



**“A three-ply cord is not easily broken.” .....Brothers better together**

# ***Playbook for Disciples***

**Series I**

## **Our Personal Relationship with God**

**Understanding God's Love**

**Knowing the Person of Jesus Christ**

**God's Plan For Us**

With video content provided by



*Empowering men to become better disciples of Jesus Christ*



Playbook for Disciples

# Our Personal Relationship with God



[www.live4more.us](http://www.live4more.us)

*Empowering men to become better disciples of Jesus Christ*

# Playbook for Disciples

This book is dedicated to all of the men who will use it together with their brothers in Christ. May our exploration of the Catholic faith empower us to become better disciples of Jesus Christ!

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To God be the glory!! Jesus we trust in You!

Live4More Men's Discipleship Ministry

A recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

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***Empowering men to become better disciples of Jesus Christ***

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## Live4More Introduction

*“Where one alone may be overcome, two together can resist. A three-ply cord is not easily broken.”*  
~ Ecc 4:12

*“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”* ~ Proverbs 27:17

Live4More is a non-profit, mostly volunteer operated ministry with the mission to promote the development of small groups where men can comfortably discuss and grow in their faith within Catholic parish life.

The goal is to encourage men to form small groups to study the faith, learn from each other and help hold each other accountable in their faith journey so they can go out to their family, friends, parish, workplace and community living out their Catholic faith as it is intended to be lived.

At Live4More, we believe that we, as men, are simply better disciples when we are walking our spiritual journeys together as a band of brothers growing and sharing in faith together. Iron cannot sharpen iron if iron doesn't repeatedly touch iron and a three ply cord cannot be formed with only one single strand. We need to meet together regularly to grow and share in our faith together so that we are fully empowered to go forth and live out our faith in every aspect of our lives. We were made for relationship. We were made for greatness. We need each other! Brothers are better together!

*“We should not stay away from our assembly, as is the custom of some, but encourage one another, and this all the more as you see the day drawing near.”* ~ Hebrews 10:25

## A Guide for Using the Playbook for Disciples

The Playbook for Disciples is designed to be a directed study of intentional Christian Discipleship for use by men's small groups. Of course it can be used by anyone individually or in any type of group, but we believe its greatest impact occurs through men's small groups. This section provides a few useful tips on how this book is intended to be used.

The ideas presented in this brief guide are intended as guidelines to help lead you on your journey as a group and not as hard and fast rules. Every group is unique and has its own special character. Think of these ideas as the guardrails on a bridge. They are here to keep you from falling over the side so that you stay on the road moving forward, but you get to choose which lane to drive in.

### **Playbook Format**

- Our Personal Relationship with God is presented in three “Skill Levels” with multiple topics for each skill level.
- Each topic can be covered in one gathering or in multiple gatherings of the group. There is no rush to “finish the book”. Take your time and explore the scriptures and questions as a group. If you spend an entire group gathering discussing only one question, no problem. Simply pick up with the next question at the next gathering.
- Each topic has an associated video component which is an episode of the Crossing The Goal TV show produced by EWTN as a ministry to men. These videos can be viewed for free by streaming them live from the [Crossing The Goal website](#) by simply following the links provided in the **Watch Video** section for each topic.
- If you do not have internet access where you meet, there are a few alternatives you can consider.
  - Each man in the group can view the associated episode at home prior to the group gathering.
  - You can purchase the appropriate DVD(s) via the [Crossing The Goal website](#) and watch them as a group during your gathering, if you have access to a TV and DVD player.
  - You could simply not use the videos. The Playbook is still quite effective even without use of the CTG episodes. They are a great feature but not absolutely required.
- See the Accessing the Videos guide on page v for more detailed information about finding and using the CTG video content.

### **Group Gatherings (Meetings)**

- We recommend a weekly group gathering, however bi-weekly also works for many groups.
- We have found that it works best when the gatherings are about 90 minutes long. However, 60 minutes can also work well. It just takes a little longer to complete the Playbook, but as noted above, there is no rush to finish the book. See our suggested Meeting Format in the next few pages.

## Playbook for Disciples – Our Personal Relationship with God

- Each man should make a commitment to make his attendance at each gathering a priority in his life. Of course, on occasion a man might not be able to attend, but it should not be because he would rather watch the game!
- It is important that each gathering be a safe environment where each man can share his thoughts freely and confidentially. What is shared in group gatherings stays in the group!
- Select a quiet place to gather so that you will not be disturbed.
  - Turn off or silence your phones.... and better yet, just leave them in the car!
  - Each man should keep an open mind and heart to grow in faith in the Lord.
- Select a leader (or facilitator) for each group gathering.
  - Rotate the role among multiple men in the group.
  - Select the facilitator for each gathering in advance of the gathering, preferably before concluding the current gathering.
- Be respectful of each other's time and schedule by starting and ending on time.
  - Always begin and end with prayer. You may want to consider including a worship song or two but keep it simple. Worship helps to open our hearts for listening and sharing.
  - Remember, there is no rush! You can continue the discussion at the next gathering.
  - This is about spending time together learning and sharing our faith and having a little fellowship too!
- Each man should have a Bible and bring it with him to each gathering of the group.
  - Take turns doing the scripture readings.
  - Share your thoughts on the questions. There may be different views and some may be strongly felt.
  - Listen to your brothers and embrace different viewpoints. God loves the discussion and we all grow when we share our faith with each other.
- Relax and enjoy each other. Lean on the Holy Spirit for guidance!

