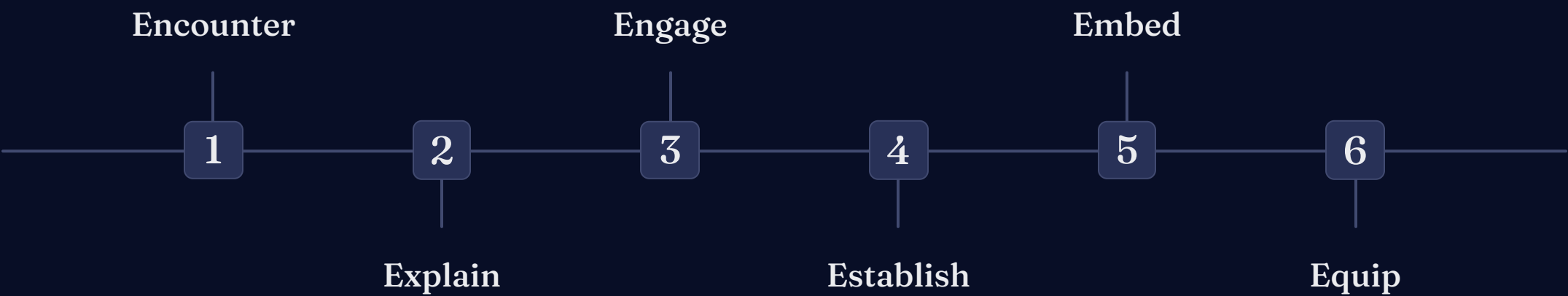
1	<p>Marsha — Unbelieving Visitor</p> <p>A curious but skeptical individual, new to church environments. She might be looking for community, answers to life's big questions, or simply observing. Her journey requires patient Encounter and clear Explain steps, avoiding jargon.</p>
2	<p>Jason — New Believer</p> <p>Recently converted, Jason is eager to grow but lacks foundational understanding and spiritual disciplines. He needs intentional Engagement, strong Establishment in doctrine, and warm Embedding into a caring community.</p>
3	<p>Angela — Transfer Believer</p> <p>Angela is already a Christian, but new to this specific church. She seeks belonging and a place to serve. Her pathway should focus on quick Embedding, understanding church culture, and identifying Equipment opportunities for ministry.</p>
4	<p>David — Returning Churchgoer</p> <p>David has a past church background but has been absent for some time. He might be spiritually rusty, wounded, or searching for renewed purpose. He needs gentle Engagement, a refresher on core beliefs (Establish), and reassurance for Embedding.</p>
5	<p>Shemar — Teen or Young Adult</p> <p>Often seeking authenticity and a sense of belonging, Shemar navigates unique social pressures. The pathway must offer relevant Engagement, opportunities for ownership in Embedded groups, and clear paths to Equipment in ministry roles.</p>
6	<p>Mrs. Clarke — Older Adult Newcomer</p> <p>Mrs. Clarke may be seeking community, spiritual growth, or comfort. She might value tradition and stable relationships. Her pathway benefits from personal Engagement, integration into age-appropriate Embedded groups, and roles where her wisdom can Equip others.</p>
7	<p>Andre & Lisa — Family with Children</p> <p>This family is looking for spiritual formation for their children and support for themselves. The pathway must address family-friendly Engagement, children's ministry Establishment, and Embedding into family-oriented communities and services.</p>
8	<p>Natalie — Wounded Former Church Member</p> <p>Natalie carries past hurts from other church experiences. Trust is paramount. Her journey requires sensitive Encounter and Explanation, careful Engagement, and a safe, loving Embedding process that rebuilds faith and community.</p>

