

THE DISCIPLE'S MISSION

MasterLife

Avery T. Willis Jr.
Kay Moore

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Nashville, Tennessee

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The Authors



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 original *MasterLife: Discipleship Training for Leaders*, published in 1980, has been used by more than 250,000 people in the United States and has been translated into more than 50 different languages for use by untold thousands. 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 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. 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.



KAY MOORE served as the coauthor of this updated edition of *MasterLife*. Formerly a design editor in the Adult Department of the Discipleship and Family Development Division, the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, she led the editorial team that produced the LIFE Support Series, biblically based courses that help people deal with critical issues in their lives. A writer, editor, and conference leader, Moore has authored or coauthored numerous books on family life, relationships, and inspirational topics. She is the author of *Gathering the Missing Pieces in an Adopted Life* and is a frequent contributor to religious magazines and devotional guides.

Introduction

MasterLife is a developmental, small-group discipleship process that will help you develop a lifelong, obedient relationship with Christ. This book, *MasterLife 4: The Disciple's Mission*, is the last of four books in that discipleship process. The other three books are *MasterLife 1: The Disciple's Cross*, *MasterLife 2: The Disciple's Personality*, and *MasterLife 3: The Disciple's Victory*. 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.

In *MasterLife 1: The Disciple's Cross* you explored your personal relationship with Jesus Christ. You learned how to draw the Disciple's Cross to illustrate the balanced life Christ wants His disciples to have. You learned that Christ wants to be at the center of your life so that everything you do is an outgrowth of your relationship with Him.

In *MasterLife 2: The Disciple's Personality* you focused on Christ's transforming your character into Christlikeness through the work of the Holy Spirit. You learned how to live a life of victory by building Christlike character. You were introduced to your per-

sonal counselor, the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and teaches, guides, directs, prays for, and empowers you to do God's will and work.

In *MasterLife 3: The Disciple's Victory* you focused on victory in spiritual warfare. You learned how to advance against the enemy with the defensive weapons of the Spiritual Armor, which protect you, and the offensive weapons, which lead you to confront the world, the flesh, and the devil. As you began demolishing your personal spiritual strongholds to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5), you learned to believe God for all He wants to do through you.

MasterLife 4: The Disciple's Mission will take you to the next stage in your discipleship journey by teaching you what it means to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). As you examine MasterBuilder, an illustration of lifelong spiritual growth, you will make plans for your continued spiritual growth, witness to lost persons, and begin discipling other believers. You will discover your spiritual gifts and will determine a ministry to which God is leading you. This study will equip you with many skills you need to make disciples and to minister to others. In addition, you will continue to practice the six disciplines you learned in *MasterLife 1: The Disciple's Cross*:

- 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 4: The Disciple's Mission is part of a 24-week discipleship process. Completing all four courses in *MasterLife* will provide you information and experiences you need to be Christ's disciple.

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

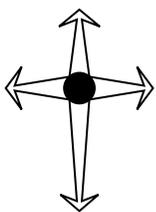
1. The *daily activities* in this book lead you into a closer walk with Christ.

2. The *weekly assignments* in “My Walk with the Master This Week” 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.
4. The weekly *group sessions* help you reflect on the concepts and experiences in *MasterLife* and help you apply the ideas to your life. Each 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 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, ministry opportunities, and support.

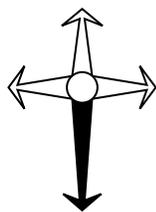
HOW TO STUDY THIS BOOK

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

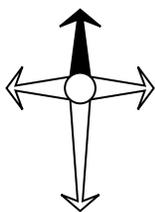
You will notice that discipline logos appear before various assignments. These logos look like this:



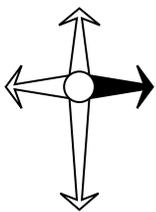
Spend time with the Master



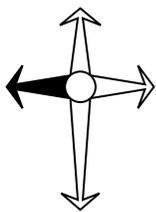
Live in the Word



Pray in faith



Fellowship with believers



Witness to the world



Minister to others

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

Set a definite time and select a quiet place to study with little or no interruption. Keep a Bible handy to find Scriptures as directed in the material. Memorizing Scripture is an important part of your work. 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.



MASTERBUILDER

On pages 123–27 you will find the MasterBuilder presentation. MasterBuilder, which illustrates the path of spiritual growth, will be the focal point for all you learn in this book. Each week you will focus on a different stage of MasterBuilder. By the end of the study you will be able to draw the MasterBuilder diagram and to explain it in your own words. As a disciple of Christ, you can learn to identify your stage and others’ stages on the pathway of spiritual growth and to help yourself and others grow.

Dimensions of Discipleship

Read from 2 Timothy 2 the verses indicated, complete the statements, and be prepared to share your answers with your group.