### **Action Plan**

- Always complete this activity near the end of every gathering, even if you don't finish all the other sections.
- Take a few minutes for each man to make an action plan to work on between now and the next group gathering. Write it down.
  - Use the actions suggested or make your own plan.
  - You can make individual plans or the entire group could decide to take on one common challenge.
- At the beginning of the next gathering, each man should have an opportunity to share on how he is doing with his action plan and how things are going in his life.
  - Celebrate together when things go well. Support one another when progress is slow.



## Accessing the Videos

The Playbook for Disciples was created in conjunction with video material from the Crossing The Goal TV show produced by EWTN (Eternal Word Television Network).

The video component which is associated with each topic is an episode of Crossing The Goal (CTG) and can be viewed for free by streaming them live from the CTG website at [crossingthegoal.com](http://crossingthegoal.com). Many of the episodes can also be found through Youtube. The various topical series CTG DVD's can be purchased through the Crossing The Goal website.

We wish to note that the Playbook for Disciples was originally developed by the men of Live4More for use by Crossing The Goal and was subsequently made available on the Crossing The Goal website. Live4More has since updated the content of the Playbook for Disciples, but has not changed the video components used with each topic. We believe our updated version is an improvement you will enjoy using in your group.

To access the appropriate video, simply follow the link provided in this document in the **Watch Video** section for each topic. Use **Ctrl-Left Click** to follow the link.

There are two alternate paths you can also choose to follow in order to access the videos, both of which lead to the same place on the [Crossing The Goal website](http://crossingthegoal.com).

1. Use the link provided on [our website at live4more.us](http://ourwebsiteatlive4more.us). Once you are on the home page:
  - Click on **Resources** at the top of the page. This will take you to the Resources page.
  - Select **Playbook Videos**. This will bring you to a page on the Crossing The Goal website with the title “Super Bowl Playbook for Disciples” at the top.
  - Select the appropriate **Skill Level** that you are currently discussing in your group from Part 1 on the left side of the page. This will bring you to a page with all of the videos for that particular skill level.
  - Select the appropriate video.
2. Go directly to the [Crossing The Goal website](http://crossingthegoal.com). Once you are on the home page:
  - Click on **Spiritual Fitness Groups** at the top of the page. This will produce a drop-down menu.
  - Select **Super Bowl**. This will bring you to a page with the title “Super Bowl Playbook for Disciples” at the top.
  - Select the appropriate **Skill Level** that you are currently discussing in your group from Part 1 on the left side of the page. This will bring you to a page with all of the videos for that particular skill level.
  - Select the appropriate video.

Please contact us with any questions regarding access of the videos. We are glad to assist you so you can begin to experience all that God has planned for you with this group!

Video content provided by



## Discipleship Group Meeting Format

### (4-10 Members)

Live4More generally recommends that a typical Men's Discipleship Group consists of about 4 to 10 men who meet every week or at least twice monthly.

**Why do we gather regularly?** - 1 Cor 9:24-25 "Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown but we an imperishable one."

#### Step 1 – Gathering, Worship and Prayer (About 20 minutes)

- Worship - Beginning with a worship song which is easy for men to sing is *highly recommended* but optional. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord."
- Prayer - Spend a few minutes in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide the group through the discussion of the topic of this gathering. Including a brief time for intercessory prayer is suggested for established groups.
- Life Sharing - Group members are encouraged to share how things went personally and spiritually since the previous gathering with a **focus** on their personal action item from the previous gathering.

#### Step 2 - Discussion and/or View Video (About 60 minutes)

- Introduction - One group member reads the introductory material for the selected topic in the Playbook and the group discusses any thoughts or impressions they have.
- Discovering - The group discusses each question in the **Discovering** section; taking turns reading the questions and associated scripture and catechism passages.
- Watch Video - The group watches the designated CTG episode and discusses their impressions.
- Responding to – The group discusses each question in the **Responding to** section; taking turns reading the questions and associated scripture and catechism passages.
- Summary – One group member reads the **Summary** section and the group discusses any thoughts or impressions they have.

#### Step 3 - Action item/Prayer (About 10 minutes)

- Each group member takes a couple of minutes to silently write down one personal action item he would like to accomplish before the next gathering.
- Make any needed announcements. Keep it *brief*!
- All the men sing together a worship song (Optional). Keep it simple!
- Close the meeting with a brief time of prayer led by one group member and concluding with all the men reciting together a common prayer such as the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be or Saint Michael the Archangel prayer.

#### Total Time – 90 minutes

## **Skill Level 1: Understanding God’s Love**

How are we to understand God’s love for us? We need look only upon the cross of Jesus our savior to know that God loves us and will never abandon us. We can and should spend a lifetime seeking to understand God’s great and infinite love for us.

### **God’s Personal Love**

Our Christian faith is built upon the love of God. God’s love is the central message of Christianity and the source of our faith. We need to try to understand God’s love if we are to make sense of anything else the Catholic Church professes.

God’s love for us is personal, constant, and secure. In fact, the very essence of God is love, so much so, that He died on the cross for every one of us.