Activity 2: Design Your Church's 6E Pathway

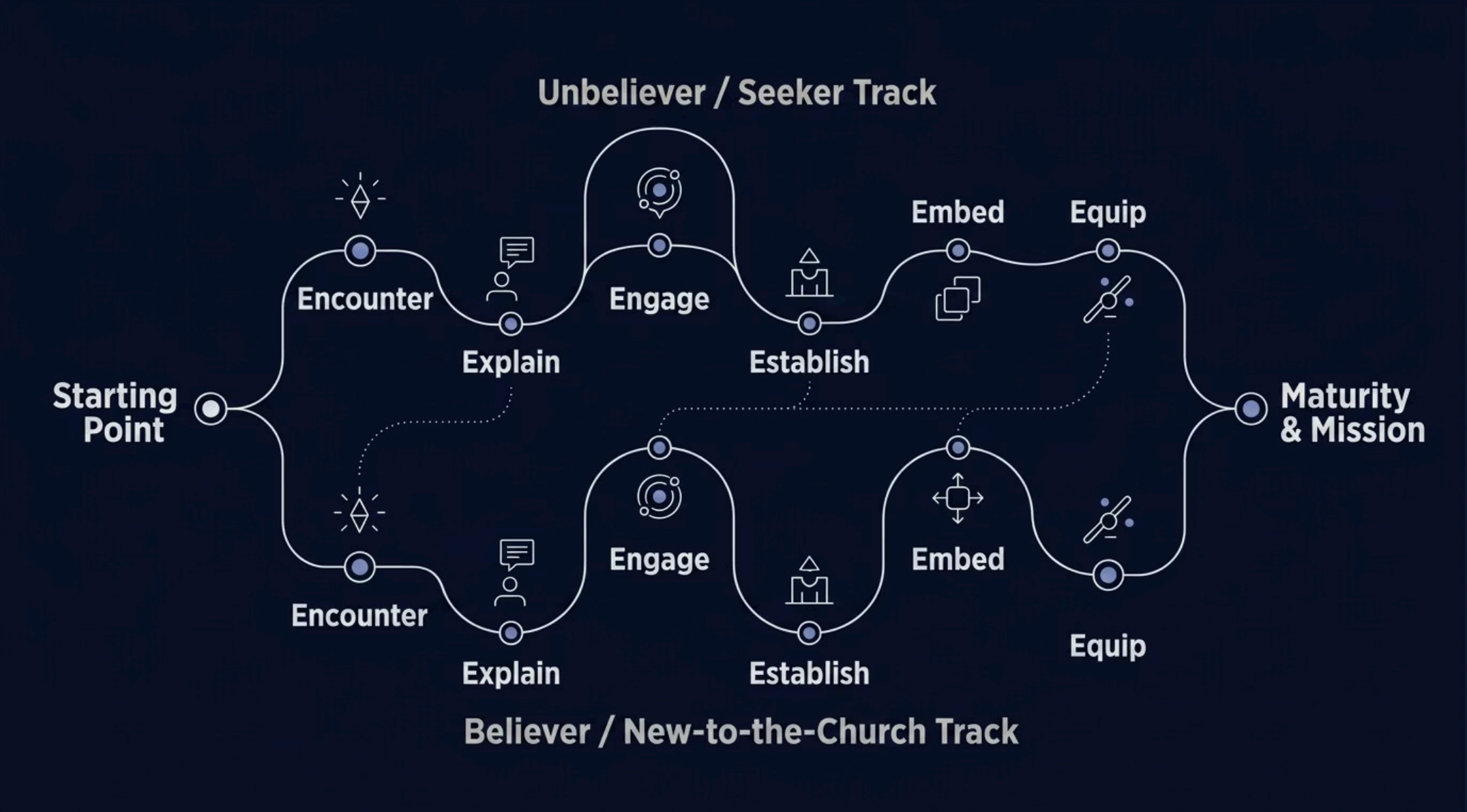
Working in your groups, design two distinct tracks for your church's enculturation pathway:

- Unbeliever / Seeker Track
- Believer / New-to-the-Church Track

Each track should utilize the six phases of the enculturation process:



Both tracks ultimately lead new attendees towards **Maturity & Mission** within your church community.



Design Track A: Unbeliever / Seeker

Guiding those new to faith through an intentional journey.



☐ **Scripture Check:** Does this pathway gently lead individuals toward Christ-centered understanding and belonging?



Design Track B: Believer / New-to-the-Church

Guiding those with existing faith or church experience into deeper belonging and mission.



☐ **Scripture Check:** Does this pathway help mature believers integrate and contribute to the body of Christ?



Deploy: What Can Begin in 30 Days?

Start Small. Start Faithfully.

