

MasterLife Together

A DISCIPLESHIP EXPERIENCE FOR SMALL GROUPS

MATT & ALLISON WILLIS

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Matt and Allison Willis met each other in college on an international mission trip. Serving the Lord together began their relationship and has continued to be its foundation and deepest joy for the last twenty years. They currently serve at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where Matt is the Associate Pastor of Missions and Evangelism. They previously served as International Mission Board missionaries for seven years in South Asia with their three children, who are now fourteen, thirteen, and eleven years old. Matt coauthored *Learning to Soar: How to Grow Through Transitions and Trials* (NavPress, 2009) with his granddad Avery Willis. Matt has a master's of divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Allison authored a simplified version of *Be Transformed: Discovering Biblical Solutions to Life's Problems* (SCOPE Ministries International, 2016), which she helped translate into South Asian languages and used to train women overseas. Allison is a registered dietitian with a master's degree in dietetics and has also served as a nutrition counselor. Matt and Allison enjoy spending time outdoors, playing games, and laughing together.

PREFACE

The best resources are not created in a vacuum, but rather as a result of a practical need. This is how my granddad Avery Willis developed the curriculum that came to be known as *MasterLife* (Lifeway, 1980). He served as a missionary in Indonesia during an unprecedented time when two million people came to faith in Christ, and he needed a way to comprehensively disciple a multitude of new believers.

Although admittedly on smaller scale, this new content was birthed in a similar way. As we were discipling groups through *MasterLife*, we saw the need for a version more conducive to a new generation. Concurrently, we were reading the biography written about my granddad's life (*I Aim to Be That Man*, by Sherrie Willis Brown, 2018), which allowed us to be retroactively redisciplined by him.

This is what Granddad said in 1983 about his vision for *MasterLife*: “I’ll tell you what I’m looking for. I’m looking for an army of two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand people who are ready to go anywhere, anytime, and do anything the Lord says to do—whether they’re lay people or clergy—people who are disciples.”

The Lord pressed upon our hearts that Granddad's vision was ours to steward. God showed us how He had been preparing us, even from childhood. We took a leap of faith and reached out to Lifeway. Every subsequent step was met with favor, not because of any merit of our own, but because God was the One who conceived the vision and carried it to completion.

Every day we wrote, we were on our knees begging Him to do the work. A jar of beans we got at my Grandmom's funeral sat on our desk as a reminder that God equips those He calls. God called Avery and Shirley to go to seminary, but they couldn't afford it. They went anyway. Poor church members gave him pounds of beans in lieu of money for preaching revival services. Every time Shirley was about to prepare them because they had nothing left to eat, God would provide something else through their ministry around town. They never had to eat the beans. Granddad kept them where he could see them for the rest of his life as a reminder of the faithfulness of God.

The Lord brought Granddad to heaven during our first term as missionaries, and Grandmom joined him in 2018. We will never forget Granddad's smile or how he managed to be both humble and fiercely competitive at the same time. And we will never forget Grandmom's fervor for Bible study and prayer or her love for the game “42.”

In preparation for writing this content, the Lord led us to read through the Gospels again to explore the way Jesus followed His Father with His entire being—His spirit, soul (mind, will, emotions), and body—and how He did not go it alone. We came away more passionate than ever to make disciples who are all His together. We together crafted the outline and edited each other's writing, somehow managing to do it without marriage counseling! Matt was the primary writer for weeks 2, 10, and 11, and Allison was the primary writer for the rest of the weeks.

We echo Granddad's desire that this resource will catalyze wholehearted disciples who will go anywhere, anytime, and do anything the Lord says to do. And may the Lord find us faithful to do just that in our own lives for the rest of our days.

INTRODUCTION

My 10-inch candlestick would not stand up straight in its 1-inch holder. It kept leaning.

First I tried tape. Then I tried glue. I even tried chewed-up gum. All to no avail.

Finally, it dawned on me: the candle itself was my solution. All I needed to do was light it, hold it upside down over the holder's opening, let it drip a pool of melted wax inside, stick the candle back in, and voilà. My candle was securely straight.

All I needed was right there—I just didn't know it.

God's Word says He has given you everything you need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). Do you ever wonder why it doesn't feel that way?

