


# THE DYNAMIC CATHOLIC PRAYER

Loving Father,  
I INVITE YOU INTO MY LIFE **TODAY**  
& MAKE MYSELF **AVAILABLE** TO YOU.  
HELP ME TO BECOME  the Best-Version-of-Myself  
BY SEEKING YOUR WILL & BECOMING A LIVING EXAMPLE  
OF YOUR **LOVE** IN THE **WORLD**.  
Open my Heart TO THE AREAS OF MY LIFE THAT NEED Change.  
IN ORDER FOR ME TO CARRY OUT THE **MISSION**  
& EXPERIENCE THE **JOY** YOU HAVE IMAGINED FOR MY LIFE.  
**INSPIRE** ME TO LIVE THE Catholic faith IN WAYS THAT ARE  
**DYNAMIC** & **ENGAGING**.  
SHOW ME HOW TO **BEST** GET INVOLVED IN THE LIFE OF MY PARISH.  
MAKE OUR COMMUNITY **HUNGRY** FOR BEST PRACTICES  
AND *continuous* LEARNING  
GIVE ME **COURAGE** WHEN I AM **AFRAID**,  
*hope* WHEN I AM DISCOURAGED,  
AND CLARITY IN TIMES OF **DECISION**.  
Teach ME TO **ENJOY** UNCERTAINTY & LEAD YOUR CHURCH  
TO BECOME *all you* **IMAGINED** IT WOULD BE  
FOR THE **PEOPLE** OF OUR TIMES,  
*Amen.*



**DECISION**  
point

THIS IS THE ONLINE DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS FOR THE 8TH GRADE  
ADAPTED PROCESS.

The following are fillable discussion questions.  
Please fill them out, save them to a file and email  
them to [jobryan@stpatlou.org](mailto:jobryan@stpatlou.org). Or you can print  
them out and turn in during class. See  
coordinators for Confirmation for due date.



*Life is* \_\_\_\_\_ **SESSION ONE**

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**CHOICES**

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MY LORD GOD, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself... But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost... I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

•————— Thomas Merton —————•

**“HIS CONSCIENCE IS MAN’S MOST SECRET CORE AND HIS SANCTUARY. THERE HE IS ALONE WITH GOD WHOSE VOICE ECHOES IN HIS DEPTHS.”**

VATICAN II - GAUDIUM ET SPES.

To guide you in the use of this incredibly powerful gift, God has also given you **reason** and **conscience**.

rea•son (ree-zhun)

Reason is the capacity for logical, rational, and analytic thought.

con•science (con-shuhns)

Conscience is the inner voice that encourages you to do good and avoid evil. God speaks to us through our conscience (CCC 1776–1779).

Reason and conscience work together to help you distinguish good actions from bad ones. Reason and conscience work together to help you discover the best way to live.

*All choices are not equal.*

Some choices are good choices, and some are bad. And you usually know at the time if you are making a good or bad choice. The inner voice of conscience encourages you toward what is good and right.

Are you good at making decisions?

What’s the best choice you made in the past twenty-four hours?

What’s the worst choice you made in the past twenty-four hours?

How can you make better choices in the future?

God wants you to become a great decision maker. This is one of the reasons he sends us the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you and counsel you—and you will find yourself making better choices.

Every day you make hundreds of choices. These choices determine the direction of your life. Sometimes you choose the-best-version-of-yourself and sometimes you choose a-second-rate-version-of-yourself.

Every time you say yes to something, it changes who you are forever.

It’s time to start taking your choices seriously. Next time you need to make a decision, *ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.*



# Discussion Questions

**1) WHO DO YOU KNOW WHO IS A GREAT DECISION MAKER? WHAT MAKES THIS PERSON A GREAT DECISION MAKER?**

**2) DESCRIBE A TIME WHEN YOU IGNORED YOUR CONSCIENCE AND REGRETTED IT LATER. DESCRIBE A TIME WHEN YOU LISTENED TO YOUR CONSCIENCE AND FOLLOWED IT, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS DIFFICULT.**

**3) ARE YOU GOOD AT MAKING DECISIONS? ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10 (10 BEING THE BEST), HOW GOOD DO YOU THINK YOU ARE AT MAKING DECISIONS? WHAT’S ONE PRACTICAL THING YOU COULD DO TO BECOME A BETTER DECISION MAKER?**



IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE OR WHAT YOU ARE HERE FOR, IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT MATTERS MOST OR WHAT MATTERS LEAST, YOU MAY BE EXPERIENCING AN IDENTITY CRISIS. WE ALL EXPERIENCE THIS AT DIFFERENT TIMES IN OUR LIVES. BUT LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING, **GOD WANTS TO SOLVE YOUR IDENTITY CRISIS.** I AM BEYOND IDENTITY CRISIS AND YOU WILL BE TOO THE DAY YOU REALIZE THAT YOU ARE A CHILD OF GOD, THAT GOD IS YOUR FATHER, AND THAT YOU ARE HIS SON OR DAUGHTER. YOU GET YOUR IDENTITY FIRST FROM GOD. UNTIL WE REALIZE THIS WE ARE LOST.





# THE GLORY OF GOD IS MAN FULLY ALIVE.

SAINT IRENAEUS

## THE THIRD PRINCIPLE: SELF-CONTROL

The opposite of self-control is **slavery**. If we cannot control our ability to drink, then we are a slave to drink. If we cannot control our temper, then we are a slave to our temper. If we cannot control our ability to get started, then we are a slave to procrastination. If we cannot direct our ability to work hard, then we are a slave to laziness.

*God made us free.* Anything that enslaves us is *not* from God, and therefore not the best way to live.

At different times in history some people may have thought that it was OK for other people to be slaves, but *no man ever thought it was a good idea that he be made a slave.*

Freedom and self-control go hand in hand.

The person who has the self-control to do what is good and right—even when it is difficult or comes at great personal cost—is universally respected.

Self-control is the best way to live for everybody.



These are just three examples of how the best way to live is the same for us all. Throughout your life you will encounter people who say, “There are no absolute truths. What’s true for you is not necessarily true for me!” This is **relativism**, and it is a lie.

Some things are true for everyone.



1. IN SOME WAYS THE BEST WAY TO LIVE IS THE SAME FOR US ALL. WHICH OF THE THREE PRINCIPLES HAD THE MOST IMPACT ON YOU (THE BEST VERSION OF YOURSELF, VIRTUE, OR SELF-CONTROL)?

2. HOW WOULD YOUR RELATIONSHIPS IMPROVE IF YOU STARTED TO REALLY LIVE THESE THREE PRINCIPLES?

3. IF AT THE END OF YOUR LIFE YOU COULD BE REMEMBERED FOR JUST ONE VIRTUE, WHICH WOULD YOU CHOOSE? WHY IS THAT VIRTUE IMPORTANT TO YOU?



## Four Quotes. One Author.

HOW OLD DO YOU THINK  
THE AUTHOR WAS?

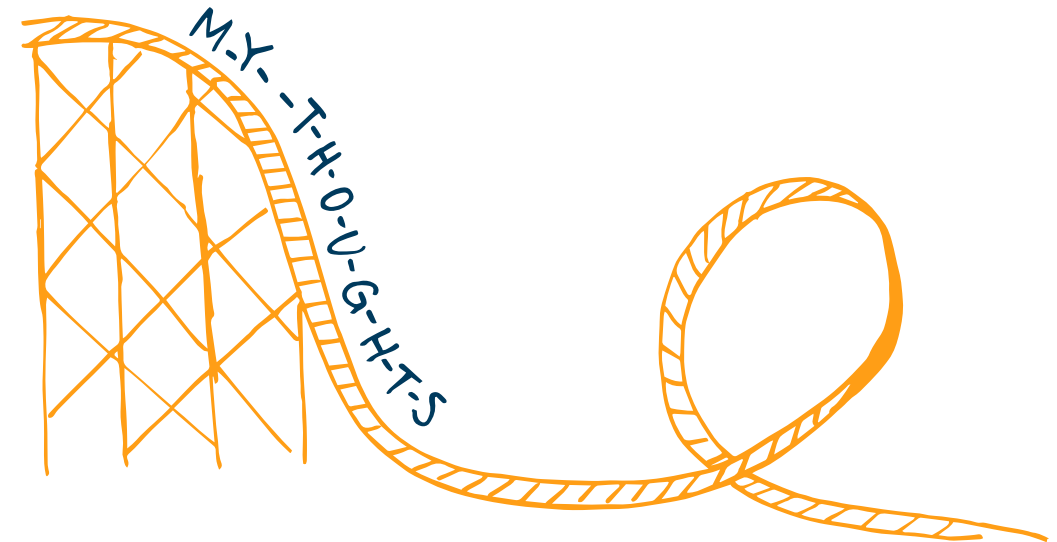
**“LAZINESS MAY APPEAR ATTRACTIVE, BUT WORK GIVES SATISFACTION.”**

**“HOW TRUE DADDY’S WORDS WERE WHEN HE SAID: ALL CHILDREN MUST LOOK AFTER THEIR OWN UPBRINGING. PARENTS CAN ONLY GIVE GOOD ADVICE OR PUT THEM ON THE RIGHT PATHS, BUT THE FINAL FORMING OF A PERSON’S CHARACTER LIES IN THEIR OWN HANDS.”**

**“THE BEST REMEDY FOR THOSE WHO ARE AFRAID, LONELY OR UNHAPPY IS TO GO OUTSIDE, SOMEWHERE WHERE THEY CAN BE QUIET, ALONE WITH THE HEAVENS, NATURE AND GOD. BECAUSE ONLY THEN DOES ONE FEEL THAT ALL IS AS IT SHOULD BE.”**

**“WHOEVER IS HAPPY WILL MAKE OTHERS HAPPY TOO.”**

All four quotes are from *The Diary of a Young Girl* written by Anne Frank, one of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The book, which was found and published after her death, documents her experiences hiding from the Germans during World War II. It is available in sixty-seven languages and has sold more than fifty million copies. Anne was thirteen when she began the diary.





MODERN CULTURE'S NIGHTMARE

GOD'S DREAM

WHAT YOU DO NOW IS GOING TO MATTER LATER IN YOUR LIFE IN WAYS THAT YOU HAVE NOT EVEN BEGUN TO IMAGINE.



