

AVERY T. WILLIS, JR.

MasterLife

Student Edition



S T U D E N T B O O K

MasterLife

Student Edition

Avery T. Willis, Jr.

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We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error; for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. The 2000 statement of *The Baptist Faith and Message* is our doctrinal guideline.

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THE AUTHORS



AVERY T. WILLIS, JR., the author and developer of *MasterLife*, is the executive director of the International Orality Network. The original *MasterLife: Discipleship Training for Leaders*, published in 1980, has been used by more than 350,000 people in the United States and has been translated into more than 50 different languages. Willis is also the author of *Indonesian Revival: Why Two Million Came to Christ*, *The Biblical Basis of Missions*, *MasterBuilder: Multiplying Leaders*, *BibleGuide to Discipleship and Doctrine*, and coauthor with Henry Blackaby of *On Mission With God*. He also wrote *Lead Like Jesus* with Ken Blanchard and others, plus several books in Indonesian.

Avery served for 10 years as a pastor in Oklahoma and Texas and for 14 years as a missionary to Indonesia, during which he served for 6 years as the president of the Indonesian Baptist Theological Seminary. He served as the director of the Adult Department of the Discipleship and Family Development Division, the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention for 15 years and as the senior vice-president of overseas operations at the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention for 10 years. He and his wife, Shirley, have five grown children. They experienced 19 straight years of having teenagers in the home and now are relating to their 15 grandchildren.



KAY MOORE is a veteran church curriculum writer and former senior editor for LifeWay Christian Resources. She and her husband, Louis, live in Garland, Texas, and have two grown children.

INTRODUCTION

MasterLife, Student Edition, is a developmental, small-group discipleship process that will help you develop a lifelong, obedient relationship with Christ. Through this study you will experience a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ as He leads you to develop six biblical disciplines of a disciple. This study will enable you to acknowledge Christ as your Master and to master life in Him.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU

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

Christian discipleship is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ experienced in a lifelong journey of obedience. As you follow Christ He transforms you to be like Him, He changes your values to His kingdom values, and He involves you in His mission in your home, church and world.

As you study the *MasterLife* process and learn to follow Christ as His disciple, you'll experience the thrill of growing spiritually. Several ways you'll grow are:

- Discovering 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.
- Understanding what it means to abide, or live, in Christ, and you will experience the peace, security, and purpose that abiding in Christ brings.
- Experiencing the assurance and confidence that come from living in the Word. You'll develop new skills for studying and understanding the Bible. The Holy Spirit will use those skills to help you understand God's will for your life.
- Experiencing new power in prayer as you learn to pray in faith.
- Deepening fellowship with believers.
- Discovering the joy of sharing Christ with others—both by your words and actions.
- Experiencing the fulfillment of investing yourself in others by ministering to their needs.

- Observing 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.

In weeks 1-6 you will explore your personal relationship with Jesus Christ. You'll learn how to draw the Disciple's Cross to illustrate the balanced life Christ wants His disciples to have. You'll learn that Christ wants to be at the center of your life so that everything you do is because of your relationship with Him.

Then in weeks 7-12 you'll focus on Christ's transforming your character into Christlikeness through the work of the Holy Spirit. Although you are a Christian, you may wonder why you continue to sin despite your best intentions, as if two people are at war inside you—one controlled by the Spirit and one controlled by the flesh. Jesus' disciples were not yet Christlike when they were born again, and neither were you. In this study you'll learn how the Holy Spirit can change your character and behavior into Christlikeness so that He can work through your will and your life. If you deny yourself and open yourself to the leading of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you, your character can grow more like that of Christ. The outgrowth of having Christ at the center of your personality is life in the Spirit. He will build Christlike character in you as you practice the following six disciplines:

- Spend time with the Master
- Live in the Word
- Pray in faith
- Fellowship with believers
- Witness to the world
- Minister to others

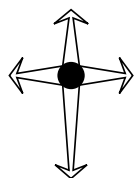
THE MASTERLIFE PROCESS

This study is designed to be individually studied and then processed in group sessions. Discipleship is experiential. Your experiences in studying *MasterLife* will be life-changing, and it's important that you discuss these experiences with your group.

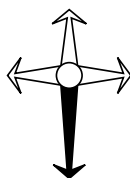
HOW TO STUDY THIS BOOK

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

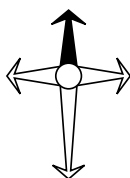
You will notice that discipline logos appear before various assignments:



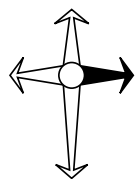
Spend time with the Master



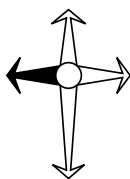
Live in the Word



Pray in faith



Fellowship with believers



Witness to the world



Minister to others

These logos link certain activities to the six disciplines you are learning to incorporate into your life as a disciple. These activities are part of your weekly assignments, which are outlined in "My Walk with the Master This Week" at the beginning of each week's material. The discipline logos differentiate your weekly assignments from the activities related to your study for that particular day.

Set a definite time and select a quiet place to study with little or no interruption. Keep a Bible handy to find Scriptures as directed in the material. Follow a systematic plan to read your Bible. This course suggests passages of Scripture for you to read each day. Later, you may want to follow the one provided in *DiscipleHelps: A Daily Quiet Time and Guide and Journal*, which can be ordered by calling 1-800-458-2772.

Memorizing Scripture is an important part of your work. You will be asked to memorize one Scripture each week. Set aside a portion of your study period for memory work.

Unless I have deliberately chosen another version for a specific emphasis, all Scriptures in *MasterLife* are quoted from the *New International Version* of the Bible. However, feel free to memorize Scripture from any version of the Bible you prefer. I suggest that you write each memory verse on a card that you can review often during the week.

