

Using the Building Blocks of Faith in Elder Visits

by Shannon Jammal-Hollemans, based on a concept by Laura Keeley and Robert J. Keeley

Dear Elders:

The Building Blocks of Faith are meant to answer a simple question: “What do people need in order to grow in faith?” They are based on four statements that should be true of everyone in your church: **I Belong, I Know and Understand, I Have Hope, and I Am Called and Equipped.**

I Belong

“What is your only comfort in life and death? That I am not my own but belong body and soul, in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.” This notion of belonging, body and soul, in life and in death to Jesus is at the heart of what we want as people. Congregations should consider how they help all the people in their community feel like they belong. It is important to preach the gospel of belonging from our pulpits but we also need to make it concrete. We need to *feel* it.

I Know and Understand

The story of God’s faithfulness to his people is one we need to know. Our faith cannot be merely based on a warm feeling that God loves us (which he does) or that God wants us to live upright lives (which he also does.) We need to know actual content so that our faith is not just based on emotions. Our faith is built on a solid rock and we, as God’s people, must be able to recognize that rock. If we don’t know the story of God’s people found in God’s Word, then we will be just like the people in the book of Judges who “know neither the Lord nor what he did for us.”

I Have Hope

This is no random wish or shallow desire. It is an expectation that is strong and confident. This is the hope that lives in knowing that our expectation is based in the promises of the Creator of the universe. Our hope is found in the person of Jesus Christ. We not only have confidence that God will make all things new, but we have confidence that he is using us to do it.

I Am Called and Equipped

Because we belong, because we know who God is and who we are in relationship to him, and because we have hope that we are part of God’s plan for renewing all things, we believe that we have a particular call. To go with this call, God has equipped us in particular ways.

Elder Visit Questions Based on the Building Blocks of Faith

How do you and/or your family family experience belonging in church?

- What relationships or activities at our church help you know that you belong to Jesus and to this community?
- Who do you think has difficulty belonging at our church because barriers prevent them from being present with the community (physical barriers or otherwise)? How can we overcome these barriers?
- What steps do you take to cultivate a sense of belonging for others at our church?

What opportunities are we offering that are helping you know and understand what you believe?

- What practices (personal or communal) grow your understanding of your faith?
- What opportunities at our church help you know and understand God's Word and apply it to your life?
- How can our community encourage you to share your faith story with others?

How are we helping you find hope in Christ?

- Which relationships, programs or spaces at our church cultivate hope in your heart?
- How does our church encourage you to take the "long view," seeing your life as part of God's kingdom?
- How do you encourage hope in others?

How do you feel called to serve? How are we equipping you for that?

- In what ways is our church teaching you about God's call on your life?
- What practices or programs help you clarify your gifts and how God is calling you to use them?
- What opportunities has our church offered you to live out your calling by serving?