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THE DISCIPLE'S CROSS

MasterLife



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Introduction

MasterLife is a developmental, small-group discipleship process that will help you develop a lifelong, obedient relationship with Christ. *MasterLife 1: The Disciple's Cross*, is the first of four books in that discipleship process. Through this study you will experience a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ as He leads you to develop six biblical disciplines of a disciple. The other three books in the *MasterLife* process are *MasterLife 2: The Disciple's Personality*, *MasterLife 3: The Disciple's Victory*, and *MasterLife 4: The Disciple's Mission*. These studies will enable you to acknowledge Christ as your Master and to master life in Him.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU

The goal of *MasterLife* is your discipleship—for you to become like Christ. To do that, you must follow Jesus, learn to do the things He instructed His followers to do, and help others become His disciples. *MasterLife* was designed to help you make the following definition of *discipleship* a way of life:

Christian discipleship is developing a personal, lifelong, obedient relationship with Jesus Christ in which He transforms your character into Christlikeness; changes your values into Kingdom values; and involves you in His mission in the home, the church, and the world.

As you progress through the *MasterLife* process and learn to follow Christ as His disciple, you will experience the thrill of growing spiritually. Here are several ways you will grow:

- You will discover that denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Christ is such an exciting and challenging adventure that it will become the top priority of your life.
- You will understand what it means to abide, or live, in Christ, and you will experience the peace, security, and purpose that abiding in Christ brings.
- You will experience the assurance and confidence that come from living in the Word. You will

develop new skills for studying and interpreting the Bible. The Holy Spirit will use those skills to give you fresh insights into the Scriptures and into God's will for your life.

- You will experience new power in prayer as you learn to pray in faith.
- You will experience deeper fellowship with other believers.
- You will discover the joy of sharing Christ with others—both by the way you live and by what you say.
- You will experience the fulfillment of investing yourself in others by ministering to their needs.
- You will observe that Christlike attitudes develop naturally and spontaneously in your life. These include—
 - humility and servanthood;
 - dependence on God;
 - love for people, especially fellow Christians;
 - confidence in yourself and in God;
 - a sense of God's presence through His direct guidance;
 - a desire to serve God and people;
 - concern for unsaved people;
 - deepening faith;
 - overflowing joy;
 - perseverance in faithfulness;
 - appreciation of God's work through the church;
 - companionship with family members;
 - a prayerful spirit.

SIX KEY DISCIPLINES

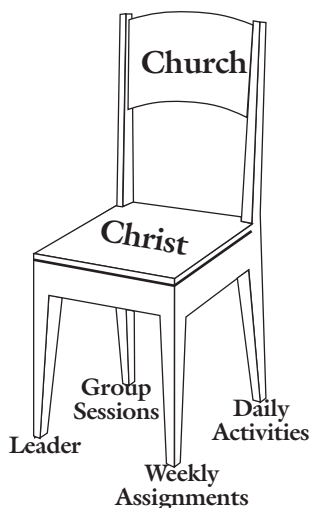
As you develop a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, you will experience His leading you to develop six biblical disciplines of a disciple. These disciplines are—

- spend time with the Master;
- live in the Word;
- pray in faith;
- fellowship with believers;
- witness to the world;
- minister to others.

THE MASTERLIFE PROCESS

MasterLife 1: The Disciple's Cross is part of a 24-week discipleship process. Completing all four courses in *MasterLife* will provide you information and experiences you need to be Christ's disciple. Each book builds on the other and is recommended as a prerequisite for the one that follows.

The *MasterLife* process involves six elements. Each element is essential to your study of *MasterLife*, as illustrated in the chair diagram shown.



- 1.-The *daily activities* in this book lead you into a closer walk with Christ. Doing these exercises daily is important.
- 2.-The *weekly assignments* in “My Walk with the Master This Week” are real-life experiences that will change your life.
- 3.-The *leader* is a major element. Discipleship is a relationship. It is not something you do by yourself. You need human models, instruction, and accountability to become what Christ intends for you to be. That is why Jesus commanded His disciples to make disciples (see Matt. 28:19-20). We all need someone who has followed Christ long enough to challenge us. To become a better disciple, you need a leader to whom you can relate personally and regularly—someone who can teach you, model behaviors, and hold you accountable.
- 4.-The weekly *group sessions* help you reflect on the concepts and experiences in *MasterLife* and help you apply the ideas to your life. The group sessions allow you to experience in your inmost being the profound changes Christ is making in your life.

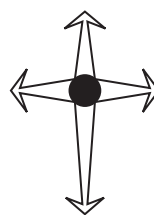
Each group session also provides training for the next stage of spiritual growth.

- 5.-*Christ* is the Discipler, and you become His disciple. As you fully depend on Him, He works through each of the previous elements and uses them to support you.
- 6.-The body of Christ—the *church*—is vital for complete discipling to take place. You depend on Christian friends for fellowship, strength, and ministry opportunities. Without the church, you lack the support you need to grow in Christ.