### **Discovering God’s Personal Love**

**1. In what ways does God take a personal interest in our lives?**

Psalm 139:13-15 \_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 29:11-12 \_\_\_\_\_

**2. What are God’s provisions for us?**

Matthew 6:25-34 \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 8:28 \_\_\_\_\_

**3. How can we have faith that God will not abandon us?**

Isaiah 49:15-16 \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 8:31-39 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. How can we know God’s plan for us?**

Romans 12:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_

**5. How can we be confident that God still cares for us when we experience difficult life situations?**

Hebrews 12:5-11 \_\_\_\_\_

**Watch Video: [The Father’s Love](#) (Our Father – Our Father Who Art in Heaven)**

## **Responding to God's Personal Love**

**CCC 50** By natural reason man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works. But there is another order of knowledge, which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: the order of divine Revelation. Through an utterly free decision, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. This he does by revealing the mystery, his plan of loving goodness, formed from all eternity in Christ, for the benefit of all men. God has fully revealed this plan by sending us his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

**CCC 52** God, who "dwells in unapproachable light", wants to communicate his own divine life to the men he freely created, in order to adopt them as his sons in his only-begotten Son. By revealing himself God wishes to make them capable of responding to him, and of knowing him and of loving him far beyond their own natural capacity.

### **6. How do we understand and practice intimacy with God?**

Matthew 6:5-15 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 10:38-42 \_\_\_\_\_

### **7. How do we stay in God's presence and how does this impact our day?**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-22 \_\_\_\_\_

Philippians 4:6-7 \_\_\_\_\_

## **Summary**

God is infinite and eternal. He is perfect Spirit. So for those who don't take the time to know Him, it is common to think of Him as distant and impersonal. As we take time to know God through His word in scripture and through studying the life of Christ, we learn that God is intensely personal. Our relationship with God, like God Himself, has infinite possibility and is made to last eternally! The result of this relationship is perfect unity with God.

"It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness; He is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; He is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is He who provoked you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is He who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is He who reads in your heart your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle." ~ *Saint Pope John Paul II*

## **Action Plan**

Each morning this week rise five minutes early, meditate on one of the scriptures in this section and listen to what God wants to show you through the passage. Write down what you hear.

When you are challenged this week, stop and tell God you know He is with you and thank Him for the strength He gives you.

## God's Secure Love

Human love can be fickle and dysfunctional. We can love others merely for how they make us feel or what they do for us. Since we love in this way, we can think of God's love in a similar light. This is just not the case. "As far as the heaven is above the earth are God's ways above our ways."

### Discovering God's Secure Love

#### 1. How is God's love different from our own?

Romans 5:8 \_\_\_\_\_

"Most of us were taught that God would love us if and when we change. In fact, God loves you so that you can change. What empowers change, what makes you desirous of change is the experience of love. It is that inherent experience of love that becomes the engine of change."

~ Father Richard Rohr

We can know the certain, unconditional and unshakable love of God for us through the New Testament. Read and reflect upon Romans 8:28-39. The focus in these twelve verses is firmly on God rather than on us. Yet the overall sense of this passage is one of enormous security for us.

#### 2. How can we explain the truth of verse 28 to those who are going through difficult circumstances?

Romans 8:28-31 \_\_\_\_\_

#### 3. How can we improve the likelihood of staying in God's love?

Romans 8:31-39 \_\_\_\_\_

Watch Video: [God Is Able](#) (*Jesus Said – God Is Able*)

### Responding to God's Secure Love

**CCC 220** "God's love is "everlasting"; "For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed but my steadfast love shall not depart from you". Through Jeremiah, God declares to His people, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you."

#### 4. Jesus is always able to save those who approach God through Him. What does this mean for us in our ever day lives?

Hebrews 7:23-25 \_\_\_\_\_

#### 5. Jesus can and will act in our life on a daily basis. How does this affect our faith journey?

2 Corinthians 9:6-10 \_\_\_\_\_

**6. What undermines our faith to trust in God’s promises and His secure love?**

Mark 9:14-29 \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary**

“I do believe, help my unbelief!” Like the father of the possessed boy in Mark chapter 9, we can lack faith and security in the promises of God. As we walk with God in prayer and act in faith in our life circumstances we grow to trust God’s secure love.

“Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and myself have founded empires, but upon what do these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love: and to this very day millions would die for Him.” ~ *French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte*

**Action Plan**

Identify any areas that undermine your faith in God’s secure love. Renounce them and commit to overcome them by asking for God’s grace.

Spend 5 minutes per day praising God.

## God's Intimate Love

The word “love” can have many meanings. In English, we have only the one word to express all these meanings. The Greeks had multiple words to express the different meanings for love. Love as “Eros” is used to mean all the spontaneous human passions, emotions, and attractions that contribute to love. “Philia” is the brotherly love common among friends. “Pragma” is the practical love demonstrated by long standing commitment and love in marriage. “Ludus” is a playful love like bantering or laughing with friends or going out dancing. The love God has for us, known as “Agape”, refers to His self-sacrificing love that desires only the good for us. We also are called to live a life of *agape* in our relationship with God and His people.

### Discovering God's Intimate Love

Read and reflect upon the parable of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15:11-32.

**1. What initially separates the younger son from the father's love?**

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**2. When the son comes to his senses, he expects to return as a servant, how do you feel about the father's response?**

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**3. What separates the older son from the father's prodigal love? How do you relate to this?**

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**4. How do we experience God's embrace when we return to Him?**

---

**5. Both sons seem to miss the best part. What are they missing? How can we avoid the same mistake?**

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**Watch Video: [Love – An Act of Our Will](#) (*Virtues: Love: An Act of the Will*)**

## **Responding to God's Intimate Love**

**6. How does our culture's perspective of love differ from the Love Jesus calls us to live?**

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Jesus' prayer before He enters into His passion communicates God's desire for oneness with us. How can we be one with God and what can we do to help make this a reality?**

John 17:20-21 \_\_\_\_\_

## **Summary**

Men find it hard to be intimate with God. This may stem from dysfunction in our relationship with our earthly fathers, or a myriad of other reasons. If we accept that Jesus is our highest role model, then we too are called to intimacy with God. We can learn from Jesus how to love the Father.