Does your relationship with God feel disconnected from the rest of your life—like it doesn't overlap with much of your daily reality? Do you love Jesus but find that much of your real life is untouched by Him as Master? Do you feel like God is contained in a compartment inside you, and its door is shut more often than it is open? Have you ever thought, "Is this all there is to the Christian life?" Do you desire to follow Him more fully but know that in reality you are just a part-time Christian? Do you ever feel like you were made for more?

What's missing in your life's puzzle? God says He hasn't withheld any of the pieces from you. Is it possible that you just haven't fit them together yet? Or could you be withholding from Him a piece of you?

We understand that feeling of unsettledness. Moving overseas to serve God in one of the toughest places in the world with our little kids stripped us to our core. And not all at once, but one painful layer at a time over the next seven years we lived there. Then God jolted us back to the States (or so it felt), and we were confronted with our own brokenness. Thus began an intimate healing journey with the Lord that informed this content and continues to this day.

More than a Bible study focused on knowing, this is a transformative discipleship journey focused on being and doing. If you fully engage in it, you will experience God and His people in a way you never have before.

Over the next twelve weeks, you will grasp who you really are and what you are made to do. You will discover what it looks like to follow Jesus with your whole spirit, soul, and body. You will explore the connection between your relationships and your mission. You will find anchors to keep you grounded in God's love. And you will learn rhythms to keep your walk with Him fresh.

More than anything you can do for God, He just wants you—*all* of you. This discipleship experience is your invitation.

GETTING STARTED

FINDING A GROUP

This discipleship experience was created for seekers and/or believers to experience together as a small group. If you have purchased this workbook individually and do not have a group, contact someone at your church or another local church to see if you can start a new group or join an existing one. While individuals can benefit from going through this workbook alone, the experience will be much more transformative if done with a small group as it was designed.

FINDING A RHYTHM

You can expect to spend fifteen to thirty minutes each day, five days a week, investing in this experience. Optional day 6 and 7 passages are provided in case you are already in the habit of meeting with God every day, or would like to begin this habit (which we highly recommend!). The foundation of this discipleship experience involves you spending time with God reflectively in His Word—so you will need a Bible and a journal or notebook in addition to this workbook. We encourage you to have a designated space to have your conversation with the Lord—which we describe in the next section. If possible, have this conversation with Him in the morning. Most of us need a dose of caffeine each morning to get our bodies going. How much more do we need to hear from God every morning before we engage with anyone or anything else?

DAILY CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD

In your journal or notebook, draw a vertical line down the middle of the page, forming two columns. Write *God* at the top of the left column, and *Me* at the top of the right column. Write the date at the left side, along with the passage that you will find at the top of each day's lesson. See the example to the right.

Begin each day by reading the assigned passage (listed at the top of the page under the title of each day). Write what God says to you from His Word in the left column, and then write your response to what He says (in essence, your prayer to Him) in the right column. If you aren't sure what He is saying to you, don't worry—listening to His voice gets easier with practice. Just write something you learned or that stood out to you from the passage, noting the verse number.

GOD	ME
<p>10/11 Luke 5</p> <hr/> <p><i>v. 10 – Don't be afraid. I want to bring other people to Me through your life.</i></p>	<p><i>I will follow You and learn how I can grow as Your witness.</i></p>
<p>10/12 Luke 6</p> <hr/> <p><i>v. 12 – When will you spend an hour or more with Me in prayer?</i></p>	<p><i>Lord, I will gladly spend an hour with You in prayer this Saturday.</i></p>

READING & EXERCISES

After having your daily conversation with God, read the day's content and complete the questions and/or experiences included. One of the experiences you will have each week is memorizing God's Word. For your convenience, verse cards that can be cut out are included at the back of this workbook. At the end of this discipleship experience, you will have memorized twelve verses that will help you follow Jesus more closely.

GROUP SESSIONS

You will meet with your group each week for about one and a half hours to discuss the lesson you completed individually the week prior. You will need to bring this workbook and your journal or notebook to group sessions. The format of group sessions will be the same each week and will include prayer, reviewing the verse you memorized, sharing highlights from your conversations with God, discussing the questions you answered throughout the week, and sharing how you plan to apply what you've learned. You will also preview the next week's lesson together.

Section One

YOUR RELATIONSHIP
WITH GOD

Week One
BEING ALL HIS



“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

MARK 12:30

In this very moment, the God who created you is actively loving you. You are not simply a human being. You are a human being loved by God. His love for you has nothing to do with what you have or haven't done. God is loving you right now because of who He is. God is love (1 John 4:16).

