

EQUIP

Parish Discipleship Program

**"... TO EQUIP THE HOLY
ONES FOR THE WORK OF
MINISTRY, FOR BUILDING
UP THE BODY OF CHRIST"**

- EPHESIANS 4:12

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Program updates and additional leadership resources can be found at www.archstl.org/evangelization

Brian Miller
Director of Evangelization and Discipleship
Archdiocese of St. Louis
brianmiller@archstl.org
314-792-7083

Table of Contents:

Program Overview _____ p. 4

Leader expectations_____ p. 9

Week 1_____ p. 13

Week 2_____ p. 21

Week 3_____ p. 22

Week 4_____ p. 24

Week 5_____ p. 28

Week 6_____ p. 33

Week 7_____ p. 38

Week 8_____ p. 42

Week 9_____ p. 47

Week 10_____ p. 49

Week 11_____ p. 52

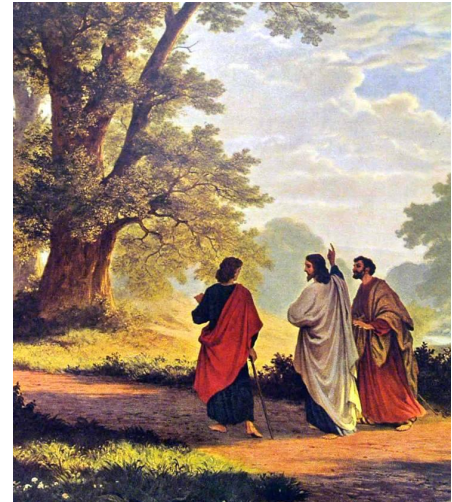
Week 12_____ p. 55

EQUIP

Parish Discipleship Program Overview

What Is Discipleship?

The greek word for Disciple is “mathetes”, which literally means “learner”. In Jesus’ time, a disciple was one who learned from a master, not only in the classroom, but by sharing life, by spending time together and observing the teacher's interactions in all areas of life. While we are all ultimately called to be disciples of Christ in walking with him and following his example, we do this by being in relationship with one another, learning from one another. In this context, we can talk about Discipleship as a methodology for teaching the Christian faith & living.



Why Discipleship?

We see models of discipleship throughout the scriptures (Jesus & The apostles, St. Paul & Timothy, etc...) and throughout the early church (Sts. Ignatius and Polycarp, Sts. Ambrose & Augustine, etc...) and even still in our modern church (Jan Tyranowski & Karol Wojtyła). The Catholic faith is in an *incarnational* faith that is best expressed through relationship. When we live a *discipleship* model, we imitate the self gift of Jesus becoming man and sharing life with us. Pope Francis, in the Joy of the Gospel, has called each of us to become actively involved in the work of evangelization, to become “Missionary Disciples”. Missionary Disciples go to the peripheries of their communities to reach all with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

"THE PARISH MUST PROVIDE FORMED DISCIPLES WHO CAN ACCOMPANY THOSE WHO ARE RETURNING TO THE CHURCH AND GUIDE THEM THROUGHOUT THEIR JOURNEY. APPRENTICESHIP "LINKS AN EXPERIENCED CHRISTIAN BELIEVER, OR MENTOR, WITH ONE WHO SEEKS A DEEPER RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST AND THE CHURCH."

- DISCIPLES CALLED TO WITNESS, USCCB

Parish Impact

Much of the recent focus on parish renewal in the United States has focused on a discipleship based methodology. Many movements in the Church, such as FOCUS or Evangelical Catholic have been very successful in implementing a discipleship based methodology. Pope Francis identifies the parish as a key institution for the renewal of our Church, provided that the parish is relevant to the lives of its members. By becoming oriented in discipleship, we equip our parishes to reach into all areas of our community and boundaries, ready to walk with people as they return to the parish or join the parish for the first time.

"THE PARISH IS NOT AN OUTDATED INSTITUTION; PRECISELY BECAUSE IT POSSESSES GREAT FLEXIBILITY, IT CAN ASSUME QUITE DIFFERENT CONTOURS DEPENDING ON THE OPENNESS AND MISSIONARY CREATIVITY OF THE PASTOR AND THE COMMUNITY.

WHILE CERTAINLY NOT THE ONLY INSTITUTION WHICH EVANGELIZES, IF THE PARISH PROVES CAPABLE OF SELF-RENEWAL AND CONSTANT ADAPTIVITY, IT CONTINUES TO BE "THE CHURCH LIVING IN THE MIDST OF THE HOMES OF HER SONS AND DAUGHTERS". THIS PRESUMES THAT IT REALLY IS IN CONTACT WITH THE HOMES AND THE LIVES OF ITS PEOPLE, AND DOES NOT BECOME A USELESS STRUCTURE OUT OF TOUCH WITH PEOPLE OR A SELF-ABSORBED GROUP MADE UP OF A CHOSEN FEW."

- JOY OF THE GOSPEL, EVANGELII GAUDIUM, 28'

Where to start?

Discipleship movements within parishes will begin slowly. It is important to begin with a small number of leaders within a parish and first live the model before incorporating it more broadly to all parts of the parish. When the leadership and key volunteers of a parish begin living a discipleship based methodology, it becomes easier to infuse the culture of discipleship into all aspects of parish life. While the effects of this type of change of culture in a parish will take time to develop and become visible, the vision is that the parish is establishing a culture that will become the deepest identity of the parish and provide for a lasting and meaningful change to a more missionary mindset in all areas of parish life.

"I DREAM OF A "MISSIONARY OPTION", THAT IS, A MISSIONARY IMPULSE CAPABLE OF TRANSFORMING EVERYTHING, SO THAT THE CHURCH'S CUSTOMS, WAYS OF DOING THINGS, TIMES AND SCHEDULES, LANGUAGE AND STRUCTURES CAN BE SUITABLY CHANNLED FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF TODAY'S WORLD RATHER THAN FOR HER SELF- PRESERVATION."

- JOY OF THE GOSPEL, 27

Discipleship Group Basics

Group make- up

The best practice regarding discipleship groups is that they are comprised of individuals of the same sex. This allows more freedom and depth in sharing in the areas that can be sensitive. This is especially true when not all members of the group are married, as a mixed sex group could make for awkward dynamics. While groups can be intergenerational, it is good if group members have some natural connections or interactions outside of group meetings.

Group Size

Research has shown that discipleship is most effective in smaller groups. *Transformative Discipleship* by Greg Ogden recommends groups of 3-4, to encourage a greater depth of sharing and to allow time for each group member to give personal updates. While groups can be slightly larger than this (4-6), it is not recommended to have discipleship groups larger than 6-8 people so that everyone has the opportunity to participate and share freely. Other faith sharing groups, such as bible studies, may be more comfortable in a 6-10 person environment. These groups can serve a strong function in faith formation, earning personal trust and exposing parishioners to small group experiences, however they are not the most effective for living discipleship.

Meeting Frequency

Weekly meetings are encouraged in order to establish strong personal relationships and to enable the group to get through the material in a reasonable amount of time. This also allows members to become more familiar with one another and to share the joys and struggles of everyday life.

It will occasionally be necessary for a group member to miss a week. The designated group leader should review the material in a one on one follow up with the missing member. If more than 2 members are unable to attend, it is recommended to postpone the group meeting for a week or try to meet digitally if possible.

Key Elements of a Discipleship Group

Prayer

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

The foundation of each session of a discipleship group is prayer. We come together to offer ourselves to the Lord, to ask for his guidance and blessing on our meeting and to lift up our needs, as individuals and as a group to God. Sessions should begin and end with prayer. Leaders should pray for the group in their daily prayers and make sacrifices in their own lives for the growth of the group in holiness and mission.

Formation

Each session of a discipleship group will contain material that helps the participants (and the leaders) come to know a part of their Catholic faith more intimately. These formative elements are learned within the context of how they apply to the daily lives of those participating in the group. While there are many avenues for continued catechesis in the Church today (like adult faith formation classes, formed.org, etc...) this aspect of formation seeks to emphasize the lived reality of these concepts.

Accompaniment

Another key component of a discipleship group is what the Pope Francis has called "the art of accompaniment". This is the art of sharing "not only the Gospel of God, but our very selves" (1 Thes. 2:8). It is important in discipleship groups to allow time for participants to talk about what is going on in their lives- whether it relates to the content or not. Most groups begin by sharing personal updates, including joys and struggles and then move on to the more formative part of the sessions. Accompaniment also means walking with members of the group in life outside of the formal meeting times. Healthy groups often get together for social gatherings or interact at the parish or in their community.

Accountability

The final component of these discipleship groups is accountability. This is tied deeply to accompaniment. An important part of the Christian life is growth in virtue and holiness. Fraternal correction and accountability, within the context of accompaniment, helps ensure this growth. Accountability within a discipleship group must be rooted in trust and charity.

Discipleship Group Curriculum

Each discipleship group leader needs to determine the appropriate starting point for the curriculum of their discipleship group. While the key elements of each group should remain consistent, different audiences will be at differing stages of their discipleship journey. While the discipleship group is ongoing, the leaders should be focused on forming personal relationships with each member of the group and begin investing more deeply in those who show a capacity to lead a future group.

1. EQUIP: Leadership Training - A Vision for Discipleship (Office of Evangelization & Discipleship)

This curriculum is designed by the Office of Evangelization and Discipleship for those who are preparing to lead a discipleship group. This study assumes that those participating are intentional disciples of Christ who have a desire to evangelize, but are wanting to learn the practical skills of missionary discipleship and how to apply them within the context of a discipleship group.

Content Overview:

- I. A Vision of Discipleship
- II. Establishing Trust: Personal histories
- III. Who do you Say that I am?
- IV. Scriptural Foundations of Discipleship
- V. The Mission of the Church: Go and Make Disciples
- VI. Prayer: Personal and Intercessory Prayer
- VII. Kerygma: The Core Gospel Message
- VIII. Testimony: Sharing your witness
- IX. Giving your Testimony
- X. 1 Thessalonians 2:8 - Sharing Life
- XI. Recognizing thresholds of Conversion
- XII. Spirit filled Evangelizers

This curriculum should be accompanied by 1 on 1 follow ups with participants to gauge progress and understanding of the material, ensuring they are prepared to lead their own group.

They key to leading a successful discipleship *movement* in your parish is making it repeatable. Leading a discipleship group does not rely on having an advanced degree in theology, or years of experience in leading small groups, but rather in following the format provided in the curriculum

and training materials. Ongoing coaching and resources are available from the Office of Evangelization and Discipleship. Additional recommended studies can be found at archstl.org/evangelization

Leader Expectations

1. Faithful

Leaders in Discipleship groups should exhibit faithfulness to the teachings of the Church, in both Catholic moral life and in Catholic doctrine. While leaders don't need to be able to articulate perfectly all aspects of the Catholic faith, they should assent to the teachings of the Church and be committed to finding answers to questions to which they do not know the answers.