1. Read verse 1. One aim of discipleship: that you be _____

2. Read verse 2. Part of the mission of discipleship: _____

3. Read verse 3. Part of the commitment of discipleship: _____
4. Read verse 4. The focus of discipleship: _____
5. Read verse 5. The discipline of discipleship: _____
6. Read verse 7. The teacher in discipleship: _____
7. Read verse 8. The foundation of discipleship: _____
8. Read verse 9. The potency of discipleship: _____
9. Read verse 10. The fruit and ultimate reason for discipleship: _____

10. Read verse 15. The challenge of discipleship: _____

11. Read verses 20-21. The secret of individual usefulness in discipleship: _____

12. Read verse 21. The finished product of discipleship: _____

13. Read verses 24-25a. The essential nature of discipleship: _____

14. Read verses 25b-26. Part of the ministry of discipleship: _____

Discipleship Covenant

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

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

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

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Signed _____ Date _____

WEEK 1

Righting Wrong Relationships

This Week's Goal

You will evaluate your relationships with others and will seek reconciliation when needed.

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

- ◇ Have a quiet time each day. Check each day you have a quiet time: Sunday
 Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday



LIVE IN THE WORD

- ◇ Read your Bible every day. Write what God says to you and what you say to God.
- ◇ Memorize Matthew 5:23-24.



PRAY IN FAITH

- ◇ Pray with your prayer partner.



FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS

- ◇ Read "How to Use the Relationship Quotient Form."
- ◇ Complete the Relationship Quotient form with your spouse, a family member, or a close friend.



WITNESS TO THE WORLD

- ◇ Write the names of lost persons on your Prayer-Covenant List.
- ◇ Visit at least one neighbor this week.



MINISTER TO OTHERS

- ◇ Complete the Personal-Assessment Worksheet.
- ◇ Read the MasterBuilder presentation.

This Week's Scripture-Memory Verses

"If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23-24).

DAY 1



The Importance of Relationships

At your first group session your leader introduced you to MasterBuilder, which depicts the path of discipleship and spiritual growth. MasterBuilder illustrates that relationships are vitally important in spreading the gospel and in carrying out Christ's mission. What is our mission as Christ's disciples?

A disciple's mission is to—

- glorify God by being a lifelong, obedient disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ;
- glorify God by making disciples of all nations;
- join God's mission to—
 - glorify His name;
 - exalt Christ as Lord;
 - reconcile the world to Himself;
 - establish His kingdom.

Establishing relationships is essential to advancing the gospel and to making disciples of all nations.

Establishing relationships is essential to advancing the gospel and to making disciples of all nations. Poor relationships erect barriers to witnessing, to establishing a spiritual child, to training and discipling another person, to equipping a disciple maker, or to serving as a colaborer. Before we study each stage of spiritual growth in MasterBuilder, we will focus on the importance of maintaining healthy relationships.

Christians function as a loving family, but they experience misunderstandings and hurt, just as families do. This week's study is designed to help you know what to do when a problem arises in a relationship. At the end of this week you should be able to—

- list three reasons relationships should be restored immediately;
- explain what action to take if you are the offender;
- identify six steps to take if you are offended;
- describe the role of a peacemaker.

Fellowship among Christians is at the heart of your Christian experience.

THE HEART OF YOUR EXPERIENCE

Fellowship among Christians is at the heart of your Christian experience. Your relationship with God through Christ binds you together with other Christians as the body of Christ.

Jesus' death on the cross paid the penalty for your sin and restored the broken relationship with God (see Rom. 5:1). It also made possible right relationships among God's children. John tells you that your love for God is reflected by your love for one another (see 1 John 4:21).

“We know that we have passed

Read 1 John 3:14 in the margin. How do we know that we have passed from death to life?

Love for one another is the way we see evidence that we have been delivered from spiritual death to eternal life in Christ. Someone who demonstrates Christlike love for others testifies that he or she has eternal life.

We are to love others in word and deed, as 1 John 3:18, in the margin, says. However, sin still interrupts fellowship among us.

Underline causes of problems between you and others.

jealousy	covetousness	bitterness
pride	insensitivity	impatience
anger	gossip	tactlessness
misunderstanding	boasting	greed

Differences of opinions, personality clashes, and power struggles also damage the love relationship among individuals. Jesus' disciples struggled with loving one another in spite of human sinfulness.

Read Matthew 20:20-24 in the margin.

With whom were the disciples angry? _____

Why were they angry? _____

The disciples were angry with James and John and became jealous of them because they wanted prominent places in the Kingdom.

Our relationship with Christ makes restored relationships possible. By asking forgiveness, we can be reconciled with God and one another.

Read 1 John 1:7 in the margin.

What is the source of Christian fellowship? _____

What cleanses (restores) that fellowship? _____

Our relationship with God through Christ is the source of Christian fellowship. The blood of Jesus restores fellowship.



This week's Scripture-memory verses, Matthew 5:23-24, describe the seriousness of estranged, bitter relationships. To begin memorizing these verses, go back to page 9 and read them aloud from one to three times.

from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death" (1 John 3:14).

"Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

"Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. 'What is it you want?' he asked. She said, 'Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.' 'You don't know what you are asking,' Jesus said to them. 'Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?' 'We can,' they answered. Jesus said to them, 'You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.' When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers" (Matt. 20:20-24).

