

6-SESSION BIBLE STUDY

MasterLife

I

The Disciple's

CROSS

AVERY T. WILLIS JR.



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Lifeway Press®
Brentwood, Tennessee

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ISBN 979-8-3845-4009-0 • Item 005853823

Dewey decimal classification: 248.4 • Subject heading: DISCIPLESHIP

Our deepest thanks go to Kay Moore for her skills and insights in collaboration on the manuscripts of the *MasterLife* series.

Cover painting: Ivan Shishkin, Forest. Spruce Trees, 1897, Vyazniki History and Art Museum, Vyazniki, Russia.

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Printed in the United States of America

Adult Ministry Publishing • Lifeway Christian Resources
200 Powell Place, Suite 100 • Brentwood, TN 37027-7707

CONTENTS

About the Author	4
Introduction	5
How to Study This Book	9
Group Covenant	11
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WEEK 1: Spend Time with the Master	12
WEEK 2: Live in the Word	38
WEEK 3: Pray in Faith	66
WEEK 4: Fellowship with Believers.	94
WEEK 5: Witness to the World	120
WEEK 6: Minister to Others	150
<hr/>	
The Disciple's Cross	178
MasterTime	184
Map of Unreached Peoples.	185
Hearing the Word	186
Prayer List	188

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

AVERY T. WILLIS JR., the author and developer of *MasterLife*, served as the senior vice president of overseas operations at the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention until his retirement in 2004. The *MasterLife* series, originally published in 1980, has been used by more than half a million people in the United States and has been translated into more than fifty languages for use by untold thousands around the world. Willis authored many books, including *Indonesian Revival: Why Two Million Came to Christ*, *The Biblical Basis of Missions*, *MasterBuilder: Multiplying Leaders*, *BibleGuide to Discipleship and Doctrine*, and several books in Indonesian.

Willis served for ten years as a pastor in Oklahoma and Texas and for fourteen years as a missionary to Indonesia, during which he served for six years as the president of the Indonesian Baptist Theological Seminary. Later, he served as the director of the Adult Department of the Discipleship and Family Development Division, the Sunday School Board (now Lifeway Christian Resources) of the Southern Baptist Convention, where he introduced the Lay Institute for Equipping (LIFE), a series of in-depth discipleship courses. Willis went to be with the Lord in 2010.

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. In these ways, *MasterLife* will enable you to discover the satisfaction of following Christ as His disciple and the joy of that relationship with Him. *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 twenty-four-week discipleship process. Completing all four six-week courses in MasterLife will provide you with 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.

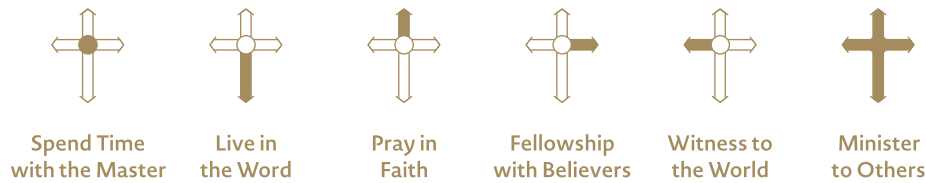
The *MasterLife* process involves six elements. Each element is essential to your study of *MasterLife*.

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 the Walk with the Master checklist 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. 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 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 twenty to thirty 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 icons appear before various assignments:



These icons 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 the Walk with the Master checklist at the beginning of each week's material. The discipline icons 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. Set aside a portion of your study period for memory work. 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 and mark off any activities you have completed in the Walk with the Master checklist. 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 183, 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.

ABIDING IN CHRIST

You will complete this activity during your group session after week 1 of *MasterLife*. This Bible study will help you understand what it means to abide in Christ and help you commit to a life of abiding in Christ. Read John 15:1-17. Then, complete the following questionnaire to assess where you are as you begin *MasterLife*.

I find John 15:1-17 to be:

- Challenging Confusing
- Comforting Scary
- Refreshing Restrictive
- 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?

Christ says that if I am to abide in His love, I must keep His commandments. That makes me feel like:

- 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:

- Thankful
- Inadequate
- Overjoyed
- Strengthened
- Defeated
- Confident
- Overwhelmed
- Indifferent
- Enthusiastic

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 ...

