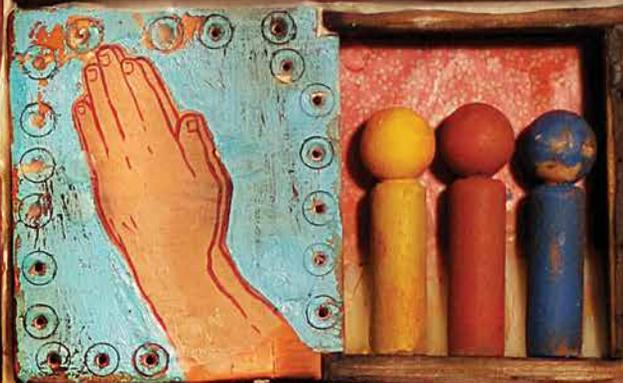
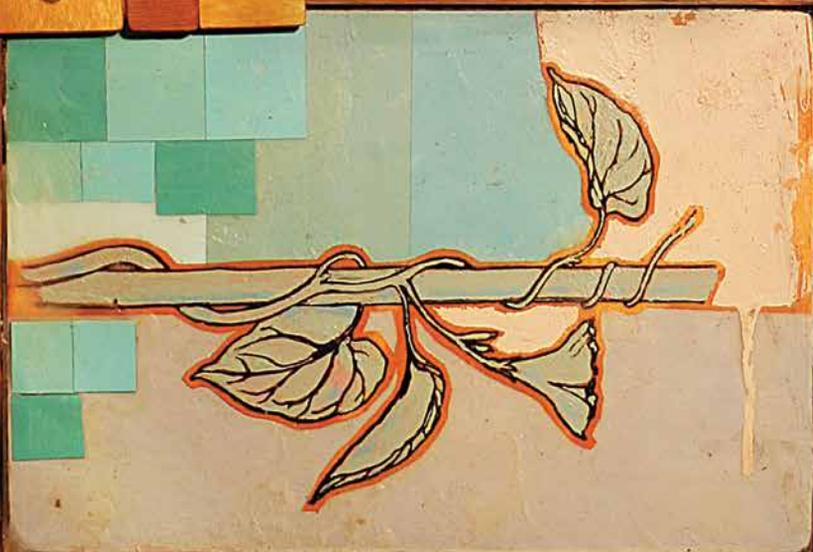


THE CALL TO
FOLLOW CHRIST

Six Disciplines for New
and Growing Believers



C l a u d e
K i n g





THE CALL TO
FOLLOW CHRIST

CLAUDE KING
with a music CD by Dámaris Carbaugh

LifeWay Press®
Nashville, Tennessee

 **LifeWay**
Biblical Solutions for Life

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Contents

Introducing Claude King and Dámaris Carbaugh.....	4
Let's Follow Christ Together.....	5
Week 1: Introducing <i>The Call to Follow Christ</i>.....	8
Chosen by Christ and Called	10
Called to Follow.....	12
Three Requirements for Following.....	14
Christ-Centered Following	16
Introducing Six Disciplines	18
Week 2: Abide in Christ.....	20
Abiding in the Vine	22
Experiencing Oneness with Christ	24
Spending Time with the Master	26
Bearing Spiritual Fruit	28
Obeying Christ's Commands	30
Week 3: Live in the Word	32
Treasuring God's Word	34
Reading God's Word.....	36
Memorizing God's Word	38
Studying God's Word.....	40
Doing God's Word	42
Week 4: Pray in Faith.....	44
Learning to Pray.....	46
Responding to God in Prayer.....	48
Asking in Prayer.....	50
Giving God a Reason to Answer.....	52
Praying Together	54
Week 5: Fellowship with Believers	56
Forgiving One Another	58
Experiencing Fellowship	60
Accepting One Another	62
Loving One Another.....	64
Keeping the Unity of the Spirit	66
Week 6: Witness to the World	68
Obeying the Final Command.....	70
Surveying and Praying.....	72
Cultivating Relationships	74
Telling Your Story	76
Introducing Jesus Christ.....	78
Week 7: Minister to Others	80
Serving like Jesus	82
Serving to Build Up the Body of Christ.....	84
Showing Love by Meeting Needs.....	86
Comforting One Another	88
Growing as a Disciple.....	90
Discipleship Helps	92
Tips for Memorizing Scripture.....	92
The Disciple's Cross	93
Bible Study Tools	94
Suggestions for Praying Together.....	96
Guidelines for Reconciling and Forgiving	97
Telling the Story of Jesus	99
Courses to Help You	
Grow in Discipleship	100
Leader Guide.....	101
Session 1: Introducing <i>The Call</i> to <i>Follow Christ</i>	104
Session 2: Abide in Christ	105
Session 3: Live in the Word.....	106
Session 4: Pray in Faith.....	107
Session 5: Fellowship with Believers	108
Session 6: Witness to the World.....	109
Session 7: Minister to Others	110
Scripture-Memory Cards	113