2. Available

Leaders should be able to commit to a weekly discipleship group meeting as well as some contact with group members outside of weekly meetings (whether that be in phone calls, text messages, or in person gatherings). Discipleship requires being available and responsive to those we are accompanying on the journey.

3. Contagious

This does not mean that all leaders of discipleship groups should be extroverted, but rather all leaders should have an aspect of excitement in sharing the faith and sharing life with others. These leaders make the faith attractive by living their own charisms and using the gifts that God has given them for His glory.

4. Teachable

Leaders should be willing to continue to grow in their own discipleship and holiness. By learning more about our faith and how to live as a missionary disciple of Christ, we model for others what continued growth on the path of discipleship looks like. The disciple is always learning and growing.

Leader Commitment

1. Weekly Discipleship Group Meetings
2. Monthly Discipleship Formation (Upper Rooms & 1 on 1 mentoring)
3. Sacramental life (regular Mass and confession)
4. Personal prayer life
5. Moral life - Living beyond reproach

Leaders of Discipleship groups should be making an active effort to grow in personal holiness and be committed to the vision of creating an evangelizing parish through personal relationships. It is important to recognize that not all members of the parish may be called to lead a discipleship group, however each parishioner is called to live as a disciple of Christ and live the mission of the Church in the ways that God is calling them. Discernment of personal charisms is an important step in the discipleship journey.

First Meeting Preparations

- Email, text, or call the day before your group meets as a friendly reminder.
- Pray over the material for the first week of the study and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your preparations. Read over the content and make your own notes.
- Create an inviting and welcoming environment where you meet. Consider making snacks or drinks available.
- Pray and invite the presence of the Holy Spirit before members arrive at the meeting location – to prepare their hearts and further change their lives.
- Spend some time getting to know each member and their experience with small groups.
- Talk, as a group, about expectations, goals, and fears of the experience. Discuss confidentiality.

Discipleship Group Meeting Structure (75-90 min)

1. Socializing and Conversation (20 minutes)
 - A. Group arrives, socializes, food and drinks, etc.
 - B. Personal Check in: Develop a routine that lets the group know they are entering into prayerful discussion
 1. Opening prayer - invite the Holy Spirit to be present in your understanding of the material, in your prayer, and in your discussion
 2. "Highs and Lows" or "God-moments" (spiritual insights) since the last meeting. Share what's going on in your life and how you lived your resolutions front he previous week
2. Formation & Discussion (45 minutes)
 - A. Group leader goes through formative material
 - B. Question and Answer / Group Sharing
 - C. Suggestion: Be prepared. Look over the study materials ahead of time. Allow time for each person to share. Be intentional about reminding group members that they should not interrupt during sharing. Remember that you are not a spiritual director!
 1. Explore the content - what struck you?
 2. Discuss movements of the heart
 3. Apply lessons and insights from the material to group's lives
4. Closing - Resolutions & Prayer (10 minutes)
 - a. Group members share resolutions based upon formative material
 - b. Closing prayer offering up each member's prayer requests
 - c. Confirm schedule for the next meeting

Best Practices: What to Avoid

- *Interrupting a member while he or she is sharing* - Interruption, while often good intentioned, can keep a person from fully expressing themselves. Listeners that interrupt can keep some members from feeling comfortable enough to share. It is more effective to repeat back what the member has already stated to show understanding and fully allowing them to express their thoughts.
- *Any member, or yourself, dominating conversation* – Everyone should have the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings.
- *Controversial topics and debate* – While these can be important, this is not the purpose of discipleship groups. If a group conversation leads here, it can be tabled until an appropriate time.
- *Any type of gossip or negativity* - “One who slanders reveals secrets, but a trustworthy person keeps a confidence.” (Proverbs 11:13) This kind of conversation is not only sinful, but also detrimental to the spirit of trust within the group.
- *Being a counselor* – The group leader should not act as spiritual director or a counselor. Leaders and group members should be careful to give advice unless it is clear that the speaker is asking the group for it. If someone is in need of more serious professional help, please help them find the appropriate place to seek it. The Office of Evangelization & Discipleship is available to assist in this process.
- *Missing the mark* - Building community through socializing is an important aspect of a Discipleship Group, but it’s important to have a healthy balance of prayer, group discussion, and socializing. Don’t let your Discipleship Group start every meeting with 30-45 minutes of discussion before breaking open the material. Hopefully your group will develop solid enough friendships that “hang-out” time happens outside of your normal group meeting.

The above resources are intended as a starting point to help launch discipleship based movements in your parish.

For additional resources on the best practices for leading a small group visit www.archstl.org/evangelization or contact the Office of Evangelization and Discipleship at 314-792-7083.

Week 1: Introduction to Discipleship

Overview

The purpose of this week's session is to provide an overall orientation to discipleship and the program. Terms like "discipleship" get thrown out a lot in the Church and we have to make sure we define our terms. By the end of the session, participants should identify where they are on their own journey of discipleship and make a commitment to grow in a specific way. Reminder: the curriculum of this group is not for beginners, but rather those who have already made a commitment to Christ. While we will take time to renew our commitment to Christ, it's important that participants have a basic grounding in the Catholic faith and a desire to share the faith.

In advance of the first session ask participants to read *Making Missionary Disciples*, by Curtis Martin. Copies are available from the Office of Evangelization and Discipleship. A book overview is available on p. 18. (THIS WILL BE REPLACED AND/OR SUPPLEMENTED WITH A VIDEO EXPLAINING THE CONCEPTS OF THE BOOK IN THE FUTURE)

Introduction

Welcome everyone to the group and remind them why they are here. They have made a commitment to grow in their own relationship with Christ and have committed to being a leader in the parish to help others grow in their discipleship journey. Remind them that they are receiving so as to pass the gift along to others.

1. Ask the members of the group to make a very simple introduction of themselves. We will do more in depth introductions next week. (5 minutes)

Opening Prayer (5-10 minutes)

Begin by taking time to pray. Pray for the members attending, thank God that they said yes to this process, pray for the journey we are about to begin and for the blessing of the Holy Spirit as we seek to renew our parish.

Read: Lk 5: 1-11. Allow time for quiet reflection. Ask participants to share any graces. As the leaders, you should model the sharing first.

Discussion

1. Ask the members of the group to make a very simple introduction of themselves. We will do more in depth introductions next week. (5 minutes)
2. Making Missionary Disciples Book Review (20 minutes)

Introduce the concepts of the book (see overview on p.15) and ask participants their overall reactions to reading it. If participants were unable to read the book, they can review the concepts in the overview on the following pages. After the review, please ask the following questions for discussion:

- Ask: How is your commitment to Divine Intimacy?

- Ask: How do you see Authentic Friendship playing out in your life? Who are the people God might be calling you to reach?
- Ask: Is this the first time you've heard of the concept of "spiritual multiplication"? What did you think of it? Have you seen examples of this in your life?

3. Discipleship Road Map (20-30 minutes)

- Review the concepts in the Discipleship Road Map, look at the references in the handout.
- Remind the group: The roadmap is a tool, not a judgement
- Ask: If you had to put yourself in one of these categories right now, where would you be? (let people answer for themselves, don't assign them a place)

4. Personal Histories Exercise (15 minutes)

- Model for the group how to do the personal histories exercise by sharing your own personal history.
- Hand out the Week 1 Homework Sheet

Closing

Ask: What is going on in your life that you need prayers for this week?

End by leading prayer and open up for group members to offer their own intercessions.

Verify the time and location of your next meeting.

Call or text the group members throughout the week to check in (shared life) and remind them of the next meeting.

Notes

DISCIPLESHIP ROAD MAP

Beginning Disciple

Growing Disciple

Commissioned Disciple

Disciple Maker

Spiritual Multiplier

NOTE: Each section below describes a stage within discipleship with Jesus Christ. Each section builds on one another. The overall goal in the Christian life is sanctification; all growth in the Christian life is done through God's grace.

BEGINNING DISCIPLE • Acts 2:37-38; CCC 1427; CCC 1

- Change of attitude towards Jesus Christ and the Church He established (favorable) (Romans 10:8-10)
- Change of attitude towards sin (unfavorable) (1 John 1:5-9)
- Has made a verbal profession of commitment to Jesus Christ to others (Mark 5:18-20)
- Desires to grow spiritually (Philippians 4:8)
- Has received the sacraments of initiation or has gone to Confession if already a Catholic (Acts 2:37-38)

GROWING DISCIPLE • James 1:19-25; CCC 1694

- Has developed a heart for God that motivates his/her attitudes and actions
- Is willing to make any sacrifices to grow, even change his/her schedule
- Observable changes in attitudes and actions can be seen
- Is committed to chastity, sobriety, and excellence in their state of life.
- Consistent in continually growing in the basic habits of the Christian life, including but not limited to:
 - Seeks interior growth through daily prayer with Scripture and spiritual reading (John 1:1-18; Ephesians 6:18)
 - Grows in sanctification through the reception of the sacraments (Acts 2:42)
 - Builds character through the virtues and the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-16)
 - Accepts suffering and uses it to unite him/her to Christ (Colossians 1:24)
 - Practices the spiritual and corporal works of mercy (Matthew 25:31-46)
 - Is open to the Holy Spirit (John 16:7; 12-13)

COMMISSIONED DISCIPLE • Matthew 28:18-20; CCC 905

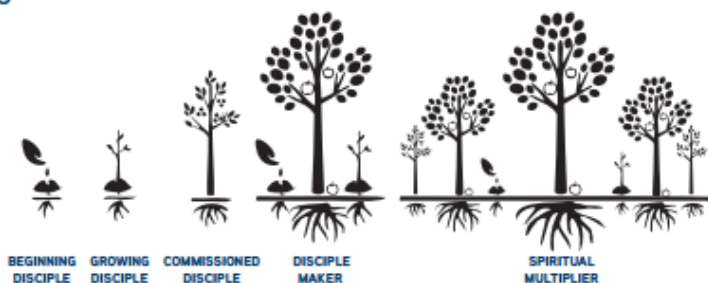
- Has decided to answer the call to take part in the mission of the Church
- Is actively striving to win people over to Jesus and His mission, to build them up in small-group Bible studies and to send them out to spiritually multiply (John 15:8)

DISCIPLE MAKER • 1 Thessalonians 2:8; CCC 1816

- Led someone to commit his/her life to Jesus Christ and His mission and is helping them engage in the work of evangelization, discipling and friendships through a mentoring relationship (2 Timothy 2:2)
- Has developed a heart for God's people and is willing to make any sacrifice to help another grow, even change his/her schedule (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Makes life decisions (vocation, location, relationships, etc.) based upon how he/she can most effectively fulfill the Great Commission

SPIRITUAL MULTIPLIER • 2 Timothy 2:2; CCC 3

- Has been the major influence in helping others become disciple makers (has produced a strong third generation)
- Has been trained and equipped to go to another location and remain active in lifelong Catholic mission in which this process is repeated
- Regular participation in personal prayer and sacramental life of the Church; Fulfills Vocational commitments; Leading a life of evangelization and discipleship through small groups; Lives an influential life of faith, parish, community, and workplace



Mark 4:1-8, CCC 546

Equip Discipleship Group Week 1 Homework

Spend time in Prayer with the Discipleship Road Map (30-60 minutes)

For printing, full size copies of the Discipleship Road Map can be found at

<https://focusoncampus.org/content/discipleship-road-map>

- Where are you currently on the Roadmap?
- Why are there?
- Do you feel God calling you to be somewhere else on the Roadmap?
- What changes do you need to make in your daily life to get there?