GROUP 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 member of this *MasterLife* group, I make a commitment to:

- Acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord of my life each day.
- Attend all group sessions unless providentially hindered.
- Spend from twenty to thirty minutes a day as needed to complete all assignments.
- Have a daily quiet time.
- Faithfully fill out the Live in the Word guide as I study Scripture daily.
- 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. (List their names below.)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

SIGNATURE

DATE



MasterLife

Week 1

SPEND TIME
with the
MASTER

MEMORY VERSE

“I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.”

JOHN 15:5

WALK WITH THE MASTER

Complete these activities to develop the six disciplines.



SPEND TIME WITH THE MASTER

- Have a quiet time each day. Check the days you have a quiet time this week:

- Monday ○ Tuesday ○ Wednesday
- Thursday ○ Friday ○ Saturday ○ Sunday



LIVE IN THE WORD

- Read the Bible every day. Write what God says to you and what you say to God.
- Memorize John 15:5.



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 Map of Unreached Peoples on page 185 to pray for people throughout the world.



FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS

- Get better acquainted with a group member.



WITNESS TO THE WORLD

- Begin developing Christian habits (e.g., daily prayer, Bible study) that will form and empower you to show your love of God to the world.



MINISTER TO OTHERS

- At the end of the week, tell someone what you have learned about the center of the Disciple's Cross.

THIS WEEK'S GOAL

Evaluate your discipleship and focus on Christ as the center of your life.

Day 1

THE FIRST PRIORITY

Are you going to be
a disciple who gives
everything to Christ?

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 a 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. Luke 9:23 says:

*“If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself,
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: “For the eyes of the LORD roam throughout the earth to show himself strong for those who are wholeheartedly devoted 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.

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

D. L. MOODY

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.” 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. What three individuals or groups are identified as having disciples?

- 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 is very specific about why Jesus called these apostles.

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

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

Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. People came and asked him, “Why do John’s disciples and the Pharisees’ disciples fast, but your disciples do not fast?”

MARK 2:18

He appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, to send them out to preach ...

MARK 3:14

THE DISCIPLE'S CROSS

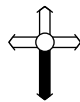
Now great crowds were traveling with him. So he turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, and even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

LUKE 14:25-27

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 Luke 14:25-27 in the margin. Write in your own words what Jesus did when people began to follow 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 also states those requirements.



Look up Luke 9:23 in your Bible and write it in the margin. This verse is foundational for MasterLife.

You have seen that the term disciple is a general term for a committed follower of a teacher or a group, one of Jesus's twelve apostles, and a follower who meets Jesus's 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 183 and can read the presentation of the Disciple's Cross on pages 178–183. 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 quote all of the Scriptures that go with it.



Begin learning the Disciple's Cross by drawing a circle, representing you, in the margin. Write Christ in the center. 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 top priority in your life.

Day 2
UNDER CHRIST'S CONTROL

Jesus's followers must love Him more than any other person, possession, or purpose.

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, and even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. [...] In the same way, therefore, every one of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple."

LUKE 14:26-27,33

You may believe that you are unusual if you struggle with the issue of priorities. Your family, your job, and other responsibilities demand a great deal of your time. Maybe you think that because previous generations had simpler lives, it was easier for them to focus on Christ and to meet the requirements for discipleship.

If that was true, then why was it necessary for Jesus to remind His disciples, who lived two thousand years ago, that they must give Him supreme loyalty? In Luke 14, Jesus said His followers must love Him more than any other person, possession, or purpose.

Read the Scripture passage in the margin. Circle the phrases that show Christ must have priority over the following areas of life. Draw a line from the phrase of the passage to its corresponding area. The first one is done for you.

- Person**
- Possession**
- Purpose**

Clearly, these areas were concerns in Jesus's day just as they are in ours. In the previous exercise, the other correct answers are:

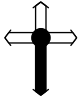
- Possession: "Every one of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple."
- Purpose: "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."

The highest purpose is to bear one's cross, which glorifies God. One of the best ways to express cross bearing is by voluntary commitment to kingdom work that you know is costly.

A DISCIPLE'S PRIORITIES

Christ's disciples had to learn gradually, just as we do. His followers sometimes put their own selfish needs and concerns above Him. Two of them chose sleep over honoring His request to stay awake and pray with Him in the garden of Gethsemane. They argued about who would be chief in His kingdom. When Jesus was arrested, His followers fled, and one of the closest to Him denied Him. Who was the disciples' first priority on such occasions?

