



# A PATH FOR MERE CHRISTIANS

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## MASTER PLAN

*Stand ye in the way, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.*

- Jeremiah. 6:16

Welcome to *A Path for Mere Christians*, a four-year curriculum designed by the Jackson Institute to help believers develop a deeper, more meaningful relationship with God through Jesus Christ and glorify His name, the central purpose for which we have been created. Whether studying the materials alone for your own spiritual nourishment or, as a leader, using them to build mature, reproducing believers in the context of committed discipleship groups, you will soon discover that you are being progressively and continuously transformed into the image of Jesus Christ by His grace and power.

## Module One

Category	Objective	Week - Topic/Chapters	Curriculum	Supplementary Reading
Orientation	To encourage believers to learn how to adore God and live solely for His glory	1 - God's Glory	<i>Man's Chief End: God's Glory</i> by Thomas Watson	First Semester: <i>Knowing God</i> by J. I. Packer
	To prepare believers for the process of personal transformation into the image of Jesus Christ	2 - God's Word 3 - Spiritual Disciplines 4 - Accountability 5 - Life Together 6 - Prayer 7 - Great Commission		
	To prepare believers to uncover the rich spiritual insights present in <i>The Pilgrim's Progress</i>	8 - Allegory	<i>How to Read The Pilgrim's Progress</i>	Second Semester: <i>True Spirituality</i> by Francis Schaeffer
The Christian Life	To understand the true nature of the Christian life and how to live by grace in the power of the Holy Spirit	9-33 - Chapters 1-25	<i>The Pilgrim's Progress</i> by John Bunyan	
<b>Summer Reading Topic: Spiritual Disciplines.</b> <i>The Spirit of the Disciplines</i> by Dallas Willard. Optional: <i>Celebration of Discipline</i> by Richard Foster				

## Module Two

Category	Objective	Week - Topic/Chapters	Curriculum	Supplementary Reading
Orientation	To review the elements of group life in preparation for the second year and to introduce the curriculum for the first semester	1 - God's Word Spiritual Disciplines Accountability Life Together Prayer Great Commission		<i>Baptism and Fullness</i> by R. W. Stott
The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit	To understand what the Scriptures teach about the second person of the Godhead, how to walk in the Spirit, and how to discover, develop, and employ one's spiritual gifts for the expansion and edification of the Church	2-16 - The Holy Spirit and His Gifts	<i>The Holy Spirit &amp; His Gifts</i> by John Musselman	Optional: <i>Keep in Step with the Spirit</i> by J. I. Packer
Life Purpose	To help believers find and fulfill God's unique purpose for their lives	17-33 - Life Purpose	<i>The Call and Entrepreneurs of Life</i> by Os Guinness	
<b>Summer Reading Topic: Worldview. <i>The Universe Next Door</i> by James W. Sire</b>				

## Module Three

Category	Objective	Week - Topic/Chapters	Curriculum	Supplementary Reading
The Life of Christ, Part 1	To foster a more intimate relationship with Jesus Christ by studying His life as presented in the Gospels and to learn how to make reproducing disciples by following the principles and methods He used in training the Twelve	Topic: Jesus' plan for the redemption of the nations through multiplying discipleship  Chapters: 1-25	<i>The Training of the Twelve</i> by A.B. Bruce	<i>A Chronological Framework for the Public Ministry of Jesus Christ</i> by John Musselman
<b>Summer Reading Topic: Ministry Plan for Multiplying Discipleship.</b>				

## Module Four

Category	Objective	Week - Topic/Chapters	Curriculum	Supplementary Reading
The Life of Christ, Part 2	To foster a more intimate relationship with Jesus Christ by studying His life as presented in the Gospels and to learn how to make reproducing disciples by following the principles and methods He used in training the Twelve	Topic: Jesus' plan for the redemption of the nations through multiplying discipleship  Chapters: 26-53	<i>The Training of the Twelve</i> by A.B. Bruce	<i>A Chronological Framework for the Public Ministry of Jesus Christ</i> by John Musselman
<b>Summer Reading Topic: Ministry Plan for Multiplying Discipleship.</b>				



## The Purpose of Curriculum

Curriculum, from the Latin word *currere* meaning “to run,” is, literally, a race or race-track, such as the chariot course portrayed in the 1959 Academy Award-winning film *Ben Hur*. When the word is used figuratively, it suggests “a regular course of study or training, as at a school or university” (OED). When students graduate from a college or university, it would be proper to say that they have finished their *course of studies*. Scholars working in the academic community are familiar with *curriculum vitae*, literally, “the course of one’s life,” i.e., a written account of their qualifications.