Week 2 prep - Personal History Exercise

Adapted from the Steubenville Discipleship Quad Program (www.steubenville.org)

Share Spiritual Journeys (20-25 minutes each)

Take time to share about your life to help the group get to know one another. Because Discipleship is rooted in authentic friendship, this exercise important to begin to develop trust within the group. It should take no more than two gatherings for all members to share their spiritual journeys. Everyone may use the following outline to prepare in advance of the first two gatherings.

Preparation

Sharing this journey is more than just about people's first encounter with God's love; it is also a sharing of key moments in their lives that have formed them into the people they are today. Therefore, it may be helpful for you to prepare for this time of sharing by focusing on key times in your life where you had moments of encounter with God's love.

To lead up to those moments, share with the group what your life was like before those moments of encounter with God, what happened in your encounter with Christ, and how your life was changed after that encounter. You may have had a one-time encounter that changed everything or you may have had many small encounters that have slowly transformed your life to get you where you are today.

Maybe you have had an encounter with Christ that is not as profound as others', but you are at a place where you are seeking a deeper encounter. That is perfectly fine! You can share that experience. Plan to share for 20-25 minutes. It is best to go in the chronological order of your life.

Here are some questions to help to guide you in preparing to share your journey:

Childhood and Family Background:

- Where were you born and where did you grow up?
- How would you describe your childhood?
- What was your family like? How many siblings do you have? Where are you in the birth order?
- What are your most impactful childhood memories that made you into who you are today?
- How important was faith in your childhood?
- Did you experience any moments of encounter with God’s love as a child?

College/Post High School/Career:

- How did your faith develop through college/post-high school (touch upon challenges and moments of encounter with God’s love)?
- How did you choose your school and/or profession?
- What do you like and dislike about your work/career?

If Married:

- How did you meet your spouse?
- How has marriage/kids impacted your life and faith journey?
- How would you describe your relationship with your spouse?

Other Life Moments:

- What were other major occurrences in your life that had an impact on where you are today?
- How would you describe your relationship with God/spiritual life at this time?
- Why did you decide to become a part of this Discipleship group? Why do you see this as important at this time?

Notes

Making Missionary Disciples by Curtis Martin

Overview

- Everything begins to change when a culture of missionary disciples is established...lives are changed.
- How do you change culture? Build a clear vision.
- Evangelizing and disciple-making are like farming – ultimately, God controls the harvest, but there are principles and activities good farmers utilize and lesser farmer do not. Three foundational habits in fostering effective evangelization: Divine Intimacy, Authentic Friendship and Spiritual Multiplication

The Three Habits

Evangelization flows from who we are in Jesus – from our baptismal vocation and ongoing encounter with him.

1. Divine Intimacy:

- The habit upon which everything else rests.
- Evangelization is first and foremost the work of God, we will be fruitful in the mission if we ourselves are abiding in deep union with Him. (He is the vine, we are the branches).
- Jesus defines eternal life in light of relationship – not knowing things about God, but being in relationship with the living God. (Inviting people to be in friendship with Jesus).
- God is calling us so intimately that we become family, we become adopted members of His perfect family, the Blessed Trinity – a deep, covenantal friendship.
- God Transforming Us – through regular, personal encounters we become changed. If you place a cold rod in a hot fire, the rod takes on the properties of the fire – warm and glows.
- The fruits of the Holy Spirit begin to manifest themselves in our lives.
- Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.
- The nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Growing in Divine Intimacy – four practices the early disciples devoted themselves to:

- The Apostles Teachings
- The Breaking of the Bread (Sacramental life)
- Fellowship
- Prayer

"APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING." (JOHN 1 5:5)

2. Authentic Friendship:

- We must genuinely love the people we are serving, accompanying them in life and personally invest ourselves in them, truly become a friend.
- Evangelizers take on the “smell of the sheep.” Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*
- Jesus personally entered the world and became one of us.
- Jesus met people in their particular circumstance, he did not passively wait for people to come to him; he went out to the people. (Incarnational Evangelization)
- The personal time outside of formal faith formation is often where lives are changed the most and more fruitful.

3. Spiritual Multiplication:

- This is impossible without the first two habits.
- Clarity – is the laser focus which keeps us on task.
- Conviction – prioritize our actions to make them fruitful.
- To invest in a few people so as to form them as followers of Jesus and equip them to go out and do the same for others; not just disciples, but missionary disciples.
- Foster an ever-growing chain of missionary disciples; today, many just focus on the first generation, namely, the people already showing up in the pews and programs.
- This is about developing a relationship with others.
- When we live the first two habits without the third, we do not bear as much fruit.
- Growth is incremental – one person reaching out to three and so on.

The Method

- “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few...” (Luke 10:2)
- We live in a time of great opportunity.
- The best catechetical resources can never replace a living witness; the priest is the single greatest factor in fruitfulness and effectiveness.
- Jesus lived a life of authentic friendship with a relative few and he imparted both faithfulness and fruitfulness.

1. Win

- Lead people to a life-shaping encounter with Jesus – facilitating moments of encounter with Jesus.
- God wants more from us than merely following rules, He wants a relationship with each of us.
- Either starting a new relationship or strengthening an existing one.
- The Gospels are a series of encounters with Jesus. Scripture speaks to us where we are at in our lives.
- Sharing the Gospel: Winning Hearts for Christ
 - “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.” Pope Francis
 - The joy of Christian life stands out – our witness, hospitality and example attracts others.
 - We must share the Gospel, but also our very lives, invest personally in people.
 - Invite others to put Jesus first in their lives.

- We need to share the heart of the Gospel message – Kerygma (Core Gospel Message)
 - The good news – we are each created to be amazing in God’s salvation plan!
 - The bad news – when we sin, we choose to separate ourselves from God. Sin is universal and creates a chasm so great no human, even with best efforts, could bridge the gap between humanity and God.
 - The even better news – God sent Jesus, who lived and died, so that we can become who God meant us to be.
 - Salvation is a gift, freely offered each day. Before a gift can be owned, it has to be accepted. To accept God’s saving gift means making a decision to be a disciple of Jesus – making a gift of ourselves in return.

2. Build

- The influence of friendship cannot be overstated. (Saints came in clusters- they shared life)
- Commit to building personal relationships with others.
- Things that are most natural in life are learned by modeling, not mere instruction (i.e. learning how to walk). Holiness is the same, instruction is needed, but demonstration is more effective.
- For friendship to become discipleship there is a clear choice to put Jesus at the center of human relationships.
- Intentionally select a few people. Jesus only chose 12 men, invested deeply in 3.

How to Build:

- Help the other person live more deeply every day as a true disciple of Jesus: read teachings of the Apostles, frequent sacraments, prayer, retreats, faith formation.
- Train people on how to evangelize: sharing the Gospel message, sharing your testimony, lead small faith groups, mentor others. (“More is caught rather than taught”).
- Let others observe how you live the Christian life
- Give disciples opportunities to practice leadership: boosts confidence, offer constructive feedback.

3. Send

- On Pentecost Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the Apostles – they boldly went out and used their training.
- They changed from disciples to disciple-makers.
- “Make disciples of all nations”. (Matthew 28:19)
- Becoming a disciple-maker requires deeper unity with Jesus.

Notes:

Week 2: Personal Histories

Overview

The purpose of this week's session is to provide participants an opportunity to get to know one another on a deeper level. Often we have surface level relationships with people in our parishes and lives, but in order to have a mutual discipleship relationship, we must be willing to be authentic and vulnerable.

Introduction 10 minutes

Welcome everyone to the group and remind them why they are here. They have made a commitment to grow in their own relationship with Christ and have committed to being a leader in the parish to help others grow in their discipleship journey. Remind them that they are receiving so as to pass the gift along to others.

1. This time can be used for simply catching up on the week, sharing about any resolutions from last week and following up on prayer requests that were made. By following up on last week's discussions, we show a commitment that we care about those people in our groups.

Opening Prayer (5-10 minutes)

Begin by taking time to pray. Pray for the members attending, thank God that they said yes to this process, pray for the journey we are about to begin and for the blessing of the Holy Spirit as we seek to renew our parish.

Read John 4:1-25. Allow time for quiet reflection. Ask the members of the group to share any insights or graces from the prayer time.

Discussion

1. Ask the members to share the fruit of their prayer time with the Discipleship Road Map.
 - a. Where do you identify on the road map?
 - b. Where do you feel God calling you to grow?
 - c. What practical steps can you take this week to move further towards being a spiritual multiplier?
2. Personal histories exercise (20 minutes per person)
 - a. Using the guide from Week 1, ask participants to share about their lives and their faith. If you don't get through all of them, this session can be extended an additional week.

Closing

- Ask: What is going on in your life that you need prayers for this week?
- End by leading prayer and open up for group members to offer their own intercessions and Verify the time and location of your next meeting.
- Call or text the group members throughout the week to check in (shared life) and remind them of the next meeting.

Week 3: Who Do You Say That I Am?

Overview

The purpose of this week's session is to provide a foundation for posing the most fundamental question in the Christian life, the one Jesus posed to Peter in Mt. 16. By defining the answer and identifying obstacles to living the answer, we help establish a common understanding of what discipleship is, where we are on our own journeys and we gain an insight into how to help other parishioners walk the path of discipleship.

Remember, the purpose of this group is to *experience* discipleship, so that we can lead future small groups with a discipleship methodology. It's okay if the beginnings still feel slow. As the sessions continue, participants will be taught and observe more practical tips on leading discipleship.

Introduction 10-15 minutes

Welcome everyone to the group and remind them why they are here. They have made a commitment to grow in their own relationship with Christ and have committed to being a leader in the parish to help others grow in their discipleship journey. Remind them that they are receiving so as to pass the gift along to others.

1. This time can be used for simply catching up on the week, sharing about any resolutions from last week and following up on prayer requests that were made. By following up on last week's discussions, we show a commitment that we care about those people in our groups.

Opening Prayer (5-10 minutes)

Pray for the members attending, thank God that they said yes to this process, pray for the journey we are on and for the blessing of the Holy Spirit as we seek to renew our parish.

Read John 1:1-18. Allow time for quiet reflection. Ask the members to share insights or graces.

Discussion (30-45 Minutes)

1. Read Matthew 16:13-20

This is a pivotal moment in the Gospels. Peter and the other disciples had been called by Jesus, they began following Jesus, and had witnessed some amazing miracles and teachings along the way. I'm sure that this is something that they had thought about along the way - Is Jesus the real deal? Is He really the messiah?

- a. Ask: When did you first answer this question in your life?

Note: Be aware that there may be those in the group who are "cradle Catholics" who can't define this very well. You might need to challenge them to take this passage and question to prayer this week.

