

Partners

ONE-on-ONE Discipleship

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Partners: *ONE-on-ONE Discipleship*

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Except where otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in this manual are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV), Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, 2007.

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Table of Contents

<i>Introduction to Partners</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>A Few Pointers</i>	<i>v</i>
1. <i>Being Sure About Your Relationship with God</i>	1
2. <i>Deepening Your Knowledge of God</i>	25
3. <i>Learning to Study the Bible on Your Own</i>	51
4. <i>Developing an Effective Prayer Life</i>	73
5. <i>Living a Life Led by the Holy Spirit</i>	95
6. <i>The Importance of a Good Church</i>	119
7. <i>Being Intentional About Biblical Fellowship</i>	143
8. <i>Getting Actively Involved in Serving Your Church</i>	165
9. <i>Sharing the Gospel with People Who Need It</i>	193
10. <i>Living a Holy Life in an Unholy World</i>	213

Introduction to **Partners**

“walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him,
bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the
knowledge of God”

Colossians 1:10

In a phrase, that is what Partners is all about. Partners is a program designed to help people enhance their walk with Jesus—learning how to live an effective and pleasing Christian life. The emphasis is on application, but there is plenty of learning that takes place at the same time.

The Partners program includes ten chapters and takes anywhere from ten to thirteen weeks. There’s no doubt that the program is intensive. It will take some time and some hard work, but it is definitely worth it!

The workbook chapters are to be studied and completed throughout each week, and each chapter culminates in your weekly meeting with your “partner.” At your meeting, you and your partner will discuss and develop the concepts studied that week.

The Partners program is designed to prepare you to take another person through the same chapters when you have completed the program. I trust that each chapter will be so exciting and relevant that you will be eager to share your progress in each area with another Christian.

A Few Pointers

Studying the Manual

1. Do Your Homework

Be sure to thoughtfully study the chapter that you will be discussing during your Partners appointment. If you confront a difficult question, answer it the best you can—this is not an exam booklet! If you are totally stumped, leave it blank and be sure to discuss it with your partner during your next meeting.

2. Use a “Good” Bible

If you don’t have a readable and reliable translation of the Bible, get one! An understandable translation will help you to answer the questions in the manual that call for you to look up passages of Scripture. The *English Standard Version* is a reliable and yet readable translation that I suggest. Do not rely exclusively on paraphrases or translations that seek to be extraordinarily current or modern in their translation such as the *Living Bible* or *The Phillips Translation*, or *The Message*. The *King James Version* may be beautiful sixteenth-century English, but among other disadvantages it proves hard to understand when attempting to discover the meaning of a verse.

Other helpful suggestions would include the *The New American Standard Version*, *The New Revised Standard Version*, *New International Version*, or even *The Amplified Bible*. Using more than one of the suggested translations may be helpful when looking at what seems to be a confusing verse.

3. Pray!

Don’t forget to pray as you begin working on each chapter. Ask God to give you insight into the topic being presented and the Scripture passages that you will be asked to read. Pray for clear thinking and undistracted study time.

Meeting With Your Partner

1. Pray

In anticipation of your appointment, pray that God would allow you and your partner to have a meaningful time of communication and learning. Pray that unnecessary walls would come down and that open and honest communication would take place.

2. Be Practical

During your discussion with your partner, remember that the goal is not simply to educate, but also to change our lives. We must be honest about where we are spiritually and the struggles we face. The Christian life is not easy, and this partnership is not the place to make it look that way. Make sure your discussion touches the real you.

3. Take Notes

The words of your partner are not inspired, but they have been prepared with much thought and prayer. The direction of your discussion and the additional comments and topics brought up are probably worth jotting down. Make it a habit to take notes. Remember, you will be teaching this material soon!

PARTNERS MEETING #1

Being Sure About Your Relationship with God

At Partners Meeting #1...

You will be discussing the importance of knowing for sure that you are a Christian. There are plenty of misconceptions out there about what God requires to be right with him, so whether you have been a Christian for a long time or a short time you can look forward to digging into what God's word has to say about biblical Christianity.

To Prepare for Partners Meeting #1...

- Read chapter 1 carefully.
- Fill in the questions for chapter 1.
- Be ready to discuss your testimony.
- If any of the "Deeper Study" topics are of interest to you, prepare to discuss those as well.
- Memorize 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

– 2 Corinthians 5:17

**PARTNERS:
ONE-ON-ONE DISCIPLESHIP**

The concern over being “right with God” is as old as the third chapter of the Bible. Ever since Adam and Eve’s first rebellious act in the Garden of Eden men and women have been faced with the problem of a severed relationship with their Creator. People with sin on their record can’t create nor maintain a relationship with a holy and sinless God. For centuries people have tried, and they still do, but by themselves imperfect people just don’t have a chance.