**CCC 221** "But St. John goes even further when he affirms that "God is love": God's very being is love. By sending His only Son and the Spirit of Love in the fullness of time, God has revealed His innermost secret: God Himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and has destined us to share in that exchange."

"God loves each of us as if there were only one of us" ~ *Saint Augustine*

## **Action Plan**

Spend 10 minutes a day this week listening to God.

Give God a gift of avoiding sin whenever tempted. Literally lift the temptation up to God and say "my gift is choosing not to give into this sin".



## Skill Level 2: Knowing the Person of Jesus Christ

Jesus lived on this earth for about 33 years much like us except that He did not sin. He ate and drank, laughed and cried and experienced everything in life that we do. He suffered the most horrendous torture and death ever devised by man, was buried and on the third day He rose from the dead. After His resurrection, He was seen by over 500 people before He ascended into heaven to be seated at the right hand of God the Father.

### The Deity of Jesus Christ

Jesus is the Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity. The creed we profess in Mass tells us that Jesus is true God and true man and that He is one in being or consubstantial with the Father. This means that Jesus and the Father are of the same substance. Jesus is God. Jesus Himself told the Apostles (and therefore us) that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him.

### Discovering the Deity of Jesus

**1. How is Jesus the exact representation of the Father?**

Hebrews 1:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_

**2. How does Jesus identify Himself to the woman at the well? What can we learn from this encounter?**

John 4:25-26 \_\_\_\_\_

**3. How does Jesus claim that He is God? Why did the Pharisees reject Him?**

John 8:51-59 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. How does Jesus show that He is God? What priorities does Jesus demonstrate?**

Luke 5:17-26 \_\_\_\_\_

**Watch Video:** [Who is Jesus?](#) (*Jesus Said: Who is Jesus?*)

### Responding to the Deity of Jesus

**CCC 444** The Gospels report that at two solemn moments, the Baptism and the Transfiguration of Christ, the voice of the Father designates Jesus his “beloved Son.” Jesus calls himself the “only Son of God,” and by this title affirms his eternal preexistence. He asks for faith in “the name of the only Son of God.” In the centurion’s exclamation before the crucified Christ, “Truly this man was the Son of God,” that Christian confession is already heard. Only in the Paschal mystery can the believer give the title “Son of God” its full meaning.

**5. Who do you say that Jesus is? How does this impact your life?**

Matthew 16:13-20 \_\_\_\_\_

**6. How do you relate to the men removing the roof tiles and lowering the paralytic through the roof? How do you relate to the Pharisees calling Jesus a blasphemer? What do you feel about the outcome of this passage?**

Luke 5:17-26 \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary**

Jesus throughout the gospels demonstrates the qualities of God and several times says that He is one with the Father and He ultimately claims to be God “I Am” which leads to His crucifixion. His resurrection bears out His claim.

**Action Plan**

Read a section of the Gospels every day this week. Write down the qualities of Jesus that you read about.

## The Humanity of Jesus Christ

God became man in the person of Jesus through the free choice of His chosen pure vessel, the Blessed Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was and is fully human. He is a man like us in all ways but sin. He felt everything that we feel; the full range of emotions from sorrow to joy. He cried, laughed and smiled. He got tired and hungry. He slept and ate. He prayed and went to temple. He was tempted but never sinned. He was persecuted. He was insulted and betrayed. He suffered physical and emotional pain and endured death on the cross. All of this He did out of love for us.

“He had to become like his brothers in every way, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest before God to expiate the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.” ~ *Hebrews 2:17-18*.

### Discovering the Humanity of Jesus

**CCC 475** Similarly, at the sixth ecumenical council, Constantinople III in 681, the Church confessed that Christ possesses two wills and two natural operations, divine and human. They are not opposed to each other, but cooperate in such a way that the Word made flesh willed humanly in obedience to his Father all that he had decided divinely with the Father and the Holy Spirit for our salvation. Christ’s human will “does not resist or oppose but rather submits to his divine and almighty will.”

**1. How did Jesus view Himself? What does this mean for how we should view ourselves?**

Philippians 2:5-11 \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Jesus was tempted just as we are. How can we fight temptation?**

Matthew 4:11 \_\_\_\_\_

**3. In what ways do we see the humanity of Jesus in these passages?**

John 4:4-8 \_\_\_\_\_

John 11:32-35 \_\_\_\_\_

**Watch Video:** [Loving Jesus](#) (*Jesus Said: Do You Love Me?*)

### Responding to the Humanity of Jesus

**4. When Jesus is pursued how does He respond? What human emotions does He display? How can we apply this to our life?**

Matthew 14:13-21 \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Jesus became like us in all things except sin so “that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest before God”. What does this mean for us in our daily life?**

Hebrews 2:14-18 \_\_\_\_\_

## **Summary**

Jesus was fully man and fully God. He had a human will and God's will in one being. This is not unlike us, we have a human will and the Spirit of God in us. Perhaps the greatest aspect of Jesus' life is that He loved the Father perfectly; He was always obedient to the will of God.