- b. Say: In the Joy of the Gospel (3) Pope Francis says this:

*I invite **all Christians**, everywhere, **at this very moment**, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord".*

- i. Ask: Do you find time in your day to pray and make this profession of faith in your own life? How do you recommit to the Lord?
2. Read Matthew 16: 21-23. Here, we see Peter, just after his profession of faith, still not quite understanding what discipleship means. Jesus talks about the need to suffer and die, and Peter wants nothing to do with that.
- a. Discuss:
- i. Is it hard to follow Jesus on his terms?
- ii. Where in your life do you try to define the terms of your discipleship?
3. Read: Matthew 19:16-30 | The Rich Young Man . It's important to believe, but we also have to act on that belief, or it's empty.
- a. How do you experience a disconnect between belief and action in your own life?
- b. When the Church or it's members don't live up to its belief, it causes scandal. How have you experienced or dealt with this?
4. Parish Application: Discuss:
- a. Do you think most Catholics have answered the question posed by Jesus?
- i. Why or why not?
- b. How can you propose this question to people in different parts of the parish?
- i. How can you ask people in your daily life?
5. Let the members of the group know that in order to learn leadership in a supportive and comfortable context, you'll be asking them to lead in future weeks, probably starting around week 5. The material is self explanatory, and you will be available to help them.

Challenge the group to participate in the sacrament of reconciliation this week to seek forgiveness for the times we have failed to live our call to discipleship.

Closing

- Ask: What is going on in your life that you need prayers for this week?
- End by leading prayer and intercessions. Verify the time and location of your next meeting.
- Call or text the group throughout the week to check in and remind them of the next meeting.

Notes

Leader Guide Week 4: A Biblical Vision of Discipleship

Overview

The purpose of this week's session is to provide a scriptural foundation for discipleship. We want to illustrate that this is not a new idea or current fad, and that a discipleship methodology is biblically rooted and is effective.

There is a lot of material in the lessons this week. It's okay if you don't get through everything or read every scripture. If you don't make it through everything, make sure to set aside time at the closing for prayer and reminders. Participants can also read through the material on their own and spend time reflecting on it in prayer.

Introduction 10-15 minutes

Welcome everyone to the group and remind them why they are here. They have made a commitment to grow in their own relationship with Christ and have committed to being a leader in the parish to help others grow in their discipleship journey. Remind them that they are receiving so as to pass the gift along to others.

1. This time can be used for simply catching up on the week, sharing about any resolutions from last week and following up on prayer requests that were made. By following up on last week's discussions, we show a commitment that we care about those people in our groups.
2. Last week's resolutions included getting to confession if possible and taking time to reflect on how you can ask people about their own relationship to Christ. How did it go?

Opening Prayer (5-10 minutes)

Pray for the members attending, thank God that they said yes to this process, pray for the journey we are on and for the blessing of the Holy Spirit as we seek to renew our parish.

Read Luke 10:1-12. Allow time for quiet reflection. Ask the members to share insights or graces.

Discussion (30-45 Minutes)

1. Say: This week we're looking at models of Discipleship in the scriptures. Before we dive into the text, how would you define discipleship?
 - a. After discussion say: There's a lot of buzz around discipleship, so we want to make sure we get clarity. Give this quote: "the foundation of Discipleship is imitation" (Jeff Cavins, *The Activated Disciple*). This is rooted in the idea of St. Paul from 1 Corinthians 11:1 to "Be imitators of me as I imitate Christ." All authentic discipleship points to Christ, never to an attachment to an individual.
 - i. We see this in the life of the Church how they imitated Christ in the Acts of the Apostles: Just after the descent of the Holy Spirit at pentecost, Acts describes how the first converts lived after their conversion. Read: 2:37-42
 1. The 4 categories in verse 42 are the pillars of Christian life, the pillars of discipleship. This 4 sections of the Catechism of the Church is based on this too.

- a. Teaching of the apostles (I. Creed)
- b. Fellowship (III. Life in Christ - Moral life)
- c. Breaking of the bread (II. Christian Mystery - Sacrament)
- d. Prayers (IV. Christian Prayer).

To be a disciple of Christ, means that after our conversion, we live out these categories. To be in a discipleship relationship means we learn how to live the truths of the Church in these categories from the example of someone who is on this path too. This idea of mentoring is everywhere in the world (not just in the Church) -it's a revelation of how God ordered the world: we are made to be in relationship and to learn from one another.

2. Who are some people in your life who have mentored you in life or professionally? Share about the impact they have had on you.
3. Who are some people in your life who have mentored you in the faith? Share about the impact they have had on you.
4. Read 2 Timothy 2:2. We see here that the faith is a gift that is meant to be passed on. Don't keep it for yourself, but entrust to others will also teach.
5. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:8. What does this tell us about Discipleship? (hint: sharing the Gospel and sharing life)
6. We see this type of relationship all throughout the scriptures, as well as the early church and even still today.
 - a. Moses and Joshua (See attached - reference each of these categories)
 - b. Elijah and Elisha
 - i. Read: 1 Kings 19: 9-16: After Elijah hears the voice of God, he knows he must raise up another prophet, a disciple.
 - ii. Read: 1 Kings 19: 19-21. Elisha leaves everything behind to follow in the steps of Elijah and learn from him¹
 - iii. Read: 2 Kings 2:1–14: Elisha prays for a double portion of Eliah's spirit. We see in the next chapters that Elisha goes on to perform twice as many miracles as Elijah. The disciple is not lesser than the master, but the master passes on the gift of faith in abundance.
 - c. John the Baptist - We know he had disciples that followed him - (Mt. 11:3)
 - i. True Discipleship imitates John the baptist (read John 3:25-30)
 - d. Jesus and the 12 (read: John 1:35-42) - "Come and you will see" 12 guys went camping for 3 years - shared life, learned the Gospel. Peter didn't keep the faith for only himself - shared it immediately (key discipleship principal)
 - e. Ananias & Paul: read Acts 9:10-19. Ananias then helps Saul get oriented into the Christian community who were very skeptical of his conversion (see v. 26)
 - f. Barnabas & Paul: read: Acts 11:25-6, then 13:1-3. When Paul is sent on mission, he is sent with Baranabas, an established Christian, as a mentor.
 - g. Paul & Timothy: Read Acts 16:1-3. Paul has Timothy accompany him, before eventually sending him on his own missions. Paul's letter to Timothy is an

¹ Note that in v. 20 when Elijah says "what have I done to you", he is asking Elisha if he understands the anointing he has received and the requirements of discipleship to leave everything and follow him. We also see that his sacrifice is fruitful - he slaughters the oxen and feeds the people. Our vocations, in following Christ, are also meant to bear fruit.

encouragement and reinforcing of what Timothy learned from Paul in this mentoring/discipleship relationship.

We see in the life of the Church that Saints often come in clusters. Ask participants to name any saint pairs they know. A few examples:

John the Apostle mentored & consecrated Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp
St. Ambrose mentored St. Augustine for his conversion
St. Benedict & St. Scholastica - brother and sister
St. John of the Cross & St. Teresa of Avila - St. John was her spiritual director
St. Ignatius & Francis Xavier - Formed the Jesuits, were sent on mission.
St. Francis & St. Clare of Assisi - Deep spiritual friendship.
St. Therese of Lisieux's parents are also saints (Sts. Louis and Zélie Martin)
Bl. Jan Tyranowski & Karol Wojtyła (St. John Paul II) Jan was JP II's youth minister

Here we see continued evidence of people handing on the faith in the context of relationships.

Ask: Why do you think this methodology is so effective? (Hint: When we see something modeled, we understand how to do it better than just learning in a classroom. There is an element of Divine Pedagogy² here- God becomes man so we can become like God. Because he shared our experience, our life. Discipleship operates on the same principle.).

7. Say: In the Joy of the Gospel Pope Francis says this:

Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples". If we are not convinced, let us look at those first disciples, who, immediately after encountering the gaze of Jesus, went forth to proclaim him joyfully: "We have found the Messiah!" (Jn 1:41). The Samaritan woman became a missionary immediately after speaking with Jesus and many Samaritans come to believe in him "because of the woman's testimony" (Jn 4:39). So too, Saint Paul, after his encounter with Jesus Christ, "immediately proclaimed Jesus" (Acts 9:20; cf. 22:6-21). So what are we waiting for?

To encounter Christ is to be sent on mission to share Him with others. To be a disciple is to also be a mentor to others on the path. Christianity is always lived out in the context of community because we mirror the Holy Trinity who is itself community.

Ask: How do you live your call as a missionary disciple right now? Who are the people that you are sharing life and sharing the gospel with? Your family, friends, children, parents in the school community, etc...?

² Divine Pedagogy is a term that means how God ordered the world so as to reveal himself and his true nature (pedagogy is the way something is ordered so as to be taught).

Parish Discipleship Mission Field Worksheet

Encounter:

Forming relationships to invite people into a relationship with Christ.

Who are individuals in the parish that I have regular contact with?

What do I know about their relationship with Christ?

How can I strengthen these relationships and lead them to an encounter with Christ?

Grow:

Helping parishioners build skills in an a time of formation for mission.

Who are individuals in the parish that I care about their faith?

Who might be ready to be challenged to take their faith to the next step?

Witness:

Sending out parishioners to participate in the mission of evangelization.

Who have I been working with that is ready to take on leadership?

How can I help them identify their mission field?

How can I walk with them in accountability for their mission field?

This week I will pray for

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Leader Guide Week 5: The Mission of the Church

Overview

The purpose of this week's session is to demonstrate that the mission of the Church is to evangelize. It is set out in the scriptures and in the teachings of the Church. By helping participants understand evangelizing as part of their own deepest identity, we help them gain the courage and realize the necessity of embracing this mission. If Christ has commanded it, then we can not avoid it.

Introduction 10-15 minutes

Welcome everyone to the group and remind them why they are here. They have made a commitment to grow in their own relationship with Christ and have committed to being a leader in the parish to help others grow in their discipleship journey. Remind them that they are receiving so as to pass the gift along to others. (I know it's repetitive, but it's important to drive this home - it creates a sense of urgency and action as we progress).

1. This time can be used for simply catching up on the week, sharing about any resolutions from last week and following up on prayer requests that were made.

Opening Prayer (5-10 minutes)

Pray for the members attending, thank God that they said yes to this process, pray for the journey we are on and for the blessing of the Holy Spirit as we seek to renew our parish.

Read Matthew 9:9-13. Allow time for quiet reflection. Ask the members to share insights or graces.

Discussion (30-45 Minutes)

1. Say: This week we're looking at the mission of the Church and how we are called to participate in it as Catholics.
 - a. Ask: Why does the Church exist? What is the mission of the Church?

Read *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 14. *"Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection."*

- b. Has this been your experience within the Church? How does the image of the Church we usually see reconcile with it's true identity? Is this how most Catholics experience the Church?