Introducing Claude King and Dámaris Carbaugh



Claude King is a discipleship specialist at LifeWay Christian Resources. In 1990 he coauthored *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* with Henry Blackaby, which has sold over 5 million copies and has been translated into over 50 languages. He has written or coauthored over 20 other books and discipleship resources. Claude serves on the board of directors for Final Command Ministries. He is a graduate of Belmont College and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He is married to Reta and has two daughters and one grandson. Other LifeWay courses written or coauthored by Claude King include: *Fresh Encounter* with Henry Blackaby, *The Mind of Christ* with T. W. Hunt, and *Come to the Lord's Table*.



Dámaris Carbaugh has known the heights of success in the New York City recording community. She's sung in commercial jingles for some of the world's biggest advertisers, including Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Minute Maid, and Wrigley's Doublemint Gum. Yet the desire of her heart is to be a servant of Christ. "I don't want a career," she says, "I want to be faithful." Dámaris has frequently been a soloist with the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir in New York City, and she is also a soloist and member of the Discovery Singers for the "Day of Discovery" television program produced by Radio Bible Class. She has recorded numerous solo music CDs, including *The Call*, from which we have drawn seven songs to share with you throughout this course. Dámaris and her husband, Rod, have two adult children. You can find out more about her ministry, music, and concert schedule at her Web site, www.damariscarbaugh.com.

Let's Follow Christ Together

Hello! I'm Claude, and I have the privilege of spending the next seven weeks with you as we seek to follow Jesus Christ more faithfully. I am a bit overwhelmed at this assignment. Who am I to teach you how to follow Christ? That's a huge responsibility. Yet I am comforted to know that I'm not alone in this task.

God gave us His Word to teach and guide us—what a gift! And He's placed His Holy Spirit in His children (you and me) to be our Teacher and to help us apply the truths of His Word to our lives. (I'm making the assumption that you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ and that you have a personal relationship with Him. If that is not the case, talk to a pastor or a Christian friend about how you can enter that relationship before we get started.) The Holy Spirit is going to point us to Christ and help us to know Him and experience Him at work in us and through us. Jesus once said to some religious leaders, "You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, yet they testify about Me. And you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:39-40). Here's the plan: I want us to study the Scriptures together. Then we'll take one more step to a relationship with Jesus Christ in which He will guide us to experience the abundant life He came to give us.

SMALL-GROUP STUDY OF *THE CALL TO FOLLOW CHRIST*

But let's not stop there. Although you could study this book alone, I want you to experience God's best. When God saved you, He placed you in the body of Christ so that you can benefit from the ministry of the other members of the body. You are also in the body to contribute to helping others. The writer of Hebrews instructs us: "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another" (Hebrews 10:24-25). Will you do that with me? Join a group of other believers in Christ. If necessary, enlist some to join you in your study so that you can help one another grow in following Christ. You will find that we need one another, and we can help one another. Let's do it.

If you are the person who will lead the small-group sessions, I've included a brief leader guide beginning on page 101. For each of the seven sessions I've included suggested learning activities to guide your sharing, processing, and applying the things you are learning. If you are not the group leader, you may still want to look at the session plans on pages 104–10 so that you will be prepared to respond to the things your leader guides you to do. Before the study ends, you will experience a special closeness to your small group. You will experience some of the benefits God intended when He created the church as the body of Christ.

MESSAGE MUSIC

I've also got some help from a dear friend, Dámaris Carbaugh. In 2003 while working in New York City, I attended a prayer breakfast at the United Nations as the General

Assembly prepared to open. Dámaris sang that day, and I had the privilege of meeting her and her husband, Rod. I had been deeply impacted by her music for years. Two of her songs had particularly touched me: “Willingly” and “Whatever It Takes.” In fact, God had used those songs to prepare me to answer His call to serve in New York City. She and Rod invited me to visit their church on Sunday for an outdoor concert.

After the service they took me to dinner, and I heard about *The Call* (see p. 112). Dámaris and 80 people in her church had been studying *MasterLife*, a discipleship course by Avery T. Willis Jr. When her music publisher asked her to select a theme for her next recording project, she suggested that the writers use *MasterLife* as the source of their work. A few weeks later, 10 songs were ready for recording. That night at dinner she began to sing for me some of the songs she had just recorded. Wow! I was moved.