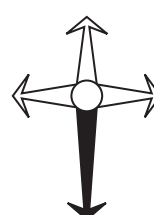
HOW TO STUDY THIS BOOK

Each day for five days a week you will be expected to study a segment of the material in this workbook and to complete the related activities. You may need from 20 to 30 minutes of study time each day. Even if you find that you can study the material in less time, spreading the study over five days will give you time to apply the truths to your life.

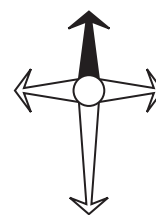
You will notice that discipline logos appear before various assignments:



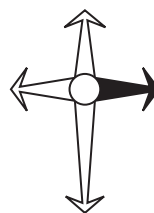
**Spend time
with the
Master**



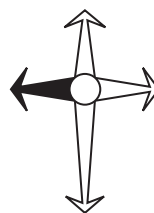
**Live in
the Word**



Pray in faith



**Fellowship
with
believers**



**Witness to
the world**



**Minister
to others**

These logos link certain activities to the six disciplines you are learning to incorporate into your life as a disciple. These activities are part of your weekly assignments, which are outlined in “My Walk with the Master This Week” at the beginning of each week’s

material. The discipline logos differentiate your weekly assignments from the activities related to your study for that particular day.

Set a definite time and select a quiet place to study with little or no interruption. Keep a Bible handy to find Scriptures as directed in the material. Memorizing Scripture is an important part of your work. You will be asked to memorize one Scripture each week. Set aside a portion of your study period for memory work. Unless I have deliberately chosen another version for a specific emphasis, all Scriptures in *MasterLife* are quoted from the New International Version of the Bible. However, feel free to memorize Scripture from any version of the Bible you prefer. I suggest that you write each memory verse on a card that you can review often during the week.

After completing each day's assignments, turn to the beginning of the week's material. If you completed an activity that corresponds to one listed under "My Walk with the Master This Week," place a vertical line in the diamond beside the activity. During the following group session a member of the group will

verify your work and will add a horizontal line in the diamond, forming a cross in each diamond. This process will confirm that you have completed each weekly assignment before you continue. You may do the assignments at your own pace, but be sure to complete all of them before the next group session.



THE DISCIPLE'S CROSS

On page 136 you will find a diagram of the Disciple's Cross. The Disciple's Cross, which illustrates the six Christian disciplines, will be the focal point for all you learn in this book. Each week you will study an additional portion of the Disciple's Cross and will learn the Scripture that accompanies it. By the end of the study you will be able to explain the cross in your own words and to say all of the verses that go with it. You can learn to live the Disciple's Cross so that it embodies the way you show that you are Christ's follower.

Autobiography Worksheet

Session 1 provides an opportunity for you and other *MasterLife* participants to get to know one another. You will be asked to share your responses to the questions below. Jot down brief thoughts you want to share. Your response to each question should be no longer than one minute.

1.-How have I become the person I am?

What person(s) or event(s) have most influenced my values?

2.-What motivated me to take *MasterLife*?

Why do I want to be in this *MasterLife* group?

3.-What may be my greatest weakness or difficulty in completing the course?

Abiding in Christ

This Bible study will help you understand what it means to abide in Christ and will allow you to commit to abide in Christ. Read John 15:1-17. Then complete the following questionnaire. Later, you will share phase 1 with another person, phase 2 with three other persons, and phase 3 with your entire group.

PHASE 1

I find John 15:1-17 (check one)—

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> challenging; | <input type="checkbox"/> confusing; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> comforting; | <input type="checkbox"/> scary; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> refreshing; | <input type="checkbox"/> restrictive; |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ | |

Imagine that Jesus is speaking directly to you as you read John 15:1-17. He says (check the statements that apply)—

- ☐ “I love you” (v. 9);
- ☐ “You are My friend” (v. 15);
- ☐ “I have chosen you” (v. 16);
- ☐ “I have ordained you to bring forth fruit” (v. 16);
- ☐ “I am speaking to you so that you may have fullness of joy” (v. 11).

How do you feel when Jesus makes the previous statements about you? Check one:

- ☐ Praise the Lord!
- ☐ Surely You don’t mean me, Lord.
- ☐ I am so unworthy.
- ☐ Wonderful; let’s get on with it.
- ☐ What’s the catch?

PHASE 2

Christ says that if I am to abide in His love, I must keep His commandments. That makes me feel that (check one)—

- ☐ He is trying to bribe me into being obedient;
- ☐ He is sharing His secret for the way He abides in the Father’s love;
- ☐ He is asking too much;
- ☐ He does not love me;
- ☐ He really wants me as a friend;
- ☐ Keeping His commandments is a great way to show my love for Him.