ANTHONY OF THE DESERT

What makes a good book or movie? Those that inspire you to become the-best-version-of-yourself.

Why do your parents send you to school? To torture you! No, the word *education* comes from the Latin verb *educare*, which means "to draw out." Education at its best draws out the-best-version-of-you. Looking back on my life, I can see that the best teachers, mentors, coaches, and managers were all men and women who were trying to draw the best out of me.

What is the purpose of study? When you study hard you become a-better-version-of-yourself.

What is the meaning of work? Making money? No. This is a secondary outcome. The primary value of work is that when we work hard and pay attention to the details of our work, we develop character and virtue—and become the-best-version-of-ourselves.

What is the purpose of marriage? Husband and wife challenging and encouraging each other to become the-best-version-of-themselves, and raising children and encouraging them to become the-best-version-of-themselves.

Life is about saying yes to the things that help you become the-best-version-of-yourself, and no to the things that don't.

Next time you are confronted with a decision, simply ask yourself: What will help me become the-best-version-of-myself?

Everything makes sense in relation to God's dream. When we feel like life is not making sense, it is usually because we have lost sight of God's vision for our lives.

God wants you to become the-best-version-of-yourself. Will you choose God's dream or the modern culture's nightmare?

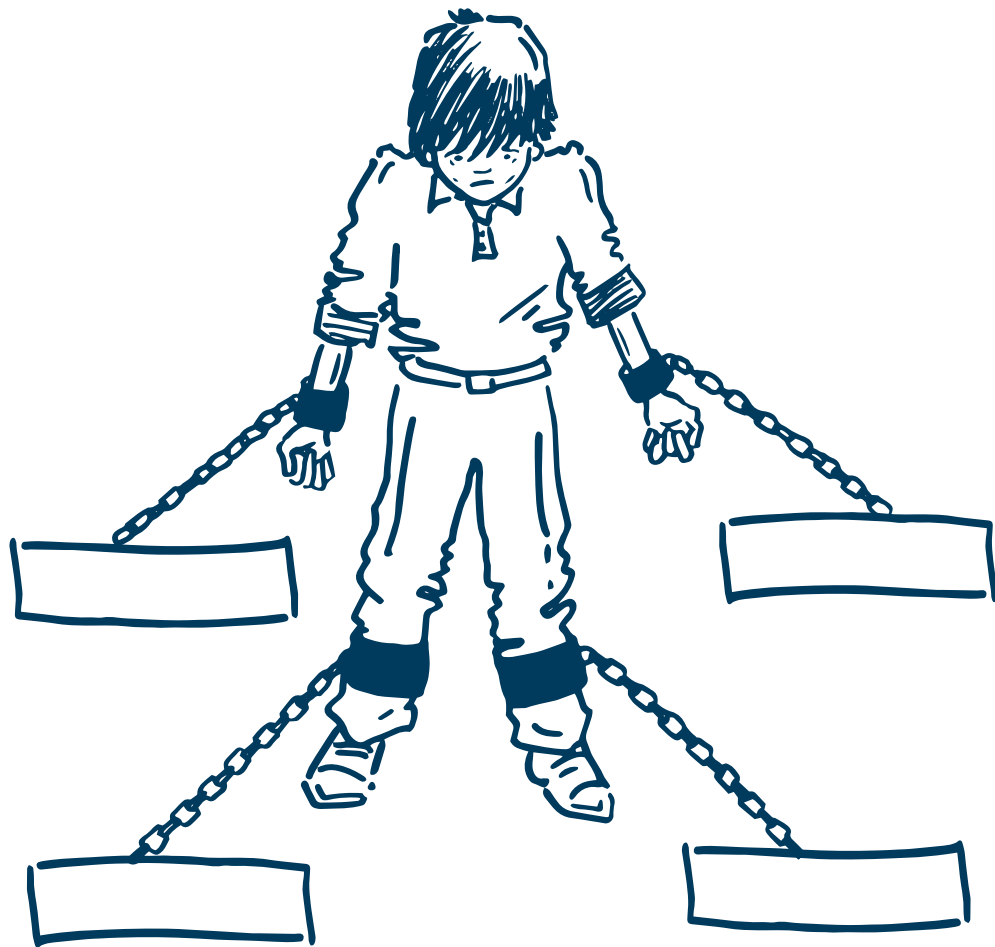
1. HAVE YOU EVER MET SOMEONE AND DISCOVERED THAT PERSON WAS NOTHING LIKE WHAT YOU THOUGHT HE OR SHE WOULD BE LIKE?

2. WHO IN YOUR LIFE IS HELPING YOU BECOME THE-BEST-VERSION-OF-YOURSELF?

3. WHAT ARE TWO THINGS YOU CAN DO TO BECOME A-BETTER-VERSION-OF-YOURSELF THIS WEEK?



# WHAT'S ENSLAVING YOU?





# Discussion Questions

1. WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU WATCHED SOMETHING ON TV THAT HELPED YOU BECOME A-BETTER-VERSION-OF-YOURSELF?

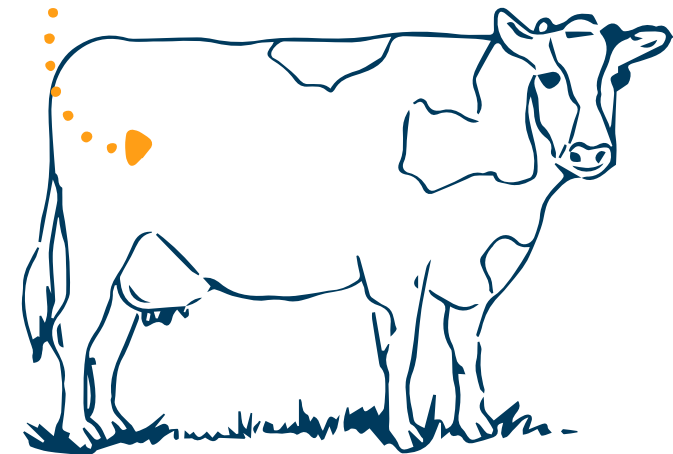
2. IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU FEEL CALLED TO REBEL AGAINST TODAY'S CULTURE?

3. HOW IS THE PATH GOD IS CALLING YOU ALONG DIFFERENT AND BETTER THAN THE CULTURE'S WAY OF DOING THINGS?



## WHAT BRAND ARE YOU MOST ATTACHED TO?

(Draw logo here.)



**“DO NOT BE AFRAID.”**  
—JESUS CHRIST

# 1.5 DECISION point

One of the great figures in the Bible is Moses. He led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and toward the Promised Land.

When Moses was about to die he said to Joshua and the people of Israel, *“I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity.”* (Deuteronomy 30:15)

What was Moses saying to the people? *You choose*—life or death. *You choose*—prosperity or adversity.

Throughout our journey together you are going to face many decision points. They matter. They may not seem like life-or-death decisions, but they are.

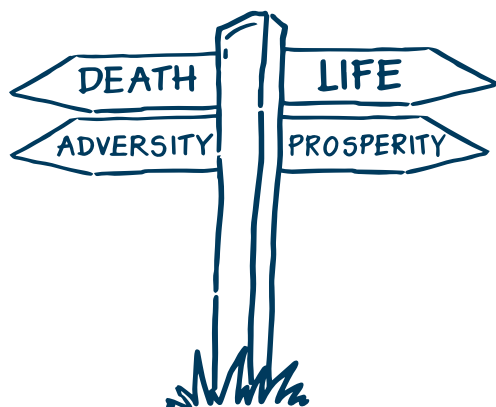
Jesus said, *“I have come so that you may have life, and have it to the fullest.”* (John 10:10)

Do you want to live life to the fullest? God will not force fullness of life on you. God has given you free will and he will let you use that free will to live a shallow and empty life if that is what you choose. What do you choose?

I have placed before you today God’s incredible vision for your life and the world’s empty vision for your life. Which do you choose?

The-best-version-of-yourself or some second-rate-version-of-yourself?

Freedom or slavery?



## DEUTERONOMY 30:15

**KNOW IT:** Joshua is telling the Israelites: “You are at a Decision Point.”

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Are you choosing life or death, prosperity or adversity in your daily decisions?

**LIVE IT:** When you are deciding what to eat this week, choose life and prosperity.

## JOHN 10:10

**KNOW IT:** God wants good things for you! Jesus wants to help you live life to the fullest!

**THINK ABOUT IT:** If you were living life to the fullest, how would your life be different?

**LIVE IT:** Do one thing today that will help you to live the incredible life God has imagined for you.

# JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. DO YOU WANT TO LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST? WHY OR WHY NOT?

2. ARE YOU GOING TO CHOOSE GOD’S INCREDIBLE VISION FOR YOUR LIFE OR THE WORLD’S EMPTY VISION FOR YOUR LIFE?

3. WHAT IS ONE MESSAGE FROM THIS SESSION THAT YOU ARE GOING TO SHARE WITH SOMEONE ELSE?



## Psalm 1: The Two Ways

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

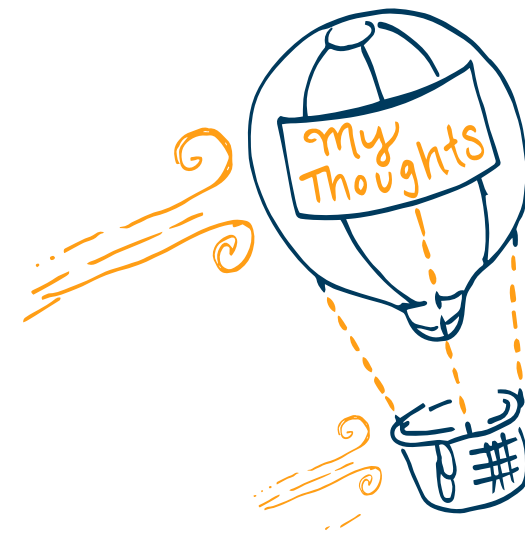
<sup>2</sup> but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

<sup>3</sup> He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

<sup>4</sup> The wicked are not so, but are like chaff which the wind drives away.

<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

<sup>6</sup> for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.