Two years later, I returned to work at LifeWay, the publisher of *MasterLife*. I made a proposal for *The Call to Follow Christ*, based on six disciplines taught in *MasterLife*. I’m thrilled that Discovery House Music has permitted us to use seven songs from *The Call* to enrich your study and to develop the six disciplines in your life. I call these songs message music. The songs have a powerful message that can help us grow in our walk with Christ and development of these spiritual disciplines. Each week I’ll introduce you to one of the songs and guide you to interact with the message in the music. But you don’t have to wait to listen to all seven songs. Go ahead and let God begin using these messages to saturate your heart and mind with the desire to answer His call to follow Christ.

PERSONAL STUDY OF *THE CALL TO FOLLOW CHRIST*

This book may be different from others you have read. I call this a self-paced, interactive study. I’m not just speaking to you as I write. I want you to interact with me and with the Lord. So I will give you instructions for at least two types of activities.



One is a prayer activity that begins with an arrow pointing up to God and down to you. The arrow symbolizes what I want you to do in prayer. Talk to the Lord and listen as He speaks to you. At the beginning of each day I will ask you to listen to God through His Word; you’ll read a verse or two from the Bible. Then I’ll ask you to meditate and pray. At other times I will give you suggestions for a time of prayer. While we’re here, take a moment to pray and ask God to guide you and speak to you as you pray to Him over the next seven weeks.



The other kind of activity will begin with a circled number. In these learning activities I may ask you a question and give you instructions for responding. Or I may give you instructions about something I want you to do. Take these learning activities seriously. Don’t just skip over them to move on in your reading. I don’t want you just to read some information about following Christ. I want you to understand the message, and I want you to apply it to your life. These learning activities will help you understand and apply these truths to your life. Will you work with me by completing these learning activities? Check your response: yes no

I hope you answered yes. If you answered no, you'll miss much of the help this study can provide for your spiritual growth. After the learning activities I may give you some feedback about your response as I'm doing now. If there are correct answers, I will provide them either in the following paragraph or in the margin.

Each week you will study five daily lessons before getting together with a mentor or a small group to process what you are learning. Don't wait until the end of the week to start your study. I don't want you to be overwhelmed by having too much to do in too short a time. That can be discouraging. But more importantly, I want you to develop a habit of spending time with God every day. Some people call this a quiet time or devotional time. Take some time every day (preferably at the beginning of the day) to read God's Word, study or meditate on its meaning, and talk to God in prayer. For the next seven weeks, let this book be your guide. By starting the day with your focus on Christ, you will be in a position all day to let God apply the truths to your life. As you do this in "chewable bites" (or small pieces at a time), you will learn and grow at a reasonable pace. You will need to study week 1 before your first small-group session.

I will also ask you to memorize some Bible verses. These Scriptures can guide you, encourage you, warn you, or give you a promise from God to keep in your mind. I've chosen a verse for each week that will apply to the discipline for the week. One of your lessons in week 3 will help you understand better why memorizing Scripture is valuable. Just take my word for it: this will be worth your effort! The first week's study provides tips for memorizing Scripture.

THE DISCIPLE'S CROSS

For years I worked with Avery T. Willis Jr., who had written the discipleship course called *MasterLife*. Probably half a million people or more have studied this course just as the people at Dámaris Carbaugh's church did. It is being used all around the world. *The Call to Follow Christ* is an introduction to the six disciplines taught in *MasterLife*. After you finish this study, you may want to move into the four courses in *MasterLife* to grow much deeper and stronger in your walk with Christ.

In *MasterLife* Avery organizes the six disciplines into what I call a course "map." His "map" is called the Disciple's Cross. I'll introduce it to you in week 2, but you can take a peek now on page 93. As you study the diagram, you will see all six disciplines on or around the cross. This can be a valuable memory aid for your own discipleship journey. I will use it for that purpose. However, it can also be a valuable tool for you to teach others what a life of following Christ looks like. With that purpose in mind, your small-group leader or mentor will probably ask you to describe parts of the diagram week by week. Watch for opportunities to draw and describe the Disciple's Cross. That will help you learn the disciplines and may help you bring another person to our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Well, the time has come. Let's get started on our journey of following Jesus!



Week 1 • Introducing *The Call to Follow Christ*

“If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23).

Introducing *The Call to Follow Christ*

God has chosen and called believers into a real love relationship with Jesus Christ that is joyful, meaningful, and fruitful. Following Christ requires denying self, taking up our cross daily, and following Him in obedience. Following Christ is reflected through a disciplined life in our relationship with Him, other believers, and the rest of the world.

