

Discipleship Cycle

Making Disciples Who Make Disciples



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Steps for Growing Disciples

Commitment is essential to the life of a disciple (follower of Jesus), more commitment, not less. The steps provided show how one that has been transformed by Christ can grow into a healthy, reproducing disciple of Jesus. Would you be willing to go to the next step?

Evaluate where you are in the cycle. Do you know Christ as your Lord and Savior? If you do not, trusting Him would be your starting point. If you do, then read through the following steps to see where you are and what your next step should be. God will be glorified as you move forward in your spiritual journey.

Step 1—Commit to Christ

Do you know that God is perfect and holy? Do you know that your sin is what separates you from His presence? Do you know that God made a way for you to be right with Him? Only Jesus who lived a perfect life could take on the sin of the world and die as our substitute. He died where we should. But God raised Him from the dead to show victory over sin and death. Now God says that He will apply Christ's death toward our sin if we will repent (turn) from our sinful ways and trust in Jesus. Is that you? When you trust Christ, God will radically change you into a new person because His Holy Spirit will come to live inside you.

Step 2—Commit to membership/baptism at HPC or a local church

After a person is transformed by the gospel, he/she should be baptized into a local church. Here at HPC we believe this is an important step for your growth in Christ. During the membership journey, an individual will develop his/her personal testimony and learn the core beliefs of the Christian faith. He/she will also learn more about what it means to be part of the local church at HPC.

Step 3—Commit to personal growth

Growth as a Christian is essential. Growth indicates life. We believe there are at least 2 areas where members should be ever-growing in their relationship with the Lord.

1. Personal disciplines

We emphasize the essential disciplines of Bible reading and prayer because they are so vital to your relationship with the Lord. They are called disciplines because one must set aside time to invest in them.

Bible reading: God clearly uses His Word to speak to His people and develop them into what He wants for their lives, so we must take advantage of reading God's Word. Develop a plan. Read through the New Testament. Read the Bible in a year. You will benefit from a plan because a plan will help set you up for successful growth.

Prayer: Speaking to God is another vital discipline for every Christian. A good place to begin is responding to the Bible reading of the day. We also have a great resource available if you would like to expand your prayer life (*How to Develop a Powerful Prayer Life* by Gregory Frizzell).

2. Personal holiness

Christians often get into ruts and let sin slip into their lives. As a growing disciple, you must rid your life of sin by actively killing it in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's Supper is a great time to take inventory for any sin that has crept into your life or any sin that has gone unchecked. Submit your life often to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, repent, and walk in the freedom that God offers in Christ.

Step 4—Commit to ministry in the local church

The local church plays a vital role in a disciple's growth. We commit to the local church because that is Jesus' plan to change the world starting right here where we live. Committing to the local church should be a part of every disciples' journey.

1. Attend

Prioritizing Sunday morning worship gatherings is crucial for a disciple of Christ. God forms His people through the preaching of His Word, and Sundays are where that happens. Christians also are encouraged by other like-minded believers when they gather together. We participate in the Lord's Supper as a gathered body. All of this happens on Sunday, so you should attend on Sunday mornings but not just on Sunday mornings.

At HPC we want to offer many other avenues for discipleship. Smaller Bible study groups are great ways for you to grow as a disciple. Significant discipleship happens when we gather together through the teaching of the Word and in fellowship with other members.

2. Care for members

Our love for one another should be ever-growing. The ways one can care for other members is endless, but we want to include a few ideas. The importance of praying for one another cannot be underestimated, so we want to commit to pray for the other members. Sharing life together is another way to care for members. You could invite another member to your home, out to dinner, for a cup of coffee, etc. Many people wonder how they can get involved in the church; ask someone to lunch would be a great way to start. When members suffer, we should suffer with them. If you hear of a sickness or loss in another member's family, you may want to reach out to them with a phone call, prepare a meal, visit the hospital, or even attend a funeral. All of these suggestions show a fellow member that you care about them.

3. Commit to health

We give a book, *What Is a Healthy Church Member?* by Thabiti Anyabwile, to all prospective members. It is a gem for anyone wanting to grow as a disciple to get ideas how you could be growing.

4. Serve the church body with your spiritual gift(s)

At salvation all Christians are promised to receive a gift from the Holy Spirit to be used for the good of the body. We need you to utilize your spiritual gift, so we can be complete and whole. Without you we suffer. Some of these gifts are used during the gathering of the church on Sundays, but do not think your gift must be used only on Sunday.

5. Give generously

Paul wrote, “God loves a cheerful giver.” While Paul was talking about money God wants more than our money; He wants our heart. It is easy to see what someone values. Take a look at one’s wallet and calendar. How one spends money and time shows where the heart is. We want to be people who give generously to the Lord through our tithes and offerings as well as our service to Him in the body of believers. All members should have “skin in the game” to see us succeed in our God-glorifying mission to make disciples of all nations.

Step 5—Commit to make disciples

Disciples disciple. Part of your obedience as a disciple is to help other Christians be obedient. Our goal as disciples is to reproduce more followers of Christ. This strategy means making new disciples (evangelism) and seeing disciples to maturity (discipleship).

1. Evangelism

Evangelism is telling someone of their sin before a holy God and asking them to respond by repenting of their sin and placing their trust in Christ for salvation. Evangelism is not complete until the person is baptized and connected into a local church.

A. Personal evangelism is the most effective method of evangelism

i. Know the gospel

It is impossible to be saved and not know the gospel. It is also impossible to share the gospel without knowing the gospel. Thabiti Anyabwile does a good job of sharing the gospel in his book, *What Is a Healthy Church Member?*:

“The gospel or good news of Jesus Christ is that God the Father, who is holy and righteous in all His ways, is angry with sinners and will punish sin. Man, who disobeys the rule of God, is alienated from the love of God and is in danger of an eternal and agonizing condemnation at the hands of God. But God, who is also rich in mercy, because of His great love, sent His eternal Son born by the Virgin Mary, to die as a ransom and a substitute for the sins of rebellious people. And now, through the perfect obedience of the Son of God and His willing death on the cross as payment for our sins, all who repent and believe in Jesus Christ, following Him as Savior and Lord, will be saved from the wrath of God to come, be declared just in His sight, have eternal life, and receive the Spirit of God as a foretaste of the glories of heaven with God Himself.” (40-41)

ii. Develop your personal testimony

You should have developed your conversion experience during the membership journey. Your testimony is a powerful illustration of how the gospel of Jesus Christ can change a person. Be willing to share it even when someone does not believe the Bible to be true because your testimony is irrefutable.

iii. Write down and pray for 3 non-Christians

God uses our prayers in salvation. We may never know why but we know He does. When you pray for 3 non-Christians you are asking the sovereign Lord in heaven to bring about a transformation in a non-Christian's soul. You will likely find your heart softening toward non-Christians.

iv. Pray for opportunities to share the gospel

Be bold. Ask God to give you opportunities to share the gospel. Ask the Holy Spirit to empower you. Then seize the opportunities the Lord gives you.

v. Invite non-Christians to church or church activity

As the Lord draws non-Christians to Himself, follow the Holy Spirit as you invite them to experience what the family of God is like.

2. Discipleship

Discipleship is helping other Christians follow Jesus better. While discipleship can happen in large gatherings and haphazardly, small groups with great accountability seem to be how Jesus did it (Peter, James, and John) and produce the greatest growth.

A. Disciple others

i. Help other Christians follow Jesus better.

Helping others grow does not happen without intentionality. But who should you focus on? The world is a big place with lots of Christians. Special attention should be given to your fellow members since you have committed to them, see them regularly, and share the same values.

ii. Be accountable to a member or members

Accountability keeps us in check. Without it many fall. We have some accountability questions available to you and recommend you ask someone to meet with you regularly to go over them. This will be for your spiritual good.

iii. Participate in a growth group

While we have small groups in the church a growth group is very small (3-5). We have some simple material that would be great to journey through. It takes a high commitment with great accountability but will likely be one of the greatest opportunities for you to grow as a disciple. But this group is not your end goal; forming a group that you lead will be. You know you are successful as a disciple maker when those that you disciplined are discipling others and you have "spiritual grandchildren." Then, and only then, have we succeeded and the next generation of believers is set to follow Christ into perpetuity.

All for God's glory!