But Jesus never gave up on the disciples, and after His death and resurrection, their lives changed dramatically. Acts 4:18-37 shows that His disciples loved Him more than any other person, possession, or purpose in their lives. Jesus never stopped working with them to transform them into His own character. Like them, you can begin to grow now, no matter in what stage of discipleship you find yourself.



Continue the practice of reading your Bible daily. Read Acts 4:18-37 today and ask God to speak to you. Then, complete the Live in the Word guide in the margin. Pray about how you will respond to Him.

Acts 4:18-37 indicates that the disciples loved Christ more than any other person, possession, or purpose. Can you say this about your relationship with Christ? Apply this passage to your life. List anyone or anything that presently takes priority over Christ in your life.

Person:

Possession:

Purpose:

As you began to draw the Disciple’s Cross on day 1, you learned that Christ should have the main priority in your life, filling up the entire circle of your life as you focus on Him. This priority is necessary for a lifelong, obedient relationship with Him.

CHRIST AT THE CENTER

Randy prided himself on the work he did at church. Each Saturday, he set up chairs for the Sunday worship service. He served as the chairman of a church committee, taught a weekly Bible study, and helped at all youth events. At least four nights a week, he was involved in a project at church. Randy thought that if he did enough at church, people would appreciate and compliment him. When people told Randy that they admired him for his diligent church efforts, he beamed with pride. Soon, Randy depended so much on others’ praise of him that he forgot the real reason for his service. Randy thought that he was being obedient to Christ by his faithful church service, but his priorities had become misplaced, making his relationship with Christ secondary.

LIVE IN THE WORD

ACTS 4:18-37

What God said to me:

What I said to God:

If Randy drew a circle representing his life, whose name would likely be in the center of the circle?

What seems to be the motivation behind Randy's acts of service?

Realizing that the focus of our lives is on self instead of on Christ can be a startling revelation.

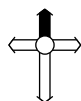
In the case study about Randy, what looked like service from obedience to Christ was actually service for self. Instead of doing good deeds in Christ's name to serve others, Randy served to gain the approval of others. It could be said that Randy, instead of Christ, was at the center of his circle. Realizing that the focus of our lives is on self instead of on Christ can be a startling revelation, but it is very important to be honest with yourself and with God about this matter.

Stop and pray, asking God to show you ways other persons, possessions, or purposes motivate you instead of your love for Him.

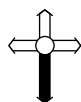
Who or what motivates you?

If you listed anything or anyone besides your love for Jesus Christ, confess in prayer that your life is controlled by impure desires. Then, list the steps you will take to give Christ control of your life.

To be Christ's disciple, you need to surrender control to Him in every area of life. *MasterLife* will help you with this process.



Pray for each member of your *MasterLife* group by name. Refer to your Group Covenant on page 11 to recall group members' names.



Continue memorizing this week's Scripture-memory verse, John 15:5. Write it in the margin, then read it aloud.

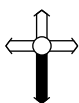
Day 3

CONNECTED TO THE VINE

So far, so good, you may think. I want to have Jesus at the center of my life. I want to adjust my relationship with anyone, anything, or any purpose that takes priority over Him. But I get distracted. I get busy. I forget about Him. I sometimes wait to call on Him until I'm at the end of my rope. How can I allow Him to be the first priority in my life so that I turn to Him first? How can I have a personal, lifelong, obedient relationship with Him?

REMAINING IN CHRIST

The secret of discipleship is lordship. When you truly acknowledge Christ as Lord in all areas of your life, He lives in you in the fullness of His Spirit. He provides what you need to be like Him and to do His will.



In the margin, write out John 15:5, your Scripture-memory verse for this week. Then, complete this sentence:

Without Jesus's living in you and your living in Him, you can do _____ to bear fruit.

You may try to make it on your own. You may try your own remedies and the world's remedies. You may do good deeds to satisfy your ego or to please others. But ultimately, the victory is His. You can do nothing to bear fruit without Him.

Jesus said three things will characterize your life when He lives in you and you live in Him. Read the Scriptures in the margin. Match those three things with the appropriate verses.

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| _____ 1. Luke 6:46 | a. Obedience |
| _____ 2. John 15:8 | b. Love |
| _____ 3. John 13:34-35 | c. Fruit |

When He lives in you and you live in Him, obedience, love, and fruit are apparent to persons around you. The correct answers are (1) a, (2) c, (3) b. Remember these three things by putting them in sequence: Love produces obedience, and obedience produces fruit.

