

THRIVE



A HANDBOOK FOR NEW CHRISTIANS

Growing with
One PLANTs One
discipleship

© 1989, 1992, 2008, 2011 by James H. Hall

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Welcome to God's eternal family!

Welcome to God's eternal family! Your new birth was made possible by God's eternal Son Jesus, and now you are God's child forever—if you continue to trust Him with your life here on earth.

Daily trust means living each day as a child of God by talking with Him and cooperating with Him every day that you live. This manual was written to show you what God is saying to you through the Bible, His written Word, and by teaching you to listen each day as He speaks to you through His Spirit. You will learn to talk to God yourself and to depend on Him to help you obey what He tells you.

But you need more than this handbook to find the help that God intends for you to have. You need a Christian friend—someone who has been a child of God longer than you have. That friend can explain things you study in the sessions and in the Bible, and can help you know how to obey what God is saying to you. This friend will celebrate with you the wonderful new life you have begun and will also encourage you to keep going when you get discouraged.

If you don't have such a friend to help you with the sessions in this manual, ask God to help you find one. Go ahead on your own and start studying the Bible, guided by these sessions, until you find the friend you are praying for. If you know another new Christian, it would be helpful for the two of you to study together and encourage each other.

If you do have a Christian friend to help you, cooperate with him or her—as long as he or she helps you in ways that go along with this manual. It is important to have the help of a friend.

God is happy that you are His child, and He will be even happier as you get to know Him. Give your best effort to learning how to talk with God and how to

hear Him talk to you. Do your best to cooperate with Him by depending on Him to help you obey.

Also, plan right now to be a helping friend to other new Christians after you have completed these sessions. Study the material well—for your sake, and so that one day you will be able to help someone else by using this same material with them.

Eternal happiness is available on earth now—as long as you stay close to God through Jesus Christ, His Son. My prayer is that these sessions and your Christian friends will help you stay close to God. I look forward to meeting you in heaven!

Your brother forever,

Jim Hall

Session Summaries

Phase 1 Orientation

☞ Making Contact ☞

Session 1 **Starting New Life in Jesus**

God’s loving plan for you is to (1) rescue you from the punishment your sins deserve and make you His child; and (2) give you new life through His indwelling Spirit and have a personal relationship and personal conversation with you.

Session 2 **Knowing God Is Always with You**

A loving relationship with God involves both contact—being alert constantly to God’s presence and staying in communication with Him; and conduct—intentionally doing everything with God.

Session 3 **Worshiping God, Loving God**

According to Jesus, the first and greatest commandment is to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). God wants you to worship Him and love Him in words and actions that come from your heart. Such love is a fitting response to His love for you.

Session 4 **Working with God**

Jesus said that the second greatest command was: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). God’s plan and command is for you to actively love people, in partnership with Him, responding to needs—especially people’s need for salvation.

Session 5 **Your Spiritual Birth Announcement**

Water baptism announces, illustrates, and explains your conversion and the change it brings.

Phase 2 Prayerful Living (based on the Lord’s Prayer)

☞ Contact That Leads to Conduct ☞

Session 6 **Knowing God as Your Father**

The Lord’s Prayer gives us a template for praying and living that pleases God. Who you are and what your life means becomes clear when you see God as loving Father and ruling King.

- Session 7 **Becoming a Citizen of Heaven**
“Your kingdom come” is to be your prayer and life’s ambition. You live this out and bring God’s kingdom to earth now when you live in obedience to God and to His delegated earthly authorities.
- Session 8 **Your Daily Supply of Food**
God is your source, and He will faithfully provide for your physical need—if you ask Him to, and if you honor Him with tithes and offerings.
- Session 9 **Your Daily Supply of Forgiveness**
God is gracious and is faithful to forgive your sin if you ask Him to—and if you also forgive others.
- Session 10 **Freedom through Dependence**
Dependence on God brings freedom from the bondage and heart-breaking consequences of sin. God is always stronger than any temptation, circumstance, or enemy. Therefore, ask God (and act) to help you avoid temptation; and ask Him to rescue you when you are tempted, deceived, or attacked by Satan.