As I read that Christ has ordained me to bear fruit and that my fruit will last, I feel (check two)—

- ☐ thankful;
- ☐ inadequate;
- ☐ overjoyed;
- ☐ strengthened;
- ☐ defeated;
- ☐ confident;
- ☐ enthusiastic;
- ☐ indifferent.

PHASE 3

To abide in Christ, I need to—

In response to Jesus’ speaking to me through John 15:1-17, for the next week I will concentrate on abiding in Christ by—

Discipleship Covenant

To participate in *MasterLife*, you are asked to dedicate yourself to God and to your *MasterLife* group by making the following commitments. You may not currently be able to do everything listed, but by signing this covenant, you pledge to adopt these practices as you progress through the study.

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, I commit myself to—

- acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord of my life each day;
- attend all group sessions unless providentially hindered;
- spend from 20 to 30 minutes a day as needed to complete all assignments;
- have a daily quiet time;
- keep a Daily Master Communication Guide about the way God speaks to me and I speak to Him;
- be faithful to my church in attendance and stewardship;
- love and encourage each group member;
- share my faith with others;
- keep in confidence anything that others share in the group sessions;
- submit myself to others willingly in accountability;
- become a discipler of others as God gives opportunities;
- support my church financially by practicing biblical giving;
- pray daily for group members.

Signed _____ Date _____

WEEK 1



Spend Time with the Master

This Week's Goal

You will evaluate your discipleship and will focus on Christ as the center of your life.

My Walk with the Master This Week

You will complete the following activities to develop the six biblical disciplines. When you have completed each activity, draw a vertical line in the diamond beside it.



SPEND TIME WITH THE MASTER

- ◇ Tell how to have a daily quiet time and begin to have one regularly.



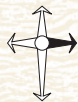
LIVE IN THE WORD

- ◇ Read your Bible every day. Write what God says to you and what you say to God.
- ◇ Memorize John 15:5.
- ◇ Review Luke 9:23, which you memorized in the introductory group session.



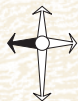
PRAY IN FAITH

- ◇ Pray for each member of your *MasterLife* group by name at least twice this week.
- ◇ Find a prayer partner with whom you will pray each week.
- ◇ Use the World-Awareness Map to pray for people throughout the world.



FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS

- ◇ Get better acquainted with a group member.



WITNESS TO THE WORLD

- ◇ Demonstrate how others know that you are a Christian.



MINISTER TO OTHERS

- ◇ Explain the center of the Disciple's Cross.

This Week's Scripture-Memory Verse

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

DAY 1

*The First Priority*

When I went away to college, I had been a Christian for several years. I had done almost everything my church had asked me to do. I had tithed, attended church five times a week, occasionally visited prospects, and read my Bible daily. But when the influences of home and church were removed, I came face to face with who I really was. I realized that I possessed Christ as my Savior but that He did not possess me. I faced the decision, Am I going to be a disciple who gives everything to Christ? I spent many nights walking through the fields near the college, talking to God, and pondering whether I really meant business about being a Christian.

Then I started looking at the Scriptures to see what being a disciple involves. The Bible told me that a disciple of Christ is someone who makes Christ the Lord of his or her life. As you learned during your introductory group session, Luke 9:23 says, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

I realized that I would be either a real disciple of Christ or a mediocre Christian for the rest of my life. As people often do when they arrive at a crossroads in their walk with Christ, I began to make excuses. I began to tell God that I was not capable of doing all He wanted me to do, that I had failed many times, and that I was not even sure He would want me to be His disciple.

In answer to my excuses, God showed me 2 Chronicles 16:9: “The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.” I remembered that evangelist D. L. Moody had heard his friend Henry Varley say, “It remains to be seen what God will do with a man who gives himself up wholly to Him.” In response Moody said, “I will be that man.”¹ If anyone gave himself up wholly to God, it was D. L. Moody. With only a third-grade education he led hundreds of thousands of people in England and America to God. My response was “Lord, I want to be like that. I want to have a heart committed to You. Then if You do anything with my life, everyone will know it was because You did it and not because of my abilities.”

My heart has not always been right toward God since that time. However, because of the commitment I made, the Holy Spirit reveals whenever my heart is not right. I immediately confess and ask God to forgive me and to restore my heart.

That is how I decided to be a true disciple of Christ and to commit to a lifelong, obedient relationship with Him. At the outset I said, “I will obey and do whatever God tells me to do, and I will depend on Him to accomplish whatever He wants to accomplish through my life.”

Am I going to be a disciple who gives everything to Christ?

“Lord, I want to have a heart committed to You.”

This study provides an opportunity for you to reassess your standing in your relationship with Christ.

“John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, ‘How is it that John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?’ ”
(Mark 2:18).

“He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons”
(Mark 3:14).