God created you to experience His love and belong to Him. Scripture teaches that you are His masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10). He has engraved you on the palms of His hands (Isaiah 49:16). Your life matters because you matter to the Master.

God's immeasurable love for you is the truest thing about you. You are fully known and fully loved by God. This is your true identity. Satan will relentlessly attack it, just as he first attacked Jesus's identity after He spent forty days in the wilderness. Satan repeatedly said, "If you are the Son of God" prove your identity by doing: Make the stones bread. Throw yourself down. Bow down to me (see Matthew 4:1-11).

Satan will likewise tempt you to prove your identity by what you do for God. He will convince you that you must achieve the relationship you've already received. Jesus didn't give in to the temptation to prove Himself. He rebuked Satan with truth from God's Word and commanded him to flee. Jesus wants you to mimic Him by rooting your identity in the love of God. Only these roots will lead to abundant life in Him.

God's love for you steadily flows and He desires that you soak it up as a personal, experiential reality every single day. The abundance of His love allows you to further love and accept yourself. You are only able to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:30,31b) because God first loved you (1 John 4:19).

The quality of the love you give God directly relates to the quantity of love you've received from Him.

God's love is the foundation of the gospel, so it must be the foundation of your relationship with Him. God's love needs to be received and basked in regularly. The quality of your obedience and the extent of your surrender to Him depend on it.

It is possible to halfheartedly follow God and not love Him. But be assured that you can't truly love Him and not follow Him.

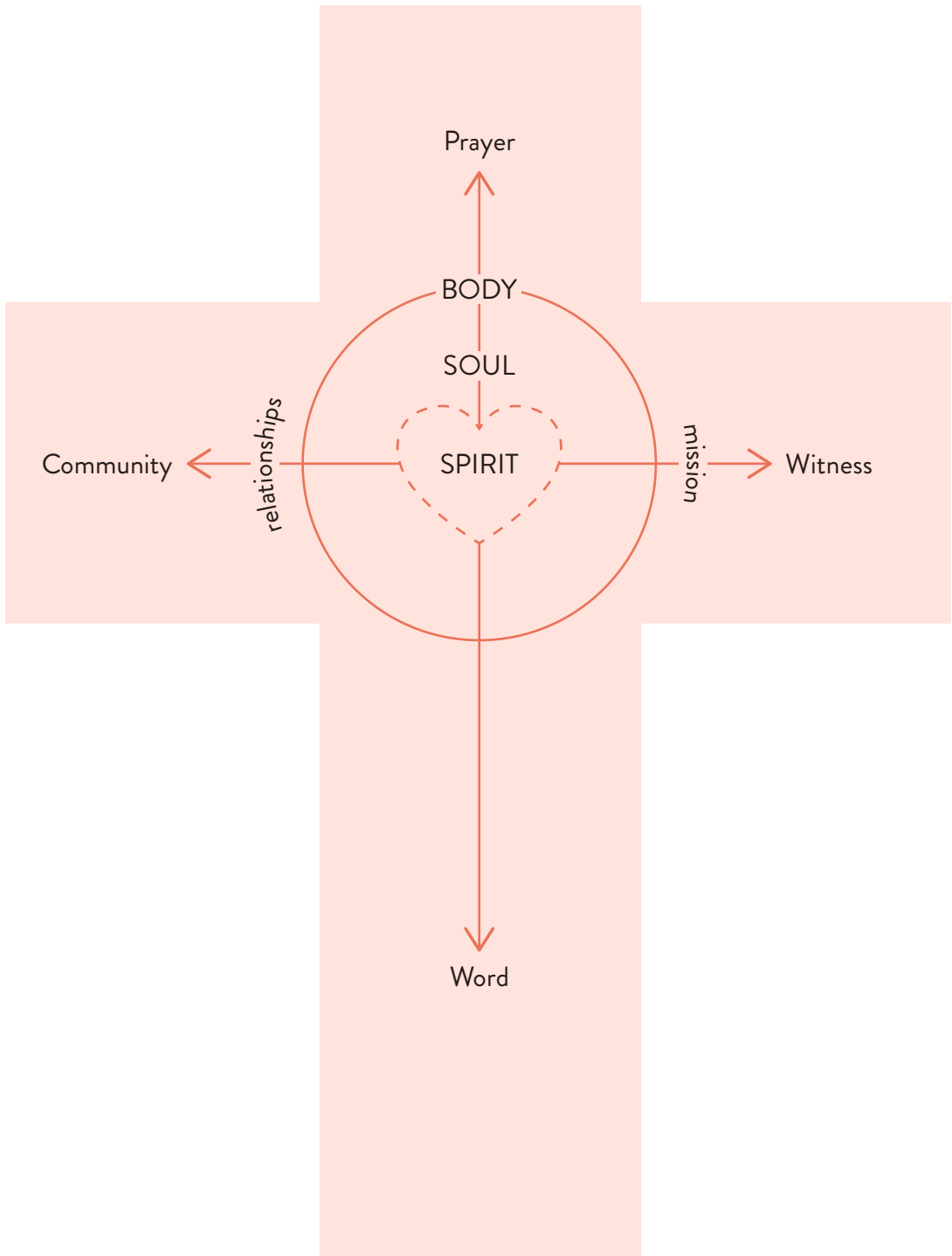
If you're like me, being loved can feel uncomfortable and vulnerable. I am better at giving love than receiving it. But God took the initiative and first loved us, so you and I must receive His love empty-handed, over and over again.