The mission of the Church is to evangelize - to proclaim the Good news. We see this in Matthew 28. Jesus is giving his final instructions to the disciples gathered just before his Ascension into heaven. He gives them one last reminder: *don't forget to live the what I have taught you these last 3 years!*

2. Read: Mt. 28:16-20. This is one of the most crucial verses for a missionary disciple. (Ask them to begin memorizing v.18-20 for next week).

- a. This passage is called the great commission. What stands out to you? How can you live this command in your everyday life? (Note: "Make" is an action verb)
3. Read Genesis: 12:1-3 Here we see the promise made to Abram as part of God's covenant. These promises would be fulfilled if Abram keeps his covenant.
- a. I will make you a great nation (fulfilled in Moses - the promised land)
 - b. I will make your name great (fulfilled in David - the Davidic dynasty)
 - c. By you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves (fulfilled in Jesus - Worldwide blessing & the Great Commission)

We often think of Israel as a nation set apart by God, separate from the rest of the world; God's Chosen People. And while this is true, they were set apart not to be away from the world, but to be the vehicle through which God bestowed in the world his blessing. Because of the failings of the Israelites, they had failed to live this until Jesus comes as messiah and sends us out in the great commission to be the blessing for the world.

4. Read Genesis 15:1-12
- a. Abram doesn't see how God is staying faithful to his word- he has no heir.
 - b. V. 5 -God says to look to the stars. God will be faithful.
 - c. V. 12. Note - "When the sun had gone down" This means the account where God asked Abram to look at the stars was in the daylight. Abram couldn't see the stars, but he knew they were there.
 - d. Sometimes, living God's plan doesn't go how we want it to, but we have to remain faithful to what he asks of us.

Ask: In living the great commission, in fulfilling this worldwide blessing - how do you need to trust God more?

5. Read Acts 1:4-11 Here we have Luke's account of the Ascension, with the same message - GO & be my witnesses, but do it with the power of the Holy Spirit.
- a. He sends them to Jerusalem, Judea, Samara and the ends of the earth. These are real places, but also emblematic of places in our lives.
 - i. Jerusalem - Home - How can I evangelize in myself and my family.
 - ii. Judea - The area surrounding Jerusalem - my parish, neighborhood
 - iii. Samaria - Those who are nearby, but not "one of us" - those on the peripheries of our parishes or our communities.
 - iv. Ends of the Earth - proclaim Jesus to ALL that we meet - to the nations!
 - b. When we evangelize, we are called to live it in many different dimensions. The faith is a gift that can't be kept to ourselves, and the apostles lived this way too.
6. Recount the story of Acts 2 - The Apostles wait in Jerusalem for the descent of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit comes and they begin to preach and make converts (disciples). This should be our response too. The rest of the book of Acts demonstrates that those who converted lived the mission of the Church with urgency. They went out immediately to the ends of the earth.
7. Read Acts 2:37-42
- a. When the spirit moves, and we are "cut to the heart", we just respond, we see this in the question - what shall we do. - They go and live as disciples (acts 2:42) and begin to spread the good news of the kingdom.
 - b. This is fundamental to who we are as Christians.

Ask: Do you often think of your faith as something for you, to help you get through hard times, or get yourself to heaven, - or do you view it as a gift for others?

8. Read the following excerpt from Pope Francis' Joy of the Gospel, paragraph 24:

"The Church which "goes forth" is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast. Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father's infinite mercy. Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved.

- a. How does this inform the way you live your faith?

9. Ask: What is Evangelization?

10. Read the definition of Evangelization from the USCCB document, Go and Make Disciples.

"...Evangelizing means bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and seeking to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel itself.⁶ At its essence are the proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ and the response of a person in faith, which are both works of the Spirit of God."

This means that Evangelization has a personal and a communal impact. We form individuals who are sent out to be leaven in society.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church in paragraph 900 tells us that unless lay people participate in the work of Evangelization - the ministry of our priests is actually less effective.

"Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth. This duty is the more pressing when it is only through them that men can hear the Gospel and know Christ. Their activity in ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it." - CCC 900

Homework:

Begin work on key memory verses, listed on the next page.

Closing

- Assign a leader for next week
- Ask: What is going on in your life that you need prayers for this week?
- End with a prayer and intercessions. Verify the time and location of your next meeting.
- Call or text the group throughout the week to check in and remind them of the next meeting.

Equip Discipleship Group Scripture Memory Verses

- **Matthew 28:18-20:** Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”
- **1 Thessalonians 2:8:** With such affection for you, we were determined to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our very selves as well, so dearly beloved had you become to us.
- **2 Timothy 2:2:** And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well.
- **1 Peter 3:15:** Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.

Additional Key verses & passages

- **Acts 2:42:** They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.
- **Matthew 16:15:** He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”
- **Luke 6:46:** “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ but not do what I command?”
- **Evangelii Nuntiandi 41:** Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.
- **CCC 1:** God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness, freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.

Practice memorizing these verses each day! You will be quizzed on them in future weeks.

“IGNORANCE OF SCRIPTURE IS IGNORANCE OF CHRIST”

-ST. JEROME

Leader Guide Week 6: Prayer - Personal & Intercessory

Overview

The purpose of this week's session is to show the importance of prayer as the root of all of our efforts in evangelization and discipleship. We cannot give others a relationship with Jesus if we're not living one ourselves. We'll also begin to identify and pray for those who hope to lead in discipleship moving forward.

Introduction 10-15 minutes

Welcome everyone to the group and remind them why they are here. They have made a commitment to grow in their own relationship with Christ and have committed to being a leader in the parish to help others grow in their discipleship journey. Remind them that they are receiving this formation so as to pass the gift along to others. (I know it's repetitive, but it's important to drive this home - it creates a sense of urgency and action as we progress).

1. This time can be used for simply catching up on the week, sharing about any resolutions from last week and following up on prayer requests that were made.

Opening Prayer (5-10 minutes)

Pray for the members attending, thank God that they said yes to this process, pray for the journey we are on and for the blessing of the Holy Spirit as we seek to renew our parish.

Read Matthew 4:1-11. Allow time for quiet reflection. Ask the members to share insights or graces.

Discussion (30-45 Minutes)

1. In the Joy of the Gospel (paragraph 3), pope Francis says this:

"I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord". The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms."

This is a landmark document on evangelization, but it begins with a call for each of us to encounter Christ new each day, even if we don't feel like we have much to offer.

Ask: How do you encounter Christ each day? In sacrament? In scripture? In Prayer?

Say: This week we're talking about the importance of prayer in the life of discipleship.

- a. Ask: What does your prayer life look like right now?
- b. Are there areas that could be improved?

Read:

"A soul arms itself by prayer for all kinds of combat. In whatever state the soul may be, it ought to pray. A soul which is pure and beautiful must pray, or else it will lose its beauty; a soul which is striving after this purity must pray, or else it will never attain it; a soul which is newly converted must pray, or else it will fall again; a sinful soul, plunged in sins, must pray so that it might rise again. There is no soul which is not bound to pray, for every single grace comes to the soul through prayer." - St. Faustina, Diary, 146

Even though we know prayer is essential, we don't always act like it.

- a. How do you persevere in prayer when you don't feel like it?
 - i. Encourage the members of your group to persevere. We have made a commitment to be in a relationship. Even when it's not easy, we must fulfill our duty.
- b. Is your prayer more often for you? For God? For Others?

St. Paul calls each of us to pray unceasingly in our lives- all throughout our every day. This ongoing, unceasing prayer doesn't replace our times of quiet contemplation of God. It must be balanced with the practice of intentional mental prayer. This is the call of a missionary Disciple.

Challenge:

A Missionary Disciple, who is leading others, should have an established routine of Mental Prayer. Mental prayer is different from intercessory prayer, or other established prayers of the Church. It is our time to listen to God, to reflect on the ways we hear God and what he is calling us to do in life.

Even Jesus spent quiet time with God in prayer:

[Read Mark 6:46, Matthew 14:23, Luke 6:12](#)

We also see Jesus modeling prayer for the Disciples

Read: Luke 9:18. We are called to pray on our own, but also to model that prayer for those that we are discipling. (In v. 28 we see Jesus praying with Peter, James and John)

Each of us, as leaders and intentional disciples, should be spending 20-30 minutes a day in mental prayer.

Ask: Will you commit to this level of prayer as you commit to be a leader in your parish?

Intercessory Prayer:

Often we think of intercessory prayer as simple petitions, which may or may not have a big impact on the world around us, but the saints knew the power of prayer and begging God to act in the world.

St. Therese of Lisieux is one of the two patrons of evangelization and mission for the church. How? Because she developed such a zeal for souls, a deep desire that the entire world would come to know Jesus that she offered up every prayer, every ounce of the tremendous suffering that she had for the whole world to come to know Christ.

St. Therese of Lisieux recounts the conversion story of Henri Pranzini, a triple-murderer whom she feared would die impenitent for his sins. Calling Henri her “mon premier enfant” (my first child), she “wanted at all costs to keep him from falling into hell, and to succeed I employed all means imaginable, feeling that of myself I could do nothing. I offered to God all the infinite merits of Our Lord.” (Story of a Soul, St. Therese of Lisieux)

After Henri’s execution in 1887, Therese learned of his last moments. “He turned, took hold of the crucifix the priest was holding out to him, and kissed the sacred wounds three times! Then his soul went to receive the merciful sentence of Him who declares that in heaven there will be more joy over one sinner who does penance than over ninety-nine who have no need of repentance!” (Story of a Soul).

Her sacrifice and prayer bore visible fruit in the world in the world around her.

- a. Have you ever had an experience of your prayer bearing this kind of fruit?
- b. If we believed that our prayers would be that fruitful, would it change the way you pray?
- c. Who are the people in your life right now that you are interceding for?

St. Augustine, before he was a bishop, saint and doctor of the Church, was a wayward soul. His autobiography *Confessions*, recounts his spiritual journey, into sin and running from God. All along his mother, St. Monica, prayed that he would come to know God, and return to the Church and she worked tirelessly to accompany him and to find people, like St. Ambrose, to help bring him back.

When she begged with the bishop to speak to her son, the bishop said to her “Only pray for him to the Lord: he will discover by reading what his error is...” She would not acquiesce to what he said but continued imploring... “Go away,” he said, “while you live, the son of these tears of yours shall not perish”

He knew that the power of these prayers would bear fruit, along with her persistent witness of the faith- she never gave up on her son. So too, no one in our parish, in our lives is beyond the grace of redemption.

We may not always see the fruits of our prayers as clearly as St. Monica and St. Therese, but the lord hears our cries!

Lead group through the Parish Discipleship Mission Field Worksheet (attached).

Have them write in the names of different people in the parish that they might consider inviting into their group when they launch their own studies. It’s okay to recognize that different people we interact with are at differing spots on the chart, and different levels of readiness in their spiritual journey.

Ask them to pray for these individuals each week and ask God to provide opportunities for spiritual conversations with these people.

Notes

Homework:

Spend an hour in prayer with the Parish Discipleship Mission Field Worksheet asking the lord who he wants you to begin working with.