## **Action Plan**

Spend quality time with Jesus every day this week, focus on how He related to His humanity. Identify areas of your life that hinder your relationship with Jesus and obedience to the will of the Father. Each day, ask Jesus to help you work through them.

## The Life of Jesus Christ

Jesus is God. All things were made for Him, in Him and through Him. He has all authority and power in heaven and on the earth. Yet, He became man so that He could show us the way to spend eternity with Him and save us from our sins. He was born in Bethlehem in about 6 BC and lived about 33 years. Little is known about the first 30 years of His life, but we do know that He was born to a very poor couple, had to live in exile in Egypt when He was a baby, but was returned to Israel before He was 12. There He grew and matured and was obedient to His parents. He began His earthly ministry at about age 30 and roamed Israel and the surrounding areas preaching, teaching and healing. Of His own free will, He eventually suffered a tortuous death by crucifixion, but three days later He rose again, and later in the presence of the Apostles, ascended into heaven.

### Discovering the Life of Jesus

**CCC 457** The Word became flesh for us *in order to save us by reconciling us with God, who “loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins”: “the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world,” and “he was revealed to take away sins”:*

1. **What is unusual about Jesus’ conception and birth? Has God called you to do something that does not seem logical to you?**

Matthew 1:18-25 \_\_\_\_\_

2. **How do the disciples react to Jesus walking on the water? Recall a time when Jesus called you out of the boat; how did you keep your eyes on Jesus?**

Matthew 14:22-33 \_\_\_\_\_

**Watch Video:** [Following Jesus](#) (*Becoming Disciples: Following Jesus*)

### Responding to the Life of Jesus

Read and reflect upon John 8:2-11.

3. **In what ways are you like the woman caught in adultery?**

\_\_\_\_\_

4. **How do you think the woman felt as the Jews were ready to stone her? What is the closest experience to this in your life?**

\_\_\_\_\_

5. **Jesus told her to go and sin no more. Is Jesus serious? How are you doing with this?**

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Summary**

The life of Christ has no equal. No other person has risen from the dead. No other has lived without sin, except His mother the Blessed Virgin Mary. No other has loved so much and revealed the Father so vividly. In Christ, we come to a crossroad. We must choose to follow in His footsteps or to do our own thing. One road leads to the face of God, the other to eternal darkness.

## **Action Plan**

Perform a random act of kindness each day this week for someone you don't know.

Pick one quality that Jesus has that really changes lives and imitate it this week.

## The Death of Jesus Christ

Jesus suffered the most painful humiliating torture and death ever devised by mankind and He did it willingly. Many mocked Him and some spat upon Him and cursed Him. Just about all of His friends denied knowing Him. Before He was nailed to the cross, He was beaten to within an inch of His life with instruments of torture, which literally ripped the skin off His back. He was then subjected to wearing a crown of thorns, which was forcibly pushed into His scalp. Then He carried His own cross through jeering mobs on the streets of Jerusalem. Jesus knows pain. He knows our pain.

### Discovering the Death of Jesus

**CCC 614** This sacrifice of Christ is unique; it completes and surpasses all other sacrifices. First, it is a gift from God the Father himself, for the Father handed his Son over to sinners in order to reconcile us with himself. At the same time it is the offering of the Son of God made man, who in freedom and love offered his life to his Father through the Holy Spirit in reparation for our disobedience.

- 1. In Gethsemane, Jesus wrestles with His eminent suffering and death. How would you describe the extent of His suffering? How are the apostles like us today?**  
Matthew 26:36-46 \_\_\_\_\_  
2 Corinthians 5:21 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. In addition to the physical torture how else did Jesus suffer? What was His reaction?**  
Matthew 27:27-44 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Why did it seem as though God had abandoned Jesus?**  
Matthew 27:45-54 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Do you think Jesus felt abandoned by His Father? Do you think God abandoned Jesus?**  
Matthew 27:46 \_\_\_\_\_  
Psalm 22:2-32 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Why did Jesus die for us? From whom is the gift of His death given?**  
Matthew 27:45-54 \_\_\_\_\_

**Watch Video:** [Forgiveness](#) (*Shocking Claims of Jesus: Forgiveness*)

## **Responding to the Death of Jesus**

**6. Jesus knew the time for His passion was near but He still moved forward. How can we do this in our life?**

Matthew 16:21 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 17:22-23 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 20:17-19 \_\_\_\_\_

**7. How did Jesus relate to those who crucified Him? What is He showing us about the extent of forgiveness with others in our life?**

Luke 23:26-43 \_\_\_\_\_

## **Summary**

Jesus is God's love incarnate. He has given a triune gift to all. First He laid down His God-Head and entered the womb of Mary to be born in the flesh. In this profoundly humble act He has raised humanity to new heights. Then He gave His all on the cross freeing us from eternal death. Finally, He comes to us in the form of bread to nourish all who receive Him in the Eucharist.

## **Action Plan**

Fast one day this week and focus on the sacrifice of Christ. (Matthew 9:14-15)



## The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The Resurrection is the central tenet of the Catholic faith. If Jesus did not rise from the dead our faith would be meaningless. We believe that after Jesus died on the cross to save us from sin and death, He rose from the dead. We celebrate this miracle most especially on Easter Sunday. Actually each Sunday Mass is a celebration of Jesus passion, death and resurrection. During Sunday Mass we profess our belief by saying in the Nicene Creed, "On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures". We also believe that those who profess and live this faith will also one day be raised from the dead and spend eternity with Jesus in heaven.

### Discovering the Resurrection of Jesus

**1. How can the women be sure that Jesus is risen? How can we be sure?**

Matthew 28:1-10 \_\_\_\_\_

**2. What made it difficult for someone to claim that Jesus' body was stolen?**

Matthew 27:62-66 \_\_\_\_\_

**3. What evidence of the resurrection is presented in these passages? Would this evidence prevail in a courtroom? What is the significance of the role of faith?**

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 1:1-11 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. What is the result of the resurrection of Jesus Christ?**

1 Corinthians 15:20-26 \_\_\_\_\_

**Watch Video:** [All Authority](#) (*Shocking Claims of Jesus: All Authority*)

### Responding to the Resurrection of Jesus

**CCC 654** The Paschal mystery has two aspects: by his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life. This new life is above all justification that reinstates us in God's grace, "so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Justification consists in both victory over the death caused by sin and a new participation in grace. It brings about filial adoption so that men become Christ's brethren, as Jesus himself called his disciples after his Resurrection: "Go and tell my brethren." We are brethren not by nature, but by the gift of grace, because that adoptive filiation gains us a real share in the life of the only Son, which was fully revealed in his Resurrection.

**CCC 655** Finally, Christ's Resurrection - and the risen Christ himself is the principle and source of our future resurrection: "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. . . For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." The risen Christ lives in the hearts of his faithful while they await that fulfillment. In Christ, Christians "have tasted. . . the powers of the age to come" and their lives are swept up by Christ into the heart of divine life, so that they may "live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised."

**5. How does the resurrection of Jesus change your view of death?**

1 Corinthians 15:54-58 \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Recount a time when your heart burned with fire due to the resurrection of Jesus?**

Luke 24:13-35 \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary**

The Resurrection confirms that Jesus is who He claimed to be.

- The Resurrection proves that Jesus is divine. The fact that Jesus died on the cross does not prove in itself that He is God. Jesus proved His deity by fulfilling the prophecies of His death and His return from the grave. (Rom 1:4).
- The Resurrection proved Christ's power to forgive sin. The Bible asserts, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain; you are still in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17). By rising from the dead, Jesus proved His authority and power to break the bonds of sin and to assure forgiveness and eternal life to all who accept His gift of salvation.
- The Resurrection revealed Christ's power over death. Scripture declares in Romans 6:9, "We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over Him." The Resurrection secured our victory over death as well and "raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavens in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6).

**Action Plan**

Thank God every day this week that Jesus died and rose from the dead so that we could have eternal life with Him.

Memorize John 3:16 – "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him should have everlasting life."

## Skill Level 3: God’s Plan for Us

We have learned that God’s love for us is personal, secure and intimate. He created us to live in a deep intimate personal relationship with Him both now during our life on earth and for all eternity in His presence in heaven. When we sin, we turn away from God in what we have done and in what we have failed to do and this relationship that God intended for us is broken. God, in His great love for us, became one of us in the person of Jesus Christ, dwelling with us and experiencing all that we experience so that He could fully know us and we could fully know Him. Through this exchange, Jesus restores our relationship with God.

### Our Need

Adam and Eve “walked with God in the Garden of Eden.” In their relationship with God they were to learn about all things. Desiring to be like God, they disobeyed God and took a “short cut” to the knowledge of good and evil. This separated them from God and ended their ideal existence. Since then we have all found ourselves separated from God. Thankfully, Jesus “although in the form of God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped” instead he was obedient to the Father even unto death. In Jesus we can walk with God again and in Him find the meaning of all things.

### Discovering Our Need

**1. How did sin originate? What implication does it have?**

Mark 7:15-23 \_\_\_\_\_

**2. How can man’s sinful nature be described? Does our sinfulness come from within us or from external forces?**

Romans 5:12-14 \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Do our desires control us? How are our desires formed?**

James 1:13-15 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. What is the result of sin?**

Romans 6:23 \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Can we atone for our sins by being “good”?**

Ephesians 2:8-9 \_\_\_\_\_

John 15:4-8 \_\_\_\_\_

**Watch Video:** [Genuine Love](#) (*Marks of a True Christian: Hate Evil – Love Good*)

## **Responding to Our Need**

**CCC 953** *Communion in charity.* In the sanctorum communion, “None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.” “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” “Charity does not insist on its own way.” In this solidarity with all men, living or dead, which is founded on the communion of saints, the least of our acts done in charity redounds to the profit of all. Every sin harms this communion.

### **6. How does sin impact our relationship with God and others?**

Isaiah 59:2 \_\_\_\_\_

### **7. In what ways can we overcome sin in our life?**

Psalms 37:4 \_\_\_\_\_

## **Summary**

God made humans very good in order that we might love Him. The devil deceived Adam and Eve and sin entered the world. By inheritance, we are all vulnerable to the same deception. We are all sinners by nature and by choice. We all live a daily struggle with an unending desire for power, pleasure and possessions (concupiscence). The result of this sin is eternal death, which is separation from God our creator who loves us and desires a deep intimate personal relationship with us.

## **Action Plan**

Perform an Examination of Conscience over the next week and participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Is there someone in my life that I need to forgive? How can I reach out to them this week?

## God's Solution

Throughout the ages sin has been a terrible problem between man and God. God has provided the solution to that problem by sending Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins. When Jesus shed His blood on the cross, the grace, forgiveness, and mercy of God became available to each one of us. How we each respond to His love is extremely important to God. He wants us to believe that Jesus is His Son and that He died for us. When we realize that our sins cost Jesus His life and we repent of our sins, God welcomes us with the open arms of a loving Father. He wants each one of us to respond to His love by surrendering our life to Him through the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation and Eucharist.