Everything you have you received from God, so what can you even give Him that He doesn't already have? The answer is both simple and radical: all of you. He doesn't want your acts of service, your money, or your time as much as He wants you. All of you—your heart, soul, mind, and strength, as the verse you will memorize this week highlights.

Each week of this journey, you will look at one aspect of the diagram to the right, which will help you conceptualize what it is to be all His. Get ready to explore the God who created you and to figure out how to be an all-in, fully alive participant in His unfolding story.

PRAYER

Father, I thank You for loving me even in this very moment. This week, show me all the ways You are actively pursuing me with Your love. Lord, drive out my fear, and give me the desire to belong fully to You. Show me how to surrender my whole being to You, and give my group and me the courage to do so as we journey together. In Jesus's name, amen.



Day One

BEING IN HIS STORY

Today's passage for your conversation with God: Romans 11:33-36

Begin today by reading the above passage and journaling what God says to you and what you say back to God. Refer to the instructions on pages 8-9 for more details.

Like all good stories, God's story begins at the beginning.

In the beginning, only God existed. Nothing else. He created the universe and everything in by speaking it into existence day by day for five days. Then on the sixth day of creation God made man and woman and fashioned them "in His likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Human beings are the only thing God has ever made in His image and likeness. He loved the people He created and lived in peace and a perfect relationship with them in a beautiful garden.

Life continued this way until Adam and Eve broke their relationship with God by disobeying Him. Their sin separated them from their Creator, and God banished them from the garden. Adam and Eve had children, and their children had children who later had children—all of these children and all people since have shared a sinful nature that turns their hearts toward their own desires and away from God.

But God's love never ceased and He still desired to be in a relationship with the people He created. So He made a promise to a man named Abraham to give him many descendants through which all the peoples on earth would be blessed.

Abraham believed God, and because of his belief, God restored their relationship. God kept His promise to Abraham, and his descendants were numerous. Some of them followed God, but most of them wanted to rule over their own lives just like Adam and Eve had done. They did evil and suffered its consequences. But God's love for them never stopped, so He sent spokesmen to tell the people He made how to be restored to Him.

One spokesman was named Isaiah. He told them that their evil was sin against God but God would send them a Savior who would take all of their sins on Himself. Isaiah taught this Savior would be beaten and killed because of their sins but promised them that God would raise Him back to life. Through the Savior, Abraham's descendants could be restored to a relationship with God. After hearing this message, Abraham's people began expectantly waiting for this promised Savior—and they waited and waited.

God kept His promise. Years later, He sent this promised Savior—His Son, Jesus. Many people did not recognize who Jesus was, but many people did. Jesus traveled around teaching and performing miracles and healings. Jesus came so that they could have everlasting peace with God. While some believed and followed, many violently opposed Him and convinced the government to have Him executed. Just as God had said through Isaiah, Jesus was beaten and

killed—He was broken to end brokenness for all who follow Him. Three days later, God raised Him back to life in victory over sin and death!

Jesus appeared to His followers, proving that He was alive again, and gave them a mission. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth,” Jesus said (Acts 1:8). He sent His followers into the world to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything He had commanded them.