Continue to work on key memory verses:

Email group follow up resources on learning mental prayer:

Bishop Barron - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aR6J1pPiRQo>

Method of Mental Prayer - Blessed is She <https://blessedisshenet.net/blog/method-mental-prayer/>

Formed.org - LECTIO - Prayer - <https://watch.formed.org/lectio-prayer-with-dr-tim-gray>

Additional resources on prayer can be found at www.archstl.org/evangelization

Closing

- Ask: What is going on in your life that you need prayers for this week?
- End with a prayer and intercessions. Verify the time and location of your next meeting.
- Call or text the group throughout the week to check in and remind them of the next meeting.

Notes

Parish Discipleship Mission Field Worksheet

Encounter:

Forming relationships to invite people into a relationship with Christ.

Who are individuals in the parish that I have regular contact with?

What do I know about their relationship with Christ?

How can I strengthen these relationships and lead them to an encounter with Christ?

Grow:

Helping parishioners build skills in an a time of formation for mission.

Who are individuals in the parish that I care about their faith?

Who might be ready to be challenged to take their faith to the next step?

Witness:

Sending out parishioners to participate in the mission of evangelization.

Who have I been working with that is ready to take on leadership?

How can I help them identify their mission field?

How can I walk with them in accountability for their mission field?

This week I will pray for:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Leader Guide Week 7: Kerygma - The Core Gospel Message

Overview

The purpose of this week's session is to teach the Kerygma - the Core Gospel message.. Participants should understand the importance of this core gospel proclamation and eventually, after some practice, be able to articulate it clearly.

Introduction 15-20 minutes

Welcome everyone to the group and remind them why they are here. They have made a commitment to grow in their own relationship with Christ and have committed to being a leader in the parish to help others grow in their discipleship journey. Remind them that they are receiving so as to pass the gift along to others. (I know it's repetitive, but it's important to drive this home - it creates a sense of urgency and action as we progress).

1. This time can be used for simply catching up on the week, sharing about any resolutions from last week and following up on prayer requests that were made.
2. Accountability: How did you do on your daily commitment to prayer last week? How can you do better this week?
3. As we get further into this program, we're beginning to ask you to spend extra time outside of the sessions, to pray, study and prepare. This week has a bit of homework.

Opening Prayer (5-10 minutes)

Pray for the members attending, thank God that they said yes to this process, pray for the journey we are on and for the blessing of the Holy Spirit as we seek to renew our parish.

Read John 15:1-17. Allow time for quiet reflection. Ask the members to share insights or graces.

Discussion (30-45 Minutes)

1. This week we're talking about the Kerygma (a fancy greek word, we'll define in a moment) - the Core Gospel message. At the end of mass, we're told, "go and announce the Gospel of the Lord". If someone asked you to articulate "what is the Gospel message" - what would you say?

2. What is Kerygma?

In the ancient Greek/Roman world, an important announcement would be made from the king through a herald, or a "Keryx". The herald would travel throughout the empire, and this announcement would be proclaimed exactly as the king/ruler had mandated- this message would be called a "Kerygma". The word Kerygma literally means "to proclaim".

3. Pope John Paul II, defined the Christian Kerygma this way:

(The kerygma is) "the initial ardent proclamation by which a person is one day overwhelmed and brought to the decision to entrust himself to Jesus Christ by faith. - CATECHESI TRADENDAE 25

Before we begin to learn more about our faith (catechesis) we must be "overwhelmed" by the faith. Have you had this experience of being overwhelmed in your faith life? Do any particular moments come to mind?

4. Another way we can define Kerygma is the proclamation of the "Core Gospel Message". Discuss some different ways you might frame the core gospel message to:
 - a. A non-believer
 - b. A fallen away Catholic
 - c. An irregularly practicing Catholic.
 - d. A mass-going Catholic going through the motions
5. Can you think of any scripture verses that articulate the kerygma clearly and concisely?
 - a. Let the participants name some verses. After they run out, have them look up (or depending on how much time you have, mention) the following:
 - i. John 3:16
 - ii. Acts 2:14-36
 - iii. Acts 3:12-26
 - iv. Acts 10:34-43
 - v. Acts 13:16-41
6. There are a few different formulas that may be helpful in articulating the Kerygma.
 - a. Chris Stefanick frames it in the following five movements:
 - i. Creation
 - ii. Sin
 - iii. Redemption
 - iv. Conversion
 - v. Immersion
 - b. Fr. John Riccardo uses 4 descriptive phases:
 - i. Created
 - ii. Captured
 - iii. Rescued
 - iv. Response
 - c. Romans Road: Often used by protestants as "gospel tracts" - A little incomplete from a Catholic Worldview, but knowing this can still be helpful. There are many variations of this.
 - i. 3:23 - All have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God
 - ii. 6:12 - The punishment of sin is death
 - iii. 5:8 - While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us
 - iv. 10: 13 - All who call on the name of the lord shall be saved

We can even see the Kerygma in the very beginning of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1):

"God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness, freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his

family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.

So that this call should resound throughout the world, Christ sent forth the apostles he had chosen, commissioning them to proclaim the gospel: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." Strengthened by this mission, the apostles "went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it."

7. As Christians, as Catholics, we must have this good news on our lips at all times; that Jesus Christ is Lord and offers us salvation.
 - a. How can we incorporate this good news message into more aspects of our life?
 - b. How can we incorporate it more into our parish and parish activities? If you don't have time to answer these questions, you can assign them as reflection questions for homework.
8. Often when we think of "evangelization" - we think of this proclamation - people standing on street corners proclaiming Jesus, or going door to door like Jehovah's witnesses or Mormon missionaries telling people about the faith. While this proclamation, this "Kerygma" is a critical part of evangelization it does not encompass all of evangelization.

Read:

This proclamation - kerygma, preaching or catechesis - occupies such an important place in evangelization that it has often become synonymous with it; and yet it is only one aspect of evangelization. - Evangelii Nuntiandi, 22, Pope St. Paul VI

Ask: What might be some other aspects of Evangelization?

Pope St. Paul VI goes on to say this:

"In fact the proclamation only reaches full development when it is listened to, accepted and assimilated, and when it arouses a genuine adherence in the one who has thus received it." (23)

And:

"Finally, the person who has been evangelized goes on to evangelize others. Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelization: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn."

And:

"Evangelization, as we have said, is a complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative." (24).

As Catholics we must embrace the necessity of this "explicit proclamation" and be comfortable articulating this core Gospel message.

- A. Is this hard? Why?

Homework:

For further study on the Kerygma - sign up for free to REVIVE Parishes and watch Chris Stefanick’s Course on evangelization, chapters 3-6: (<https://reviveparishes.com/STL>)

<https://learn.reviveparishes.com/courses/take/evangelization/lessons/8603308-chapter-3-kerygma-the-message>

Watch Fr. John Riccardo on Kerygma: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ye8D8p54C4c>

Read Catholic Missionary Disciples post on the variations and importance of the Kerygma:

<https://catholicmissionarydisciples.com/news/the-content-of-the-kerygma-good-news-for-the-world>

Begin to practice articulating the kerygma in one of the above formats.

Closing

- Assign a leader for next week.
- Ask: What is going on in your life that you need prayers for this week?
- End with a prayer and intercessions. Verify the time and location of your next meeting.
- Call or text the group throughout the week to check in and remind them of the next meeting.

Notes

Leader Guide Week 8: Testimony - Sharing your story

The purpose of this week's session is to teach the importance and power of sharing our testimony. Even when we can't articulate the entire Gospel message, we can always share with others how our own experience in encountering the love of the Lord has been powerful in our lives.

Introduction 15-20 minutes

Welcome everyone to the group and remind them why they are here. They have made a commitment to grow in their own relationship with Christ and have committed to being a leader in the parish to help others grow in their discipleship journey. Remind them that they are receiving so as to pass the gift along to others. (I know it's repetitive, but it's important to drive this home - it creates a sense of urgency and action as we progress).

1. This time can be used for simply catching up on the week, sharing about any resolutions from last week and following up on prayer requests that were made.
2. Ask: how are you doing with the scripture verses you were asked to memorize? Can any of you recite one of the following from memory? 1 Thes. 2:8, Mt. 28:18-20, 2 Tim 2:2
3. Accountability: How did you do on your daily commitment to prayer last week? How can you do better this week?

Opening Prayer (5-10 minutes)

Pray for the members attending, thank God that they said yes to this process, pray for the journey we are on and for the blessing of the Holy Spirit as we seek to renew our parish.

Read Luke 18:18-30. Allow time for quiet reflection. Ask the members to share insights or graces.

Discussion (30-45 Minutes)

1. Ask each group member: What is your favorite movie? Why? Tell me why should I see it?
 - a. If you can convince someone that they need to see this movie, congratulations- you've just become an evangelist for this movie. Sharing your Catholic faith can be just as simple. While each of us might not be able to teach the entire catechism, we can give a witness of what God has done in your life.
2. 1 Peter 3:15 is one of our memory verses- Can anyone recite it?
 - a. It says: Always be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is within you.
 - b. Our hope is rooted in Jesus Christ and what he has done for us. Last week we talked about sharing the Kerygma and the story of Jesus. Can anyone share a version of the kerygma? How might you share a Gospel presentation with:
 - i. A friend
 - ii. A non-christian
 - c. This week we're talking about the idea of a testimony. If the Kerygma is one part of the reason for the hope in us (what Jesus has done for us all), our testimony is another critical part. We share about what Christ has done for us specifically. We

recognize the areas of our life where we are broken and in most need of Christ's healing love.

- d. One of the more powerful things about sharing your own testimony, is that, unlike apologetics, no one can argue with your own experience of Christ's love. Yes, we can argue or dialogue about the truths of faith, and that is important, but your experience is a huge part of the *reason for your hope*.
3. Have you ever heard someone give their testimony? In a talk? On a retreat? In a conversation? How did it impact you? How did it stir in your heart?
4. Have you ever had to give your testimony? Where?
5. In *Evangelization in the Modern World (41)*, St. Pope Paul VI says: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." (Ask participants to memorize this quote). Have you experienced this reality? Who is someone who has not only taught you the faith but witnessed it to you?
6. One of the most famous "testimonies" of all time is St. Augustine's confessions. St. Augustine was a brilliant teacher of the faith - one of the important doctors of the Church. While he has many famous works, perhaps his most famous is the story of his own journey to becoming a practicing Catholic. While St. Augustine was learning about the faith for many years he began to be intellectually convinced of its truth, but he still would not commit to Christianity. Of the Catholic faith he said "I had found a precious pearl, worth buying at the cost of all I had; but I went on hesitating" (Confessions, Book 8.2). He still struggled with his worldly addictions and could not overcome them to come to the faith.

While he had many christian friends and influences, it was only after hearing the stories of others living their faith that he came to a conversion. First he heard the story of Victorinus - who like him was a philosopher, who struggled with the faith, but eventually converted. Then he heard the story of his friend Ponticianus, who told him of the conversion of some of his dear friends when they read the story of St. Anthony of Egypt. This story overwhelmed St. Augustine and his heart was convinced that he needed to repent. Even though he knew for years what he needed to do (he had even prayed previously "lord Give me chastity, but not yet"), it was in hearing the testimony of others that his own heart was finally stirred (not just his mind).