# LIFE IS CHOICES

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



## ACROSS

3. Rejecting the world's vision for your life
4. The opportunity or power to choose between two or more possibilities
6. The way you think, feel, act
8. The inner voice that encourages you to do good and avoid evil.
12. The capacity for logical, rational, and analytic thought
13. A good and moral behavior or character
14. The power of acting without the constraint of necessity or fate
15. Being content
16. Restraint exercised over one's own impulses, emotions, or desires

## DOWN

1. A way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or organization
2. Opposite to self control
5. Having a divine quality, being perfectly good.
7. What's driving the culture of the world
9. Not liking to work hard or to be active
10. The ability to make our own choices; one of God's greatest gifts to humanity
11. The ultimate Father



## SESSION TWO

*What's*

# HOLDING

*you back?*

O Lord my God, teach my heart this day where and how to see you, where and how to find you. You have made me and remade me, and you have bestowed on me all the good things I possess, and still I do not know you. I have not yet done that for which I was made. Teach me to seek you, for I cannot seek you unless you teach me, or find you unless you show yourself to me. Let me seek you in my desire, let me desire you in my seeking. Let me find you by loving you, let me love you when I find you. Amen.

— *St. Anselm* —



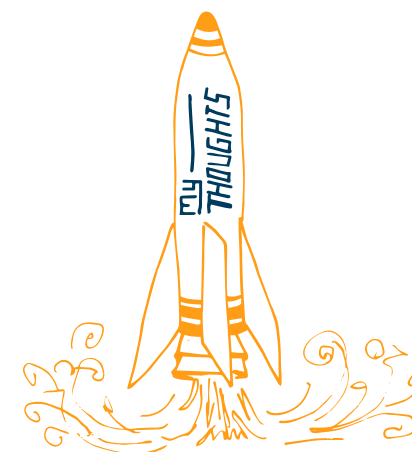
# discussion questions



1. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS YOU DESIRE THAT ARE GOOD FOR YOU?

2. WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU THOUGHT WOULD MAKE YOU HAPPY, BUT IN FACT LEFT YOU FEELING EMPTY, UNHAPPY, MISERABLE, USED, DECEIVED, OR WORSE?

3. DESCRIBE A TIME WHEN YOU HAD THE WISDOM AND COURAGE TO FOLLOW YOUR CONSCIENCE, AND YOU WERE GLAD YOU DID.



DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS

1. HOW IS “STINKING THINKING” HOLDING YOU BACK FROM BECOMING THE PERSON GOD CREATED YOU TO BE?

2. INDIVIDUALISM, HEDONISM, MINIMALISM, RELATIVISM: WHICH OF THESE ARE THE BIGGEST TEMPTATIONS FOR YOU AT THIS TIME IN YOUR LIFE?

3. DESCRIBE A TIME WHEN YOU EMBRACED ONE OF THESE BROKEN PHILOSOPHIES. WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME? HOW DID YOU FEEL AFTERWARD? DID YOU BECOME A-BETTER-VERSION-OF-YOURSELF?

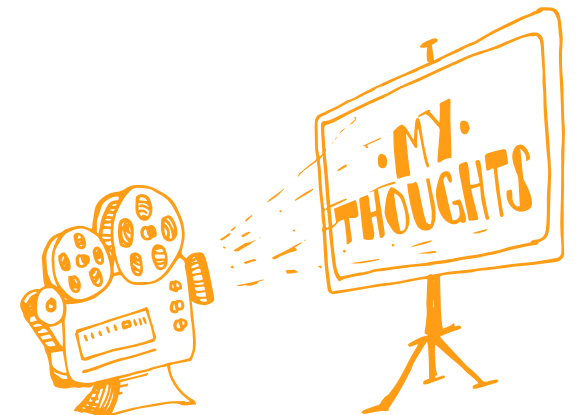


# Discussion QUESTIONS

1. DESCRIBE A TIME WHEN YOU WERE NOT “HUNGRY FOR TRUTH,” WHEN YOU DIDN’T WANT TO KNOW THE TRUTH. WHY WERE YOU AVOIDING IT?

2. THINK ABOUT A DISTURBING STORY YOU HAVE SEEN IN THE NEWS RECENTLY. WHAT HAPPENED? WHICH OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS WERE BROKEN?

3. WHEN WE EXAMINE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, THE OBVIOUS WAYS OF VIOLATING THEM ARE APPARENT, BUT WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MORE SUBTLE WAYS WE CAN BREAK THEM? For example, most people will never be in a situation in which they are tempted to break the Fifth Commandment (You shall not kill). But most of us have killed someone’s reputation with gossip. Go through the commandments one by one and discuss the not-so-obvious ways each can be broken.



Life is a journey. Where is your journey taking you at the moment? Is it time to make a change? If it is, I hope you will have the **courage** to make the change.

*Courage is a prerequisite for the life God has envisioned for you.*

*Everything in life requires courage.* Whether it is playing football or coaching football; crossing the room to ask a woman on date, or rekindling a love that has grown old; whether it's your first day at college or your first day back at college after twenty years, life requires courage. It takes courage to say yes at the right times and it takes courage to say no at the right times. Your first day at work or starting a business, battling a potentially fatal disease, getting married, struggling to overcome an addiction, apologizing for something you have done, or coming humbly before God in prayer and asking: God, what do you think I should do? All require courage.

Life requires courage. Courage animates us and is therefore essential to the human experience.

The most dominant emotion in our society today is **fear**. We are afraid. Afraid of rejection and failure, afraid of certain parts of town, afraid of certain types of people, afraid of criticism, afraid of suffering, afraid of change, afraid to tell people how we really feel, afraid of losing the things we have worked hard to buy, afraid of what our friends will think . . . We are afraid of so many things. Often, we are afraid to be the best-version-of-ourselves.

But before too long we are going to meet someone who will *banish our fears* and fill us with courage to *live an incredible life*.



# Discussion Questions

1. WHAT DID THE STORY ABOUT THE RATTLESNAKE MAKE YOU THINK?

2. WHAT DOES THE RATTLESNAKE REPRESENT FOR YOU? WHO OR WHAT IS HOLDING YOU BACK? WHAT IS IT THAT SOONER OR LATER IS GOING TO TURN ON YOU AND STRIKE YOU DOWN? HOW WOULD YOUR LIFE BE BETTER IF YOU COULD WALK AWAY FROM THAT RATTLESNAKE?

3. IF YOU HAD MORE COURAGE, WHAT GOOD THING WOULD YOU DO?





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If you ask people **what the main message is in the Bible**, they might tell you

➡ IT'S *Love* ← OR **FORGIVENESS.**

BUT WHAT IS THE PHRASE THAT APPEARS MORE TIMES **than any other message in the Bible?**

**DO NOT BE AFRAID.** OVER AND OVER throughout history, GOD'S MESSAGE TO HUMANITY HAS OVERWHELMINGLY BEEN *Do not be afraid.*

*This phrase (or some variation of it) appears more than one thousand times* in the Bible. → **WHY?** ←

BECAUSE GOD SENSES THAT WE ARE IN FACT AFRAID. *AFRAID TO TRUST HIM.* **Afraid to love others.**

*Afraid to love ourselves.* Afraid to embrace and celebrate **THE-BEST-VERSION-OF-OURSELVES.**

**Afraid to ask the big questions and see where they might lead us.** **AFRAID.**

GOD WANTS TO *liberate* YOU FROM THESE FEARS.

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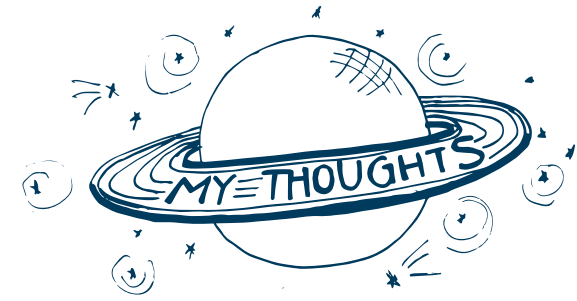


# Journal Questions

1. IF GOD CALLED YOU TO A GREAT MISSION LIKE HE DID GIDEON, DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD SAY YES? WHY? WHY NOT?

2. LIKE THE ISRAELITES, WE HAVE ALL: GONE LOOKING FOR HAPPINESS IN THE WRONG PLACES, FALLEN INTO STINKING THINKING, TURNED OUR BACKS ON THE TRUTH, AND BEEN TOO PROUD TO ADMIT OUR WRONGDOING. WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU ACTED LIKE THE ISRAELITES?

3. WHAT DOES OUR CULTURE WORSHIP?





**SESSION THREE**

*The*

**JESUS**

*Question*

Lord, catch me off guard today. Surprise me with some moment of beauty or pain. So that at least for the moment I may be startled into seeing that you are here in all your splendor, always and everywhere, barely hidden, beneath, beyond, within this life I breathe. Amen.

• ——— Frederick Buechner ——— •

# discussion questions

1. HOW DID THIS SESSION CHANGE THE WAY YOU SEE JESUS?

2. HOW DID JESUS CHANGE THE WORLD?

3. THE JESUS QUESTION IS, "WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?" (MARK 8:29) IF JESUS CAME TO YOUR HOUSE TO VISIT TODAY AND ASKED YOU THIS QUESTION, WHAT WOULD YOUR ANSWER BE?



## THE TRINITY

God, the Father, is the first person of the Trinity. The Father is kind, merciful, and loving, and he gives in abundance. By calling God Father, the language of faith indicates two main things: that God is the origin of everything, and that he is goodness and loving care for all his children. (CCC 239)

Jesus, the Son, is the second person of the Trinity. The Son is one person with two natures: divine and human. He is true God and true man. (CCC 464)

The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity. He is the one whom Jesus promised the Father would send to guide and encourage us. When you think of it, the Holy Spirit is incredibly practical. How often in your life do you need guidance and encouragement?

In the Scriptures God is revealed as the Father, who created us (Genesis 1); his Son, who redeemed us (Matthew 1); and the Holy Spirit, who inspires us (Acts 1). The whole history we find in the Bible is the story of God's ongoing concern for the human family, and for each of us as his children.

Try this. Read the Gospel of Matthew. As you read about what Jesus taught, ask yourself, are these the solutions to the mess the world is in today? I think you will discover that Jesus has the antidote to the world's mess. Jesus is the solution.

