

real-life discipleship

training manual

equipping disciples who
make disciples

real-life discipleship

training manual

jim putman // avery t. willis jr. // brandon guindon // bill krause

NAV PRESS 
Discipleship Inside Out™



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how to use this book



As I boarded the plane back to Oregon, I couldn't help but think, *If this church ends up looking like every other struggling church I've ever been in, what will we have accomplished?* On Sunday evenings, I had been flying to northern Idaho to meet with a small group of people who wanted to plant a new church and me to become their pastor. If I agreed, how could I ensure we did not end up like so many other churches: struggling to survive, hoping for a better way, but not reaching the potential of God's design for His church?

I accepted the offer to become their pastor, and the training manual you have in your hands explains how I and the rest of the leadership team at Real Life Ministries answered those questions. There isn't much theory here. Instead, it is the day-by-day, boots-on-the-ground game plan that we use every day at our church. For the next twelve weeks, I along with Avery Willis, Brandon Guindon, and Bill Krause will coach you through a clear and uncomplicated way to make disciples.

Avery is the executive director of the International Orality Network, and he speaks around the world to both oral and literate audiences. Brandon is the executive pastor at Real Life Ministries. He, along with his team, pioneered the small-groups ministry at Real Life. Bill serves as the family ministry team leader at Real Life Ministries. Together we have boiled down the lessons our church learned through trial and error and put them into this workbook format.

You will need twenty to thirty minutes five days each week to do the assignments. It is important for you to complete each learning exercise before reading further. Each day will include interactive activities, passages to look up, and a review section that will summarize what you should have learned. It is possible for you to work through this book on your own, but we recommend that you work through it with a group of three to ten people. If you are leading the group, we have a leader's guide at the back of this training manual that will help you facilitate the group.

By the end of the first week, you should be able to explain why making disciples is a priority for both you and your church. By the end of the twelfth week, you should be better equipped to make disciples. Our objective is that you will become a more intentional disciple-maker and have a strong grasp of the process Jesus modeled for us.

Jim Putman
Spring 2010

a heart to make disciples



The church in America is in decline. At the heart of this problem, good Christian people are lost as to what to do. These next twelve weeks are dedicated to what we believe will be a life-changing journey to restoring God’s priorities to our lives. The church was built to win.

WHAT DOES WINNING LOOK LIKE?

day 1

When Jim Putman met with the people who wanted to plant a church in Idaho, it caused him to think about what a *successful* church would look like. Consequently, when he agreed to help start a new church, he asked the group he met with two questions: (1) If Christianity were a team sport and the church were Christ’s team, what would winning be? (2) What is the church supposed to be and do to win?

Several people answered that the church wins as we worship together or when it grows in attendance and people become believers. A few said that we win when we are a family who cares for one another. Jim went on to ask what a church would have to do to accomplish all these goals. Some felt it would need inspiring weekend services with dynamic preaching and great music. Others thought the church should train people in pastoral care in order to meet the needs of hurting people.

1. Before you move ahead, write down your answers to these same questions.

- In relation to Christianity and the church, what is winning?

- What is the church supposed to be and do to win?

The varying answers people gave caused Jim to turn to the Bible for a solution. The church needed a clear game plan or it would be divided from the start. Jesus’ last command in Matthew 28:18-20 makes the church’s mission clear: The church is called to reach the world for Jesus one person at a time. In other words, every Christian is commanded to participate in the mission to make disciples. This mission became Real Life Ministries’ purpose.

That was ten years ago. Since then our church has grown to more than eight thousand

people, and discipleship is happening in every ministry. Oh, we have made many mistakes and we still have a lot to learn, but God is leading and blessing our obedience to His command to make disciples.

Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

(Matthew 28:18-20)

2. Read Matthew 28:18-20 in the margin and circle the words in which Jesus is telling us to do something.

Did you circle the words *go, make disciples, baptizing, and teaching*?