7. In his message for World Communication Day for 2020, Pope Francis chose to share about the power of stories:

"Human beings are storytellers. From childhood we hunger for stories just as we hunger for food. Stories influence our lives, whether in the form of fairy tales, novels, films, songs, news, even if we do not always realize it. Often we decide what is right or wrong based on characters and stories we have made our own. Stories leave their mark on us; they shape our convictions and our behaviour. They can help us understand and communicate who we are."

Invite group members to read the [whole message](#) on their own (it's not very long). Email the link in follow up.

8. In the book *Forming Intentional Disciples*, author Sherry Weddell says to "Never accept a label in place of a story ". What do you think she means by this?

- a. Have you been tempted to label others? Write them off? Share a time when you may have labeled someone, only to find out later the complexities of the situation.
 - b. In knowing someone's story, we better understand how to minister to them. In sharing our own stories, we help people see beyond labels and become more human, more approachable.
9. We should be ready to give our testimony at any time. Sometimes that may require a 3 minute version. Sometimes that may require a 30 minute version.
10. An important part of sharing our testimony is coming to the realization of how God has worked in our lives. St. Augustine's *Confessions* is a beautiful story because it recounts all the ways that God was moving in Augustine even before his conversion moment. Upon further reflection, he saw the hand of God leading him through life and eventually to communion with him.
11. This week, spend an hour in prayer reflecting on how God has moved in your life.
- On Page 45 is a formula commonly used to help articulate your story. This is an excerpt from Marcel LeJeune at *Catholic Missionary Disciples*. *Read through this with the group now and ask them to bring it with them to prayer, this week.*
12. Ask the group to come next week prepared to share a 10 minute version of their testimony, using the format found on the next page.

Closing

- Ask: What is going on in your life that you need prayers for this week?
- End with a prayer and intercessions. Verify the time and location of your next meeting.
- Call or text the group throughout the week to check in and remind them of the next meeting.

Notes

HOW TO SHARE YOUR TESTIMONY

By Marcel Lejeune, Catholic Missionary Disciples

<https://catholicmissionarydisciples.com/news/an-indispensible-tool-of-an-evangelist-how-to-give-y-our-testimony>

Before you start, consider these questions

- *How has your life changed, because God is a part of it?*
- *When are times you felt God's presence, knew his forgiveness, experienced grace/forgiveness, or had deep experience of prayer?*
- *How has God helped you through your life? Have you felt comforted, at peace, fulfilled, etc?*

Now consider these three basic elements:

1 - Your Life Before Jesus:

- Background - what was life like?
- Tell something good about your life, don't just dwell on the negative aspects.
- Point out something that was missing, wrong, etc without Jesus at the center of your life.
- Be concrete - but don't give too many details that won't matter to your listener.
- Try to be relatable.
- Don't use words that others may not understand, unless you clearly define them.

Notes

2 - Your Conversion - an Encounter With Jesus:

- By far, this is the most important part of your story, so be clear.
- Focus on the moment of encounter with Jesus, your decision-point, and conversion.
- Describe what this time was like and what happened.
- What did you feel? What did you do? What did you say? How did you react?
- If your conversion was over a period of time (long or short), tell how things changed and focus on the major moments.
- Allow most of the time to be about Jesus impacting your life. Talk about him personally and name him. Drop the name “Jesus” frequently into your narrative.
- Don’t teach!
- Don’t judge your former life in a manner that is overly rough. You might turn off others who are in a similar place currently.
- Don’t add things that didn’t happen or exaggerate for the sake of a story. Your story should be honest. If it is simple, keep it simple.

Notes:

3 - Your Life After Conversion:

- Be very clear as to what has changed. Give examples of how your life is different. What has stopped? What have you gained? What do you do differently?
- Don’t make your life today seem like a fairy tale. Be honest about current struggles, but also remain hopeful.
- End with a simple invitation.
 - God wants something for you too.
 - Jesus can do the same for you.

Notes:

Leader Guide Week 9: Giving our Testimony

Overview

The purpose of this week's session is to give participants an opportunity to share their own testimony. This differs from the personal history exercise in that we are talking specifically of our initial encounter with Christ. It's important to prepare the group members to be able to give feedback and to receive critiques of what they might be able to do better in the future.

Introduction 15-20 minutes

Welcome everyone to the group and remind them why they are here. They have made a commitment to grow in their own relationship with Christ and have committed to being a leader in the parish to help others grow in their discipleship journey. Remind them that they are receiving so as to pass the gift along to others. (I know it's repetitive, but it's important to drive this home - it creates a sense of urgency and action as we progress).

1. This time can be used for simply catching up on the week, sharing about any resolutions from last week and following up on prayer requests that were made.
2. Accountability: How did you do on your daily commitment to prayer last week? How can you do better this week?

Opening Prayer (5-10 minutes)

Pray for the members attending, thank God that they said yes to this process, pray for the journey we are on and for the blessing of the Holy Spirit as we seek to renew our parish.

Read Luke 19:1-10. Allow time for quiet reflection. Ask the members to share insights or graces.

Discussion (45 Minutes)

1. Last week we talked about the power of testimonies and asked you to spend time in prayer reflecting on God's graces in your life, and especially the little moments that led to your "encounter" with Christ. What are some of the graces of that prayer?

Optional: If you want, you can assign each member a different scenario of who they are supposed to be giving their testimony to (an atheist, a family member, a work associate...etc)

2. Before asking each member of the group to share, remind them that it is important to be open to feedback on how to better give our testimony. Accountability is a core element of discipleship. This occasionally means conflict or words that are hard to hear. Getting feedback on our testimony helps us get better at fraternal correction.
3. Ask each of the group members to give a 10 minute version of their testimony, pretending that none of the audience has heard it before.
 - a. Time the testimonies. Note how long they spend on life before Jesus, conversion, and life after conversion.

- b. After each testimony, ask the group for feedback. What was effective in the testimony? What could use work? Use the checklist from the previous session as a guide.
 - c. How can you better incorporate the Kerygma into your testimony?
4. In the Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis says:

“The Joy of Evangelizing always arises from a grateful remembrance” (13).

As we continue to reflect on our story, we want others in our parish and our lives to experience the same joy that we have.

Review the Parish Discipleship Mission Field Worksheet. Who are the people on your list that you are praying for? How might you be able to share your testimony with them in the coming weeks?

Closing

- Ask: What is going on in your life that you need prayers for this week?
- End with a prayer and intercessions. Verify the time and location of your next meeting.
- Call or text the group throughout the week to check in and remind them of the next meeting.

Notes:

Leader Guide Week 10: Shared Life - The art of accompaniment

Overview

The purpose of this week's session is to teach to talk about the importance of shared life (1 Thes. 2:8) and to give a path forward to encourage participants to enter into the lives of those they seek to evangelize.

Introduction 15-20 minutes

Welcome everyone to the group and remind them why they are here. They have made a commitment to grow in their own relationship with Christ and have committed to being a leader in the parish to help others grow in their discipleship journey. Remind them that they are receiving so as to pass the gift along to others. (I know it's repetitive, but it's important to drive this home - it creates a sense of urgency and action as we progress).

1. This time can be used for simply catching up on the week, sharing about any resolutions from last week and following up on prayer requests that were made.
2. Did you have an opportunity to share your testimony with anyone? Were you able to integrate elements of it into any conversations?
3. Accountability: How did you do on your daily commitment to prayer last week? How can you do better this week?

Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

Pray for the members attending, thank God that they said yes to this process, pray for the journey we are on and for the blessing of the Holy Spirit as we seek to renew our parish.

Read [Luke 24:13-35](#). Allow time for quiet reflection. Ask the members to share insights or graces.

Discussion (45 Minutes)

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:8-12 . Do any of you know what St. Paul's profession was?

He was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3). It's how he earned a living "so as to not burden anyone" to whom he was proclaiming the Gospel.

What spiritual lessons do you get from this? Answer: This is one of the ways that St. Paul "shared life" with those he sought to evangelize.

2. In the Joy of the Gospel (169), Pope Francis says this

In a culture paradoxically suffering from anonymity and at the same time obsessed with the details of other people's lives, shamelessly given over to morbid curiosity, the Church must look more closely and sympathetically at others whenever necessary. In our world, ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ's closeness and his personal gaze. The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this "art of accompaniment" which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our

closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life.

What does it mean to be “steady, reassuring and reflecting our closeness”. How does that manifest itself in ordinary life?

3. In his document on the Call to Holiness in Today’s world (Gaudete et Exultate) Pope Francis says this:

In salvation history, the Lord saved one people. We are never completely ourselves unless we belong to a people. That is why no one is saved alone, as an isolated individual. Rather, God draws us to himself, taking into account the complex fabric of interpersonal relationships present in a human community. God wanted to enter into the life and history of a people.

We see this same dynamic play out in the story of the road to Emmaus. Jesus draws alongside the travelers, and even walks the wrong direction with them, for a while.

The Road to Emmaus story can be broken down into a few movements.

1. Accompaniment
2. Teaching
3. Sacrament
4. Evangelization

It’s important to recognize that the teaching that happens in the story is within the context of accompaniment. He walked with them. He asked them questions first. He got to know what was on their minds and hearts. This created a desire within them, as we hear “were not our hearts burning within us”.

Another term for this “accompaniment” is “pre-evangelization”. It is the building of trust with someone so as to make the reception of the proclamation of the Gospel more possible.

4. Ask: What are some ways you have been the recipient of “pre-evangelization”
5. Ask: What are some ways you can be involved in the lives of those around you (think - parish, family, co-workers) in the work of pre-evangelization.
6. Read:

"Pre-evangelization is justified if it results in evangelization...In the name of preparation and under the pretext of taking care to make a good foundation, we run the risk of becoming absorbed in the cultural, the social, the purely human. The world is judged to be as yet unready to receive the message, and we wait, doing work which we say prepares the approach. And all this while, the light is too prudently kept under a bushel, imprisoned in silence. At Pentecost, the world of that time was certainly not ready to receive the message; nevertheless, the apostles spoke." - Cardinal Leo Suenens (1968)

Ask: How does this quote challenge you?

7. One of the principles that we learn from the ministry of Jesus (see: the road to Emmaus, the call of Matthew, the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, and other stories) is that no one is a finished product, no one is beyond conversion or redemption. Pope Francis often speaks of the “peripheries”. In the Joy of the Gospel (20) he says:

Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the "peripheries" in need of the light of the Gospel.

8. There are peripheries in our society - what might these be? Let the participants discuss before suggesting some answers: immigrants, the poor, minorities,
9. There are even peripheries in our own parishes. What might some of the peripheries in our parish be? (divorced, elderly, single people, etc...)

All too often our ministry to those in the peripheries is focused on a good or service we can provide, rather than entering into a relationship, a process of accompaniment.