The day finally came when Jesus returned to heaven. He ascended into the clouds as His disciples watched. Two angels appeared and told them Jesus would one day come back the same way He left.

From that moment on, Jesus’s followers began expectantly waiting for Him to return as they went about the work He had entrusted to them—being His witnesses and making disciples to the ends of earth. The disciples made disciples, and their disciples made disciples who later made more disciples. One day, one of them witnessed to you. You were chosen by a God who loves you and given the same mission as all the disciples who came before.

And this takes us right up to the present moment in His story. Seems like a good spot to pause.

**How have the experiences of your life led you to participate in God’s love story?
Write your thoughts and feelings below.**

Spend a few minutes speaking to God and asking Him to show you the specific ways He wants you to be involved in His story. Record your thoughts below.

**Today’s passage summarizes some truths about God and His story.
Fill in the blanks for Romans 11:36:**

“For _____ Him and _____ Him and _____ Him are all things.”

Practice this week’s memory verse by saying it and/or writing it a few times:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

MARK 12:30

Day Two

GOD'S BEING

Today's passage for your conversation with God: Colossians 1:15-23

Read the above passage, then journal your conversation with God. Continue this pattern each day throughout this discipleship experience.

The Author of history is a God whose love you can trust.

Jesus was with God in the beginning (John 1). This is clear in Genesis 1:26 where God said, “Let us make man in *our* image, in *our* likeness” (italics mine). In His very being, God the Father exists in a supernatural three-in-one relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16-17). This relationship is known as the Trinity and is inherent to God's being. Since before time began God has been in relationship with Himself. And since you were created to reflect God's image, you were created to be a part of this eternal relationship with God.

Love is also essential to God's being. In fact, the Bible tells us that God Himself is love (1 John 4:16). The relationship in the Trinity is a loving relationship. God loves and delights in Jesus (Isaiah 42:1). It shouldn't come as a surprise that God created you to experience His love and delight.

You saw in today's passage that Jesus is the exact likeness of the unseen God—the visible representation of the invisible. The fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form in Jesus (Colossians 2:9), who said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). Jesus is fully human and fully God, and Jesus saw God as Father and taught His disciples to as well. Jesus and the Father have eternally existed in a perfect relationship.

The word *father* can evoke a wide range of emotions. The ones you feel are probably rooted in your relationship with your earthly father. Earthly fathers can be attentive and affectionate or they can be aloof, accusing, or even abusive. Even the best earthly fathers are far from perfect.

Describe who your earthly father is/was to you.

Envision the most wonderful earthly father you can imagine. Describe him here.

No matter what kind of earthly father you have had, your heavenly Father wants to refine or redeem your experience of father. David tells us a lot about our Father God in Psalm 103: He is compassionate, gracious, righteous, and sovereign. He heals, redeems, satisfies, renews, and forgives. He is full of loving-kindness.

You can better understand the character and heart of your Father God by studying the life of Jesus, who said, “The one who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). You can best see Jesus through reading the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—where you will hear the most important words Jesus spoke and discover the most important events in His life. But don’t miss out on the richness of what’s written between the lines. Notice His nature, His being—His personality, His emotions, His desires. The way He pursues conversation and relationships. The way He spends His time. There is much more to a person than what he or she says and does, and Jesus is no exception.

Jesus has a body, soul, and spirit just like you do. In Luke 2:52, you read that as a child, Jesus “grew in wisdom [soul] and stature [body], and in favor with God [spirit] and man.” Before going to the cross, Jesus told His closest friends, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death” (Matthew 26:38). Before His death, you can again see these distinct parts of His being as He says from His soul, “It is finished,” and then bowed His head (body) and gave up His spirit (John 19:30).

Jesus gave His spirit, soul, and body to His Father (Luke 23:46). But He didn’t stop there. Jesus entrusted and released His earthly relationships to God. In His last recorded prayer, Jesus told His Father, “I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do” (John 17:4). The task God entrusted to Jesus became His mission.

Jesus fully gave His spirit, soul, body, relationships, and mission to glorify His Father. He desires that you do the same.

Practice this week’s memory verse by saying it and/or writing it a few times:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

MARK 12:30

Day Three

RECEIVING GOD

Today's passage for your conversation with God: John 13:3-17

The God who created you by and for His love has a gift for you—He is reaching out to give you Himself. The catch is that to accept the gift, you have to receive all of it. It's all or nothing. God is a generous giver, but you cannot pick and choose the parts of Him you want. God is a whole package; He does not come with options.