"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). "If you forgive men when they

DAILY MASTER COMMUNICATION GUIDE



1 JOHN 3:11-24

What God said to me:

Horizontal lines for writing responses to 'What God said to me:'

What I said to God:

Horizontal lines for writing responses to 'What I said to God:'

Recall the vertical and horizontal bars of the Disciple's Cross (see p. 122). The vertical crossbar, depicting the Word and prayer, represents your relationship with God. If you live in the Word and pray in faith, that vertical relationship affects your horizontal relationships of fellowshiping with believers and witnessing to the world.

ON MISSION WITH THE MASTER



Read the MasterBuilder presentation on pages 123-27. You do not need to memorize it but should learn its principles. Beginning in week 2, you will focus on a different stage of spiritual growth each week. By the end of this study you will be able to draw the MasterBuilder diagram and to explain it in your own words.

The place to begin understanding the role of relationships in your life as a disciple is your daily quiet time, when you truly communicate with God—both hearing His message to you and communicating with Him.



During your quiet time today read 1 John 3:11-24, which teaches how to relate to others. Then complete the Daily Master Communication Guide in the margin.

DAY 2



What Christ Commands

As you learned in day 1, Christians are not immune to relationship problems. People attack you, ignore you, gossip about you, and avoid you even if you try to live a Christ-honoring life. You are also susceptible to the same sins in the way you treat others. However, when you become aware of a relationship problem, immediately take steps to correct it. Such action is necessary for three reasons:

- Wrong relationships affect your relationship with God.
• You are commanded to restore relationships.
• You are to restore right relationships as a witness to the unsaved world.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

First we will consider how wrong relationships affect your relationship with God.

Read the first two Scriptures in the margin on the following page and summarize them.

Matthew 6:14-15: _____

1 John 4:20-21: _____

Sin destroys human fellowship, according to Matthew 6:14-15. If you do not forgive others when they wrong you, how can you expect God to forgive you? Fellowship on the human level is restored through forgiveness. First John 4:20-21 reiterates the seriousness of proper fellowship with others. If you do not love your brother, it makes little sense to say that you love God.

CHRIST'S COMMAND

The second reason to restore relationships is that Christ commands it.



See if you can write from memory Matthew 5:23-24, this week's Scripture-memory verses, in the margin below the reference. Then read Matthew 18:21-22 and John 13:34-35 and write *true* or *false* beside each statement below.

_____ You are commanded to restore relationships only if the other person has wronged you, according to Matthew 5:23-24.

_____ According to Matthew 18:21-22, you are required to forgive 77 times.

_____ According to John 13:34-35, you are not expected to love one another as Christ loved you.

The three Scriptures command you to restore relationships, no matter who is at fault. You are to forgive again and again. Christ showed you how to love others, and you are expected to love in the same way He loved you. The second statement is true; the others are false.

A WITNESS TO THE WORLD

Third, you are to restore relationships because of your witness to the unsaved world. Jesus told His disciples that they could be easily identified.

You just read John 13:34-35. Check what this passage says is the mark of a true disciple.

- A Galilean accent Love for one another
 The sign of the fish

Jesus said that love for one another identifies His true disciples. How can you tell others about God's love if you are unloving toward fellow believers? Just as God reconciled the world to Himself through Christ,

sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matt. 6:14-15).

"If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:20-21).

Matthew 5:23-24:

"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times' " (Matt. 18:21-22).

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).

"All this is from God, who

*reconciled us to himself
through Christ and gave us
the ministry of reconciliation”
(2 Cor. 5:18).*

you have been given the ministry of reconciliation. Read 2 Corinthians 5:18 in the margin.

Your relationship with Christ shows in how you treat people. Others watch you model how to live the Christian life. If they hear you say that you are a Christian but see you harboring bitterness, unforgiveness, or a critical spirit, your words do not count.



List on your Prayer-Covenant List (p. 131) the names of unsaved friends and family members. Pray with your prayer partner that they will be open to the gospel. Ask your prayer partner to pray for you as you seek God’s will for your life, mission, and ministry. Also ask him or her to pray that you will be a role model in your relationships.

Use the Relationship Quotient form to understand your relationships better.

WITNESSING FOR THE MASTER

As you have studied this material about relationships, you may have felt a desire to improve relationships with persons in your life and to take measures to prevent relational problems. You can use the Relationship Quotient form on page 132 with family members and with close friends to discuss your relationships, to understand your relationships better, and to improve your relationships.



Read “How to Use the Relationship Quotient Form,” which follows.

HOW TO USE THE RELATIONSHIP QUOTIENT FORM

Use the Relationship Quotient form on page 132 with only one person at a time. Make copies to use with others. Each person will need a separate form.