After completing each day's assignments, turn to the beginning of the week's material. If you completed an activity that corresponds to one listed under "My Walk with the Master This Week," place a vertical line in the diamond beside the activity. During the following group session a member of the group will verify your work and will add a horizontal line in the diamond, forming a cross in each diamond. This process will confirm that you have completed each weekly assignment before you continue. You may do the assignments at your own pace, but be sure to complete all of them before the next group session.



THE DISCIPLE'S CROSS

On page 204 you will find a diagram of the Disciple's Cross which illustrates the six Christian disciplines that you'll learn in this book. In weeks 1-6, you'll 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.

THE DISCIPLE'S PERSONALITY

On pages 213-19 you will find the Disciple's Personality presentation. The Disciple's Personality, explains how to become more Christlike in character and behavior. In weeks 7-12 you'll study an additional part of the Disciple's Personality and will learn the Scripture that accompanies it. By the end of the study you will be able to explain the Disciple's Personality in your own words and to say all of the verses that go with it.

ABIDING IN CHRIST

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

Phase 1

I find *John 15:1-17* (check one)—

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

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

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

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

- ☐ Way to go, God!
- ☐ You couldn’t mean me, Lord.
- ☐ I don’t deserve this.
- ☐ Great; let’s get going.
- ☐ What’s the catch?

Phase 2

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

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

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

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

Phase 3

To abide in Christ, I need to—

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

AUTOBIOGRAPHY WORKSHEET

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

I. How have I become the person I am? What person(s) or event(s) have most influenced by values?

Of event(s) have most influenced by values.

3. What may be my greatest weakness or difficulty in completing the 12 weeks?

2. What motivated me to take MasterLife? Why do I want to be in this MasterLife group?

DISCIPLESHIP COVENANT

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

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

- *acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord of my life each day;*
- *attend all group sessions unless an emergency prevents it;*
- *spend enough time each day to complete all assignments;*
- *have a daily quiet time;*
- *keep a Daily Master Communication Guide about the way God speaks to me and I speak to Him;*
- *be faithful to my church in attendance and stewardship;*
- *love and encourage each group member;*
- *share my faith with others;*
- *keep in confidence anything that others share in the group sessions;*
- *be accountable to others in the group;*
- *become a discipler of others as God gives opportunities;*
- *pray daily for group members.*

List names and phone numbers of group members here.

Name	Phone #	Name	Phone #
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Signed _____ **Date** _____

WEEK 1

Spend Time with the Master

This Week's Goal

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

My Walk with the Master This Week

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



SPEND TIME WITH THE MASTER

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



LIVE IN THE WORD

- ◇ Read your Bible every day. Write what God says to you and what you say to God.
- ◇ Memorize *John 15:5*.
- ◇ Review *Luke 9:23*.



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 a map to pray for people throughout the world.



FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS

- ◇ Get better acquainted with a group member.



WITNESS TO THE WORLD

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



MINISTER TO OTHERS

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

This Week's Scripture-Memory Verse

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

DAY 1

The First Priority

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

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

I realized that I would be either a real disciple of Christ or a luke warm 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 told God that I wasn’t capable of doing all He wanted me to do, that I had failed many times, and that I was not even sure He would want me to be His disciple.

In answer to my excuses, God showed me *2 Chronicles 16:9*: “The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.” I remembered that evangelist D. L. Moody had heard his friend Henry Varley say, “It remains to be seen what God will do with a man who gives himself up completely 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 hasn’t always been right toward God since that time. However, because of the commitment I made, the Holy Spirit shows me when my heart isn’t right. I immediately confess and ask God to forgive me and to restore my heart.

That’s how I decided to be a true disciple of Christ and to commit to a lifelong, obedient relationship with Him. I began by saying “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. 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 is an opportunity for you to see where you stand 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

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

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

This study is an opportunity to see where you stand in your relationship with Christ.

¹R.A. Torrey, *Why God Used D. L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1923), 10.

Christ helped me through my journey as a student, a pastor, and a missionary and as I share other believers' testimonies, I hope that you'll learn the concepts of truly mastering life as Christ lives through you—that you'll learn what life in Christ is all about.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

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

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

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

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

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

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

He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons (Mark 3:14-15).

In Mark 3:14 underline the phrases that show two purposes for which Jesus chose the twelve.

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

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

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

Did you write something like this? He told them that to follow Him they must be His disciples. He then explained what it meant to be a disciple. *Luke 9:23*, the verse I hope you memorized in your introductory group session, also states what it means to be a disciple.



In the margin write *Luke 9:23* a couple of times.

So, now you know the term *disciple* is a general term for a committed follower of a teacher or a group, one of Jesus' twelve apostles, or a follower who meets Jesus' requirements.

LEARNING THE DISCIPLE'S CROSS

One way you can learn more about what Jesus had in mind for His disciples is to learn the Disciple's Cross—the foundation of this study. You can see the complete cross on page 204 and can read the presentation of the Disciple's Cross on pages 202–04. When you learn the cross thoroughly, you can use it in a variety of ways: it can help you to witness, to evaluate your church, and to reflect on where you stand in your discipleship.

As you complete this book, you'll study the various elements of the Disciple's Cross. Each week you will learn additional information. By the end of six weeks you'll be able to explain the cross in your own words and to 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 of the circle. This circle will help you focus on ways *Christ* is to be at the center of your life.

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

PUTTING CHRIST FIRST

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

List the three highest priorities in your life.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

You can't become a disciple of Christ if you're not willing to make Him number one on your priority list. Stop and pray, asking God to help you remove anything that keeps Him from having first place in your life. What do you need to do to give Him first place? List one action you will take to remove whatever stands in the way of placing Him first in your life.



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

Daily Master Communication Guide

Matthew 6:25-34

What God said to me:

What I said to God:

