

The Journey:
A Discipleship Pathway For
New Believers

A Training Resource From BridgeWay Community
Church

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IF YOU'RE NEW TO CHRISTIANITY THEN THIS BOOK IS FOR YOU

Welcome to the Kingdom of God!

In my thirty years of pastoring, I've had the joy of training a wide variety of church leaders. But do you know what gives me the greatest joy? It's when I get to be part of the journey that sees a brand-new Christian grow up in his or her faith to become a juggernaut for Jesus. There's nothing like that.

If you're that new believer I think I'm safe in saying that this is also what you want for your life. The reason you finally accepted Christ's offer of forgiveness and a reboot for your life is that one day you realized you were on a road to nowhere and unless you changed course, it wasn't going to end well for you.

I'm willing to bet that becoming a Christian was not the first option you considered. Maybe you met a Christian who didn't fit the stereotypes you had for church-people and something you saw in them intrigued you. Maybe one day you started poking around the internet, randomly checking out bits of sermons, and some of what you heard made sense. Which annoyed you. But you kept coming back because you couldn't help yourself.

Maybe you picked up a Bible one day and started paging through it, looking for loopholes. But instead you found that some of what you were reading shot like an arrow into your heart. There were times you snapped the book shut for fear you might let something loose. But a day or two later there you were peering inside again.

Or maybe it was Jesus Christ himself. You started reading articles about him and couldn't quite shake the thought that there's never been anyone who's walked the earth like him.

Whatever it was, the day came when it all suddenly made sense, as if the sun itself had forced open the shutters of your heart. Light and warmth came pouring in which you couldn't stop if you tried. *Jesus, I'll follow you*, you said in words of your own choosing.

What Comes Next?

Hopefully your conversion happened with Christian friends around to celebrate with you and give you a jumpstart in your spiritual journey, which included baptism.

Hopefully you're no longer secretly watching sermons but hearing them live in connection to a local community of faith.

And hopefully the church and Christians around you have some sort of process in place to help you grow spiritually. These are exciting days for you, but critical as well, for as the saying goes, *As the twig is bent, so grows the tree.*

If your church has such a discipleship program, then dive in with both feet and learn everything you can. (*Discipleship* is a word Christians usually use to describe the process we go through to grow in our faith. If you're a Christian, then you're truthfully a "disciple" of your Lord Jesus with the goal of learning how to live and love like him.) If your church doesn't have a specific discipleship process in place yet, then ask around for something like it. In the meantime, that's where this study guide might be helpful.

A Discipleship Roadmap – 9 Sessions

We put this book together for two reasons: First, to encourage you to get into a disciple-making relationship with one or two others who can give you the spiritual training you need right now as a new believer. Second, we wrote it to provide you and your coach with a roadmap to follow if they are looking for one.

We said to ourselves, "If we could sit down with a new believer for a few hours, and pour our hearts out to them about how they can best grow as a disciple of Christ, what would we say? What would we want them to learn first? What skills would we want them to start mastering right away?"

The answer is in these pages.

This training manual is divided into nine sessions, which are focused on teaching you how to enjoy real communion with Christ. That's the first order of business for you.

When you look at the first sermons of the apostles and how they taught new believers, they began with Jesus, making sure everyone understood who he was, and why he came to die on the cross. "*We preach Christ crucified,*" said the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 1:23).

So in the first session we drill down on *Christ*, and explain why there is no one like Jesus. Then we'll get you started in discovering that for yourself, more than you already have.

In the second session we deep-dive into *Christ crucified*. We want you to fall in love with the word "gospel" and understand how "gospel-thinking" will change everything around you that you see. We also want you to begin to learn how to share the gospel in simple ways with others.

In the third session we'll talk specifically and practically about how you can have a real relationship with Christ, even though you can't see him or hear him with your senses. Christianity is less a religion than a relationship and we'll explain how that's possible.

One more thing. Would you agree with me if I said that to grow up, babies need to learn how to feed themselves and how to communicate with their parents? That's true in the kingdom of God as well.

With this in mind, there are two essential spiritual habits (or "disciplines" as they're sometimes called) that we want you to begin learning right away in your young faith – reading God's Word for yourself and prayer. In the rest of this guide, we will take three sessions each to lay a good foundation for learning these habits.

How To Use This Roadmap

True discipleship does not take place best in a classroom, or just with a book in your lap. It happens through relationships. The growth your heart longs for is just not going to happen without being in the regular company of mentors, who will take this journey with you.

How Many Should You Meet With?

One-on-one works great (as long as your coach is in an accountability relationship with other coaches.) The idea of a “triad” – three meeting together – also hits the sweet spot. With four or more in a group, people will start getting lost in the shadows of the stronger and louder ones.

If the person you need is not coming to you, then you go to them, and ask them straight up, “Would you be willing to disciple me?” If they hem and haw, then hand them a copy of this book, and say, “Can we go through this together?”

What About Materials?

The only materials to get you started besides this guidebook are your Bible and a notebook.

As for a notebook – either paper or digital – we want you to begin to think of this as just as indispensable as your right or left arm. In your notebook, you can keep a record of quiet time lessons, sermon notes, prayer logs, and spiritual journaling related to this discipleship guidebook.

The act of writing imprints a lesson deeper into your heart and mind. The real payoff comes when, down the road, you look back over what you have written down. Your soul will be warmed by the reminders of how the Lord has met with you time and time again.

What About Time?

Once every two to three weeks, you should meet formally with your coach or training team to walk through each of these sessions as you complete them. Each formal meeting will take around two hours. On the off-weeks, you and your coach should connect at least once for checking-up purposes. These get-togethers can happen in any number of ways, limited only by your time and shared interests.

What About The Work I'm To Do In Preparing For Each Session?

Each session has two parts to it. First, is a short devotional where I set the theme for the session. This is me, a seasoned, grizzled pastor, sharing with you from my experience and scars. Take what you find useful and encouraging, then discard the rest. Your coach may want to supplement the topic with other resources and training he has available.

The second part – called “Training Work” – involves things we’ll ask you to do, built around the given theme. Let me be honest with you. We’re setting a high bar for you. The King of kings, and Lord of lords has high expectations for his disciples.

Since mastery of the Word of God is foundational to your future strength, we’ll ask you to become a lover of Scripture by taking in wide swaths of it at a time. We’re also going to teach you to become a student of prayer by teaching you a variety of prayer exercises. You’ll be asked to practice memorization. Each session will also provide you with some practical exercises where you can grow stronger in sharing your faith with others, and grow deeper in serving others in the love of Christ.

Each session will finish up with a time for sharing your heart and struggles with each other and then praying together.

It may seem like a lot, but these are the very things I wish I had been given early on in my faith journey.

Final Thoughts

You’re not after a diploma, you’re after growth, so don’t rush. Take one lesson at a time, and once the training work is completed, move on to the next. If it takes two weeks to complete, that’s great. If it takes longer, no worries.

As for the roadmap itself, this book is just that, a *roadmap*. Roadmaps get you in the general direction of where you want to travel, but it doesn’t mean you can’t take detours along the way to explore things, or supplement the roadmap with other resources you or your mentor

might find useful.

Take necessary time to do “maintenance”. Don’t be so rigid that Holy Spirit-led spontaneity can’t happen, or so lax that the essential disciplines we’ll be covering are not mastered.

There’s one more thing I think is important to stress. This is not a “class” after which you “graduate” and then you start doing the work. If you are a disciple of Christ, then you are commissioned by your Lord to win and make other disciples right here and now, no matter how young in the faith you are.

You don’t have to wait for lessons on evangelism before you start sharing your faith with others. You don’t have to wait until you’ve read the Bible through before you begin teaching it. You don’t have to master all the doctrinal nuances of the Trinity before you start pointing others to Christ, and saying, “I was one thing, and now I’m another, and Jesus is the difference in between.”

The sooner you begin practicing what you’re learning, the better.

So if you’re up to the challenge, let’s begin the journey.