1. Examine the Relationship Quotient form. Notice that it features seven relationship quotients that you will evaluate. Each quotient has two extremes, such as “closed, open” in your sharing relationship and “does not listen, listens” in your listening relationship. Between these extremes is a line with seven marks to indicate the degree to which each person demonstrates that characteristic. The words *she/he* above the line and *I* below the line indicate that you are to place your evaluation of the other person’s relationship quotient above the line and your evaluation of your own relationship quotient below the line.
2. Make sure each of you understands the meaning of each relationship quotient.
 - a. *Sharing relationship quotient.* Do you share your inner feelings and thoughts, or do you keep them to yourself? Do you usually have to guess how the other feels?
 - b. *Listening relationship quotient.* Do you listen attentively and with understanding to the other person, or do you turn him

- or her off? Do you respond from habit, or do you give your full attention to what your partner says?
- c. *Nurturing relationship quotient.* Do you support, encourage, aid, and cherish? Are you loyal, or do you tear down, neglect, hinder, or leave the other alone? Do you know that the other person is actively seeking your best interest at all times?
 - d. *Affirmation relationship quotient.* Do you verbally affirm each other by praising or speaking well of him or her to the person and/or to others, or do you habitually criticize, belittle, blame, reprimand, or condemn the other person?
 - e. *Spiritual relationship quotient.* Do you talk intimately with each other about your spiritual journey? Do you openly share what is happening in your relationship with God, struggles, victories, and dreams? Or do you remain distant, closed, or uncommunicative about your spiritual state?
 - f. *Developmental relationship quotient.* Do you help the other person feel free to grow and become all God intended, or do you manipulate or restrict the other person to make him or her do or be what you want?
 - g. *Physical relationship quotient.* Are you affectionate? Do you relate properly to the other person physically, or are you unresponsive, uninterested, or cold toward the other person?
3. Each family member or friend should complete a separate Relationship Quotient form without seeing what the other person has done. Each person should follow these instructions.
 - a. Above each line on the form, place a mark that indicates the way the other person relates to you.
 - b. Below each line on the form, place a mark that indicates the way you relate to the other person.
 4. After you and the other person have completed your forms, compare your evaluations. Discuss why you ranked each other as you did, paying particular attention to the reasons you ranked each other differently. The reasons for these different perceptions of your relationship are as important as the differences themselves.
 5. Discuss what you can do to improve your relationship in each area. The most important thing you can do is listen. Try to understand what the other person says. Do not try to defend yourself. Do not be defensive or argue about how the person rated you. These are honest evaluations, whether or not you like them. Do not condemn or blame. If you disagree with the person, you may cut off an avenue of communication that is beginning to open. If you rated the person higher than he or she did, you may encourage the person by explaining why.
 6. Notice the areas in which you rated yourself poorly. Decide on a course of action to improve. Discuss what you can do together to improve your relationship.

Do you help the other person feel free to grow and become all God intended?

Discuss what you can do together to improve your relationship.

**DAILY MASTER
COMMUNICATION
GUIDE**

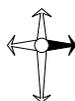


MATTHEW 5:21-48

What God said to me:

What I said to God:

7. Identify the relationship quotient in which you need the most help and begin to design a project to improve in this area. Any mark to the left of the center crossbar on your form or on the other person's form shows that you need to work on that particular relationship quotient. Ask the other person to help you. Your attitude may be the reason the other person gave himself or herself a poor score. For example, perhaps the other person marked himself or herself "closed" on sharing because he or she was uneasy about what your reaction would be if he or she were more open.
8. The purpose of the Relationship Quotient form is not a professional, clinical evaluation of your relationships with others. Rather, it is a vehicle to begin dialogue about your relationship. You may need to ask for help in resolving difficulties. Pray about your relationship. Covenant to help each other develop a better relationship.



Complete the Relationship Quotient form with your spouse, a family member, or a close friend before the next group session.



During your quiet time today read Matthew 5:21-48, which elaborates on how you are to treat people. Then complete the Daily Master Communication Guide in the margin.

DAY 3



Taking the First Steps

My former pastor, Tom Elliff, once experienced a deep hurt that caused him to become very bitter. When Tom sought from God a message on how to forgive, he learned several lessons based on Matthew 18:

- Forgiveness is a deliberate decision of the will. Even if the other person never asks for forgiveness, you can still say in advance, "I choose to consider you no longer in debt to me."
- Satan tempts you to retry that person's case in your emotions and reminds you of how much you hurt. You can respond, "No, on July 12 I made a deliberate, volitional decision to release that person."
- Forgiveness removes you from torment. Unforgiveness can even have physical symptoms that can harm you.
- When you forgive someone, you place that person's case in God's court, saying, "I trust You in Your sovereign mercy to deal with this person in a better way than I can."

- Forgiveness causes you to rely on God’s resources. When you do not forgive, it is as though you are saying: “God, You don’t hold the ultimate key to my joy. That person does.” When you forgive, you rely on God’s forgiveness, which is available to you.

THE DANGER OF BITTERNESS

Seeking a person to right a wrong relationship requires a great deal of personal initiative and courage. But doing this is necessary to begin the process. You may be tempted to postpone doing anything about the estranged relationship, rationalizing that things should cool off or that you need to wait until the mood is right.

The writer of Hebrews explained the danger of not immediately resolving a situation.

Read Hebrews 12:15 in the margin and underline the danger it specifies.