OVERVIEW OF WEEK 1

Day 1: Chosen by Christ and Called

Day 2: Called to Follow

Day 3: Three Requirements for Following

Day 4: Christ-Centered Following

Day 5: Introducing Six Disciplines

VERSE TO MEMORIZE

“If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23).

MESSAGE-MUSIC CD

“The Call” (track 1)

DISCIPLESHIP HELPS FOR WEEK 1

“Tips for Memorizing Scripture” (p. 92)

WHY THIS WEEK WILL BE MEANINGFUL TO YOU

You will understand God’s calling on your life to follow Christ. You will show your willingness to follow Christ by doing such things as ...

- praying a prayer of surrender to Him and His will;
- describing to Him your desire to be a faithful follower;
- choosing to deny self so that you can freely follow His will;
- taking up your cross daily, which puts sin to death in your life;
- studying Scriptures diligently and moving through them into a relationship with Christ to understand and live by the spirit of His Word;
- developing spiritual disciplines in your life that strengthen Christlikeness, demonstrate obedience, and yield spiritual fruitfulness.

Day 1 • Chosen by Christ and Called

God's Word for Today

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."

2 Peter 1:3, NIV

Responding to the Lord

Wow! Lord, I didn't know when I first came to You that Your divine power would give me everything I need for life and godliness. In fact, I don't think I've fully experienced the truth of that promise. But I sure want to. Lord, You are good and glorious. You have called me. I've joined this study because I want to follow You, but I need Your help. Empower me to live the life You have called me to live. I ask this in Jesus' name and according to Your promise. Amen.

Optional Reading

2 Peter 1

Called: invited, summoned by God to partake of the blessings of salvation and redemption



Read and briefly meditate on "God's Word for Today" in the margin and respond to the Lord in prayer. As your time permits, consider the "Optional Reading" each day. Read it in your Bible and mark verses that are meaningful or that you would like to memorize. As you read, pause and talk to God about what you are reading. Cultivate your relationship with Him.

The night before Jesus laid down His life on the cross, He spoke to His followers. These instructions are also for us as followers of Christ. Here's one:

I have spoken these things to you so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is My command: love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you slaves anymore, because a slave doesn't know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from My Father. You did not choose Me, but I chose you. I appointed you that you should go out and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain (John 15:11-16).



Which statement would you choose as the most meaningful to you?

Check one or underline a phrase from John 15:11-16 above.

- a. He wants my joy to be complete.
- b. He showed His great love for me when He laid down His life for me.
- c. I don't have to be a slave of God; I can be His friend.
- d. Out of all people on earth, He chose me and gave me an assignment.
- e. His plan is to produce spiritual fruit through my life that will last.

As we begin our study together, we have every reason to be amazed. Jesus, the Savior and Creator, has chosen us to be His friends and coworkers. He has planned that we will be fruitful—spiritually successful. He has every intention to fill us with His joy, and best of all, He loved us so deeply that He went to the cross and gave His life for us. What a privilege to follow such a Savior. In addition to being chosen, we are also called.*



Read 1 Peter 2:9 in the margin on the next page and circle the word *called*.

What are you called from? _____ And to? _____

 As you read the words below, listen to Dámaris sing “The Call” (track 1) on the message-music CD. In the chorus underline the other things to which you are called. I’ve underlined one for you.

It’s a stirring in my spirit / It’s a tugging at my heart
It’s the voice of everlasting / Speaking in my deepest part
And as I read the Scripture / It leaps off of the page
It leads me as I worship / And draws me when I pray

Chorus

It’s the call to trust / The call to love / The call to walk by faith
The call to go / And the call to serve / To follow and obey
He is worthy indeed / Oh, will you heed the call

The question lies before us / A decision we must make
Oh, will we follow Jesus / Or hold to our own way
We must not take it lightly / ‘Cause it touches everything
It’s a lifelong surrender / To heaven’s gracious King

Repeat chorus

The call is like a whisper / The call is like a shout
And it’s the invitation / True life is all about

Repeat chorus

 The call of Jesus is to a “lifelong surrender / To heaven’s gracious King.” “Will you heed the call”? Check your answer below.

- a. I choose to follow Jesus—to trust, to love, to walk by faith, to go, to serve, to follow and obey.
- b. I’m sorry, but I’m still going to hold to my own way.

I pray that your answer is *a*. It’s a huge choice, isn’t it? If you are still at answer *b*, stick with us. Paul wrote, “It is God who is working in you, enabling you both to will and to act for His good purpose” (Philippians 2:13). God hasn’t called you to do or be anything that He will not also enable you to be or do in order to fulfill His purpose. He will even help you want to do His will.