Until you receive life, you are spiritually dead because of sin. Your sinful nature has made you dead on arrival, and you need to be brought back to life. Simply put, sin is anything in you that misses the mark of His perfection. Because of Adam and Eve's original sin and the curse it brought, you've needed a new spirit from the time of your conception. Jesus died on a cross to pay the price for your sin. In His resurrection, Jesus offers you the chance to become a new creation through His Holy Spirit living inside of you (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Receiving life from God is what the Bible calls salvation, but salvation is more than just a thing—it's a Person.

Jesus stands before you with His arms stretched wide, but you have to actively receive Him. In fact, you were made to receive. Like a newborn whose needs are met through its parents care, God's love must similarly be received. But as you grow older, receiving love and care from others can be difficult.

As you read in today's passage, Peter found it hard to receive God's love. Days before Jesus's death, Jesus gathered His twelve closest disciples to show them the full extent of His love (John 13:1). While they were being served a feast, Jesus got up and began to wash and then dry each of their feet. Peter was so uncomfortable he initially refused—until Jesus told him, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me” (v. 8). Jesus did not need or want Peter's help. He wanted Peter to receive the full extent of His love. He wants you to receive it, too.

Receiving God involves opening yourself and embracing Him. You will first need to admit to Him that you are a sinner and need a Savior. Then you must believe Jesus died to save you from your sin and commit to making Him Lord of your life. You must make the decision to turn from the path of sin you have been on and walk on the path of life. The Bible calls this process of turning from sin and toward life in God *repentance*. In taking these steps, you will receive Jesus and His embrace. Then the Holy Spirit will immediately come to reside in you forever and empower you to be a disciple.

I received Jesus when I was nine years old. I remember feeling mixed emotions—comforted at receiving eternal salvation and nervous as I made my choice public.

Somewhere along the way, though, I forgot that the foundation of my relationship with God was receiving His ever-present love. Jesus told His followers, “If you love me, keep my

commands” (John 14:15). Somehow, I started reading it backward. I got pretty good at obeying Him—at least in the big things. But I followed Him with my obedience before my love. I had stopped receiving. Giving was more natural and comfortable for me. We also see examples of this in Scripture.

Mary and Martha were sisters who were Jesus’s close friends. Martha invited Jesus into her home and got busy preparing a meal to serve Him. Mary, on the other hand, sat at Jesus’s feet, just listening to all He said. Martha was angry at Mary for not lifting a finger to help prepare the meal. Jesus responded, “Martha, Martha . . . you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41-42). Being with Jesus was better than Martha’s doing. Receiving Him and all He offers is the one thing you need—especially when giving feels more comfortable.

What do you need to receive from God? Look over what you wrote down and take time to receive it!

Once received, the kingdom of God begins to work itself in our lives like a small amount of yeast kneaded into dough (Luke 13:21). What percent of your life has been thoroughly affected by Him? Mark the spectrum between 0-100%.

0%

100%

If you have never received God’s gift of eternal life with Him through salvation from your sins, do you want to ask Him to save you today? To do so right now (or later), you need to believe Jesus died for your sins and that God raised Him from the dead, then confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9). If you just made this decision to receive God’s salvation, write down at least one person you will tell here:

If you are interested in making this most important decision of your life but need some help, ask a follower of Jesus whom you trust, such as your group leader.

Practice this week’s memory verse:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

MARK 12:30

Day Four

GIVING YOURSELF

Today's passage for your conversation with God: 1 Corinthians 13

Try to quote Mark 12:30 aloud right now. If you can't, keep practicing until you can:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

Don't you wish loving God was as easy as checking a box? It is no coincidence that the two commands He says are most important cannot be fully accomplished or completed. As long as you are still alive, you have more love to give. Love requires an ongoing investment. It is described in today's passage as “the most excellent” and greatest gift (1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:13).

Have you noticed that our verse this week uses “all” four times? Love is not easy to measure, but the measure Jesus gave was “all.” Giving just a part of Himself would not have been perfect love. Loving someone well requires a sacrifice of all of oneself. And that's what God wants from you. No one else can give God what He wants from you.