- **The person may forget about it.**
- **You may decide not to forgive the person.**
- **Bitterness may grow up and defile many.**

If you put off taking action to right a bruised relationship, a root of bitterness will spring up. Have you ever met a bitter person? You can be sure that it began with unforgiveness and resentment, which grew until they consumed his or her personality and then began to spill over on everyone. Bitterness may begin to consume you and to sap your energy. If you act quickly, the energy wasted on fretting about the broken friendship can be channeled into other areas. A spirit of reconciliation should be a distinguishing mark of Christians.

“See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many” (Heb. 12:15).

A spirit of reconciliation should be a distinguishing mark of Christians.



In this week’s Scripture-memory verses, Matthew 5:23-24, Jesus described a disciple who realized the need to mend a broken relationship. First see how much of this passage you can say from memory. Then answer this question: Where was the disciple when the realization came?

According to the passage, the disciple was at the altar when he realized that something was amiss in a relationship. In God’s presence you can become aware of needs and problems in relationships. As you open yourself to His Spirit, He examines your heart and convicts you of sin. He makes known His will for your attitudes and actions.

Matthew 5:23-24 also describes the process for mending broken relationships. It does not specify whether the person at the altar was the offender or the one offended. But it says that if you remember that your brother has something against you, then you are to seek reconciliation.

“If we confess our sins, he is

faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

If you have caused the offense, what does 1 John 1:9, in the margin, tell you to do?

Without exception every person sins, but God promises that He will be faithful in forgiving our sins when we confess them. We do not have to wonder whether God will forgive us.

You must also confess to the wronged person by verbalizing your specific offense and by asking forgiveness.

Which of the following approaches is best?

- “I was wrong, but if you had not ...”
- “If I have been wrong, forgive me.”
- “I am sorry that you are angry at me.”
- “I was wrong to _____. Will you forgive me?”

Your confession is not conditional. It does not occur with an attitude of ifs or maybe’s. Approach the matter with an awareness of your sin. The act that provoked or prompted your anger is immaterial. Your responsibilities are to confess your wrong and to ask for forgiveness.

TRAINING IN MINISTRY

The following section will teach you skills for approaching another person face-to-face to work out a difficulty.

HOW TO SEEK RECONCILIATION

Perhaps the single most damaging obstacle to God’s work and to revival among His children is an unforgiving spirit. This attitude prevents reconciliation. If you have carried this burden for years, now is the time to be free of it. The Bible gives clear commands and instructions for being reconciled.

Your Responsibilities

1. Seek peace: “Make every effort to live in peace with all men” (Heb. 12:14).
 - a. Seek reconciliation with anyone you dislike, have offended, or have not forgiven.
 - b. Try to reconcile with anyone who has something against you, whether or not you are wrong.
 - c. Try to reconcile with anyone who has wronged you.
 - d. Seek to be a peacemaker (see Matt. 5:9).
2. Be pure and holy (see Heb. 12:14-15).
 - a. Seek personal cleansing from the Lord before you attempt to be reconciled with anyone.
 - b. Seek to have pure relationships with others so that they can experience God’s grace and can be forgiven (see Heb. 12:15).

The Bible gives clear commands and instructions for being reconciled.

- c. Diligently look for opportunities to make peace rather than spread gossip or talk about others.
- 3. Prevent bitterness and resentment (see Heb. 12:15).
 - a. Unforgiven sin plants roots of bitterness that yield evil fruit and cause many people to be defiled (contaminated) (see Heb. 12:15).
 - b. Unreconciled relationships develop roots of bitterness that make a relationship continually grow worse.

Your Resources

1. You have God's forgiveness (see Matt. 18:21-35).
 - a. God has forgiven you of a greater sin than anyone has ever committed against you. Your sin sent His Son to the cross.
 - b. You can afford to forgive others because you have been forgiven. They may not be able to forgive if they do not experience the grace, love, and joy you experience (see Matt. 18:23-35).
2. You have fellowship with God (see 1 John 1)
 - a. Walk openly and honestly with God in the light, as Jesus did. Do not try to hide anything from God.
 - b. Walk openly and honestly with others in the light. Confess your sins to other believers as well as to God (see Jas. 5:16).
 - c. God wants you to experience full fellowship with Him and with others. Confessing your sins to God and others opens your relationships with them.
3. If the Holy Spirit has impressed you with a need, you can be sure that He is also at work in the other person or that He wants to use you to help the other person become aware of conviction by the Holy Spirit.

Your Reconciliation

1. Attempt reconciliation privately. Find a place where you can talk together uninterrupted.
2. Confess your shortcomings. (If the Holy Spirit has not convicted you of any sin, omit step 2 and move to step 3.)
 - a. The right way to confess:
 - Say, "I've been thinking a lot about our relationship, and the Lord has convicted me of my [state wrong attitude] toward you and my actions when I [state wrong actions]. Possible wrong attitudes are an unforgiving spirit, bitterness, resentment, pride, and a judgmental attitude. Possible wrong actions are ignoring you; avoiding you; talking about you; criticizing you; arguing with you; trying to tear you down; embarrassing you; teasing, annoying, or provoking you; and tempting you. Do not qualify your request at this point by saying, "Perhaps I have ..." or "If I have. ..." You are confessing a sin of which the Holy Spirit has convicted you. Do not

God has forgiven you of a greater sin than anyone has ever committed against you.

