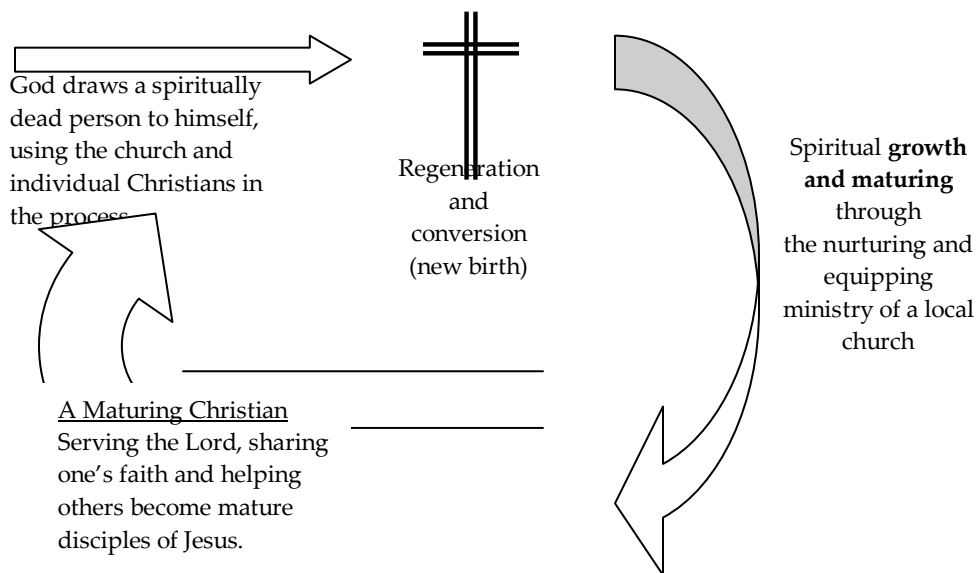


**The Church's Great Commission: Make Mature Disciples of Jesus**

By definition, a disciple is *someone who follows another person or another way of life and who submits himself to the discipline and teaching of that leader or way*. For the past 2000 years, Jesus has been calling people to forsake their own plans, desires and their own lives, and to come and follow him as his disciples. Jesus made it clear that becoming his disciple required whole-hearted obedience and a single-minded, life-long commitment (Mark 1:17-20; Luke 9:23-24, 57-62; Luke 14:26-27). Through the Holy Spirit and the Apostles, Jesus created a new organism: the church, which has the primary purpose of fulfilling his command to make disciples of Jesus Christ throughout the world, until he returns in glory to establish his eternal kingdom (Matthew 28:19-20).

Early in the life of the church, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul brought further clarity as to how the church must fulfill her Great Commission, by teaching that it is not sufficient to simply win people to faith in Jesus Christ. These spiritual "new-borns" must be fed an appropriate spiritual diet of "milk" and then "solid food" in order to grow and develop into mature followers of Jesus (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:12-14).

We believe that the Biblical process of making mature disciples of Jesus can be represented by the following diagram:



**Characteristics of a Mature Christian**

There are certain Biblical characteristics which we would expect to see consistently demonstrated in the life of man or a woman who is a mature Christian.

**A mature disciple of Jesus Christ consistently seeks to please and glorify God by:**

- **Desiring and actively pursuing their own spiritual growth.** Since the Bible is our primary source of truth and knowledge about God and his will for mankind and our individual lives, we would expect a maturing Christian to be a student of God's Word, able to feed themselves, making accurate interpretations and appropriate personal application of the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15). We would expect a maturing Christian to understand, articulate and give a Biblical defense of the essential doctrines of the Christian faith.
- **Living in obedience to God's Word.** Jesus said that his true disciples will obey him because they love him (John 14:15). Those who are obedient to Christ will inevitably bear fruit (John 15:1-17), therefore, one characteristic of a spiritually mature Christian is that they are bearing spiritual fruit. This is demonstrated in various ways including love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22), humble and sacrificial service to God and others (Philippians 2:1-10), and through a distinctly Christian world-view lived out in daily choices and decisions (Colossians 2:6-8, 3:1-2).
- **Helping others become mature disciples of Jesus.** Mature Christians are actively involved in the ministries of evangelism and discipleship. Mature Christians take 1 Peter 3:15 seriously and are "always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." While God is the only one who can bring life and growth, a mature Christian sows the seed of the Gospel, waters and cares for the spiritual seedlings, cultivates the immature plant, seeking to help it to grow to maturity, and trusts the Lord for the spiritual harvest.

At FBF, our desire is to produce mature Christians who are characterized by a passion for: **Studying the Word, Living the Word, Sharing the Word, and teaching others to do the same.**