"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and don't do the things I say?"
LUKE 6:46

"My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples."
JOHN 15:8

"I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
JOHN 13:34-35



LIFE IN CHRIST

How do you abide in the Vine, as your Scripture-memory verse emphasizes? How do you make Christ the center of your Christian life? Consistently devote part of each day to a quiet time so that you can spend time with the Father and can stay attached to the Vine. Shut out all distractions and totally turn over that portion of your day to Him. If you do not already do so, begin having a daily quiet time to stay in touch with God on a regular, consistent basis.

The two things that will help you grow most as a Christian are a quiet time and Scripture memory. Part of discipleship is setting aside from fifteen to twenty minutes every day to spend with Jesus Christ, who is at the center of your life.

Here are guidelines for having a consistent quiet time. As you read, write decisions about your personal quiet time.

HOW TO HAVE A QUIET TIME

1. Make a personal quiet time the top priority of your day.

- Select a time to spend with God that fits your schedule. Usually, morning is preferable, but you may want or need to choose another time.

My quiet time is/will be _____ every day.

2. Prepare the night before.

- If your quiet time is in the morning, set your alarm. If it is difficult for you to wake up, plan to exercise, bathe, dress, and eat before your quiet time.
- Select a place where you can be alone. Gather materials, such as your Bible, notebook, and a pen or a pencil, and put them in the place selected so that you will not waste time in the morning.

The place for my quiet time is/will be _____.

3. Develop a balanced plan of Bible reading and prayer.

- Pray for guidance during your quiet time.
- Follow a systematic plan to read your Bible. This course suggests passages of Scripture for you to read each day. Later, I hope that you will develop your own plan. You

may want to follow the one provided in *Day by Day in God's Kingdom: A Discipleship Journal*.²

- Make notes of what God says to you through His Word (use the Live in the Word guide).
- Pray in response to the Scriptures you have read.
- As you pray, use various components of prayer. For example, using the acronym ACTS—adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication—helps you remember the components.

Write the components of prayer:

A
C
T
S

4. Be persistent until you are consistent.

- Strive for consistency rather than for length of time spent. Try to have a few minutes of quiet time every day rather than long devotional periods every other day.
- Expect interruptions. Satan tries to prevent you from spending time with God. He fears even the weakest Christians who are on their knees. Plan around interruptions rather than being frustrated by them.

Check the days this week when you have a quiet time.

- Monday Tuesday Wednesday
 Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

5. Focus on the Person you are meeting rather than on the habit of having the quiet time.

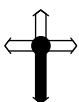
- If you scheduled a meeting with the person you admire most, you would not allow anything to stand in your way. Meeting God is even more important. He created you with a capacity for fellowship with Him, and He saved you to bring about that fellowship.

LIVE IN THE WORD

LUKE 10:38-42

What God said to me:

What I said to God:



For today's quiet time, read Luke 10:38-42. Then, write your responses in the Live in the Word guide in the margin.

LEARNING THE DISCIPLE'S CROSS

Now, focus on the Disciple's Cross. Life in Christ is Christ living in you. John 15:5 says: "I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me." What can you do without abiding in Christ? Nothing!



Again, draw a circle in the margin. Write *Christ* in the center, and under *Christ*, write *John 15:5* so that you will remember this central Scriptural premise of discipleship.

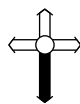
Christ said that He is the Vine and we are the branches. The branches are part of the Vine. We are part of Christ. He wants to live through us.

Is this the kind of life you would like to have? **Yes** **No**

Describe actions you need to take for Christ to live in you like that.

You may have answered something like this: *I would need to stop watching TV late at night so that I could have a quiet time at bedtime or could get up earlier and have a quiet time in the morning. Or I would need to give up certain bad habits so that I would be a better example of Christ living in me. No matter how you answered, remember Christ's admonition in John 15:5: "you can do nothing without me." It does not say that you can do some things on your own. Ultimately, you can do nothing without Him.*

Stop and pray, asking God to help you remove stumbling blocks from your life that keep you from staying connected to Him.

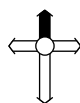


Work on this week's Scripture-memory verse, John 15:5. Try to say the verse aloud from memory.

Memorizing Scripture
is vital to mastering
life in Christ.

Learning your memory verse is an important part of *MasterLife* because memorizing Scripture is vital to mastering life in Christ. You can recall memorized verses when you need them to strengthen you and to fight temptation.