In the Bible's original language, *make disciples* is the key phrase in these verses because the words *going, baptizing, and teaching* support the command to make disciples.

3. In these verses, Jesus commanded us to go into the world and _____ of every nation.

4. The three other action words show us what is entailed in obeying that command. To make disciples, we must be _____, _____, and _____.

Go back and review how you answered the two questions at the beginning of this lesson. Compare what you wrote with the command above.

5. Check the box below that fits best at this point:

- "Yes! I knew it. I am off to a good start because I knew that the church is supposed to make disciples."
- "No, I missed it. No one has ever explained the church's purpose to me like this before."
- "Well, I had it right, but I said it in a different way."
- "I disagree! I had a different answer, and I still think I am right."

Your answers throughout this training manual will shape the discussions in your small group each week. Be sure not to skip over any of them. This process is designed to help you understand and remember the lesson.

6. In your own words, write what part the church plays in making disciples.

7. What is your personal role in helping the church make disciples?

8. Spend some time meditating on Matthew 28:18-20. Begin memorizing it phrase by phrase. You will be asked to write it from memory later. Using these verses, explain to someone today why the church should focus on making disciples. Write the name(s) of the person(s) you told or plan to tell. _____

Review

- God designed the church to reach the world for Christ by making disciples.
- Making disciples was Jesus' original command.

day 2

HOW DO WE OBEY JESUS' COMMAND?

Yesterday we looked at Jesus' command to make disciples. Today we will take a closer look at the importance of making disciples in our homes, workplaces, and churches.

Jesus Completed His Work

During the Last Supper, before Jesus was arrested and taken to the cross, He prayed with His disciples. In His prayer, Jesus says, "I have brought you glory on earth by *completing* the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4, emphasis added). How could He say that He had completed the work God had given Him to do when He had not yet died on the cross and risen from the dead?

I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.

(John 17:6-9)

1. Read John 17:6-9 in the margin and underline the work Jesus had completed when He prayed this prayer.

The answer? In His prayer, Jesus said that He had completed the work of making disciples. The disciples were ready to go and make disciples themselves; all they needed was the Holy Spirit. If Jesus had died on the cross for our sins but had not made disciples who could deliver the message, none of us would have heard the good news. Jesus completed the message: He died for us and rose from the grave. He also created a way for people even today to hear that message: by releasing His disciples to go and make disciples, who in turn were released to go and make disciples, and so on.

2. Many people believe that Jesus came only to die and be resurrected from the dead. Why do you think they often leave out the work Jesus did of making disciples?

Look again in Matthew 28:18-20. A few weeks after His resurrection, Jesus commanded twelve men to do the same work His Father had given Him to do. The disciples didn't look at Jesus and say, "How do we do *that*?" Jesus had already shown them how; He had given them a living model to follow. Jesus made disciples who made other disciples.

3. What main work did Jesus say He had completed when He prayed to the Father in John 17? Circle the answer.

- Healed people who were sick
- Taught truth to the crowds
- Made twelve men into mature disciples
- Reformed Jewish worship
- Rose from the dead

The correct answer is the third one.

4. How can you know when your work with someone you are discipling is complete?

The Message Needs a Messenger

Your work is complete when the person you are discipling can make a disciple. Some might question the need for disciples who can disciple others. After all, we have the Bible and the Holy Spirit. Aren't they enough to make disciples? We must remember that Jesus knew we would have both these things, yet He still told His disciples to go and to teach others to obey. Jesus knew that mature disciples were needed to deliver the message. Disciples are made when the Spirit of God, the Word of God, and the people of God work together.

5. Read Romans 10:14 in the margin and then rate the importance of a messenger. Circle your choice:

The messenger is essential.

The messenger is very important.

The messenger is optional.

The messenger is unnecessary.

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

(Romans 10:14)

The church was not designed to be a group of spectators who attend weekly lectures; it was designed to be a trained army with a powerful message. *All* believers are the messengers who bring the message to others and then continue the process of discipling those who believe. By doing this, we complete the same work Jesus prayed about in John 17. He gave that work to His disciples, who in turn gave it to us.