### Discovering God's Solution

**1. What types of sin offerings existed in the Old Covenant?**

Leviticus 7:37 \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Why were sacrifices not permanent solutions?**

Hebrews 10:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_

**3. How did God give us our permanent sin offering?**

2 Corinthians 5:21 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. What does it mean that Jesus died for our sin?**

Romans 5:8-11 \_\_\_\_\_

**Watch Video:** [Knowing Jesus](#) (*Becoming Disciples: Knowing Jesus*)

### Responding to God's Solution

**CCC 1009** *Death is transformed by Christ.* Jesus, the Son of God, also himself suffered the death that is part of the human condition. Yet, despite his anguish as he faced death, he accepted it in an act of complete and free submission to his Father's will. The obedience of Jesus has transformed the curse of death into a blessing.

**5. In what frame of mind and heart can we draw near to God?**

Hebrews 10:19-22 \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Does knowing Jesus and receiving His love make you perfect (sinless)?**

Hebrews 10:22-25 \_\_\_\_\_

## **Summary**

Since Jesus made perfect atonement, original sin is overcome. He condemned sin in the flesh when He died upon the cross. He subdued it, He destroyed it, and He deprived it of all its power over us. The law was never able to do that for us, but what the law could not do, Christ did! Mankind, separated from God through its sin, and incapable of restoring itself without God's intervention, is saved by a God/Man, Jesus. It is only a God/Man who can accomplish this task. Jesus is fully man so he can restore all mankind to the Father and He is fully God so His self-giving atones for the disobedience against God. Only a man can represent mankind and only God can atone for disobedience against God. The grace that flows from the sacrifice made by Jesus is super abundant, because His sacrifice is like no other sacrifice. In fact, all the sacrifices and offerings ever made from Abel and Noah up to the crucifixion, are inconsequential in comparison. Jesus, fully God and fully man, free from all sin, carried the suffering for all sin - past, present and future. In so doing, He who is worthy of all glory, honor and praise bore all horror, shame, and suffering. All this Christ did freely and He pours upon an undeserving yet greatly loved humanity super abundant grace sufficient for the salvation of any who will receive and follow Him.

## **Action Plan**

Spend time each day this week thanking God for the gift of His Son Jesus Christ.

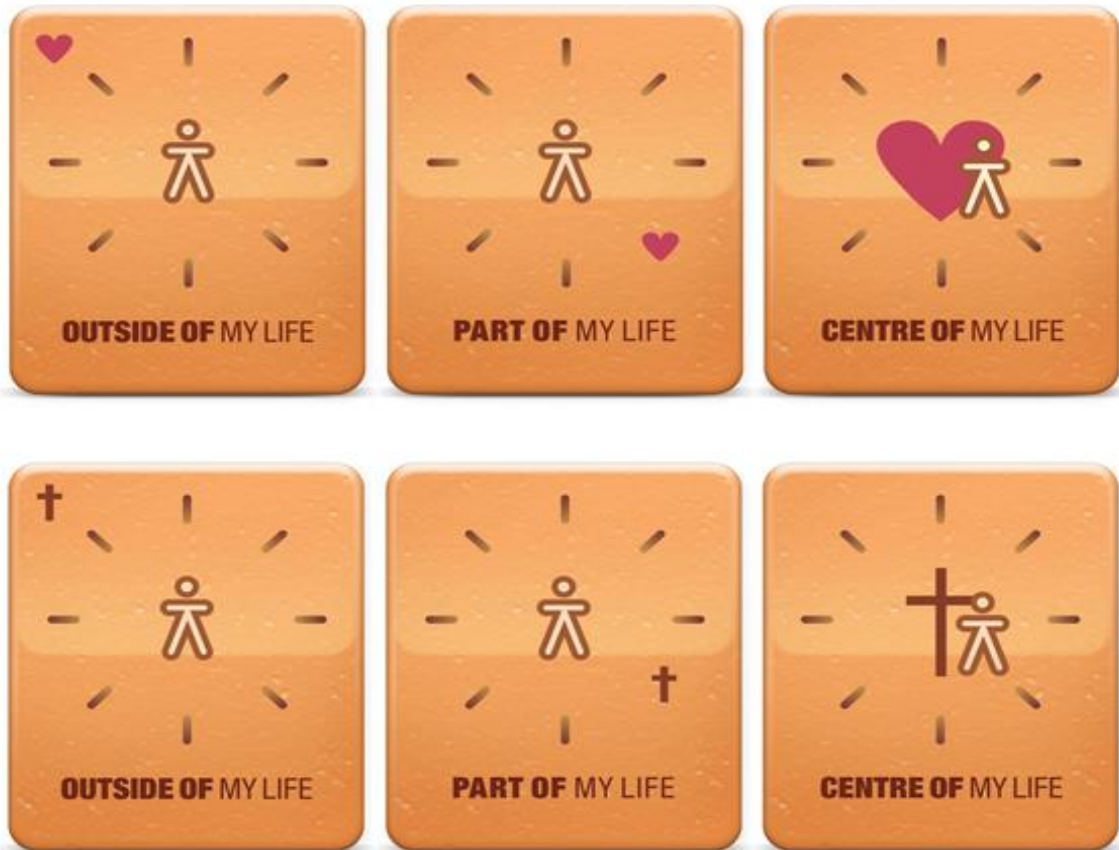
If God is not at the center of my life, what steps can I take now to put Him there? Write them down and start giving them a try.