What does this mean to you and me?

It is easy to say that the world is a mess. But the thing is, the more I become aware of who I really am, the more I discover that I'm a bit of a mess too. I do things every day that don't help me to become the best-version-of-myself. And most of the time I don't actually want to do these things. Just like Paul wrote, "I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Romans 7:19).

I am capable of incredible good, but sometimes I turn my back on God and his goodness. Sometimes I do it because I am stubborn and other times because I am lazy. Sometimes I turn my back on God and his goodness because the right path just seems too hard, and other times because I am selfish and just want what I want.

The truth is, I am a sinner, and sinners need a Savior. The world is a mess and I am a mess, but Jesus came to fix the mess. That's good news.



If you could have lunch with Mary, what would you ask her about Jesus?

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. IN MANY WAYS THE WORLD IS AN INCREDIBLE PLACE, BUT IN LOTS OF OTHER WAYS IT IS A MESS. IN WHAT WAYS IS THE WORLD A MESS?

2. HOW DID THE WORLD GET TO BE SUCH A MESS?

3. WHAT IS SIN? HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOU?

## THE JESUS PROPHECIES

There have been lots of famous people throughout history. Neil Armstrong was famous for being the first man to walk on the moon. Rosa Parks was famous for standing up for justice. Pablo Picasso was famous for his paintings. Mozart and Beethoven were famous for their music. Christopher Columbus was famous for discovering the Americas. Shakespeare, Dickens, Tolstoy, and Austen were famous for their writings. But all their fame came during their lives or after they died. And it was largely the result of what they did.

Jesus was famous before he was born, and he was famous because of who he was—the long-awaited Messiah. Lots of people get written about while they are alive or after they die, but Jesus was written about hundreds of years before he was born.

**ISAIAH 11** PROPHESIED that the Messiah would be a descendant of David. **MATTHEW 1:1** shows that this prophecy was FULFILLED.

**GENESIS 49** PROPHESIED that the Messiah would be born of the tribe of Judah, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. **MATTHEW 1:** FULFILLED.

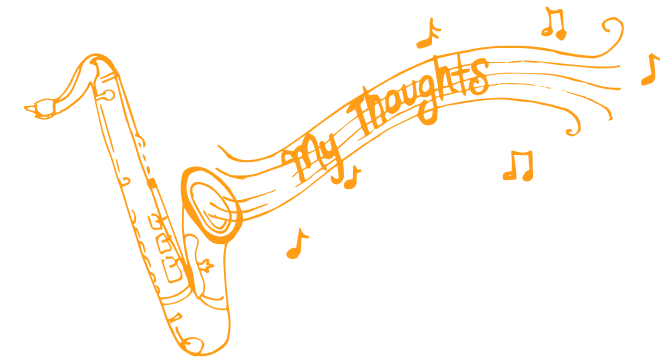
**MICAH 5** PROPHESIED that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. **MATTHEW 2:** FULFILLED.

**ISAIAH 7** PROPHESIED that the Messiah would be born of a virgin mother. **LUKE 1:** FULFILLED.

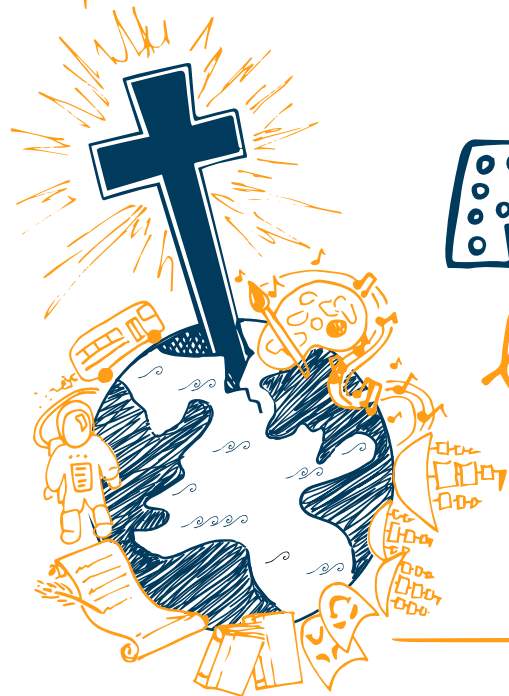
**PSALM 72** PROPHESIED that kings would come and adore the Messiah. **MATTHEW 2:** FULFILLED.

**PSALM 41** PROPHESIED that the Messiah would be betrayed. **MATTHEW 26:** FULFILLED.

**ZECHARIAH 11** PROPHESIED that the Messiah would be sold for thirty pieces of silver. **MATTHEW 26:** FULFILLED.



Jesus was  
**FAMOUS**  
before He was  
**BORN!**



**"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." John 14: 5-7**

**KNOW IT:** What three things did Jesus say he is?

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Would you be a-better-version-of-yourself if you followed Jesus' WAY, accepted his TRUTH, and embraced his LIFE?

**LIVE IT:** Allow Jesus to direct what you do sometime today!

But Jesus doesn't just love that way; he calls us to love in the same way. (I told you he was radical.)

On Sunday at Mass, after the Gospel has been read, I ask myself, "If I lived this one Gospel reading 100 percent, how much would my life change?" The answer is the same every week: radically.

There is a gap between my life and the life God invites me to live. There is a gap between the person I am and the person God created me to be. I have a long way to go. But I have started and I hope you will join me in the journey.

Most people think they are pretty good Christians. I even know non-Christians who think they are pretty good Christians. But compared to what? Compared to Jesus? No, most people don't use that as their measuring stick. Compared to the Gospel? Most people don't use that as their measuring stick either. Most compare themselves to what they see on television or to their peers. In most cases today this can be setting the bar very low indeed.

If you really want to explore the question of the best way to live, I recommend you get yourself a Bible and just start by reading the Gospel of Matthew. Read it slowly. Think about what you're reading. This way you will save yourself a lot of heartache and discover the path that leads to lasting happiness in this life and eternal happiness with God in the next life.

Along the way you will also discover the real Jesus, and you might discover he is very, very different to what you had previously thought.

*ask yourself...*

IF I LIVED THIS ONE Gospel READING 100%, HOW MUCH WOULD MY LIFE CHANGE?

**RADICALLY.**

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. WHO DO YOU KNOW WHO TAKE THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS SERIOUSLY, ALLOWING THOSE LESSONS TO DIRECT THE WAY THEY LIVE THEIR LIVES?

2. HOW DO THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHALLENGE YOU TO RADICALLY CHANGE YOUR LIFE?

3. WHAT IS AGAPE LOVE? HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM THE WAY MOVIES, MUSIC, AND THE MEDIA PORTRAY LOVE?



# Psalm 23

<sup>1</sup>The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;

<sup>2</sup> he makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside still waters;

<sup>3</sup> he restores my soul. He leads me in paths  
of righteousness for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup> Even though I walk through the valley  
of the shadow of death, I fear no evil;  
for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff,  
they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup> Thou preparest a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest  
my head with oil, my cup overflows.

<sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in  
the house of the Lord for ever.





D·I·S·C·U·S·S·I·O·N  
**QUESTIONS**

1. GRACE IS THE HELP GOD GIVES US TO RESPOND TO HIS CALL AND TO DO WHAT IS GOOD AND RIGHT. IN WHAT PART OF YOUR LIFE DO YOU NEED GOD'S GRACE MOST TODAY?

2. HOW DO YOU IMAGINE YOU WOULD BE DIFFERENT IF YOU WENT TO RECONCILIATION ONCE A MONTH?

3. WE ALL NEED TO BE FORGIVEN BY GOD AND OTHERS, AND WE ALL HAVE PEOPLE WE NEED TO FORGIVE. IN THE OUR FATHER WE PRAY, "FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US." WHOM IS GOD CALLING YOU TO FORGIVE TODAY?



# 3.5 DECISION point

# JESUS IS THE HEALER OF MY SOUL



## THE GOSPEL OF Matthew

Matthew's Gospel is one of the four Gospels and the first book of the New Testament. Scholars believe it was written between AD 70 and 110, and that it was written by a Jewish author, for a Jewish Christian audience. The way Matthew tells the story of Jesus draws on many symbols from Jewish tradition to emphasize that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah.

The Gospel of Matthew is my favorite. Maybe it is because my name is Matthew. Maybe it's because so many times I decided I would read the New Testament from start to finish and didn't get much past Matthew, so it is the Gospel I am most familiar with. But I think the reason is because the images, parables, and practicality of Matthew's Gospel resonate with me deeply.

In the ninth chapter we come across the story of the call of Matthew. It simply says:

"As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him." (Matthew 9:9)

Matthew woke up and went to work as a tax collector that day just like he did on any other day. He didn't know his whole life was about to change. That's how God works. Our God is a God of surprises.

Jesus' invitation to Matthew is one he makes to us all. There is no great fanfare; he simply says, "Follow me."

Will you?

Will you follow Jesus?

Maybe you're not ready to make that decision. That's OK. But if that is the case, you have a responsibility to learn more about who Jesus is, so that you can decide to follow him or not. If you are really not sure if you want to follow Jesus, read the Gospel of Matthew, and get to know him more.

But don't just avoid the question. God doesn't like that. We read in the book of Revelation, "You are neither hot nor cold... So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of my mouth." (Revelation 3:15-16)

Like Matthew the tax collector, today might feel like a regular day for you. But it isn't. Deciding to follow Jesus—or not to follow Jesus—is one of the biggest **decision points** you will come to in your life.

Invite Jesus into your heart and into your life, decide today to follow him, and many years from now, you will look back and know that today was a turning point in your life.

# JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. HOW IS THIS SESSION CALLING YOU TO CHANGE?

2. HOW DO THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHALLENGE YOU TO RADICALLY CHANGE YOUR LIFE?

3. WHAT IS AGAPE LOVE? HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM THE WAY MOVIES, MUSIC, AND THE MEDIA PORTRAY LOVE?

# ONE SOLITARY LIFE

BY JAMES ALLAN FRANCIS

He was born in an obscure village  
The child of a peasant woman  
He grew up in another obscure village  
Where he worked in a carpenter shop  
Until he was thirty when public opinion turned against him

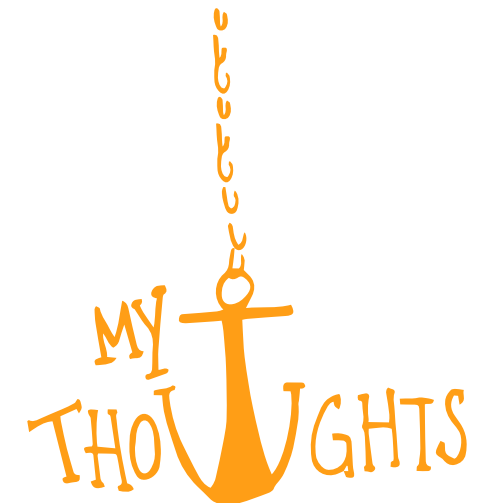
He never wrote a book  
He never held an office  
He never went to college  
He never visited a big city  
He never traveled more than two hundred miles  
From the place where he was born  
He did none of the things  
Usually associated with greatness  
He had no credentials but himself

He was only thirty three

His friends ran away  
One of them denied him  
He was turned over to his enemies  
And went through the mockery of a trial  
He was nailed to a cross between two thieves  
While dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing  
The only property he had on earth

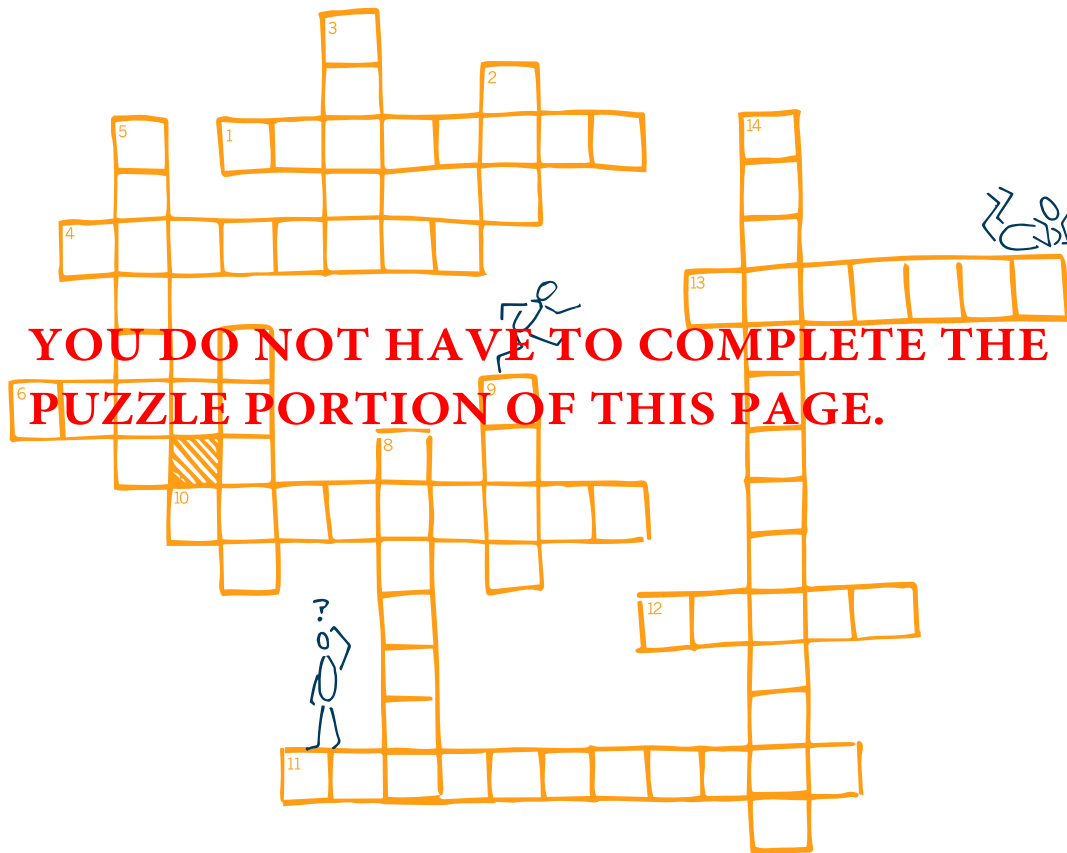
When he was dead  
He was laid in a borrowed grave  
Through the pity of a friend

Nineteen centuries have come and gone  
And today Jesus is the central figure of the human race  
And the leader of mankind's progress  
All the armies that have ever marched  
All the navies that have ever sailed  
All the parliaments that have ever sat  
All the kings that ever reigned put together  
Have not affected the life of mankind on earth  
As powerfully as that one solitary life



# THE JESUS QUESTION

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



**YOU DO NOT HAVE TO COMPLETE THE PUZZLE PORTION OF THIS PAGE.**

## ACROSS

1. Purity and self-control in thought, conduct, and intention in the area of sexuality
4. Sexual relations with someone who is not your spouse
6. God wants to flood our hearts with
10. A state of pain or distress
11. Being treated unfairly because of your beliefs
12. The help God gives us to respond to his call, and to do what is good and right
13. The first four books of the New Testament that share the life and teachings of Jesus Christ

## DOWN

2. To offend God by rejecting what is good, right, and true
3. Selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love
5. The new and counter cultural teachings of Jesus were
7. The long-awaited Messiah
8. Devoid of connection to things religious or spiritual
9. Profoundly immoral
14. The Sacrament God gives us for the ongoing forgiveness of our sins



## SESSION FOUR

# The PRAYER Process

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time, accepting hardships as the pathway to peace, taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it, trusting that you will make all things right, if I surrender to your will, so that I may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with you forever in the next. Amen.

•————— *The Serenity Prayer* —————•

# Discussion Questions

1. WHOM DO YOU TALK TO EVERY DAY? WHY?

2. DO YOU PRAY? HOW OFTEN? HOW DO YOU FEEL AFTER YOU PRAY?

3. DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD BE HAPPIER IF YOU MADE TIME TO PRAY EACH DAY?



# Discussion Questions

1. DESCRIBE A TIME WHEN SOMEONE CHALLENGED YOU TO DO SOMETHING THAT WOULD HELP YOU BECOME THE-BEST-VERSION-OF-YOURSELF. HOW DID YOU RESPOND?

2. HAVE YOU EVER ASKED GOD THE BIG QUESTION: "WHAT DO YOU THINK I SHOULD DO?" IF YOU HAVE, WHAT HAPPENED? IF YOU HAVE NEVER ASKED GOD THE BIG QUESTION, WHY NOT?

3. IF YOU SPENT TEN MINUTES A DAY IN PRAYER EVERY DAY FOR THE NEXT MONTH, HOW DO YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BE DIFFERENT A MONTH FROM NOW?



# DISCUSSION

## QUESTIONS



1. HAS ANYONE EVER TAUGHT YOU HOW TO PRAY? WHO? WHEN?

2. WHICH OF THE SEVEN STEPS IN THE PRAYER PROCESS INTRIGUED YOU THE MOST? WHY?

3. IF YOU WERE GOING TO SET ASIDE TEN MINUTES TO PRAY AT THE SAME TIME EVERY DAY, WHAT TIME OF DAY WOULD BE BEST FOR YOU?

---

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# PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

(1 Thessalonians 5:17)

We cannot pray every minute of every day. We have things to do. **What was Paul saying?** He was encouraging us to transform every moment of every day into a prayer. **How?** By offering each hour of study or work to God as a prayer, offering inconveniences and suffering to God as a prayer, and offering everything we do each day to God, we transform the ordinary realities of everyday life into prayer.

When I was a child I was taught to start my day by offering everything that was going to happen that day to God. This prayer is called a morning offering. There are many different versions; this is the one I was taught:

O Jesus, through the most pure heart of Mary, I offer you the prayer, works, joys, and sufferings of this day, for all the intentions of your divine heart.  
Amen.

There is genius in Catholicism. It may not always be apparent on the surface, but behind each and every Catholic tradition are glimpses of the genius of Catholicism.

You can open your eyes now. Thanks for praying with me. For four years I have been working on this Confirmation program, and for four years I have been praying for you – the young men and women from all over the world who will experience it. I'm going to continue to pray for you every day. And I hope you will pray for me, and all the team at Dynamic Catholic, as we continue to work to develop resources to help you and others to have powerful encounters with God.



# DISCUSSION

QUESTIONS

1. WHAT ARE YOU MOST GRATEFUL FOR TODAY?
2. WHAT SURPRISED YOU THE MOST AS YOU PRACTICED THE PRAYER PROCESS?
3. NOW THAT YOU HAVE BEEN TAUGHT HOW TO PRAY, WHAT IS MOST LIKELY TO GET IN THE WAY OF DEVELOPING PRAYER AS A DAILY HABIT IN YOUR LIFE?





# the PRAYER process

## STEP 1 GRATITUDE

Begin by thanking God in a personal dialogue for whatever you are most grateful for today.

---

## STEP 2 AWARENESS

Revisit the times in the past twenty-four hours when you were and were not the-best-version-of-yourself. Talk to God about these situations and what you learned from them.

---

## STEP 3 SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS

Identify something you experienced in the past twenty-four hours and explore what God might be trying to say to you through that event (or person).

---

## STEP 4 PEACE

Ask God to forgive you for any wrong you have committed (against yourself, another person, or Him) and to fill you with a deep and abiding peace.

---

## STEP 5 FREEDOM

Speak with God about how He is inviting you to change your life so that you can experience the freedom to be the-best-version-of-yourself.

---

## STEP 6 OTHERS

Lift up to God anyone you feel called to pray for today, asking God to bless and guide them.

---

## STEP 7 PRAY THE OUR FATHER



## 4.5 DECISION point

**MARK 1:35**  
**MATTHEW 14:23**  
**LUKE 5:16**  
**LUKE 9:28**

And LOTS OF OTHERS . . .

**KNOW IT:** Over and over we read about Jesus going off to quiet places to pray.

**THINK ABOUT IT:** If Jesus needed time to reflect and pray, how much more do you and I need it?

**LIVE IT:** Develop the daily habit of finding a quiet place to connect with God.

Over and over throughout the Gospels we read about Jesus going to quiet places to pray.

Mark 1:35: "In the morning, while it was still dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed."

Matthew 14:23: "After he had dismissed the crowds, he went up a mountain by himself to pray."

Luke 5:16: "Now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds would gather to hear him and be cured of their diseases. But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray."

Luke 9:28: "Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, and went up on a mountain to pray."

Why did Jesus withdraw so often to pray? He was God, right? True. But he was also man. Imagine the distractions. The fame. The people who were trying to convince him to be a political or worldly leader. The people who were trying to use him for their own benefit. He withdrew to pray so that he could stay focused on his mission, to remember what really mattered.

We all get confused about what really matters from time to time. Prayer helps us to keep things in perspective.

We live in a noisy, busy world. If you are going to work out *who you are* and *what you are here for*, you need to step back from it all for a few minutes each day to reconnect with yourself and with God.

What place does prayer have in your life today? Is prayer at the center of your life or on the periphery of your life. Give prayer a central place in your life. Place prayer at the center of your life and amazing things will begin to happen.

Find a place where you can spend a few minutes with God each day. Set aside a time at the same time each day for prayer. Make this place and time a sacred part of your day, and God will fill you with his wisdom so you can make great decisions every day.

To pray or not to pray? That's your **decision point** today.

Here's my challenge for you: Practice The Prayer Process every day for thirty days. After thirty days I hope you are convinced that prayer should remain a daily habit for the rest of your life.

**"MENTAL PRAYER IS NOTHING ELSE THAN AN INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP, A FREQUENT heart-to-heart CONVERSATION WITH HIM BY WHOM WE KNOW OURSELVES to be loved."**

*-Saint Teresa of Avila*

# JOURNAL QUESTIONS

**1. OVER AND OVER IN THE SCRIPTURES WE READ ABOUT JESUS GOING OFF TO A QUIET PLACE TO PRAY. DO YOU HAVE A QUIET PLACE WHERE YOU CAN PRAY EACH DAY? WHERE?**

**2. DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE QUIET PLACE YOU LIKE TO GO WHEN YOU NEED TO MAKE BIG DECISIONS?**

**3. DID YOU DO ANYTHING TODAY THAT WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SPENDING A FEW MINUTES WITH GOD IN PRAYER?**

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## THE GEOGRAPHY OF PRAYER

Do you pray only for yourself? If so, your geography of prayer is pretty small—tiny, in fact! As Christians, we believe we are called to pray for the whole world, and as such, the geography of our prayer should take in the whole world. When I was in high school I was given a rosary. Each of the five decades was a different color and represented a different region of the world. The idea was to offer each decade for the people in those different regions, thus praying for the whole world.

**First decade (green beads): Pray for Africa**

**Second decade (red beads): Pray for the Americas**

**Third decade (white beads): Pray for Europe**

**Fourth decade (blue beads): Pray for the South Pacific**

**Fifth decade (yellow beads): Pray for Asia**

Prayer is powerful. If we love our neighbor, we will pray for our neighbor. As Catholics, the geography of our prayer even reaches beyond this world when we pray for our loved ones who have died, that they may be united with God in paradise.

The geography of prayer is just one of millions of beautiful realities that make up our faith.





**SESSION FIVE**

*The*

**BIBBLE**

Lord, teach me to be generous. Teach me to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for reward, save that of knowing that I do your will.

• ——— St. Ignatius of Loyola ——— •

## WHAT IS A HOLY PLACE?

A PLACE SET APART FOR GOD BECAUSE OF SPECIAL RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE.

JERUSALEM IS A HOLY PLACE BECAUSE JESUS LIVED, TAUGHT, DIED, AND ROSE FROM THE DEAD THERE. YOUR LOCAL PARISH CHURCH IS A HOLY PLACE BECAUSE IT IS THE CENTER OF WORSHIP FOR YOUR COMMUNITY.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE HOLY PLACE?

Whether you realize it or not, you are on a sacred journey. Life is a pilgrimage and you are a pilgrim. Remember, a pilgrimage is a spiritual journey to a holy place. A pilgrim is someone on a journey to a holy place. The holy place we are journeying toward is Heaven.

The world doesn't want you to be a pilgrim on a spiritual journey. The world wants you to be a tourist. A pilgrim travels with purpose. A tourist travels only for pleasure. You have to decide—do you want to be a tourist or a pilgrim?

There is more to life than life. You will die one day and it is healthy to think about that from time to time. If you died today and had to account to God for the way you have lived your life, how would you fare?

God wants you to live a rich, full, and happy life—and he provides the Bible as a map for that.



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. DO YOU THINK OF THE BIBLE AS A GUIDEBOOK? IF NOT, WHAT IS YOUR PERCEPTION OF THE BIBLE?
  
2. IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOU A TOURIST AND IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOU A PILGRIM?
  
3. HOW COMFORTABLE WOULD YOU BE IF YOU DIED TODAY AND HAD TO ACCOUNT FOR THE WAY YOU HAVE LIVED YOUR LIFE?

Gud är kärlek

Boğ yest' lyubov'

ANG DIYOS AY PAG-IBIG

DEUS CARITAS EST

GOD IS LOVE

hami wai aidearu

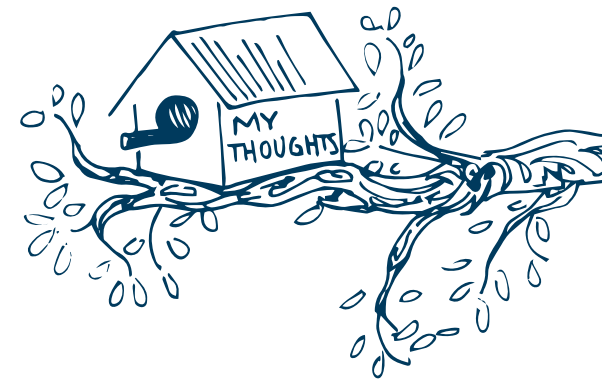
DDUW YW CARIAD

Elohim ahavah

Allah Adalah Kasih

Dieu est amour

GOD IS LIEBE  
GOTT IST DIE LIEBE  
DIO È AMORE



ARE YOU READY FOR  
**GOD'S**  
★ *Amazing* ★  
**PLAN**  
FOR YOUR LIFE?

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Greek, and has been translated into more languages than any other book. It was written by hundreds of different authors between approximately 1500 BC and 100 AD.

In the Old Testament God reveals himself as the Creator who is deeply interested in a relationship with humanity. In the New Testament he reveals his mercy and overwhelming desire that all people experience his love—more proof of God's incredible yearning for a relationship with us.

If you want to get a sense of what the Old Testament is all about, read Genesis. The book of Genesis demonstrates that there is a great cause-and-effect relationship between obedience to God and happiness, and between disobedience and misery. Genesis shows us, over and over again, what happens if you follow the ways of God and what happens if you follow the ways of the world. In Genesis we see an in-depth study of the human condition.

The New Testament presents the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the life of the early Church.

All this might lead you to ask, where did the Bible come from?

It did not fall from Heaven as a single book. Nor did God dictate it mechanically to scribes. God chose certain people whom he inspired to write down what he wanted to convey to humanity. The Bible came together over the course of more than sixteen hundred years, and hundreds of authors were involved in writing the Bible as we know it today.



You could spend your whole life just studying Sacred Scripture and it would be a life well spent. And truth be told, very few lives are really well spent. I hope you spend yours well and I hope this program is helping to prepare you for that.

But if you did spend your whole life studying the Bible you would discover that it is not just a theological book. The Bible is immensely practical. It can show you how to get to Heaven, but it can also show you how to live on earth. In many ways it is a guide to a happy life.



What do you think were Mary's hopes and fears?



1. WHAT NEW THING DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THE BIBLE IN THIS SECTION?

2. WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE BOOK IN THE BIBLE? WHY?

3. IF YOU COULD BE ONE PERSON IN THE BIBLE, WHO WOULD YOU WANT TO BE? WHY?



YOU MAY BE SAYING TO YOURSELF,  
**“I am too young**

*to be thinking about all this serious stuff!”*

**BUT THAT WOULD BE A MISTAKE.**

**MOZART** *was* **EIGHT** *years old*  
*when he wrote his first symphony.*

**JESUS** *was* **TWELVE** *years old*  
**WHEN HE FIRST TAUGHT IN THE TEMPLE.**

**ANNE FRANK** *was* **THIRTEEN**  
*—when she wrote her diary.—*

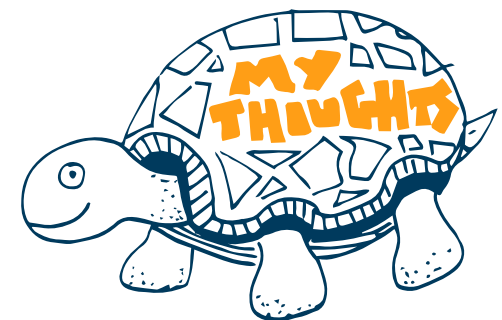
**RALPH WALDO EMERSON** *was*  
**FOURTEEN** *when he enrolled at Harvard.*

**JOAN** *of* **ARC** *was* **SEVENTEEN**  
**WHEN SHE LED THE FRENCH ARMY.**

**BILL GATES** *was* **NINETEEN**  
*—when he co-founded Microsoft.—*

**YOU ARE NOT TOO YOUNG**  
**TO START THINKING ABOUT THESE THINGS.**

**You are not too young**  
*to start thinking seriously about your life.*



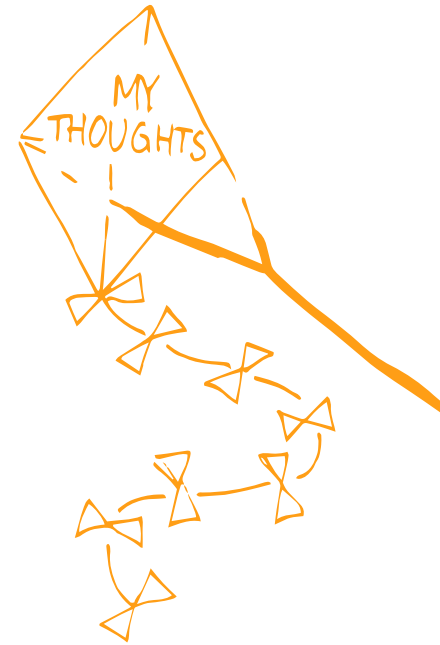


# Discussion Questions

1. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE CHALLENGE TO READ THE BIBLE FOR A FEW MINUTES EACH DAY?

2. HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR LIFE WOULD CHANGE IF YOU DID READ THE BIBLE FOR A FEW MINUTES EACH DAY?

3. OTHER THAN READING THE BIBLE, WHAT OTHER HABITS COULD HELP YOU BECOME THE-BEST-VERSION-OF-YOURSELF?



**“SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS JUSTICE, AND ALL ELSE WILL BE GIVEN IN ADDITION.”**

**MATTHEW 6:33**



**KNOW IT:** God's priorities are clear.

**THINK ABOUT IT:** How clear are you about your priorities? Are they good priorities?

**LIVE IT:** Do something today that puts God's priorities at the center of your life.

The inconvenience of having the discipline to read the Bible daily is a microcosm of a much larger truth: Christianity is inconvenient. But it will bring you a joy that you have not even imagined yet. So embrace the life and teachings of Jesus like you would a good friend whom you have not seen for a long time. Embrace the genius of Catholicism and you will live a life uncommon.



You matter, your happiness matters, and that's why habits matter.

You may be saying to yourself, "I am too young to be thinking about all this serious stuff!" But that would be a mistake. Mozart was eight years old when he wrote his first symphony. Jesus was twelve years old when he first taught in the Temple. Anne Frank was thirteen when she wrote her diary. Ralph Waldo Emerson was fourteen when he enrolled at Harvard. Joan of Arc was seventeen when she led the French army. Bill Gates was nineteen when he co-founded Microsoft. You are not too young to start thinking about these things. You are not too young to start thinking seriously about your life.

**YOU MATTER.**  
your **HAPPINESS** matters.  
& that's why **HABITS** matter.

# {DISCUSSION QUESTIONS}

1. WHO DO YOU KNOW WHO HAS GREAT HABITS? WHAT ARE THOSE HABITS?

2. HAVE YOU EVER SEEN BAD HABITS DESTROY A PERSON'S LIFE?

3. WHAT WILL BE THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO YOU ESTABLISHING THE HABIT OF READING THE BIBLE FOR A FEW MINUTES EACH DAY?



# Psalm 119

<sup>89</sup> For ever, O Lord, thy word is firmly fixed in the heavens.

<sup>90</sup> Thy faithfulness endures to all generations; thou hast established the earth, and it stands fast.

<sup>91</sup> By thy appointment they stand this day; for all things are thy servants.

<sup>92</sup> If thy law had not been my delight, I should have perished in my affliction.

<sup>93</sup> I will never forget thy precepts; for by them thou hast given me life.

<sup>94</sup> I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts.

<sup>95</sup> The wicked lie in wait to destroy me; but I consider thy testimonies.

<sup>96</sup> I have seen a limit to all perfection, but thy commandment is exceedingly broad.

<sup>97</sup> Oh, how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day.

<sup>98</sup> Thy commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me.

<sup>99</sup> I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation.

<sup>100</sup> I understand more than the aged, for I keep thy precepts.

<sup>101</sup> I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep thy word.

<sup>102</sup> I do not turn aside from thy ordinances, for thou hast taught me.

<sup>103</sup> How sweet are thy words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

<sup>104</sup> Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

<sup>105</sup> Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

*Psalm 119: 89–105*



# 5.5 DECISION point

Thirty minutes to speak about the most important book in the world is nothing. So as I prepared to speak to you about the Bible, I asked myself, "What do you hope to accomplish with this session?" I came to the conclusion that I could teach you very little about the Bible in such a short time. So I set out with two objectives:

1. To give you a starting point so that you would feel comfortable picking up the Bible and beginning to read it.
2. To give you an appetite for reading the Bible.

So, I want to encourage you to get yourself a good Bible and make reading it a part of your day. When you go looking for a Bible, remember, not all Bibles are the same—so get yourself a good Catholic Bible. The Catholic Bible has seventy-three books, but many other Christian Bibles have removed books and those Bibles usually contain only sixty-six. Visit [DynamicCatholic.com](http://DynamicCatholic.com) and we will help you find a good Catholic Bible.

If you really want to surprise your parents, ask them to get you a Bible as an early Confirmation gift.

Last week I was speaking to my friend Brian in San Diego, and he was talking about his Bible. He has had it for years, reads from it every day, and it is well worn. Something he said to me struck me particularly: "You need a good Bible to do life with."

Here's my challenge: Wear out a Bible in your lifetime. Get a really good one, and wear it out with prayer and reflection.

Dozens of voices are influencing you and the direction of your life every day. But how often do we pause and allow God to speak into our lives? Reading the Bible for a few minutes each day is a great way to allow the voice of God to speak into the situations and circumstances we are dealing with.

If I were going to spend the rest of my life on a deserted island and I could only take one book with me, I would take the Bible. I hope in time you will come to feel the same way.

The Bible is a map and an instruction manual, but it is also an invitation to get to know God and his Church. Will you accept the invitation to get to know God? Or will you reject it? What role are you going to allow the Bible to play in your life?

You get to decide.

Get yourself a Bible. Take a few minutes each day to read it. I'm telling you, it will change your life in the most incredible ways.

# "BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD."

PSALM 46:10

**KNOW IT:**  
To be still and quiet is really good for us.

**THINK ABOUT IT:**  
When was the last time you sat down and gave yourself the gift of a few still, quiet minutes?

**LIVE IT:** Make time today to be quiet and still.

# JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. WHAT ARE THE MAJOR VOICES INFLUENCING THE DIRECTION OF YOUR LIFE?

2. WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU ACCEPTED OR REJECTED AN INVITATION FROM GOD?

3. ARE YOU OPEN TO GOD'S DIRECTION IN YOUR LIFE?





## SESSION SIX

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# RELATIONSHIPS

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Lord of all pots and pans and things, since I've no time to be a great saint by doing lovely things, or watching late with thee, or dreaming in the dawnlight, or storming heaven's gates, make me a saint by getting meals, and washing up the plates. Warm all the kitchen with thy Love, and light it with thy peace; forgive me all my worrying, and make my grumbling cease. Thou who didst love to give men food, in room, or by the sea, accept the service that I do, I do it unto thee. Amen.

• ——— Brother Lawrence ——— •



### Matthew 7:24-27

**KNOW IT:** There is a difference between the wise and the foolish.

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Are you building your life on a solid foundation like the wise man?

**LIVE IT:** What one thing can you do each day to strengthen the foundation you are building your life upon?

The world says that the secret to having great relationships is common interests. Common interests are good, but they are not the key to great relationships. Your interests ten years from now will most likely be very different from your interests today. Throughout our lives our interests are constantly changing and evolving. And if you build a relationship on common interests, if you make common interests the most important thing, and your interests change—the relationship will change. And it will very often fall apart.

Purpose matters. The foundation you choose to build your relationships upon matters. Think about the story from Matthew's Gospel. Jesus said:

“Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.” (Matthew 7:24-27)

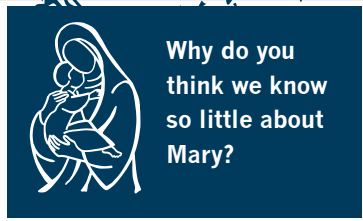
Fun is great, but it is not enough. Common interests are fabulous, but they are not enough. Building relationships upon fun or common interests is like building a house on sand. Great relationships need common *purpose*. Building relationships upon the common purpose of helping each other become the-best-version-of-ourselves is like building a house on rock.

If you want to build your relationships on sand, choose your friends based on whether or not they are good-looking, fun, athletic, rich, and popular. If you want to build your relationships on rock, choose friends of good character, who are striving for virtue, who help you become the-best-version-of-yourself, and lead you closer to God.

The more closely we align ourselves with the purpose of anything, the more success we will have. Relationships have a purpose. God gives us relationships to help us become the-best-version-of-ourselves.

The beautiful thing about the purpose of relationships is that it is unchanging. Like the rock that the wise man built his house on, common purpose is a solid foundation to build your relationships upon. Many things may change in your life over the next month, year, or decade, but the purpose of relationships will not.

Are you ready to start building your relationships on a solid foundation?



1. WHO ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE? WHY?

2. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF RELATIONSHIPS?

3. WHAT ARE YOU PRETENDING NOT TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR APPROACH TO RELATIONSHIPS?



NOTHING IS MORE PRACTICAL  
**THAN FINDING GOD,**  
*than falling in Love*  
**IN A QUITE ABSOLUTE, FINAL WAY.**

What you are *in love* with,  
**WHAT SEIZES YOUR IMAGINATION,**  
will affect **EVERYTHING.**

It will decide what will get you  
**OUT OF BED *in the morning,***

WHAT YOU DO WITH YOUR EVENINGS,  
*how you spend your weekends,*

WHAT YOU READ, **WHOM YOU KNOW,**

what *breaks your heart,*

and what amazes you with

**JOY** and **GRATITUDE.**

*Fall in love,* **STAY IN LOVE,**

AND IT WILL DECIDE EVERYTHING.





The Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - is the most dynamic relationship, and your relationship with God will have an enormous influence on every other relationship in your life.

Every yearning you have for good things is in some way a yearning for God. Your longing for relationship is a yearning for God. God is relationship. So, no wonder you yearn for relationships so much.



Throughout your life you are going to make lots of relationship decisions. You are already making dozens every day. Are you making good relationship decisions? What can you do to make better relationship decisions? Do you understand how some of the decisions you make today will impact your life in the future?

There is a great Scripture I want to invite you to reflect upon today. When we really think about what it takes to have great relationships, it can be overwhelming. In John's Gospel, Jesus says, "the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything. . ." (John 14:26) The Holy Spirit will teach you everything . . . including how to have great relationships.

Open yourself up to the Holy Spirit's guidance. Try it. Don't take my word for it. At least once a day for the next week, pray to the Holy Spirit and ask him to guide you in a specific situation. Follow your conscience and the guidance of the Holy Spirit and you will notice that you are less anxious and more joyful.

This Catholic stuff really works. It's real. It's true. It's just that most people have never really given it a chance in their life. Give the genius of Catholicism a chance in your life. You will be glad you did.