How Are We Doing?

Statistics tell us that a typical believer will die without leading a single person to a life-saving relationship with Jesus Christ.¹ Before you say, "No way!" or "That figures!" ask yourself, *Who was the last person I led to Christ?*

According to Matthew 28:18-20, even if we have led someone to Christ, we need to ask another question. Have we disciplined that person to the point that he or she is able to lead someone *else* to Christ and then disciple that new believer? We complete our work when our disciple can do his or her part to win and train new disciples who are then able to do the same with others. In this way, the process of making disciples continues until Jesus returns. His command to the church remains the same generation after generation.

6. Did you follow that? How can our work of making disciples be completed while the process of making disciples continues until Jesus returns? Write your answer using your own words.

As you consider your role in making disciples, spend time praying through Jesus' prayer in John 17.

7. Suppose someone challenges the belief that our first priority is to make disciples. Write how you would explain Jesus' example in John 17.

Review

- In John 17, Jesus prayed to the Father that He had completed the work He had been given.
- The work that Jesus had completed was training the twelve to be disciple-makers.
- God intended for the message of the gospel to come from a messenger who can disciple others.

MAKE DISCIPLES AS YOU GO

day 3

This is an important day. We are going to get even more practical about our role in what the church is supposed to do.

Evil Will Not Prevail

As a wrestler and a wrestling coach, Jim Putman knew the test of any athlete’s ability was on the mat. Athletes may make bold claims, but the wrestling mat is where they back them up. Jesus made bold claims about his church.

1. Read Matthew 16:15-18 in the margin and underline the bold statement Jesus made about the church.

Jesus said that the gates of hell (or the forces of evil) would not prevail against (overcome or stop) His church from completing its mission. But it seems the church is being overcome all the time—there are divisions and splits, fights and feuds. Why aren’t we seeing Jesus’ words backed up on the mat? The church in America is not winning many converts, and it struggles to keep the ones it already has. So many indicators seem to say that the church is no match for the forces of evil. Should that be the case? No. Jesus meant what He said. So why aren’t American Christians proving themselves “on the mat”?

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

(Matthew 16:15-18, ESV)

2. Take a minute and list the top three reasons you think the church is not winning many converts.

- _____
- _____
- _____

In his book *The Unchurched Next Door*, Thom Rainer cites a study that shows that most unchurched people do not sense that Christians actively try to share their faith and that many wonder what makes Christians hesitant.² In other words, many unchurched people would be open to talking about Christ, but Christians do not talk to them about their faith.

3. Why do you think a majority of unchurched people feel that Christians are reluctant to share their faith and, therefore, not advancing the kingdom?

4. Compare that with the roadblocks you listed previously. Were you off base?

5. What do you think it will take to turn the situation around so that evil is not prevailing against the church?

A Real Life Ministries Story

Kelly owned the most popular country-western bar in our town. He was a well-known performer all over our area. He seemed very successful doing life without Jesus, but he knew that something was missing. Through a variety of circumstances and relationships, Kelly accepted Christ, and some men in our church began to intentionally disciple him. He began sharing his life and heart with others, and it was just a matter of time before he closed his bar. He now has a ministry in our church to help people do their finances God's way. He performs all over the area, but not only does he sing, he also shares the gospel at every performance.

Kelly's story is a constant reminder to us that the church still works. It is able to take territory from the Enemy. Hell is no match for the power of Christ and His church.

“As You Are Going . . .”

The literal translation of the command in Matthew 28:19-20 is this: *“As you are going, make disciples!”* (emphasis added). Jesus is directing us to make disciples as we go about doing life. Matthew 16:15-18 reminds us that the Enemy has captured people and holds them from Christ. Disciple-makers are walking into a dark world that is in need of light.