## God's Free Gift

Salvation is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ. Eternal life, which brings us deliverance from death and condemnation, cannot be purchased for any earthly sum, but it is ours for the taking, completely free of any charge to us. This is because Jesus Christ has already paid for each one of us, by His suffering and death on the cross in our place. By His sacrifice, He ransomed us, paying the price for all the sins we would ever commit, and thus opening up the door to paradise. We can choose to walk through that door at any time through the sacraments of Baptism or Reconciliation (if we have already been baptized). This is God's free gift to us; eternal life with Him in paradise. All we have to do is accept it.

### Discovering God's Free Gift

Consider the "Relationship Diagram" below which depicts different levels of commitment in our relationships with those we love and with God.



The bottom three images represent levels of commitment in a relationship with God.

The first image represents someone who does not have a relationship with Jesus.

The second image represents someone who acknowledges Jesus as a part of his life, but has not completely committed to him. Jesus is just one aspect of his life.

The third image is a Christ-centered relationship where Christ is primary and central, influencing all decisions and every aspect of his life.

**1. Why did Jesus become man and come into the world?**

John 3:16-17 \_\_\_\_\_

**2. If Jesus does not condemn us, then who does?**

John 3:18 \_\_\_\_\_

**3. How is the Holy Spirit actively engaging and preparing our heart to receive Jesus?**

John 16:7-11 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Thessalonians 1:5-7 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. As we read the parable of the sower which type of ground would we consider ourselves today? Which do we want to be?**

Matthew 13:3-8 \_\_\_\_\_

## The Parable of the Soils

<b>The Parable</b> (4:1-9)	<b>Path</b> 4:3-4	<b>Rocky Soil</b> 4:5-6	<b>Thorns</b> 4:7	<b>Good Soil</b> 4:8-9
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard Soil</li> <li>• Birds Ate Seed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not Much Soil</li> <li>• Sprang Up</li> <li>• Sun Withered It</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seed Grew Up</li> <li>• Thorns Choked It</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seed Grew: Crop Produced</li> </ul>
<b>Purpose Statement</b>	<i>so that</i> [ἵνα]... (Mark 4:12)			
<b>The Interpretation</b> (4:13-20)	<b>Hard Heart</b> 4:15	<b>Fearful Heart</b> 4:16-17	<b>Worrisome Heart</b> 4:18-19	<b>Good Heart</b> 4:20
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satan Takes Away</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly External</li> <li>• Trouble or Persecution</li> <li>• Person Quickly Falls Away</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly Internal</li> <li>• Worries/Wealth</li> <li>• Contrary Desires</li> <li>• Word Is Choked Out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30x</li> <li>• 60x</li> <li>• 100x</li> </ul>
<b>The Sower</b>	God, Jesus and All Those Who Preach the Message			
<b>The Seed</b>	The Word (cf. the "secret," [4:11]; "the word of the kingdom" [Mt]; "the word of God" [Lk])			

**Watch Video:** [Repent and Believe](#) (Shocking Claims of Jesus: Repent and Believe)



## **Responding to God's Free Gift**

One of the most important parts in our relationship with Jesus is the new start we receive through the sacrament of Reconciliation. Jesus established the Sacrament of Reconciliation when He appeared to the Apostles after the resurrection and gave them the authority to forgive sins in His name (John 20:21-23). This is the way that Jesus has provided for us to restore our relationship with Him anytime that we turn away. We can always come back to Him and be reconciled again and again.

### **5. What must we do to respond to God's free gift?**

Acts 2:36-38 \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 10:9-10 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 25:31-46 \_\_\_\_\_

### **6. How do we acknowledge our sins and seek God's forgiveness?**

1 John 1:8-9 \_\_\_\_\_

### **7. How many times will God forgive us? How many times are we to forgive each other?**

Matthew 18:21-22 \_\_\_\_\_

God never tires in forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking His mercy. Christ, who told us to forgive one another "seventy times seven" (Mt 18:22) has given us His example: He has forgiven us seventy times seven. ~ *Pope Francis* *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)*

### **8. Through the cross, Jesus offers each one of us forgiveness, mercy, eternal life, peace, love and intimacy. What prevents us from receiving these gifts?**

Matthew 19:16-26 \_\_\_\_\_

## **Summary**

I invite you at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ. No one should think 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. ~ *Pope Francis*, *The Joy of the Gospel*

**Now is the time to say "Yes" to Jesus!**

## **Action Plan**

Receive God's gift to us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation this week.

In what way can I change the way I treat my family members in order to be more merciful and forgiving? I will start trying it this week.

Is there another way in which God is calling me to serve in His church?

Respond to God's call.

## **Growing in Our Relationship with God**

The scriptures teach us that we cannot stand still with God. We are either growing closer to Him or we are falling further away from Him.

Here are some practical steps we can take to begin growing in our personal relationship with God:

- Be baptized, if not already
- Talk to God every day through prayer
- Read the scriptures, the Word of God, in our Bible every day (either the Gospels or the daily readings)
- Go to Reconciliation (confession) on a regular basis
- Go to Mass! Celebrate the Eucharist at least every Sunday, or better yet daily
- Continue with fellowship and formation to grow in the knowledge of the faith through a men's small group
- Serve others in any way within our power - "Do small things with great love"  
~ Saint Theresa of Calcutta (Mother Theresa)
- Share our faith with others whenever we can