Confess your shortcomings.

Ask if you have offended the person in any way.

If another person has sinned against you, express your feelings to the person in a spirit of love.

try to lessen the conviction by persuading the other person to minimize your sin or to dismiss it. The other person may have wronged you, but if you reacted wrongly in attitude or action, confess your sin and let the Holy Spirit convict the other person of his or her sin.

- Continue by saying: “I have asked God to forgive me, and I believe that He has. Now I would like to ask you to forgive me.” Use the word *forgive* and urge the other person to say that he or she forgives you if he or she does. The other person will usually try to minimize your wrong instead of taking the responsibility to forgive you, for example: “Oh, it’s nothing,” “I’ve done the same thing,” or “Never mind.” Say something like this: “I don’t know how it looks to you, but it is important for me to know that you forgive me. If you can forgive me, please say so.” If the person does not forgive you, say, “I’m sorry for what I’ve done, and I hope that someday you can forgive me.”
 - b. The wrong way to confess is to blame the other person or to minimize your sin, such as “I just can’t seem to relate to you” or “I acted wrongly, but you had done [state action], and I ...” These statements suggest that the other person is really at fault.
3. Ask if you have offended the person in any way.
- a. If the person says yes, ask him or her to tell you how. Listen and try to see the situation from the other person’s point of view.
 - If the assessment of the situation is accurate, ask the person to forgive you.
 - If it is not true, state the truth as objectively as you can.
 - If the facts are stated accurately but the motive the other person interpreted in your action is not accurate, tell him or her that you did not intend to leave that impression or had never viewed the situation like that. Promise to be more careful about your actions in the future. Assure the person that you are acting from right motives.
 - b. If the person says no, ask why he or she thinks that your relationship has not been good.
 - Discuss underlying problems that are revealed.
 - The person may feel that no problem exists. If so, accept that opinion and pledge to love and help each other.
4. If another person has sinned against you, express your feelings to the person in a spirit of love (see Matt. 18:15-17; Gal. 6:1).
- a. Do not ignore the problem. The tendency is to let it go. If you ignore the problem, you are not ensuring that “no one misses the grace of God” (Heb. 12:15). By facing the problem, you may help the other person seek God’s forgiveness. That person may not even be aware of the problem or may not know that anyone else is aware of it.

- b. Use language that expresses your feelings about the action against you rather than language that accuses. For example, begin your statement with “I felt hurt when I learned that you had not invited me to serve on the committee again this year” or “I felt embarrassed when I learned that you made these remarks about me.” Beginning a conversation with “You did [state action] to me” automatically puts the other person on the defensive and dilutes the possibility that the other person will hear the depth of your feelings. However, the other person has difficulty arguing with you about the fact that you feel hurt, embarrassed, or afraid.
 - c. If your private appeal does not effect reconciliation, ask other mature, compassionate Christians to help you seek reconciliation.
 - d. If the matter still cannot be resolved, the possibility exists that the congregation should be involved in the attempt to bring about reconciliation. Even this final effort may fail, and alienation may still be a reality. By the person’s attitude and refusal to be reconciled, this person may choose to isolate himself or herself from you and the congregation. However, the Scripture is clear that your attitude should continue to be one of deep concern, love, and desire for reconciliation.
 - e. Bear in mind that you seek reconciliation, not justification or vindication. The process outlined is valid only when you follow it because of a sincere, loving desire to restore fellowship between you and a brother or sister.
5. Pray together that God will help both of you walk in His light and have a pure, honest relationship in the future.
6. Prayerfully examine all of your relationships.
- a. List the persons with whom you need to seek reconciliation.
 - b. Use this guide in reconciliation, beginning with the most difficult situation.
 - c. Continue to seek reconciliation until you fulfill God’s command: “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Rom. 12:18).

Ask for the Holy Spirit to impress on you any relationship needing reconciliation. You may want to write the person’s initials in the margin. Referring to “How to Seek Reconciliation,” think about the steps you need to take to make this relationship right. You will learn additional steps to take in tomorrow’s work.



Read Matthew 18:21-35, a passage about forgiveness, during your quiet time today. Then complete the Daily Master Communication Guide in the margin.

DAILY MASTER COMMUNICATION GUIDE



MATTHEW 18:21-35

What God said to me:

What I said to God:

DAY 4



Making Restitution

“Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount’ ”
(Luke 19:8).

Yesterday you learned the importance of confessing and asking for forgiveness. But you may need to go even farther. After you have asked for forgiveness, you may need to make restitution. Zacchaeus followed his confession with a promise to restore fourfold what he had taken unjustly. Read Luke 19:8 in the margin.

Which of the following represent proper restitution?

- 1. Tell others involved that you were wrong.
- 2. Publicly retract statements that were gossip, slander, or lies.
- 3. Return stolen property.
- 4. Replace or repair damaged property.
- 5. Offer to help with a project or a chore.

Making restitution goes beyond saying, “I’m sorry.” It puts feet to your apologies. Making restitution involves doing as much as you can to reverse the damage of your words or actions. All of the statements represent restitution except 5. Offering to help with a project or a chore would make restitution only if it were related to the wrong you did. Doing an unrelated chore or project is more penance than restitution.