### John 14:26

**KNOW IT:** God, the ultimate Father, wants to teach you everything you need to know to live a rich and full life.

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Are you really opening yourself up to the Holy Spirit's guidance?

**LIVE IT:** Each time you need to make a decision, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Love  
REARRANGES  
OUR PRIORITIES

# D·I·S·C·U·S·S·I·O·N QUESTIONS

1. WHAT'S THE BEST FRIENDSHIP DECISION YOU HAVE MADE IN THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS?

2. HOW DO YOU FEEL GOD IS CALLING YOU TO IMPROVE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR PARENTS?

3. ARE YOUR FRIENDS HELPING YOU TO BECOME THE-BEST-VERSION-OF-YOURSELF? ARE YOU HELPING THEM TO BECOME THE-BEST-VERSION-OF-THEMSELVES?





# PSALM 25

To thee, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

<sup>2</sup> O my God, in thee I trust, let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me.

<sup>3</sup> Yea, let none that wait for thee be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

<sup>4</sup> Make me to know thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths.

<sup>5</sup> Lead me in thy truth, and teach me, for thou art the God of my salvation; for thee I wait all the day long.

<sup>6</sup> Be mindful of thy mercy, O Lord, and of thy steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

<sup>7</sup> Remember not the sins of my youth, or my transgressions; according to thy steadfast love remember me, for thy goodness' sake, O Lord!

<sup>8</sup> Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

<sup>9</sup> He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

<sup>10</sup> All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

<sup>11</sup> For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon my guilt, for it is great.

<sup>12</sup> Who is the man that fears the Lord? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose.

<sup>13</sup> He himself shall abide in prosperity, and his children shall possess the land.

<sup>14</sup> The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.

<sup>15</sup> My eyes are ever toward the Lord, for he will pluck my feet out of the net.

<sup>16</sup> Turn thou to me, and be gracious to me; for I am lonely and afflicted.

<sup>17</sup> Relieve the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my distresses.

<sup>18</sup> Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.

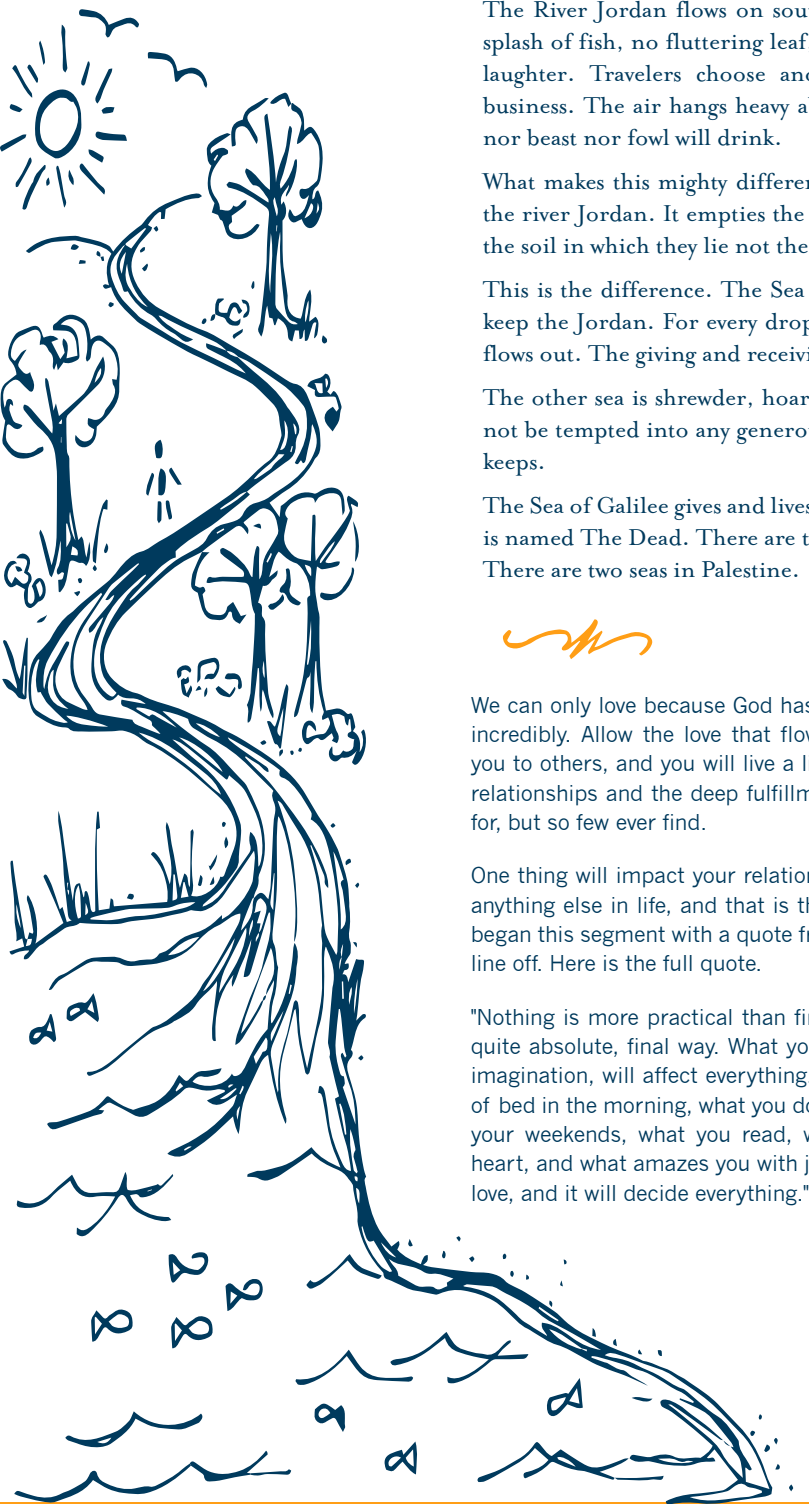
<sup>19</sup> Consider how many are my foes, and with what violent hatred they hate me.

<sup>20</sup> Oh guard my life, and deliver me; let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in thee.

<sup>21</sup> May integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for thee.

<sup>22</sup> Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.





The River Jordan flows on south into another sea. Here is no splash of fish, no fluttering leaf, no song of birds, no children's laughter. Travelers choose another route, unless on urgent business. The air hangs heavy above its water, and neither man nor beast nor fowl will drink.

What makes this mighty difference in these neighbor seas? Not the river Jordan. It empties the same good water into both. Not the soil in which they lie not the country about.

This is the difference. The Sea of Galilee receives but does not keep the Jordan. For every drop that flows into it another drop flows out. The giving and receiving go on in equal measure.

The other sea is shrewder, hoarding its income jealously. It will not be tempted into any generous impulse. Every drop it gets, it keeps.

The Sea of Galilee gives and lives. This other sea gives nothing. It is named The Dead. There are two kinds of people in the world. There are two seas in Palestine.



We can only love because God has loved us first, and he has loved us incredibly. Allow the love that flows to you from God to flow out of you to others, and you will live a life uncommon – filled with dynamic relationships and the deep fulfillment that all men and women yearn for, but so few ever find.

One thing will impact your relationships with other people more than anything else in life, and that is the way you respond to God's love. I began this segment with a quote from Father Arrupe, but I left the first line off. Here is the full quote.

"Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in Love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything."



## Discussion Questions

1. WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT LOVE IN THIS SESSION?

2. WHO MODELS SELFLESS LOVE IN YOUR LIFE?

3. HOW DOES YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD INFLUENCE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER PEOPLE?

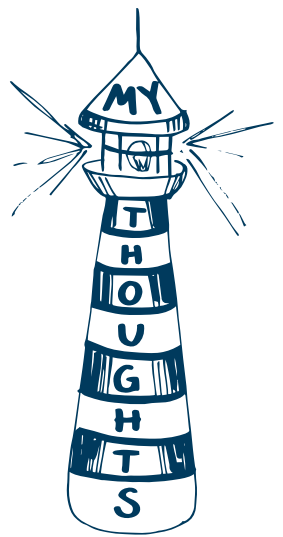


DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS

1. IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU GONE LOOKING FOR LOVE IN THE WRONG PLACES?

2. WHO DO YOU KNOW WHO HAS A GREAT MARRIAGE? WHAT DO YOU ADMIRE ABOUT THEIR MARRIAGE?

3. WHAT VIRTUE DO YOU THINK IS MOST IMPORTANT TO HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS?



“THE BEGINNING OF LOVE IS THE WILL TO LET THOSE WE LOVE BE PERFECTLY THEMSELVES. THE RESOLUTION NOT TO TWIST THEM TO FIT OUR OWN IMAGE. IF IN LOVING THEM WE DO NOT LOVE WHAT THEY ARE, BUT ONLY THEIR POTENTIAL LIKENESS TO OURSELVES, THEN WE DO NOT LOVE THEM: WE ONLY LOVE THE REFLECTION OF OURSELVES WE FIND IN THEM.”

– THOMAS MERTON

# 6.5 DECISION point

When all is said and done, life is not about what street you live on or what school you went to or what type of car you drive; it's not about whether or not you made the football team or what position you played. Life is not about what grades you got in school or what job you had. It's not about how much money you have or how much money you make, or whether or not you vacation in all the right places and wear overpriced clothes with expensive labels on them. Life is about love. It's about whom you love and whom you hurt. It's about how you love yourself and hurt yourself. It's about how you love and hurt those people closest to you. It's about how you love or hurt the other pilgrims who cross your path as you make your journey through this life. Life is about love.

One day we will stand before God, and perhaps the questions he will ask us are: How well did you love? Who or what did you lay down your life for?

Love is a choice, not a feeling. Every day you make hundreds of choices—and every choice is a choice for love or against love. So choose wisely . . . because whom and what you choose to love will determine just about everything.

Love  
IS A  
CHOICE  
[ NOT A FEELING ]

# Journal Questions

1. WHO OR WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO LAY DOWN YOUR LIFE FOR?

2. WHO LOVES YOU IN THE WAY GOD ENVISIONS LOVE?

3. HOW IS GOD CALLING YOU TO LOVE YOURSELF DIFFERENTLY SO THAT YOU CAN LOVE OTHERS MORE FULLY?