Ask the Lord to make clear to you His calling on your life. Tell Him about your willingness to surrender to His will as He makes it clear to you. Ask the Lord to help you respond to His call in faith, obedience, and full surrender. If you’re not ready to pray like this, would you at least give Him permission to help you want to follow His call? If so, do it.

The Call

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1 Peter 2:9

“You are ‘a chosen race,
a royal priesthood,
a holy nation, a people
for His possession,
so that you may proclaim
the praises’
of the One who called
you out of darkness
into His marvelous light.”

God hasn’t called you to do or be anything that He will not also enable you to be or do in order to fulfill His purpose.

Day 2 • Called to Follow

God's Word for Today

“My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand.”
John 10:27-28

Responding to the Lord

Lord Jesus, thank You for calling me and making me one of Your sheep. What a gift You have given me—eternal life and security in Your hand! Help me know Your voice so that I may follow You faithfully. Amen.

Optional Reading

1 Peter 2

John 10:11

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Called

- “To all who are ... loved by God, called as saints” (Romans 1:7).
- “All things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).



Read and briefly meditate on “God’s Word for Today” in the margin and respond to the Lord in prayer.



Read the Scriptures under “Called” in the margin on pages 12–13, and underline the words *called* and *calling* each time they occur. I’ve underlined one for you. In each verse, notice that to which you’ve been called.

My brother or sister in Christ, God has called us to salvation, to eternal life, to hope, to be saints, to an eternal inheritance and eternal glory. We’ve been called out of darkness and into His marvelous light!

JESUS CALLED DISCIPLES TO FOLLOW HIM

When Jesus began His earthly ministry, He called 12 men to follow Him and learn from Him. He called them to be with Him so that they could learn from His words as well as His example and lifestyle. He called these men to train and equip them to carry on His mission after He returned to heaven.



As you read about Jesus’ calling of some of these men, underline the words that describe how they responded to His call. What did they do?

Simon Peter and Andrew. “As He was walking along the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea, since they were fishermen. ‘Follow Me,’ He told them, ‘and I will make you fish for people!’ Immediately they left their nets and followed Him” (Matthew 4:18-20).

James and John. “Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and He called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed Him” (Matthew 4:21-22).

Levi (Matthew). “After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office, and He said to him, ‘Follow Me!’ So, leaving everything behind, he got up and began to follow Him” (Luke 5:27-28).

These five, plus seven more, chose to follow Christ when He called them. Simon Peter and Andrew *immediately* left their fishing nets and followed. James and John also *immediately* left their family fishing business and their father to follow Christ. Levi left everything behind, including his tax-collecting career, to follow Christ. For three years they followed Him, and He readied them to carry on His work. He prepared them to carry out one great assignment that He would give them at the end of their training: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). By the time Jesus returned to heaven, at least 120 people had believed and chosen to follow Him (see Acts 1:15).

CALLED TO BE A DISCIPLE

A disciple* is a learner, one who follows the teachings of another. A disciple is one who becomes like his master or teacher, one who imitates his teacher. When you answer the call to follow Christ, you begin the process of becoming a disciple, too. He is your Lord and Master. He wants you to follow Him.

- 3 Read the definition of *disciple* in the right margin below. Which of the following is the best definition of a disciple of Christ? Check one.
- a. A person who reads about Jesus and can answer questions about His life and teachings
 - b. A person who learns about Christ and His teachings and chooses to live like Him and to obey His commands
 - c. A person who chooses to live the way he or she desires without any reference to what Christ wants

Did you choose answer *b*? That’s correct. A person who chooses not to follow Christ’s commands (*c*) is not a disciple. Neither is a person who only knows about Christ and His teachings. A disciple is one who follows. Jesus has called you to be on mission with Him. As your Lord, He has chosen and called you to be His servant and follower. Jesus said, “If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me. Where I am, there My servant also will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him” (John 12:26).

- 4 If Jesus Christ evaluated the quality of your following Him, what grade do you think He would give? Check one.
- a. A—excellent follower c. I—improving
 - b. B—very good follower d. N—needs improvement

↑ ↓
Thank Jesus for calling you to His salvation and eternal life.
Talk to Jesus about your desire to be His faithful follower.

- “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so you may know what is the hope of His calling” (Ephesians 1:18).
- “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope at your calling” (Ephesians 4:4).
- “Take hold of eternal life, to which you were called” (1 Timothy 6:12).
- “He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (Hebrews 9:15).
- “You are ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises’ of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).
- “The God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support you” (1 Peter 5:10).

✦ **Disciple:** a learner, one who follows the teachings of another, an adherent, an imitator of the teacher