The commitments I made during the following year set the course for my entire life. From that day forward God began to reveal Himself to me and to teach me how to walk with Him. Looking back, I can say that everything that has been accomplished in my life has been because God did it.

This study provides an opportunity for you to reassess your standing in your relationship with Christ. It will help you evaluate yourself as a disciple and take steps to follow Him. Throughout your study of *MasterLife* I will share with you how Christ continued to reveal to me what it means to be His disciple. As I share with you how Christ helped me through my pilgrimage as a student, a pastor, and a missionary and as I share other believers’ testimonies, I hope that you will learn the concepts of truly mastering life as Christ lives through you—that you will learn what life in Christ is all about.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

We begin this study by looking at who a disciple is and what a disciple does. The New Testament uses the term *disciple* three ways. First, it is a general term used to describe a committed follower of a teacher or a group.

Read Mark 2:18 in the margin. The verse mentions three groups or individuals who have disciples. Who are they?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The persons or groups who had disciples are John, the Pharisees, and Jesus. These disciples were committed followers of these teachers or groups.

Second, the New Testament uses the term *disciple* to refer to the twelve apostles Jesus called. Mark 3:14, in the margin, is very specific about why Jesus called these apostles.

In Mark 3:14 underline the phrases that show two reasons Jesus chose the twelve.

You probably underlined the words “that they might be with him” and “that he might send them out to preach.”

Jesus also used *disciple* to describe a follower who meets His requirements. For example, He said that His disciples must forsake families, possessions, or anything else that might keep them from following Him.

Read these verses: “Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple’ ” (Luke 14:26-27). Write in your own words what Jesus did when people began to follow Him.

Jesus said that His disciples must forsake families, possessions, or anything else that might keep them from following Him.

You likely wrote something like this: He discouraged those who did not commit themselves fully to Him by first stating the requirements for being a disciple. Luke 9:23, the verse I hope you memorized in your introductory group session, also states those requirements.



In the margin write Luke 9:23 from one to three times.

You have seen that the term *disciple* is a general term for a committed follower of a teacher or a group, one of Jesus’ twelve apostles, and a follower who meets Jesus’ requirements.

LEARNING THE DISCIPLE’S CROSS

One way you can learn more about what Jesus had in mind for His disciples is to learn the Disciple’s Cross, which is the cornerstone of this study. You can see the complete cross on page 136 and can read the presentation of the Disciple’s Cross on pages 134–36. When you learn the cross thoroughly, you can use it in a variety of ways. It can help you reflect on where you stand in your discipleship. You can use it to witness. You can use it to evaluate your church. Many churches use the Disciple’s Cross to organize their church ministries.

As you proceed through this book, you will study the various elements of the Disciple’s Cross. Each week you will learn additional information. By the end of your study you will be able to explain the cross in your own words and to quote all of the Scriptures that go with it.

One way you can learn more about what Jesus had in mind for His disciples is to learn the Disciple’s Cross.



Begin learning the Disciple’s Cross by drawing a circle, representing you, in the margin. Write *Christ* in the center of the circle. This circle will help you focus on ways Christ is to be at the center of your life.

The empty circle you drew represents your life. It pictures denying all of self for Christ. This means that you lose not your identity but your self-centeredness. No one can become a disciple who is not willing to deny himself or herself. Christ must be the number one priority in your life.

DAILY MASTER COMMUNICATION GUIDE



MATTHEW 6:25-34

What God said to me:

What I said to God:

PUTTING CHRIST FIRST

When Kay Moore, who wrote this book with me, and her husband, Louis, married, they asked their pastor to make their wedding ceremony very personal. The pastor, knowing that their jobs were highly important to both the bride and the groom, wanted them to keep their priorities straight. In their wedding ceremony he wisely cautioned them, "In your marriage your first commitment is to Christ, your second is to each other, your third is to any children who are conceived, and your fourth is to your work."

If someone gave you a similar caution about your priorities, what would be on your list? Do you have a priority above Christ? For some that top priority might be a commitment to a sport. For others that priority might be acquiring material possessions. For still others that priority might be participating in religious activities. Religious activities? you may ask. Doesn't that mean I'm putting Christ first? Not always. Some people can be so involved in "doing church" that they forget the real reason for the activity. Their relationship with Christ may take a back seat to their desire to be recognized for their good works or to meet an inner drive to achieve.

List the three highest priorities in your life.

1.

2.

3.

You cannot become a disciple of Christ if you are not willing to make Him number one on your priority list. Stop and pray, asking God to help you remove any obstacles that keep Him from having first place in your life. What do you need to do to give Him first place? List one action you will take to remove an obstacle to placing Him first in your life.



Begin the practice of reading your Bible daily. Today read Matthew 6:25-34, a passage about priorities. After you have read this passage, complete the Daily Master Communication Guide in the margin.