Phase 3 Responsibility

🌀 Conduct through Contact 🌀

- Session 11 **Remembering Jesus Together**
The Lord’s Supper (or communion) is a special way commanded by Jesus for you to celebrate with other believers His death and the life He gives by His Spirit living in you. Examine yourself before sharing in this serious celebration. A supplement provides a guide for examining your overall progress in learning to walk with the Lord.
- Session 12 **Spiritual Living**
The fruit of the Spirit is produced when God’s love is channeled through your life. The more your heart beats with God’s, the more you will care about people’s needs—especially their need for eternal life.
- Session 13 **Going with the Flow**
When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you actively surrender to the Spirit and become empowered by Him. This manifests itself in witnessing to others.

Session 14 **Sowing Gospel Seed**

This session provides a biblical summary of the gospel, emphasizing the response of trust-and-obey that God requires—as well as the need to make the good news simple and clear to the unchurched.

Session 15 **Reaping**

This session explains the stages through which the Holy Spirit and human witnesses bring unbelievers to faith in Christ and union with His family, the local church. Jesus commands the family to have a welcome-home celebration and to assist the new family member. You, the not-so-new believer, can now become a discipling friend to a newborn Christian brother or sister.



Starting New Life in Jesus

After waterskiing, Dawson Trotman was tired, but not ready to leave the water. The fun-loving founder of Navigators, an organization built to evangelize the lost and disciple Christians, climbed into a motorboat for a ride. "Daws" asked two girls in the boat if they could swim. One said no, so he sat between them, locking arms with them for greater safety. Suddenly the speeding boat made a fast turn, bounced on a wave, and sent Daws and the nonswimmer into the water. He held her head above water until the boat could circle back. Another swimmer dove into the water and helped support the struggling girl until she was hauled to safety aboard the boat. But as hands reached down to grab her rescuer's hand, Dawson Trotman sank out of sight. So died "the Navigator," giving his life to save another's—a powerful story of sacrifice that reminds us of the one who gave His life to save us all.



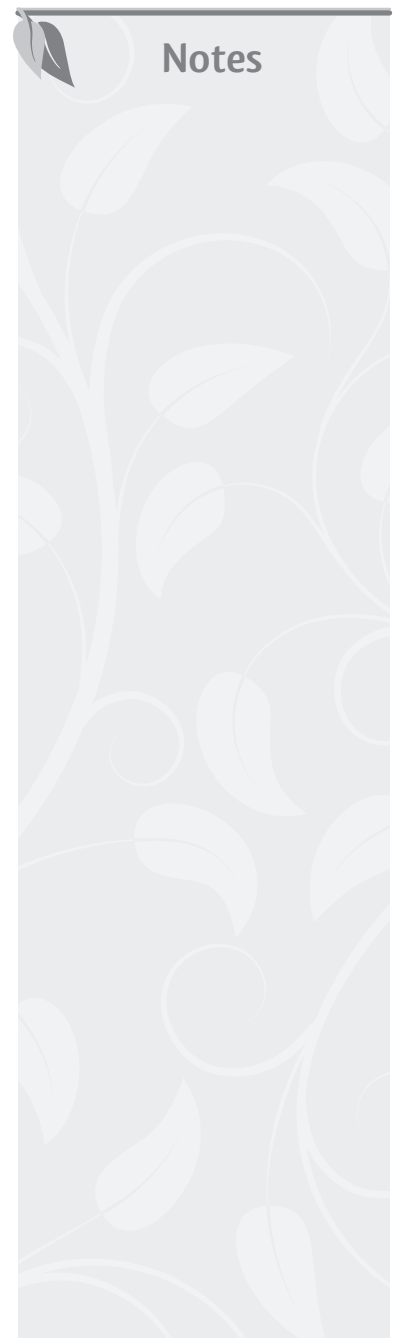
Dawson Trotman's life story should also remind us that a faith commitment to Christ is eternal life assurance only if it continues in a personal daily relationship with Jesus as our friend and leader. Daws encouraged believers to study and memorize God's Word to inform their relationship with its author. Many encouragers were central to the Navigators' strategy for reaping a spiritual harvest. This has made them world leaders in winning souls and keeping them through one-to-one mentoring.

These lessons are designed to take you to the Bible for foundational Christian truths. What you will read and discuss with your Christian friend will help you live a life of conversation and cooperation with Jesus. He desires an ever-closer personal relationship with you, and He wants you to want the same.

You've said yes to the new way of life provided by God the Father through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. May God bless the rest of your life as you constantly experience this truth: "Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:17–18 NLT).

**Because He loves
us, Jesus died so
that we might live.**

Notes



Part 1



God's plan has always been for Jesus to rescue you from hell to be His child.