C.S. Lewis said, “Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death . . . submit with every fiber of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will ever be really yours . . . look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.”¹

I have three children whom I love. I cannot give them my love without also giving them myself. I cannot give a hug that doesn't include my body. If my son Joshua, whose love language is gifts,² finds a treasure wrapped in a box in the forest, will he feel loved? Happy—yes. But loved? Probably not. However, if I wrap this same treasure in a box and give it to him, will he feel loved? Absolutely. The difference is me.

To love God requires we give all of ourselves to Him. He made all of you to be His. The Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper said it well: “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’”³

The title *lord* means someone who has ultimate power, authority, and influence. God is Lord over the entire universe. When you receive Jesus as both your Savior and Lord, you can be sure He stands ready to reign over every aspect of your life.

**Jesus has domain over every area of your life whether you acknowledge it or not.
How much of yourself are you giving to Jesus right now?**

0%

100%

If you have not made Jesus Lord and Savior of your life, what is holding you back?

Humans are gloriously complex beings. The apostle Paul gives a helpful insight into the parts of our being as he prays for the Thessalonian church, saying, “May God . . . sanctify you *through and through*. May your *whole* spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23, italics mine). The concept of humans having a spirit and soul as well as a body has been discussed for many years. While scientists and philosophers will never agree, it is widely recognized that humans are more than just physical bodies.

In the New Testament’s original language of Greek, the word that Paul used for spirit, *pneuma*, means “that which gives the body life.” The Greek word Paul used for soul is *psyche*—which is the root used in the word *psychology*—and can be defined as the seat of your desires, feelings, affections, and aversions.

How do these words compare to the ones used in this week’s memory verse for heart, soul, mind, and strength? The word for soul in Mark 12 is the exact same one Paul used. The Greek word for heart—*kardia*, where we get the word *cardiologist* from—means “inmost part.” The word for mind—*dianoia*—means “thoughts,” and the word for strength is *ischys* and means “force,” “power,” or “ability.”

In other words, Jesus says in Mark 12:30, “Love the Lord your God with all your inmost being, with all your desires and feelings, with all your thoughts, and with all your ability.” And Paul prays that the Thessalonian church will be sanctified through and through so that their spirits, desires and feelings, and tangible bodies will be kept blameless until Christ returns.

Throughout this discipleship experience, we will be processing the diagram on page 15 that will help you conceptualize being all His. Everything inside the circle represents you. The solid circle outline represents your physical body, which houses the three parts of your being. Your soul and spirit are equally important parts of you, but are without a physical boundary, and are thus separated by a dotted heart. Your spirit—your connection to God—is the inmost part of you. Your soul—your mind, will, and emotions—connects your spirit and body. Your relationships and what you spend time doing—or your mission—flow out of your being and further shape who you are.

Rank the three parts of your being in the order you invest in them by writing spirit, soul, and body in the blanks next to the numbers they correspond with. (For example, if you prioritize your relationship with God above everything else, you would write spirit beside number 1.)

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Which do you tend to prioritize most in your life: your relationships or your mission?

Which do you invest in most: your being (your body, soul, and spirit) or your doing (relationships and mission)?

Jesus said, “If you are filled with light, with no dark corners, then your whole life will be radiant, as though a floodlight were filling you with light” (Luke 11:36, NLT).

Describe someone you know or can imagine whose whole life radiantly shines with the love of God.

Write out a prayer, asking God to help you give any dark corners of yourself to Him and for Him to begin illuminating all of you.

Continue to practice this week’s memory verse:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

MARK 12:30

Day Five

BEING HIS DISCIPLE

Today's passage for your conversation with God: Luke 9:18-27

The word *disciple* means someone who follows a leader. As you saw in today's passage, Jesus told His disciples that those who follow Him must deny themselves and daily take up their cross. Then He said, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it" (v. 24).

If you had to identify yourself using just one word, what would it be?

Maybe the word you wrote is tied to your family, ethnicity, age, or gender, or maybe it's a word that hints at an interest, passion, or skill of yours. Did you write or did it occur to you to write *disciple*? If not, I hope that by the end of *MasterLife Together* you will.

Following Jesus means relinquishing control of your temporary life in view of your eternal life with God. Dietrich Bonhoeffer aptly said, "When Christ calls a man he bids him come and die."⁴ To be clear, your salvation comes by grace through faith and not by your own works (Ephesians 2:8-10). But don't confuse the means with the end: you are saved by grace for the purpose of following Jesus. You weren't saved by good works—but for good works. Your salvation as well as the good works you do both bring Him glory. The idea that after you are saved it's optional whether or not you are a disciple is not biblical. Jesus saved you to be His disciple. It is not possible to truly love Jesus and not be His disciple.