6. What about you? As you read this, do you think about the non-Christians you know? Use the following categories to help you think of names of people who need Christ.

- Someone under your own roof
- Someone at work or school
- Someone you know because your kids play on the same team or have the same teacher
- Someone in your neighborhood or community
- A friend or family member

Pray for these folks this week. God is leading these people across your path. People we meet every day need Jesus, and the Enemy cannot stop us from sharing the gospel message with them. But disciple-making begins with our going to those who need to hear the message.

Here's an example of what we are talking about. One day on a whim, Jim Putman stopped by a local movie theater during off-hours to ask if the owners would rent space to our church. We were growing, and we needed more room. As he entered the waiting area, he saw an employee sitting there crying. Jim asked what was wrong, and her story spilled out. She and her husband had separated. As they talked about her struggles, Jim was able to share the message of salvation with her, and that morning she began her journey with

Jesus. God put this woman in Jim's path as he was going through his day. If Jim had ignored her problems and just asked about renting the theater, she would not have met Jesus that day. In the same way, when we see a person in need, it is an invitation from God to step in with love and service—and eventually with words—to point people to Christ.

7. As you go through your day, what is it that keeps you from making disciples?

Review

- Jesus said that the forces of evil would not overcome His church.
- As we go along in life, we will meet people who need Jesus.

day 4

THE CHURCH IS GOD’S TEAM

Let’s review . . .

1. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus commanded us to _____.
2. In John 17, Jesus prayed to the Father about completing the work He had been given: making disciples. This work was important because the message of the gospel needs a _____.
3. Yesterday, we embraced Jesus’ claim that the forces of _____ will not _____ against the _____. The church is supposed to be a winning team that moves forward and crushes our Opponent’s strongholds.

Make notes in the margins regarding what you would like to discuss in your small group about how the church should prevail. Invite God today to be part of your study.

Christianity Is a Team Sport

The church is God’s team. Today some Christians think they can make disciples best without the church. They feel that the church (the corporate body) doesn’t hold up its end. Because of this, they are sometimes tempted to quit the church and go the Christian life alone. But Christianity is a team sport. No matter how gifted or talented an individual is, he or she needs the church to be able to successfully make disciples and be a disciple. Because a “go it alone” philosophy is unbiblical. The church is part of God’s design for disciple-making.

4. Read again Matthew 16:18: “I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (ESV). Jesus clearly tells us who is going to crush the gates of hell (the forces of evil). Check the one that is going to win the battle.

- Peter himself
- The twelve disciples
- The church

Sure, some parts of our faith can be accomplished on the individual level, but much of what the church is supposed to do can happen only when we function as a team. We can win (make disciples of all nations) only as a team.

5. The apostle Paul uses the human body to illustrate this principle. Read Romans 12:4-8 in the margin and write out how you think the church team functions like a body.

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

(Romans 12:4-8)

The Bible makes it clear that although the church is made up of individuals, we must work together to succeed.

Follow Jesus, Not Me

The church team is also important because no one person has all the abilities, gifts, and wisdom of Jesus. We need each other to fulfill Christ's command. Though we are responsible to disciple those God brings across our paths, we were never intended to do it all alone. Working as a team helps us to keep Jesus first and avoid exalting one player's importance above another.

6. Think about the believers who surround you. Write down the name of someone you know who could:

- Help others locate Bible passages that shed light on a subject

- Give empathy and encouragement when someone is struggling

- Share wisdom about how God helped him or her work through marriage or parenting problems

- Serve as a good host

- Organize a service project

In the church, people do all these things to cooperate with God in making disciples. There is still a need for a pastor, but he does not need to feel as if he must have all the wisdom, skills, or answers. The pastor can be real about his struggles because the solutions are not going to be found in him. You see, the pastor is not making disciples who follow *him*; he is making disciples who follow *Jesus*.

