

HIGH POINT

Helping Churches, Disciples and Leaders

Flourish



"Our dear fellow servants, who are faithful ministers of Christ on your behalf"

Adapted from Colossians 1:7, NKJV



Expanding Our Impact

Since January, God has prepared us to better serve churches through expansion both internally as an organization and externally with our services. One pastor wrote us, saying:

"There has been significant growth in our congregation from our work with Ascending Leaders, but it is not the kind easily calculated by counting baptisms, members, and attendance. The growth we have witnessed is relational and reflects deep shifts in the way we approach God, each other, and our community."

We are excited that God has us in a **season of expansion**, making it possible for us to serve more and more churches in this way. To our coaching team, we recently added three more godly church leaders who share a passion for active discipleship. Just three years ago, Mike Johnson was our only coach, and now we have eight outstanding coaches with another two preparing to join us. Our growing team allows us to expand our

coaching services across the country. These coaches are available to share their experiences and wisdom with churches in their areas. Be sure to check and see if there's a coach near you or near a church leader you know!

New Coaches

- Ryan Poe Indianapolis
- Matt McClure Des Moines
- Marilyn Wadkins Houston

Continuing Coaches

- Mike Johnson Houston
- Peter Cammarano Houston
- Bob Johnson Houston
- Brad Munroe Tucson
- Ken Schripsema Grand Rapids

Ascending Leaders has grown internally as well. In the last year, we've welcomed aboard three new staff:

- Natalie LaValley, Outbound Communications Associate
- Victoria Hornsby, Marketing Associate
- Rhonda Spriggs, Operations Manager

You'll get to read Rhonda's faith story on the next page! Incidentally, all three come from Houston Baptist University, whose president, Dr. Robert Sloan, is on our board. With Mike Johnson on HBU's Engineering School Advisory Board, we look forward to seeing our mutually beneficial relationship with HBU continue to grow.

The resources we offer have expanded along with our team. After a holiday hiatus, our new podcast resumed in February, providing interviews with church leaders who share insights on topics related to discipleship. We have also upgraded our blog which shares practical help for doing discipleship better.

We are thrilled that God has allowed us to expand our coaching services to bring them closer to you. We're also excited to offer you our free resources that can be accessed from your home. We hope they will bless you on your discipleship journey.

A FAITH STORY by the Discipleship Stages

The Story of Rhonda Spriggs, Operations Manager at Ascending Leaders



1

STAGE 1 – COME AND SEE

I cannot remember a specific moment of moving from unbelief to belief in Christ. From my earliest memories, I knew without a doubt that Jesus was precious, real and in my life. At age four, I asked to be baptized in

my church. My parents were skeptical that I was ready for this step, but after thoroughly questioning my basic understanding of the gospel, they agreed to let me be baptized.

2

STAGE 2 – FOLLOW ME

I loved to learn about Jesus. I got excited about Sunday School and Vacation Bible School, even though it meant getting up early on summer mornings. My walk with God dramatically deepened in my early teens. I was captivated in Sunday School by a story about David's family and, wanting to learn more about David, I dug into reading 1 and 2 Chronicles, Psalms and Proverbs on my own. As I read, my relationship with God grew stronger, and my attitude began to change. I inspired my friends to change also, urging

them to pay attention to the sermons and learn together as one.

At the age of 22, I heard God encourage me to teach children the benefits of following Him. I didn't know how I would do this, but not long afterward, God opened a door through my pastor asking me to become the youth director (for ages 0-18) of our church. That was 19 years ago. I am still filling that role today and have mentored hundreds of children in their walks with God.

The Wall

In December 2003, I was diagnosed with severe endometriosis. I had to have a huge mass removed, which turned out to be my first of seven surgeries over the next seven years. It was a long and painful season. I could not understand why God allowed me to be slowed

down so severely when I had so much desire to serve His children. My pastor helped me see this illness as a resting period—a time for me to surrender everything, *even my desire to serve*, and let God take greater control. So I did, trusting in His will.

3

STAGE 3 – BE WITH ME

It took me another seven years to fully recover from the illness, but those years of difficulty led me into a season of greater intimacy with Jesus. During that time, I recognized my life was not about me but about what God can do through me. I now see more

clearly that God has ordered my steps, and I can see myself growing into the fourth stage of daily abiding in Christ. God is the author of my story, and I will continue striving to be an example of what He can do with a life totally surrendered to Him.

“Faith Stories by Discipleship Stages” workshop for church leaders

Our coaches can facilitate a workshop on writing your own faith story by the stages at your church! Go to ascendingleaders.org/faith-stories

You can also learn about this kind of workshop on Episode 8 of our Discipleship Podcast for Church Leaders. Visit ascendingleaders.org/episode08

DISCIPLESHIP STAGES FOR YOUR CHURCH: Get It the Way You Like It

Like to Read?

- **BLOG:** Short articles with advice and encouragement for church leaders.
- **10 STEPS Toward a Clear DISCIPLEPATH:** Colorful booklet with practical help for discipling churches.

Like to Listen?

- **PODCAST:** Episodes covering topics on discipleship. Listen on iTunes to our new series on the 10 STEPS!

Like to Watch?

- **6 filmed talks** on discipleship. Visit the Ascending Leaders YouTube channel.

Like Classroom-Style Learning?

- Get a one-day **DiscipleForward** workshop in your church or community. Large churches find this helpful to do with the whole staff.

Like Peer Learning?

- **DISCIPLEON! Season 5: August-December, 2018**
 - DISCIPLEON! Basic:** Guided journey for practitioners getting started with leading congregational discipleship.
 - DISCIPLEON! Advanced:** Case study approach providing communal support for those experienced with leading congregational discipleship by the stages.



Register by **JUNE 15** for the early bird discount!
Regular registration deadline is **JULY 20**.
Go to www.ascendingleaders.org/discipleon

We Are Successful When...

- ▶ Your church is building, teaching and implementing a clear DisciplePath.
- ▶ Your church's disciples are personally journeying forward on their own DisciplePaths through the stages of faith.
- ▶ Your church leaders are coaching individuals and ministries through building effective DisciplePaths.
- ▶ Your church feels encouraged and sees Ascending Leaders as a dependable friend.

5-Second Survey

How strong is your church in fostering active discipleship growth?

Help us do our research! Answer this one-question survey at ascendingleaders.org/poll

Check our website for upcoming workshops and events: www.ascendingleaders.org

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Flourish through

Trusted to help Churches, Disciples and Leaders



“Discipleship is
an uphill push and
the hill is getting steeper!”

Rev. David Hsu, Senior Pastor of West Houston Chinese Church;
Ascending Leaders Board member

LOOK INSIDE FOR HOW TO GROW DISCIPLES IN YOUR CHURCH

Why
we need
your support:

- Discipleship is an ongoing challenge.
- Churches we coach have seen dramatic discipleship growth.
- Most churches cannot pay the full cost for us to coach them long-term.
- Your donations provide scholarships, making it possible for churches of all sizes to benefit.



Mike Johnson, Senior Editor
Natalie LaValley, Editor
Rhonda Spriggs, Operations Manager
Sunny Hyun, Graphic Designer



Our transparency has gained us the gold seals
of approval from three standard-bearers.

*Donate online at www.ascendingleaders.org or by mail.

Since Ascending Leaders is recognized as a 501c3 by the U.S. IRS, all donations are tax deductible.

www.ascendingleaders.org