In Luke 7:36-50, we read the story of a woman who loved Jesus. She learned that Jesus was eating at a Pharisee's house nearby, so she followed Him there. She came up behind Him weeping, wetting His feet with her tears. She then used her hair to dry His feet, kissed them, and poured an expensive jar of her own perfume onto them.

This woman, Mary, was described as a sinful woman, but loved Jesus with total abandon. It was not just her expensive perfume that she gave Him but also herself—her tears, her hair, her kisses. Jesus responded by affirming that she had done "a beautiful thing" and that wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she did would be told in memory of her.

Mary loved Jesus, so she followed Him as His disciple. Simon, the man who had invited Jesus to his home, was religious but not a true disciple. Jesus admonished Simon, "Her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little" (Luke 7:47).

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP is a personal love relationship with Jesus Christ that results in a lifelong journey of obedience. As you follow Christ, He transforms you to be like Him; He changes your values to kingdom values; and He involves you in His mission in your home, church, and world. As His disciple, you will progressively know Him more deeply, obey Him more quickly, reflect Him more accurately, and invite others into His kingdom more regularly.

This doesn't mean you don't have bad days or go through some valleys, but it does mean you are increasingly walking closer with Jesus.

Following Jesus is following a Person. Several years ago, my father-in-law Randy led a mission team to Sonora, Mexico. Sonora is largely desert and on moonless nights, it is can't-see-your-hand-in-front-of-your-face dark. They were driving from one town to another in a caravan of four vehicles along winding, mountainous roads with no guardrails. Driving the second car in the caravan, Randy quickly realized that if he did not stay close to the lead car, he would soon be on his own. When he focused on the leader, however, he did not have to focus on the road. When the lead car slowed, he slowed. When it turned, he turned. He glanced at the road, but his focus was on staying close to the lead vehicle. So it is with Jesus. If you stay close to Him, you can take your eyes off your circumstances, confidently trusting that He is leading you well.

As you follow Jesus, you will become fully alive and experience a deep satisfaction in Him, which will then enable you to bless others to the greatest extent possible. As John Piper has said, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him."⁵ Following Jesus is an active pursuit that is fueled by your love for Him. It requires sacrifice, but He is worth all of you and more.

How thoroughly have you surrendered the parts of yourself to Jesus? How fully are you following Him? Take the following inventory to help you discern opportunities for your growth over the course of this discipleship experience.

Rank the following on a scale of 1 to 4. Write your number next to each statement below.

1	2	3	4
never or disagree	occasionally or somewhat disagree	usually or somewhat agree	always or fully agree

___ I not only know but also experience the unconditional love of Jesus on a daily basis.

___ Spending time in God's Word is like eating food—I need it every day to sustain me.

- ___ Communicating with God through prayer comes easily to me and is something I do throughout each day.
- ___ I experience the power of the Holy Spirit as He lives through me on a daily basis.
- ___ I regularly bring to God any thoughts and desires I have that are displeasing to Him, so He can renew my mind with truth.
- ___ When I experience unpleasant emotions, I share them with God and let Him comfort me and reorient me.
- ___ What I consume through my mouth and eyes and how I move and rest my body show honor to God.
- ___ Hallmarks of my closest relationships are love, forgiveness, and healthy communication.
- ___ I regularly and authentically engage with a small group of Christ-followers for Bible study, encouragement, and accountability.
- ___ How I spend my time, money, and talents pleases God.
- ___ God has made me His witness, and I regularly engage in this role He has given me.
- ___ A deep desire I have is to bring glory to God. I seek to steward my whole life well because I know I am significant in His story.

Now add the totals for each number to get your total score and write it here: _____.
The highest possible score is 48.

Lastly, circle or highlight the statements that represent the top three areas of growth for you. These correspond with the twelve topics you will be exploring in this discipleship experience. Now invite God to transform you in these areas.

Quote this week's verse, Mark 12:30. Then, pray it aloud to Him like this:

Father, You are my Lord and my God. Help me to love You with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, and with all my strength. In Jesus's name I pray, amen.

Optional passages for more conversations with God:

Day 6: Luke 7:36-50
Day 7: Psalm 103