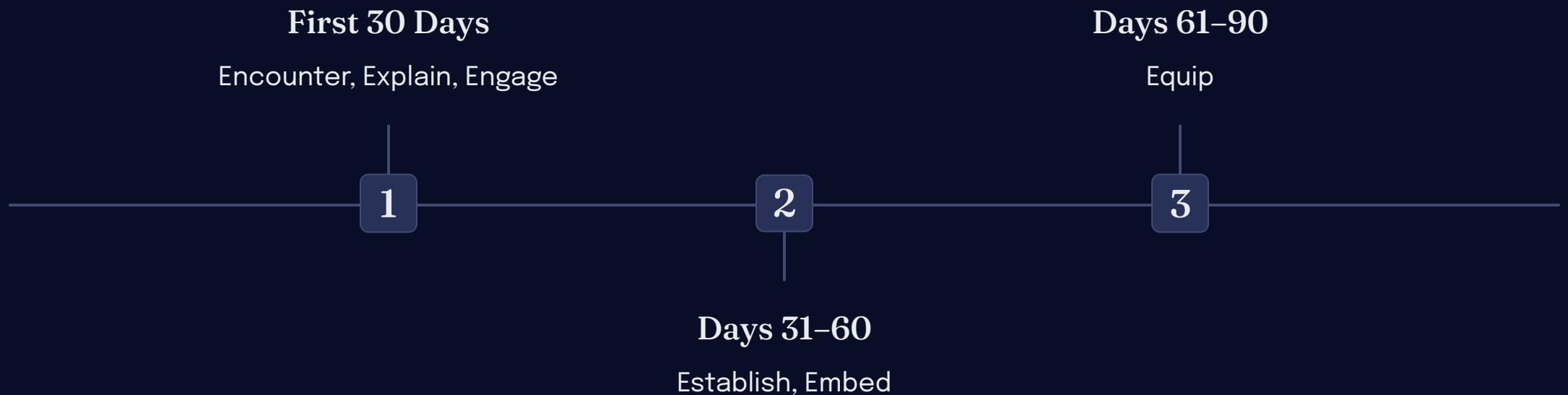
A minimum faithful process may include:

- First-time guest contact method
- 24-72 hour follow-up
- Clear next-step invitation
- Newcomers conversation
- Seeker gospel pathway
- Believer membership pathway
- Small group or care connection
- Simple tracking sheet
- Clear owner for each stage
- Quarterly review





Your First Draft: 30/60/90-Day Enculturation Pathway



This structured pathway guides newcomers from their first visit to full integration into the church's mission.

Is This Faithful, Not Just Functional?

Ask at every stage:



Encounter

Does Encounter display Christlike love and impartiality?

Explain

Is Explain gospel-clear?

Engage

Does Engage personally notice and care?

Establish

Does Establish form people in Word, prayer, doctrine, obedience, and new life?

Embed

Does Embed connect people to the household and body?

Equip

Does Equip prepare people for maturity and mission?

Debrief: What Are We Learning?

Regularly review these key questions to shepherd your pathway effectively:

Who visited?

Who returned?

Who was followed
up?

Who heard the
gospel clearly?

Who joined a
group?

Who entered
membership?

Who was baptized?

Who began
serving?

Who disappeared?

Where did the process break down?

Where Churches Often Break Down



Welcome without follow-up

Engage failure



Information without connection

Embed failure



Social connection without discipleship

Establish failure



Service before formation

Equip failure



Church language without clarity

Explain failure



Unintentional outsider signals

Encounter failure

What Will You Do in the Next Seven Days?

Choose one commitment to act on this week:



① Taking even a small step can make a significant difference in your church's enculturation journey.

From Welcome to Discipling

Do not leave enculturation to personality, habit, or chance.

Under the care of Christ and the authority of Scripture, design a pathway that helps people:

- **Encounter Christ**
- **Understand the gospel**
- **Connect with the body**
- **Become established in truth**
- **Be embedded in care**
- **Be equipped for mission**



An illustration of a diverse group of six people (three men and three women) of various ages and ethnicities shaking hands in a friendly manner. They are standing in front of a church with a steeple, surrounded by stylized foliage. The scene is rendered in a muted blue and grey color palette with white text.

Thank You for Participating

We appreciate your time and dedication to strengthening your church's enculturation pathway.

D

by Divia Francis Lewis