- A.** Jesus is able to rescue you from going to hell (eternal punishment) because He is both God and man. The following tells who Jesus is and what He has done.
1. Jesus is God. As God, He had lived in heaven since before time began. Then He was born as a baby in Israel more than two thousand years ago, at just the right time according to God's plan.
 2. Everything Jesus did on earth was good. As a man He lived to help others.
 3. He lived exactly as God told Him to live; His perfect life shows us what God is like.
 4. The Roman ruler over Israel, Pilate, executed Jesus at the request of Jewish leaders who were jealous of Jesus because of the crowds who followed Him. They hated Jesus because He exposed their sin.
 5. When He died, Jesus took God's punishment for all the things you did wrong in God's eyes (called sin). Jesus himself never sinned, so He did not deserve to be punished. But He willingly suffered your punishment so you wouldn't have to (2 Corinthians 5:21).
 6. God brought Jesus back to life, and then He returned to heaven to be eternal King. He rules now over every person who believes in Him and willingly obeys Him.
 7. One day He will return to rule the whole world with love, justice, and total authority.



In the Bible, find the book called the Gospel of John, which tells about Jesus' life. You will need to read several sections of the book called John to complete this lesson.

- B.** Jesus came to rescue you from the punishment you deserved for rebelling against God.

1. The Bible tells us that every person is guilty of sin and deserves eternal punishment. You can read more about this in the book of John, chapter 3, verses 16–20 (John 3:16–20). Also read verse 36 of that same chapter of John (John 3:36).
 - a. According to John 3:36, what will happen to every person who does not believe in Jesus Christ?
 - b. What will such a nonbeliever not see or receive?
2. Before reading John 3:36, did you understand that sin—disobeying God—is that bad? What sinful things that you’ve done in the past still seem attractive in light of those eternal consequences?
3. When Jesus died, He was being punished for your crimes against God. According to John 3:16, why did He allow himself to be treated this way?

In the space below, write John 3:16, using your name instead of the terms *the world* and *whoever*.

4. After thinking about these truths, how do you feel...
 - a. about your sins?
 - b. toward Jesus, knowing what He did for you?

Now thank Him for what He has done for you. Say it to Him just as you would tell another person. Praying is as simple as that, and God always hears.

5. Did you...
 - a. ask for forgiveness from Jesus, your sacrifice or sin payment (John 3:16)?
 - b. believe in Jesus to be your friend forever—your Savior (John 1:12; 15:14)?
 - c. commit to cooperate with Him daily as your leader and Lord (John 15:14)?

C. Jesus has rescued you to become God’s child!

1. To all those who receive Jesus and believe on His name, what special right does Jesus give them? Read John 1:12.
2. How does it feel, deep down, to be God's own child?
3. You can now say, "God has put His own Spirit inside of _____ to stay forever." (Read John 14:17 and fill in the blank.)
4. As a child of God, you are now in God's family with new brothers and sisters. God wants your life to be part of theirs. Like a log in a fire that burns better in the presence of other logs, your new life with God will get stronger as you spend time in the presence of your new spiritual family. That's why you should become an active part of a church that believes that the Bible is God's message to humankind.



Jesus, fully God and fully human, was the only perfect sacrifice capable of paying the penalty for your sins. He died so that you might have a new life as a beloved child of God forever.

Part 2



God's plan for you is new life.



Read John 3:1–8.

- A.** You have been "born again"—given a new nature by God's Spirit, who is living in you. Read about this in John 1:12–13 and 3:3–8.
1. Because of your spiritual birth, where will you one day be able to go that you would not otherwise be allowed to enter (John 3:3, 5)?
 2. Spiritual birth brings spiritual life. Your new life makes it possible for you to obey your new King, something that was impossible before no matter how hard you tried to be good. Read John 8:34–36. Whose slave were you before Jesus set you free?
 3. What is different about your life since you came to Jesus?

4. Explain what has happened inside of you—the difference Jesus has made. Would you call what this a miracle? Why or why not?

5. Explain to your Christian friend how you feel on the inside.


B. You are now a newborn spiritual baby who needs to grow and get to know God, your heavenly Father. Growing will always be connected to talking with God.

1. You were born again as a result of talking with God.

a. Somehow you began to know that the story of Jesus as told in the Bible is true. That was God speaking to your heart.

b. Then you talked to God when you asked Him to forgive you and to be your ruler. The result was your spiritual birth on _____ (date).

2. Your new position as God's child means you now have the privilege of personal contact with Him. A personal relationship grows with conversation—so you must continually listen to God and talk often with Him. See the Plan of Action, below, for instructions on how to do this.

 God is now your heavenly Father, and you are His child. God's Spirit is living in you, so you are always in direct personal contact with God. Being close to God this way calls for ongoing conversation with Him.

Plan of Action



God's plan for you, His child, is to grow a personal relationship with you.

1. Conversation with God is best learned by setting aside a regular time and place each day to be alone and quiet with God. Start with fifteen to twenty minutes of time when you can talk with God and allow Him to speak to you. How does Matthew 6:6 tell us we should pray? Where and what time of day will you commit to doing this?

Where: _____ Time each day: _____

2. In your daily quiet time, do the following:
 - a. Ask God to help you receive His message for you through what you are about to read in His Word, the Bible (John 14:26). Just pay attention to what you can understand. This is “hearing” God talk to you through the Bible.
 - b. Begin reading the Gospel of John. Keep studying chapter 1 until you meet your friend for Session 2. Read this same chapter each day, and notice how you see something new every time.
 - c. Underline the parts that speak to you strongly. Put a question mark beside the parts you don’t understand. Then use the Bible-study worksheet provided with this lesson, and write the things asked for on the worksheet. For your first day studying chapter 1 of John, write down everything the author says about Jesus; then write how those things apply to you. Just do your best as you get started on this new project. Your Christian friend will help you.
 - d. After your study time, it’s time for you to talk. In your own words, talk to God about the important things you wrote about from the chapter you studied.
 - Praise God for the things about Him you read and also for what He has done for you and for the ways He is helping you each day.
 - Talk to God about whatever else comes to your mind.
 - Be sure to thank Him for coming to live inside of you and for bringing you new eternal life.
 - Tell God how wonderful it is for you to be forgiven and to now belong to Him through Jesus.
 - Ask Him to help you with the problems you are struggling with.
 - You can also ask Him to help other people with their problems, no matter what those problems are. Remember that God created the whole universe, so He has enough power to do anything. He can even heal sickness or injury, so don’t hesitate to ask Him to do things that are impossible for man to do. With God, nothing is impossible!

Reminder: Things to Do This Week

1. Have quiet time each day, completing your Daily Journal (see Appendix A for a reproducible journal page) during this time, until you meet your friend for Session 2 on _____ (date).
2. Tell the people you usually see from day to day about the big and wonderful change Jesus has made in your life. Don’t argue or try to answer every question

they may have—just tell them what has happened to you. You can use the material you’ve already covered in this course to help you explain it to them.

3. It’s very important to make time to meet regularly with your Christian friend, who will help you understand what it means to be a Christian and pray for you every day. Also, attend the regular church meetings your friend encourages you to attend as a new Christian. Remember, a log needs other logs to burn well. Don’t stay away from other Christians! You can find them at (write in church name, address, and meeting times):



Appendix A | Daily Journal

DATE _____ PASSAGE _____ VERSES THAT SPOKE TO ME _____

WONDERFUL THINGS I SEE _____

HOW THEY APPLY TO MY LIFE _____

PRAYER NEEDS _____

PRAYER VICTORIES _____

Appendix B | How to Be a Discipling Friend

Introduction

A literal translation of Jesus' words in Matthew 28:19 is, "Disciple all the nations." God intends for His spiritual family to love His newborn spiritual children and work with Him to disciple them until they are strong and able to disciple others. You have been discipled by someone using these **THRIVE** sessions. Now you can be a discipling friend to another new Christian using a new copy of these same sessions.

Part 1

God intends for His older children to receive new Christians as their own brothers and sisters (Luke 15:32). This includes:

- A. Celebrating with God the birth of new members of His eternal family (Acts 11:23).
- B. Receiving new believers in His name as members of the family whom God loves as much as the older family members (1 Thessalonians 2:7–11; 3:12).
- C. Being a friend who...
 - understands their past,
 - accepts them as they are,
 - sees the good in them, and
 - gently encourages them to grow.

Part 2

God's loving family helps His new children learn to walk with Him (Acts 14:21–23).

- A. Paul and his coworkers in Thessalonica...
 1. Prayed for the new Christians (1 Thessalonians 1:2–3; 3:9–13; 5:23).
 2. Helped them learn to walk with God (1 Thessalonians 2:7 to 3:13; 4:1–8).
 3. Helped them learn to love people (1 Thessalonians 4:6–12, 18; 5:11–15).
- B. Then the new believers willingly cooperated with their disciplers until they also became disciplers of new Christians (1 Thessalonians 1:6–10; 2:13–14; 4:1, 9–10).