The purpose of a sound and effective curriculum is to achieve satisfactory outcomes or results in the lives of the institution’s student population. In the ordinary course of study (in whatever field), three areas of development are usually considered and addressed: *knowing, being, and doing* (or, *knowledge, character, and skills*). In other words, the whole person is being shaped by qualified and competent professors, academic inquiry, personal study, creative activity, high accountability for mastering the prescribed content, and conformity to the institution’s code of conduct. Then, as one course follows another in succession, a growing body of knowledge and wisdom increases until the university’s standard requirements are met and the earned diploma awarded to the deserving students.

## Jesus’ Curriculum

In what is known as the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20), Jesus was quite clear about the curriculum He wanted passed down to His followers from generation to generation: “Teach them to observe all that I commanded you” (vs. 20). From our Lord’s command, we have sought to build a sound discipleship curriculum upon Scripture, using the supplemental resources in the spiritual formation process to serve as an aid in the three-step process of methodical Bible study: observation, interpretation, and application. These excellent secondary sources will help you understand the meaning of the Primary Source (Bible), lead you into a growing relationship with the triune God, move you to humble prayer, increase your faith, change your character, and prepare you to serve the risen Christ by His grace - anywhere in the world.

## About A Path for Mere Christians

Each selection in our *Master Plan* was evaluated against seven distinct standards: (1) it is God-centered; (2) it is biblically sound; (3) it is well-written; (4) it is clear and understandable; (5) it emphasizes and promotes life application; (6) it is stimulating and challenging to the mind and heart; and (7) it fosters good group discussion. Most of the books are considered classics, meaning they have been recognized as literary and biblical masterworks which offer long-standing impressions of goodness, beauty, and truth for those who will make the time to savor the life-giving principles and ideas that Jesus taught and modeled, the very ones that transformed His uneducated and untrained men into a band of Apostles who turned the world upside down.

There is a certain seriousness that marks this *path for mere Christians*. It is not intended for the minimalist who cherishes brevity, simplicity, or limited transformation – the one who only wants a small taste of the life Jesus came to offer. Rather, it is for eager

souls who passionately long to know Jesus Christ and to submit to His lordship in every area of their lives. This in no way implies the curriculum is only for mature believers. To the contrary, we have watched new believers begin in the first year with *Pilgrim’s Progress*, become established in their faith, and emerge from their discipleship groups mature and thoroughly prepared to obediently respond to Christ’s call.

## For Individual or Group Study

The curriculum provided in *A Path for Mere Christians* is for your own spiritual development and for equipping you to become a more fruitful, reproducing member of the body of Christ as a passionate response to the Great Commandment (Mt. 22:36-40), the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20), and the Cultural Mandate (Gen. 1:28-30). Each of these resources may be used for private and individual study, or for use in discipleship groups where the truths and principles from each work can be openly discussed in a safe and healthy environment of unconditional love, mutual trust and respect, relational authenticity, biblical accountability, believing prayer, and humble submission and obedience to the Word of God.

## About the Duration of the Discipleship Process

Every discipleship leader has wrestled with this fundamental question: “How long should I invest in discipling the people in my group?” When asked about the automotive industry, the question would be: “How long does it take to assemble a new automobile?” When asked in the field of higher education, it would be: “How long does it take for a student to graduate with a bachelor’s diploma?” While the latter two questions can be answered definitively, the first is more difficult. The best in New Testament scholarship demonstrates that Jesus spent approximately 3½ years training the Twelve. However, He never overtly expressed concern about the time necessary to fully train His men. He simply instructed and shaped them until they were well-prepared to be and to do what He trained and equipped them to do. Today we hear of leaders promoting discipleship programs that range from six months to one year, two years, three years, etc., as if time alone was the determining factor in the quality and long-term effectiveness and fruitfulness of the people receiving the training. The primary question that needs to be asked is: “Am I faithfully discharging my duties, by the grace, power, and guidance of the Holy Spirit, in order to make mature, reproducing disciples for Christ?”

## Modules vs. Years

There are two ways in which *A Path for Mere Christians* may be used. First, one may begin at Year One and continue systematically and consecutively through Year Four. Second, an individual or discipleship group may begin with any of the Four Modules (with the exception of Module Four, which is a continuation of Module Three) on the basis of the specified area of spiritual development that is targeted. The ultimate goal is not to assess the time invested but the growth in maturity and reproducing capability of each disciple of Jesus Christ. While it takes considerable time to disciple others in the words and ways of Jesus, time is not the primary factor in determining the quality and quantity of the fruit produced.