You also abide in Christ by praying. Find a prayer partner if you have not already found one—someone who is not in your *MasterLife* group. Pray with your partner each week. You can meet to pray, or you can pray over the phone. In the margin, write the initials of someone you are considering to be your prayer partner. Tomorrow, you will write the name of the person you selected.



Pray for each member of your *MasterLife* group by name. Refer to your Group Covenant to recall members' names.

Day 4

LEARNING OBEDIENCE

Once when I was a pastor, a couple in the church disagreed with me and vocally expressed their dislike for me. I unsuccessfully tried to seek reconciliation with them. I finally had to say, "I really want to be your pastor. I value my relationship with God more than anything in the world. To stay in a right relationship with Him, I cannot afford to hold anything against you. I am going to love you regardless of what you think of me."

List other responses I could have chosen that would not have honored or been obedient to Christ.

I could have made several choices that would not have honored Christ. I could have confronted the couple angrily. I could have said unkind things about them to others. I could have pressured them to leave the church.

I could have been tempted to make any of those choices. In the end, however, I was glad that I stayed connected to the Vine and held to my relationship with Christ as the guiding force in my life. The couple that had been angry with me stayed in the church, and later, their daughter was converted and baptized. Because I was obedient to Christ and stayed in a right relationship with Him, the way I responded to the couple bore fruit later.

When you have life in Christ, having completely turned over your life to Him, a lifelong, obedient relationship with Him is a natural result. And when you obey Christ, you want to stay connected to Him and follow His teachings. As a result of obeying His commands, you bear fruit.

Stop and review what you just studied about obedience.

The key to discipleship is obedience to Christ's _____.

"I value my relationship with God more than anything in the world."

When you have life in Christ, a lifelong, obedient relationship with Him is a natural result.

Read the following verses in your Bible and match the benefits of obeying Christ's commands.

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| ___ 1. John 15:10 | a. You show you're His disciple. |
| ___ 2. John 14:21 | b. You are blessed. |
| ___ 3. John 13:34-35 | c. The Father loves you and reveals Himself to you. |
| ___ 4. John 13:17 | d. You remain in His love. |

Obeying Christ's commands is the key to discipleship. When you obey these commands, you benefit because you remain in His love (1. d), the Father loves you and reveals Himself to you (2. c), you show that you are His disciple (3. a), and you are blessed (4. b). Christ does not want you to obey Him just to be good; He wants you to be obedient so that He can involve you in His mission.

OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST'S COMMANDS

To obey Christ's commands requires two things: knowing them and doing them.

OK, you think, that sounds good. I want to obey Christ's commands. I want to have those benefits I just read about. I want to be involved in His mission. But how do I take the first step? How do I start the process of obeying Him? To obey Christ's commands requires two things: knowing them and doing them. Do you know them? Are you doing what Christ commanded?

Read the following verses in your Bible and write in your own words what Christ wants you to emphasize.

1. Matthew 5:19-20:

2. Matthew 7:21,24-27:

3. Matthew 28:19-20:

4. James 1:22:

The Bible is very clear about what area Jesus wants you to emphasize. You may have answered something like this: (1) Doing and teaching His commands. (2) Doing His will and practicing His teachings. (3) Observing any or all of His commands. (4) Doing the Word.

What is one step you can take to know and do His commands so that you can be obedient?

You may have answered something like this: *I need to set aside time each day to read the Bible consistently so that I will know what the Scriptures tell me to do. Or I need to develop a quiet time so that I can hear what God is saying to me through His Word. Or I need to respond immediately when I read Christ's commands or feel His Spirit urging me to obey a command or a Scripture in response to a situation.*



Recite John 15:5 from memory to someone in your group. Become better acquainted with this group member. As you get to know them, discuss together how obedience relates to discipleship.

Have you chosen a prayer partner? Write the name of the person you chose:

TAKING ACTION

Have you heard someone say, "Actions speak louder than words"? That admonition also applies to your Christian life. You may know the right thing to do, but what good is knowledge without action? If you are grounded in God's Word but it makes no difference in your life, your knowledge is fruitless. To show that you love Christ, you also need to obey, keep, and do His commandments.

Stop and pray, asking God to help you take the step you recorded above that will help you become more obedient.

Check one or more of the following that you are ready and willing to do.

- Give Christ first priority in your life.
- Follow Christ by obeying His commands.
- Abide in Christ so that He can produce His life and fruit in you.