In the following case study underline phrases that show ways Sam made restitution.

Sam did not trust Jack, so he spread lies about Jack at work in an effort to make trouble for him. Coworkers began snubbing Jack because they believed the gossip Sam spread. Later, Sam learned that his view of Jack was inaccurate. He learned that Jack was a decent, honorable person. He got to know Jack better and realized that he could be trusted.

Feeling badly that he had said and done things to hurt Jack, Sam asked Jack to forgive him. Sam also went to each person to whom he had gossiped and admitted that he had lied about Jack. Then he used his influence at work to have Jack appointed to a committee on which his reliability would be evident.

You may have underlined most of the last two sentences. Sam tried to correct the gossip and to improve Jack’s situation at work. Sam’s restitution went beyond words; he put feet to his words and went out of his way to try to restore Jack’s good name.

TAKE THE INITIATIVE

If a Christian has offended you, you may be tempted to wait for that person to take the initiative in resolving your problem. However, in Matthew 18:15-17 Jesus instructed the wounded party to take action.

Read Matthew 18:15-17 in the margin and number these events in the proper order.

- _____ If the presence of witnesses does not accomplish reconciliation, take the matter to the church.
- _____ Go to the one who offends you and seek reconciliation.
- _____ If the two of you can agree, the relationship is restored.
- _____ A fellow Christian offends you.
- _____ If the offender refuses to be reconciled, take two or more Christian friends with you and seek reconciliation.
- _____ If the offender fails to heed the church's advice, treat this person as a sinner.

To continue good fellowship in the body, Christians must settle disputes. If a Christian offends another Christian, efforts must be made for the two to resolve matters; ideally, the rift is mended. If that does not work, friends can be asked to encourage reconciliation. If these efforts do not resolve the matter, then the body itself can be enlisted for help. If this last effort fails, the person has proved to be unconcerned for the fellowship and in effect disassociates himself or herself from the church. The correct order of the statements is 5, 2, 3, 1, 4, 6.

If all attempts fail and a fellow Christian refuses to reconcile differences, the Scripture says that you should relate to him or her as you would relate to a sinner. The Scripture does not say that the person has ceased to be your brother or sister in Christ, nor does it say that the offended person or the church is entitled to engage in acts of bitterness, vindictiveness, revenge, or alienation. We are all sinners. The attitude of the offended toward the offender should continue to be one of love and deep concern. The relationship changes, not the Christian attitude.



Continue memorizing this week's Scripture-memory verses, Matthew 5:23-24. Describe how you intend to apply the verses to your life and to use them to resolve relationship difficulties.

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector" (Matt. 18:15-17).

The attitude of the offended toward the offender should continue to be one of love and deep concern.

WITNESSING FOR THE MASTER

Perhaps the work you did in *MasterLife 3: The Disciple's Victory* on your Relational-Witnessing Chart comes to mind when you think about reconciliation. If relationships are not right with persons in your circles of influence, sharing the gospel will be impossible.

**DAILY MASTER
COMMUNICATION
GUIDE**



1 JOHN 4:7-21

What God said to me:

What I said to God:

The late seminary professor Oscar Thompson summarized this truth in his book *Concentric Circles of Concern*. Thompson said that God holds us responsible for everyone he brings into our spheres of influence. “When we have ruptured relationships horizontally, we also have a ruptured relationship vertically, with God,” he wrote. Thompson said that because of ruptured relationships among relatives and close friends, we often want to skip those closest to us and reach out to persons we barely know in order to salve our consciences. When this happens, Thompson said, “It is not that we do not know the Lord. It is just that he is not really Lord of our lives. We are not willing to let him be Lord of everything and accept people in his conditions. ... If we are genuine, we will want to share with those closest to us.”

As Thompson explained this concept in class one day, a student named Jim stated that he had problems with this way of looking at witnessing. “My father abandoned my mother and me 26½ years ago,” the student cried. “I am 27 years old. I have never seen him. I do not want to see him.” Thompson responded: “If I cannot forgive another on the grounds of God’s infinite grace, then God is going to have great difficulty forgiving me. Your father does not deserve forgiveness, but neither do you and neither do I.”

Jim replied that he did not know his father’s whereabouts or whether he was even alive. Thompson responded: “It does not matter. Your problem is one of attitude. You take it to God, let him tell you what to do, and leave it there. If God helps you find your father, you will know what to do.

“Weeks passed. One day Jim burst into class to tell me that through a series of events stemming from a death in the family, his father had called him, out of the blue. His father said he had learned that Jim was studying for the ministry. He wanted Jim to know that he had become a Christian. The father asked for Jim’s forgiveness and asked if he could attend Jim’s graduation.

“In May of that year, we were marching in the processional of the graduation exercise,” Thompson wrote. Someone grabbed me out of the line. It was Jim. He took me over to a little man who looked up through his trifocals. In tears, Jim said, ‘Dr. Thompson, this is my father.’”¹



List on your Prayer-Covenant List (p. 131) the names of persons in your circles of influence who do not know Christ. Then ask God to remove bitterness and unforgiveness from your life as you relate to those persons.