## The Importance of Reading

In literate societies, reading is indispensable to spiritual development. While making disciples in many parts of the world requires the use of audio technology, *A Path for Mere Christians* has been developed for those who are capable of reading. We acknowledge with Mortimer Adler that “reading is a complex activity,” that “the mind passes from understanding less to understanding more,” that there is an “initial inequality in understanding” between the author and the reader, that “we can learn from our ‘betters,’” that “being informed is prerequisite to being enlightened,” and that there is a “close relationship between reading and listening” (i.e., the art of being taught).<sup>1</sup> The point to be made is that this curriculum, at times, will be challenging and, if so, only stresses “the need for us to acquire higher levels of skill in this art.”<sup>2</sup>

We recommend beginning this curriculum with a spirit of curiosity, asking these kinds of questions as you read: “I wonder what this word means?” “I have never heard of this woman before? I wonder who she is?” “What is logical positivism? I have never encountered this philosophy before.” As an example, you are reading Os Guinness’ book, *The Call*, and come to Chapter 2: *Seekers Sought*. Guinness briefly mentions the Jewish philosopher and follower of Christ, Simone Weil. Rather than skipping over these three sentences, we suggest that you take some time to investigate and learn about this important person. This practice, applied over the course of four years – indeed, over a lifetime – will ensure that your mind and heart will grow in knowledge and wisdom in order to engage diverse cultures with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is why the Apostle Paul was so effective at Mars Hill (Acts 17:16-34). He knew their language and culture as well as they did, even citing their own poets (vs. 28).

## An Old Test

Adler relates that there used to be an old test that was designed to tell you which books are the most valuable to you. “Suppose, the test went, that you know in advance that you will be marooned on a desert island for the rest of your life, or at least for a long period. Suppose, too, that you have time to prepare for the experience. There are certain practical and useful articles that you would be sure to take with you. You will also be allowed ten books. Which ones would you select?”<sup>3</sup>

## Year One

In year one, believers are introduced to the truth of God’s glory, which is foundational for living lives that are pleasing to Him. Thomas Watson’s essay, *Man’s Chief End: God’s Glory*, provides many believers with their first true understanding of what it means to glorify God. During the six weeks of *Orientation*, group members are prepared for the process of personal transformation by learning about the importance of God’s Word, spiritual disciplines, biblical accountability, life together (fellowship), prayer, and the Great Commission. John Bunyan’s classic allegory, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, is used as the primary text to help believers understand the true nature of the Christian life and to encourage them to live by grace for the glory of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Two supplemental books are highly recommended during this year in order to help believers know God better (*Knowing God* by J.I. Packer) and how to live for Jesus moment by moment (*True Spirituality* by Francis A. Schaeffer).

## Year Two

Year two builds on the foundation of year one and is devoted to helping believers discover, develop, and employ their spiritual gifts for the expansion and edification of the church. Using *The Holy Spirit and His Gifts* by John Musselman and a professional personality profile, they also learn how God has uniquely created (wired) them to glorify and serve Him in the areas of their greatest strengths. The supplementary reading for the first semester of this year is John Stott’s *Baptism and Fullness*. For those who are able, another suggested reading (optional) is J.I. Packer’s *Keep in Step with the Spirit*. During the second semester of this year, two of Os Guinness’ insightful books, *The Call* and *Entrepreneurs of Life*, become their faithful guides as they seek to understand and capture God’s purpose for their lives. The practice of the spiritual disciplines continues as they grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

## Year Three

In year three, participants begin a two-year, intensive study of the life of Christ. During this time, they read and study all four Gospels, *The Training of the Twelve* by the Scottish pastor and theologian A.B. Bruce, and *A Chronological Framework for the Public Ministry of Jesus Christ*. This study begins with the introduction of the first five disciples to Jesus and ends just before the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In addition, they learn how to make new disciples (evangelism) and bring them to maturity in Christ (discipleship) by following the same principles that Jesus used when He trained the Twelve.

## Year Four

In the final year, believers complete their study of the life of Christ. Now grounded in their faith and equipped for kingdom service, they are encouraged to continue to live the rest of their lives for the glory of God and to invest their time, talents, and resources in serving Christ and making Him known to the nations.

<sup>1</sup> Mortimer J. Adler & Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972), pp. 6-13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 344.