Day 5

CHALLENGES TO OBEDIENCE

When we were in the United States on furlough from Indonesia in 1977, I attended many churches that appeared apathetic, showing little vitality in their worship and ministry. This was at a time when our denomination had made a commitment to enlist fifty thousand volunteers for short-term mission trips overseas. Having seen little evidence of Christ's lordship in these churches, I could not imagine exporting such apathy to other countries.

God spoke to me in a special way, directing me to return to the United States and make disciples so that our denomination could reach its commitment to share the gospel with everyone in the world. Deeply committed to my work as a missionary and to the work I had begun as the president of the Indonesian Baptist Theological Seminary, I struggled to understand why God would call a missionary from the fifth-largest nation in the world to the United States indefinitely. Week after week, I wrote in my journal, "Lord, what are You trying to tell me?" For the next eight months, I struggled with God about this matter.

As I preached about Peter's being commanded to eat unclean animals on a large sheet (see Acts 10), I began to see in that sheet the dead churches in which I had been preaching. Although I sensed that God was saying to me, "Rise and eat," I told God that I did not want to get involved with already-dead churches and that I wanted to return to Indonesia. I retorted, "Peter had three men at the gate telling him what to do, and I don't have anyone!"

Immediately, three men asked me to do things that applied to my struggle. Our pastor, Tom Elliff, asked me to translate *MasterLife* into English to train his staff. Roy Edgemon, the leader of discipleship training with our denomination's publishing house, asked if I would adapt *MasterLife* for an English-speaking audience. A third, Bill Hogue, the director of our denomination's evangelism program, asked me to help design a plan to train people to witness. I continued to struggle for several months, but finally, God spoke very clearly to me about this matter, as well as about other plans, such as bringing revival and equipping His people to go on mission. Even though leaving Indonesia broke my heart, I knew that I must obey if I was going to teach others to be obedient disciples.

COMMITTED TO OBEY

Maybe you are like me and you are not as obedient as you could be or should be. Perhaps you make excuses for not being obedient, as I did. However, read Philippians 2:13 in the margin. Christ created in His disciples a desire and an increasing ability to obey Him. They

I knew that I must obey if I was going to teach others to be obedient disciples.

For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose.
PHILIPPIANS 2:13

were ordinary people, but they had an extraordinary commitment to follow Christ. Again, He did not want them to obey just to be good; He wanted to involve them in His work here on earth.

Examine the following accounts of the process by which Jesus taught His disciples:

1. He commanded, and they obeyed.
2. They learned what Christ was trying to teach them by doing what He commanded them to do.
3. Afterward, Christ discussed with them the meaning of the experience.

Respond to the following accounts as directed.

Jesus called His disciples to leave what they were doing and to follow Him. Andrew, Peter, James, and John left their fishing businesses and followed Him (see Matthew 4:18-22). Matthew left his job as a tax collector (see Matthew 9:9). What would be difficult for you to leave behind or do if God asked you to?

Jesus told Peter to catch a fish, take a coin from its mouth, and pay their taxes (see Matthew 17:27). What would you do if God asked you to do something that seemed unreasonable or did not make sense to you?

Jesus told His disciples to get a colt for Him and, if the owners asked what they were doing, to say, "The Lord needs it" (Mark 11:3). If Jesus told you to get a pickup truck parked at Main and Broad Streets, what would you do, especially if you had to answer the owner's questions by saying, "The Lord needs it"?

When Jesus told Philip to feed the five thousand, Philip said it was impossible. Andrew offered a boy's lunch even though he did not think it was enough (see John 6:5-11). Which disciple would you be most like? Philip Andrew

Have you ever declined to obey because you believed that what God asked you to do was unreasonable or did not make sense?

Yes No

The disciples' primary commitment was to be faithful to Jesus. Like the disciples, we are to obey Jesus's commands. Jesus provided resources to help His disciples obey: He prayed for them, sent the Holy Spirit, and provided His written Word. You and I have the same resources available to us. He will provide for us! If you love Him, you will obey His commands and will bear His fruit. You can have a lifelong, obedient relationship with Him. He will lead your life if you allow Him to do so!

Like the disciples,
we are to obey
Jesus's commands.

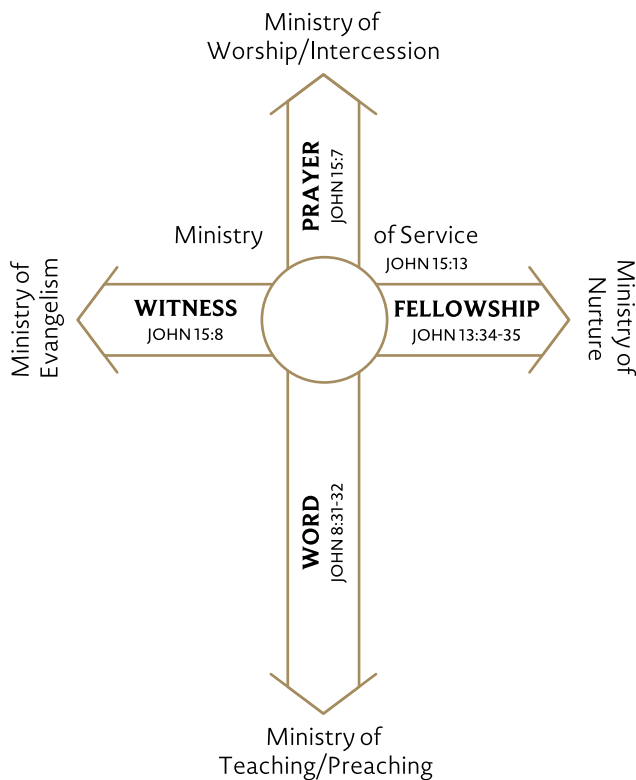
To review this week's theme, complete this sentence: If your life is characterized by _____, you will obey Christ and will bear _____.

As you have studied, you can let Christ lead you and help you so that your life is characterized by love, obedience, and fruit.

LEARNING THE DISCIPLE'S CROSS



Your primary task is to abide in Christ, the Vine. If you do this, He will be at the center of your life. Below are all the elements of the Disciple's Cross—but missing Christ at the center. Fill in the circle, and write *John 15:5* under it as a reminder of the Vine and the branches. You will learn more about the components of the Disciple's Cross in the following weeks.



Read each item and fill in the circle in the column that most nearly represents an accurate evaluation.

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
SPEND TIME WITH THE MASTER					
I have a daily quiet time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to make Christ Lord of my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel close to the Lord throughout the day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to discipline myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am aware that the Lord disciplines me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LIVE IN THE WORD					
I read my Bible daily.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I study my Bible each week.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I memorize a verse of Scripture each week.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I take notes at least once a week as I hear, read, or study the Bible in order to apply it to my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
PRAY IN FAITH					
I keep a prayer list and pray for the people and concerns on the list.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have experienced a specific answer to prayer in the past month.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Each day, my prayers include thanksgiving, praise, confession, petition, and intercession.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS					
I seek to live in peace with my fellow Christians.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I seek reconciliation with those who have a problem with me or with whom I have a problem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Others know I am a Christian by the way I love God's people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I live in harmony with other members of my family.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WITNESS TO THE WORLD					
I regularly pray for lost people by name.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I share my testimony with others when an appropriate opportunity arises.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I share the plan of salvation with those who are open to hear it.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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I witness for Christ each week.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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I follow up with and encourage people I have won to Christ.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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MINISTER TO OTHERS

I serve Christ by serving in my church.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

I give at least a tithe through my church.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

At least once a month, I do kind deeds for people less fortunate than I am.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

I have goals for my life that I keep clearly in mind.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Subtotals					
	x4	x3	x2	x1	0
Totals					
SCORE					

When you have finished checking each item, add each column except the “Never” column. Each check in the “Always” column is worth four points; the “Usually” column, three points; the “Sometimes” column, two points; the “Seldom” column, one point. Add these four totals together to get your overall score out of a possible one hundred.

Complete the following statements.

I feel that my score (does/does not) adequately reflect my life of discipleship because _____.

Other factors that should be taken into account but are not reflected in the inventory are

_____.

My personal, overall evaluation of my discipleship is

_____.

1. R. A. Torrey, *Why God Used D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1923), 10.
2. *Day by Day in God’s Kingdom: A Discipleship Journal* provides Scriptures, memory verses, and room to record what you experience in your quiet time. The journal can be downloaded from lifeway.com/masterlife.

HAS THIS WEEK MADE A DIFFERENCE?

Review your Walk with the Master checklist at the beginning of this week's material. Mark the activities you have completed. Finish any incomplete activities. Think about what you will say during your group session about your work on these activities.

Think about your experience completing week 1, "Spend Time with the Master."

- Has this week's study made a difference in your life?
- Is Christ more at the center of your life now than He was last week?