Who are the people in your life, your parish that you may have written off? How can you begin to open up spiritual conversations with them? To accompany them?

10. Review the Parish Discipleship Mission Field Worksheet. Who is the Lord putting in your life? Who do you feel called to work with?
11. How can you find opportunities to spend time with them? How can you invite them into something deeper or share the gospel with them?
12. Ask one of the participants to close in prayer.

Homework:

Continue to pray with the Parish Discipleship Mission Field Worksheet. Pick someone on your chart (or someone else you feel called to speak with) and have a spiritual conversation with them. Don't try to convert them on the spot, or even invite them to anything- just use Jesus' model - ask questions about what is going on in their lives and how they are experiencing their faith.

This might be uncomfortable, but that's okay. It might not go well, but we still have the opportunity to learn from failures as much as success.

Closing

- Ask: What is going on in your life that you need prayers for this week?
- End with a prayer and intercessions. Verify the time and location of your next meeting.
- Call or text the group throughout the week to check in and remind them of the next meeting.

Notes:

Leader Guide Week 11: Thresholds of Conversion

Overview

The purpose of this week's session is to teach to talk about the importance of recognizing where people are on their journey as we accompany them in their faith.

Introduction 15-20 minutes

Welcome everyone to the group and remind them why they are here. They have made a commitment to grow in their own relationship with Christ and have committed to being a leader in the parish to help others grow in their discipleship journey. Remind them that they are receiving so as to pass the gift along to others. (I know it's repetitive, but it's important to drive this home - it creates a sense of urgency and action as we progress).

1. This time can be used for simply catching up on the week, sharing about any resolutions from last week and following up on prayer requests that were made.
2. Did you have any spiritual conversations this week? How did they go?
3. Accountability: How did you do on your daily commitment to prayer last week? How can you do better this week?

Opening Prayer (15 minutes)

Pray for the members attending, thank God that they said yes to this process, pray for the journey we are on and for the blessing of the Holy Spirit as we seek to renew our parish.

Read [John 9:1-38](#). Allow time for quiet reflection. Ask the members to share insights or graces.

Discussion (30 Minutes)

1. For many years, we have heard those in the church lament a generation of "bad catechesis". If people only knew their faith better, they say, we wouldn't have declining mass attendance, declining sacramental numbers etc...
 - a. Ask: Do you think this is true? Why or why not?
2. Think of 5 people in your life who don't practice the faith. Do you think they are ready for deep catechesis? Let participants discuss briefly.
3. Often in the Church, when we think of evangelization, we think of inviting people back to mass. This is good because the Eucharistic sacrifice of the mass is the "source and summit" of our faith.

However, CCC 1072 says this:

"The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church": it must be preceded by evangelization, faith, and conversion. It can then produce its fruits in the lives of the faithful: new life in the Spirit, involvement in the mission of the Church, and service to her unity.

Ask: what does it mean to precede the liturgy with "evangelization, faith and conversion"?

4. Think of someone you may know (either personally or someone whose story you know - like St. Augustine) who has experienced a conversion to the faith. What were some of the highlights of their journey?
5. Previously we talked about the concept “never accept a label in place of a story”. Everyone has a history, and a reason for thinking and believing as they do. This is crucial in helping see openness in someone to conversion. Sherry Weddell, in her book *Forming Intentional Disciples*, highlights research that points to different markers on the path to conversion they are (excerpt from *Forming Intentional Disciples*):

Ask the participants to take turns reading these out loud:

I. Initial Trust: A person is able to trust or has a positive association with Jesus Christ, the Church, a Christian believer, or something identifiably Christian. Trust is not the same thing as active personal faith. Without some kind of bridge of trust in place, people will not move closer to God

Do you know anyone at this stage? What does this look like with people in the parish? Who might these folks be?

II. Spiritual Curiosity: A person finds himself intrigued by or desiring to know more about Jesus, his life, and his teachings or some aspect of the Christian faith. This curiosity can range from mere awareness of a new possibility to something quite intense. Nevertheless, a person at the threshold of curiosity is not yet open to personal change. Curiosity is still essentially passive, but is more than mere trust.

Do you know anyone at this stage? What does this look like with people in the parish? Who might these folks be?

III. Spiritual Openness: A person acknowledges to himself or herself and to God that he or she is open to the possibility of spiritual change. This is one of the most difficult transitions for a postmodern nonbeliever. Openness is not a commitment to change. People who are open are simply admitting they are open to the possibility of change.

Do you know anyone at this stage? What does this look like with people in the parish? Who might these folks be?

IV. Spiritual Seeking: The person moves from being essentially passive to actively seeking to know the God who is calling him or her. It is, if you will, “dating with a purpose” but not yet marriage. Seekers are asking, “are you the one to whom I will give myself?” At this stage, the seeker is engaged in an urgent spiritual quest, seeking to know whether he or she can commit to Christ in his Church.

Do you know anyone at this stage? What does this look like with people in the parish? Who might these folks be?

V. Intentional Discipleship: This is the decision to “drop one’s nets,” to make a conscious commitment to follow Jesus in the midst of His Church as an obedient Disciple and to reorder one’s life accordingly.

This is you (hopefully!) Who are some other people you know in your life who are at this stage?

Ask: Can you identify any moments in your life where you moved from one of these thresholds to another?

Say: After we pass through all of these thresholds, we can then locate ourselves on the Discipleship Road Map. Remember, it's not always a linear process, and these tools exist to help us to better reach people, not simply to label them. Sometimes people move through these thresholds very quickly, sometimes very slowly.

Ask: How is intentional discipleship different from “cultural Catholicism?”

Homework:

Encounter. Pray 20-30 minutes a day, daily sacraments (when possible)

Grow:

Witness: Attempt another spiritual conversation this week. Remember, it's okay to fail.

Prepare your memory verses for next week!

Closing

- Ask: What is going on in your life that you need prayers for this week?
- End with a prayer and intercessions. Verify the time and location of your next meeting.
- Call or text the group throughout the week to check in and remind them of the next meeting.

Notes:

Leader Guide Week 12: Spirit Filled Evangelizers

Overview

The purpose of this week's session is to teach to talk about the importance of relying on God's grace to accomplish the work we are setting out to do as evangelizers.

Introduction 15-20 minutes

Welcome everyone to the group and remind them why they are here. They have made a commitment to grow in their own relationship with Christ and have committed to being a leader in the parish to help others grow in their discipleship journey. Remind them that they are receiving so as to pass the gift along to others. (I know it's repetitive, but it's important to drive this home - it creates a sense of urgency and action as we progress).

1. This time can be used for simply catching up on the week, sharing about any resolutions from last week and following up on prayer requests that were made.
2. Did you have any spiritual conversations this week? How did they go?
3. Accountability: How did you do on your daily commitment to prayer last week? How can you do better this week?
4. Who can recite memory verses?

Opening Prayer (15 minutes)

Pray for the members attending, thank God that they said yes to this process, pray for the journey we are on and for the blessing of the Holy Spirit as we seek to renew our parish.

Read Acts 2:1-13. Allow time for quiet reflection. Ask the members to share insights or graces.

Discussion (30 Minutes)

1. The last section of the Joy of the Gospel is entitled "Spirit Filled Evangelizers" and it is full of great inspiration for us as we set out to evangelize.

"Spirit-filled evangelization is not the same as a set of tasks dutifully carried out despite one's own personal inclinations and wishes. How I long to find the right words to stir up enthusiasm for a new chapter of evangelization full of fervour, joy, generosity, courage, boundless love and attraction! Yet I realize that no words of encouragement will be enough unless the fire of the Holy Spirit burns in our hearts. A spirit-filled evangelization is one guided by the Holy Spirit, for he is the soul of the Church called to proclaim the Gospel. Before offering some spiritual motivations and suggestions, I once more invoke the Holy Spirit. I implore him to come and renew the Church, to stir and impel her to go forth boldly to evangelize all peoples. (261)"

- a. Earlier in our study we meditated on John 15 - the vine and branches - that apart from God we can do nothing. Not some things, not most things - nothing.
 - b. How do you need to learn to rely on the Holy Spirit in your evangelizing efforts?
2. Read Galatians 5:16-26. These are the fruits of the spirit.

- a. How do you see these fruits manifesting themselves in our everyday life?
 - b. How can you rely on the Holy Spirit more in your everyday life? How can you incorporate an awareness of these fruits in your prayer life?
3. Part of being successful in evangelization and the spiritual life is having a gameplan. It is hard to rely on the Holy Spirit in our lives if we're not continually growing in our own discipleship.
- a. In the Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis says:

"What is needed is the ability to cultivate an interior space which can give a Christian meaning to commitment and activity. Without prolonged moments of adoration, of prayerful encounter with the word, of sincere conversation with the Lord, our work easily becomes meaningless; we lose energy as a result of weariness and difficulties, and our fervour dies out." (262).
 - b. Moving forward how can you carry on what we have begun here?
 - c. Look at the "plan of life" sheet on the next page together. What commitments can you make?
4. What have been your biggest takeaways the last 12 Weeks?
- a. How are you different now than when you started?
 - b. What obstacles will you face in living your call to be a "spiritual multiplier"?

"Mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people." - Joy of the Gospel, 268

5. Ask: Are you willing to make a commitment to live as a spiritual multiplier? Remember, this isn't just doing nice things for Jesus, but a commitment to faithfulness AND fruitfulness.

Homework:

1. Fill out the *Plan of Life* worksheet
2. Invite 3-4 others in your parish to start a discipleship group so as to become a spiritual multiplier!
3. Check in with your parish point person to talk about the next steps and "upper room" nights for continued prayer and formation.

Closing

- Ask: What is going on in your life that you need prayers for this week?
- End with a prayer and intercessions. Verify the time and location of your next meeting.
- Call or text the group throughout the week to check in and remind them of the next meeting.

Notes:

Plan of Life Worksheet

Prayer

1. My Morning offering is _____
2. Evening Examen
3. Mental prayer & Eucharistic Adoration
4. Fasting
5. Rosary
6. Intercessory prayer
 - a. I will commit to praying for a renewal of my parish by _____.
 - b. I will pray for to prepare for leadership/discipleship:
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - c. I will pray for conversion for:
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.

Sacraments

Daily mass _____ days a week

Reconciliation _____ times a month

Accountability

1. I will attend spiritual direction or have regular meetings with my parish priest
2. I will continue to meet with _____ for ongoing encouragement in the moral life and for mission.

Mission & Formation

1. I will launch a new discipleship group by _____
2. I will engage in evangelization by _____
3. I will continue to prepare myself for mission by _____

For further resources and help putting together your plan of life read *Plan of Life: Habits To Help You Grow Closer To God* by Fr. Roger Landry

This program is in development by the Office of Evangelization and Discipleship in the Archdiocese of St. Louis and is subject to revision and final approval. This guide book may be used only with permission of the Office of Evangelization and Discipleship.

Program updates and additional leadership resources can be found at www.archstl.org/evangelization

Brian Miller
Director of Evangelization and Discipleship
Archdiocese of St. Louis
brianmiller@archstl.org
314-792-7083