The good news is that Jesus came to solve the problem (that’s even what the word “gospel” actually means)! What he did made all the difference in the world for people wanting to be right with their Maker. Unfortunately, too many people don’t understand what the good news is all about. They struggle through life hoping that their good deeds will outweigh their bad deeds—as though God will simply overlook their sin and embrace a 65% righteous person.

Being “right with God” is certainly not defined by doing more good than bad. Jesus made that clear in his promise to a dying thief.¹ Doing good things may be an important part of living the Christian life, but if one wants to be “right with God” it all comes down to a question of one’s relationship to Jesus Christ. Heaven and hell will ultimately be about who really “knows” Jesus and who does not.

Most People

Though there are always some who admit to being on God’s bad list, most people believe that they are “right with God.” They may be counting on a divine sliding scale, or some religious ritual, but whatever their reason, most people think that come judgment day they’ll probably come out on top. Unfortunately, that is not what the Bible says. Read *Matthew 7:13-14*. What does this passage have to say about how many really do inherit God’s blessing after their death?

FYI...

The blank spaces after certain paragraphs in the Partners manual are provided to give you room to write out your responses to the questions or statements.

With Your Partner...

Discuss the deception that is depicted in Matthew 7. Do you think that you are, or ever have been, deceived about the reality of your “right standing” before God?

Read a few verses further in *Matthew 7:22-23* where those standing before Jesus present their case. Though they seem certain about their right standing before God, Jesus tells them to depart from him because in reality “he never knew them” and they still had sin on their record. What is your reaction to Jesus’ prediction of there being so many deceived people on judgment day?

¹ See Luke 23:39-43 if you are unfamiliar with this story.

BEING SURE ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

With so much deception and so much on the line, it is critically important that we look to the Bible to discover just exactly *what a Christian is, how a person becomes a Christian, and how we will know when we are a Christian.*

What is a Christian?

The word “Christian” is not often used in the Bible (actually only three times²) and yet it was the label that caught on to refer to someone who is closely aligned with Jesus Christ. It may mean different things to different people today, but when the term was coined a person who was closely aligned with Jesus was someone who truly “knew” him and was “known by him” (remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:23).

This is obviously more than just knowing *about* Jesus. Really knowing Jesus implies a relationship with him—a good relationship. Notice how Jesus described it.

John 10:14-15a

“I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father”

Jesus compares his relationship with his people to his relationship with God the Father. It is clear then that to “know Jesus” is to have a real and vital relationship with Jesus. But it doesn’t stop there.

John 8:19b

Jesus answered, “You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”

If we have a vital relationship with Jesus Christ, we also have a real and vital relationship with God the Father. The sin problem that severed our relationship with our Creator has been solved for those who “know Christ.”

A Christian is Someone Who is Acceptable to God

Christians then, are those people who through Christ have had their sins forgiven and have been made acceptable before a perfect and sinless God. Christians are imperfect people made perfect in God’s sight through their alignment with Jesus Christ!

Acts 13:38

“Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,”

² Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16.

Remember...

Whenever a concept or a Bible verse is confusing to you be sure to bring it up for discussion with your partner.

**PARTNERS:
ONE-ON-ONE DISCIPLESHIP**

Romans 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

How does it make you feel to know that as a Christian you can be completely, 100% acceptable before God?

A Christian is Someone Who Follows Christ

One of the most popular words in the New Testament for one aligned with Jesus Christ is the word “disciple.” The word “disciple” is a descriptive term for one who follows the teachings of his master and seeks to emulate the lifestyle of his master. In the Bible those who had been made right with God through their faith in Christ sought to follow Christ. Though a Christian’s following of Christ and his teachings is never consistently perfect, the New Testament speaks volumes about this being a clear indication of those who know Christ and those who don’t.

Read *1 John 3:1-10* and summarize what is being said in that passage.

FYI...

Implications of this facet of what a Christian is will be covered in more detail on pages 12 and following.

A Christian is Someone Who Has Been Adopted by God

First John 3:1 reminds us of another popular biblical phrase used to describe Christians, namely the “children of God.” This title emphasizes the strong legal bond that exists between God and his people. With their sins forgiven and their lives made acceptable to him through the work of Christ, Christians are brought into a close and permanent relationship with God as his adopted children. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is described in Ephesians 1:5, 13-14 as the pledge of God’s adoption.

Ponder the power of this concept for a moment. God, our infinitely wise Creator, has chosen to embrace Christians not just as subjects in his kingdom but as sons and daughters in his family!

Romans 8:15b

...but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba!³ Father!”

³ “Abba” is an Aramaic term of endearment for one’s father.