Read 1 John 4:7-21, about God’s love and your love for others, during your quiet time today. Then complete the Daily Master Communication Guide in the margin.

DAY 5



Living at Peace

In day 4 you began to explore the scriptural approach to resolving difficulties with others. You will continue studying this topic today.

HOW TO SEEK RECONCILIATION

In Matthew 18:15-17, in the margin, Jesus instructed us to seek reconciliation from the one who offends. In a face-to-face confrontation, give the benefit of the doubt. Be willing to admit your part in the problem or ask if you have done something that has caused the situation. Relationship problems cause spiritual problems. Prayer is a spiritual vehicle that brings spiritual solutions.

How does prayer help resolve conflict?

You may have responded that prayer enables you to see your sin and to grant forgiveness. Prayer also prepares your heart to deal with the other person's response. The Holy Spirit prepares the way in conversations that are necessary to resolve interpersonal difficulties.

Matthew 18:15-17 suggests that witnesses might be needed to verify your attempt at reconciliation. The other person who accompanies you does not necessarily need to do or say anything in the interchange. This person's role is to be an observer or a witness to the fact that you have done everything possible to bring reconciliation. His or her presence is an encouragement and a support to you as you seek to honor Christ in the way you resolve the difficulty.

A witness, or a peacemaker, should be a mature Christian who is objective and Spirit-led. In Galatians 6:1, in the margin, Paul gave advice to peacemakers.

Summarize Paul's advice in your own words.

Paul said that persons who are spiritual should help a wrongdoer see his or her fault but should do so in a gentle way. Love for one another involves discipline offered gently but firmly, being careful that the peacemaker does not fall into the same sin as the offender.

“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector” (Matt. 18:15-17).

“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted” (Gal. 6:1).

If you, before God, have prayerfully and scripturally entered the reconciliation, you are not at fault if the other person does not respond in a Christlike manner.

Once the relationship has been restored—or once you have exhausted all of the means at your disposal—you are cleansed and free from guilt. If you, before God, have prayerfully and scripturally entered the reconciliation, you are not at fault if the other person does not respond in a Christlike manner. Before God you are cleansed. God's forgiveness is complete, and yours is also. Forgive the other person without reservation and forgive yourself.



In this week's Scripture-memory verses, Matthew 5:23-24, where does a Christian end the process of reconciliation? See if you can recite the verses from memory before answering.

You end the process where you began: before God in worship.

Ask God to reveal anyone whom you may have offended or who has offended you to the point that you are unable to worship in peace. Write the action you will take to restore the relationship.

PREPARING TO MINISTER

In this section each week you will prepare for the ministry God has in store for you.



Complete the Personal-Assessment Worksheet that follows, based on what you know about MasterBuilder and a disciple's stages of development.

PERSONAL-ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

Spiritually Dead	Spiritual Child	Spiritual Disciple	Disciple Maker	Colaborer in Ministry
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

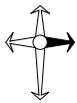
1. Circle the highest stage you have reached in your spiritual development.
2. Write on the line below each stage the name of a person you are helping develop through that stage toward the next stage.
3. Draw a plus sign (+) above any stage you need to model better.

4. Rank in order the following tasks by writing 1 through 5 on the lines above the tasks, with 1 designating the task you spend the most time doing.

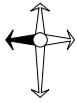
_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
 Witness Establish Train Equip Commission
 _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

5. Given your spiritual gifts, job, and the needs of a person you are discipling, rank the tasks in order according to the emphasis you feel you should be giving to each one. Write 1 through 5 on the lines below each task.

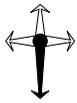
6. You may not yet be doing one or more of the tasks of a MasterBuilder. Circle the tasks for which you need additional training.



Based on what you have learned about relationships, complete the Relationship Quotient form (p. 132) with your spouse, a family member, or a close friend if you have not already done so. Discuss what you learn.



Visit at least one neighbor this week. Tell the neighbor that you would like to pray for each family member by name. Ask if the neighbor wants to share anything for you to pray about. List names and requests on your Prayer-Covenant List (p. 131). Your prayers and continued interest may lead to an opportunity to share the gospel later.



During your quiet time today read Ephesians 4:25-32, which instructs Christians in how to treat one another. Then complete the Daily Master Communication Guide in the margin.

HAS THIS WEEK MADE A DIFFERENCE?

Review “My Walk with the Master This Week” at the beginning of this week’s material. Mark the activities you have finished by drawing vertical lines in the diamonds beside them. Finish any incomplete activities. Think about what you will say during your group session about your work on these activities.

I hope that this study of “Righting Wrong Relationships” has provided practical help for a challenging area of your Christian life. You can master God-given skills to deal with others in a way that honors Christ and paves the way for you to be on mission for Him in the world.

1. W. Oscar Thompson, Jr., *Concentric Circles of Concern* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981), 22–27.

DAILY MASTER COMMUNICATION GUIDE



EPHESIANS 4:25-32

What God said to me:

What I said to God:
