

## **Discipleship Growth Cycle: Disciples Making Disciples**

**By Bob Young**

Church studies often focus on the life cycle of the local congregation, identifying points of intervention and ways to begin the cycle anew. Many of those studies focus on changing personnel or programs. Other studies note the importance of refocusing and renewing the dreams and hopes of the past.

James Ryle, founder of TruthWorks and a founding member of Promise Keepers, identified a different cycle.

Healthy things grow,  
Growing things change,  
Changing things challenges us,  
Challenges force us to trust God,  
Trust leads to obedience,  
Obedience leads to spiritual health,  
Healthy things grow.

This sequence applies in many areas of life.

Consider Jesus' instructions to his disciples, that they should go forth and make disciples who will make more disciples. Think about Paul's instructions to Timothy to share instructions with those who will in turn teach others.

The discipleship cycle begins when a disciple of Jesus reaches out and shares the gospel, baptizing and teaching a new disciple. The cycle begins.

- Healthy disciples grow.
  - When a person becomes a disciple (Christian), the logical expectation is that the new babe in Christ will grow in Christ. Baptism is followed by learning.
- Growing disciples change.
  - Christians who learn the way of Jesus are constantly changed and transformed as they grow in the ways of discipleship.
- Changing disciples are challenged, becoming aware of their own inadequacies.
- Challenged disciples learn to trust God, confident that he provides.
- Trusting disciples obey God completely, fully committed to God's Word.
- Obedient disciples are healthy disciples, reaching out and sharing the gospel with others to make more healthy disciples.
- Healthy disciples grow...

As the discipleship cycle repeats, more and more people learn about and follow Jesus.  
May this describe how your local church goes forth into the harvest.