7. What abilities and gifts do you have that can help others be like Jesus?

Paul told us in Ephesians 2:10 that we are God's masterpiece and that He saved us for good works that He planned for us to do. We all have roles we have been gifted and shaped to fulfill. Too many believers do not understand that even the scars we've received from others (and the ones we've given to ourselves) can be used now for Jesus.

A Real Life Ministries Story

Our church has a huge ministry to recovering addicts that meets in small groups. A team of people who were once alcoholics and drug addicts leads this ministry. The team members understand addiction because they have struggled with it for years. They have the experience with Jesus and know that He can save anyone out of anything. We also have groups for the sexually abused and the sexually addicted, led by folks who have found victory with Jesus in those areas. Everyone can be used in the church no matter what their past.

8. Earlier you wrote down your gifts and abilities that God might use to help others be like Jesus, but what about your scars? What has God brought you through that could be used to disciple others?

9. What areas of disciple-making could you use help?

Review

- Jesus called us to make disciples of Him, not ourselves.
- Every Christian has been given gifts to use for fulfilling Christ's command to go and make disciples.
- The church team offers a variety of gifts and abilities to make disciples together.

ON THIS TEAM, EVERYONE PLAYS

day 5

You made it! You are about to complete the first week. Be open to God's leading today.

Get in the Game

If Christianity is a team sport, then the team cannot win unless everyone gets in the game. Take a moment to read 1 Corinthians 12:14-20 in the margin.

Paul writes that we are *all* part of the church—God's team. We were chosen to be on this team and to play the role He gifted us for. We all have abilities and gifts to be used for the good of the team and the cause of Christ. Everyone is important and everyone plays.

Getting Started Can Be Hard

Scott attended one of our home groups. He listened intently each week to the discussion and quickly learned that it was okay to ask questions. People were drawn to Scott. His positive attitude and genuine enthusiasm were contagious. However, when Bill Krause asked him to consider leading a group, he hesitated. He was concerned that he did not know enough about the Bible to lead a group. He thought the leaders had to know Bible languages, understand ancient history, and so on.

Fear is one of the roadblocks that keep people from playing on the team. What if someone asks a question you cannot answer? None of us wants to look stupid. Others think they can't play on the team by leading a small group because they aren't a trained counselor, and still others say they are too busy and would be unable to do a good job. After all, time is not like money: We can't make more time.

1. What fears or concerns do you have about leading a discipleship group?

Too often, fears and concerns paralyze people from ever playing on God's team. Worse yet, in some cases their concerns are excuses that hide an unwilling heart. They just don't want to get involved. Leading a discipleship group sounds like too much work.

Letting Others Play Can Be Harder Yet!

Jim Putman was having breakfast with a pastor from another church, and during their conversation, the pastor said he wondered why Real Life was growing while his was struggling. When Jim asked him if he was discipling his people, the pastor replied, "Absolutely!" He had been meeting with a small group of guys for a couple of hours every week for nearly two years.

Jim was puzzled. This pastor had been meeting with these folks for two years, yet he insisted that these disciples were not ready to be released. When we started our church, the need in our community was so great that we released people sooner than Jim was comfortable with, so he understood this pastor's desire to get it right. (To address this concern, we created a system so that people could get on-the-job training and accountability as they went.)

The body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

(1 Corinthians 12:14-20)

4. Look again at this week's key verses, Matthew 28:18-20 (see day 1). Have you memorized it yet? How has your understanding of making disciples changed?

5. Has your commitment to making disciples grown? Mark the responses that best describe your commitment.

- I realize that I must be involved.
- I have always been committed.
- I've never thought much about it before.
- I am eager to make disciples.
- I am nervous.
- I need to be disciplined myself.
- Other _____

6. Write what you will say to someone who asks, "Why should we be committed to making disciples?"

Be prepared to share your answers with your small group.

Review

- Disciple-making happens best when Christians play together as a team to make disciples.
- Each person has something to offer to disciple-making.
- We must get out of the stands and use our abilities "on the field" to make disciples.