Read 1 Thessalonians 1 through 5 to see the example set by discipling friends Paul, Silas, and Timothy as they cared for the Thessalonian church—and how the Thessalonian believers followed their example, in turn discipling others.

Part 3

Spiritual growth is best served by a discipling friendship between a more experienced spiritual brother or sister and a new Christian.

- A.** A discipling friend (discipler) is a guide for the new believer.
1. The discipler should explain that the sessions instruct the new believer to learn to walk with God.
 2. The discipler helps the new believer to personally experience God's presence and power while learning direct conversation with God through:
 - a. Studying His written Word and responding in prayer.
 - b. Hearing God speak while praying and through the day.
 3. The discipler should pray daily and diligently for the new believer's needs and growth.
 4. The discipler will receive from God the help he or she gives to others.
- B.** A discipling friend should encourage two-way communication by:
1. Being honest and open in conversation.
 2. Being a patient and attentive listener.
 3. Describing his or her own background and growing experiences to...
 - a. Help the new believer understand the growing process in Christian living.
 - b. Encourage the new believer to trust Jesus always.
 4. Arranging time to be with the new believer without a planned discussion, to allow friendship to grow. In this setting the new believer can talk about things that are on his or her mind and heart or ask questions. This will allow the discipler to better understand how well the new believer is grow-

ing spiritually or where he or she is struggling. “Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34).

5. Being alert to what God wants to teach him or her through the new believer, because God always works through fellowship between believers to benefit everyone involved.

Plan of Action | The Discipling Process

A. Disciplers need to be trained before they disciple new believers.

1. Disciplers should always work through each session themselves before discussing the material with a new believer. This will help the discipler to know the material well and to be able to help the new believer better understand God’s truth.
2. If possible, disciplers should discuss each session with another Christian or in a small group before discussing it with a new believer. This will help them explain things more clearly.
3. Disciplers should bring their completed sessions to the meeting with the new believer as notes for reference.

B. Disciplers need to know how to use the *THRIVE* sessions.


1. First meeting: Go through Session 1 with the new believer, assisting him or her to understand how to work through the material and to understand the truth and how it applies to everyday living. At the end of each meeting:
 - a. Explain and assign the daily time of study and prayer (quiet time) to be practiced until the next meeting between discipler and new believer.
 - b. Always take time to pray together without hurry, encouraging the new believer to talk to God as simply and naturally as if talking to another person. When you pray, use simple words so the new believer can learn how easy it is to pray by listening to you.
 - c. Arrange a regular weekly time to meet. Be faithful in meeting with new believers—even if they are not. Their spiritual life depends on it.
2. Second meeting: Go through Session 2 with the new believer, using the same activity format as with your first meeting. Give whatever help is

needed to find answers in God's Word, and discuss how those answers guide daily living. Review changes in the new believer's life, discuss their quiet-time experiences, and take turns praying. Turn to Session 3 in their handbook, and ask them to work through it on their own before your next meeting. Encourage new believers to give their best effort in completing the material but not to worry about any difficult parts. Assure them that when you meet, you will discuss and make clear the Bible's answers to the questions.

3. Third meeting: Discuss together the new believer's answers, questions, and other responses to Session 3. At the end of the meeting, give the new believer Session 4 to complete before the next meeting. Continue this process for the remaining sessions.

C. Disciplers should follow these guidelines for discipling others:

1. The sessions usually work best when used by one discipler with one new believer. If many new believers need to be disciplined, two or three can meet together with one discipler.
2. Contact the new believer at least once a week without a detailed plan for the conversation. This contact, by phone or in person, will let you check on how well the new believer is doing and will help your friendship grow.
3. Maintain a schedule for completing the sessions.
 - a. Meeting regularly is more important than completing an entire session at every meeting. Sometimes dealing with pressing needs in the new believer's life will require multiple meetings to finish a session.
 - b. If the new believer seems to be making a real effort to learn and grow, it is important to give him or her whatever time is necessary to understand and apply the truth to his or her life.

 Being a discipling friend actually begins with being a friend of sinners, as Jesus is. God wants us to rescue people from the fires of hell, but He also wants us to train (disciple) them to walk with Him in daily fellowship and obedience. An important part of their obeying God is for them to become discipling friends to others. Jesus said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20). So be sure to teach the new believer to disciple others while you also keep discipling new Christians.