**Pray: "Lord, show me the areas of my life in which You want me to be more disciplined as a Christian."
Or "Lord, I am weak and need Your strength. Show me how to be disciplined in my walk with You as Master."**

GROUP GUIDE

Welcome to the group session reflecting on Week 1: "Spend Time with the Master." Start your group meeting by praying together.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Try to recite John 15:5 aloud together as a group.

NOTE FOR LEADERS

Revisit the introduction of this study (pp. 6-8) with your group during this meeting and make sure everyone signs the Group Covenant on page 11.

For a more in-depth review and group discussion on Week 1, including "How to Have a Quiet Time" and the center of the Disciple's Cross, see the free downloadable Leader Guide at lifeway.com/masterlife.

DISCUSSION

Talk through these discussion questions as a group.

What stood out to you during the study this week?

How would you define the word *disciple*? What do you think it looks like for you to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Review the discipleship evaluation you completed on pages 33–34. How would you describe the current state of your discipleship?

On day 1, you studied Luke 9:23 as a foundational verse for *MasterLife*. What insight does this verse give about the meaning of discipleship? Take a moment to read this verse and try to memorize it together.

On day 3, you learned that Jesus said three things will characterize your life when He lives in you and you live in Him: obedience, love, and fruit. You develop these characteristics as you abide in Christ. Read John 15:1-17 together. Then, take a few minutes to complete the "Abiding in Christ" activity on page 10. When you're finished, return to this page to continue your discussion.

Spend Time with the Master

What stands out to you in the “Abiding in Christ” activity? What do you think you need to do to abide in Christ this week?

On day 4, you identified one step you can take to know and do Jesus’s commands so you can be obedient. Look back at page 27 and share what you wrote down.

As weak as most of us are, is it possible for us to obey and follow Christ? Read Philippians 2:13 and John 15:5 for encouragement.

WALK WITH THE MASTER REFLECTION

Did you complete the activities on your Walk with the Master checklist?

What part was easiest for you to complete? What was most difficult?

GROUP PRAYER

Prayer is a very important component of the *MasterLife* Bible study and essential to your *MasterLife* group community as well. In the margin, write any prayer requests your group members have. Pray over these requests together, and ask God to help each group member make Christ the center of their lives as they go through this study. Continue to pray for one another throughout the week.

▶ Look over the Walk with the Master checklist for Week 2 together. Be sure to complete the activities before your next group session.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Series of horizontal dotted lines for writing prayer requests.

Keep growing in your faith.

MasterLife is a four-part discipleship journey designed to help you grow in Christ, develop spiritual maturity, and fulfill your mission as disciple-maker. Each book builds on the last, guiding every participant step by step.



Through daily exercises, group interaction, and practical biblical teaching, MasterLife will lead you to center your life on Christ (*The Disciple's Cross*), develop Christlike character (*The Disciple's Personality*), experience spiritual victory (*The Disciple's Victory*), and embrace your calling to make disciples (*The Disciple's Mission*).

As you complete this comprehensive series, you will:

- Grow deeper in your relationship with Christ.
- Build lifelong spiritual habits and disciplines.
- Experience victory over personal and spiritual struggles.
- Equip others to become disciples and leaders.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

MasterLife 1: *The Disciple's Cross*

Bible Study Book
005853823 **\$13.99**

Bible Study eBook
005857399 **\$13.99**

MasterLife 2: *The Disciple's Personality*

Bible Study Book
005853824 **\$13.99**

Bible Study eBook
005857400 **\$13.99**

MasterLife 3: *The Disciple's Victory*

Bible Study Book
005853825 **\$13.99**

Bible Study eBook
005857401 **\$13.99**

MasterLife 4: *The Disciple's Mission*

Bible Study Book
005853826 **\$13.99**

Bible Study eBook
005857402 **\$13.99**

See session samples and church promotional materials at lifeway.com/masterlife.

*Price and availability
subject to change
without notice.*

Grow as a Disciple

MasterLife is a small group discipling process that enables you to develop a personal, lifelong, obedient relationship with Jesus. Through these sequential studies, you will grow in Christlikeness as you practice six basic Christian disciplines: spend time with the Master, live in the Word, pray in faith, fellowship with believers, witness to the world, and minister to others. *The Disciple's Cross*, the first book of the *MasterLife* series, introduces these disciplines and shows you how to practice them.

Lifeway

lifeway.com/masterlife

