



## Determining Needs

It is essential that those coordinating adult education in a church differentiate between the wants of the adult learners and their needs. As indicated in the Needs Assessment resource, it is the responsibility of leadership to prescribe the “needs” of the adult learners...while realizing that adults will choose to attend based upon their perceived needs, also known as their “wants.” Since adults are self-directed learners, we must not disregard their wants.

To achieve this balance, leadership must clearly define the expectations (needs) that they have for learners compared to their current capabilities and must present these needs in such a way as to assist the learner to assign priority to those expectations (wants.) The capacity to carry out this necessary task rests partly on the degree to which congregational leadership’s directives are valued by learners. The remainder of this resource assumes that leadership is perceived of positively by congregational members. Leadership must always provide clarity regarding the difference between justification and sanctification and that our efforts will have no effect on our own salvation, which is secured only through Christ’s death and resurrection.

Characteristics of a maturing disciple: It behooves congregational leadership to define the preferred characteristics of a disciple of Christ. Because we will only reach full maturity when we join Jesus in heaven, we see all believers as “maturing” in their discipleship journey. These characteristics encompass what a disciple should know, feel, and do. Church leaders should spend time in prayer and in the study of the Word in order to define these characteristics. To avoid a focus on legalism, perhaps your church would determine that all adult members would have a clear understanding of the “solas” (know). Perhaps you would want members to have a desire to share the faith with unbelievers (feel). Maybe your leadership would determine that maturing disciples would regularly attend worship (do).

After the characteristics are identified, the leadership should inform the adults in the congregation that the leadership has attempted to provide specific information about those discipleship characteristics that it feels are important. Ask members to self-assess regarding their alignment with those characteristics. If members “own” the characteristics, and if they determine that they are deficient in one or more characteristics, they will seek learning opportunities that help them to better align with the congregationally-identified characteristics.