



2014-2015

Syllabus Handouts

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# Holiness

## Summary:

Holiness: by doing ordinary things with extraordinary love.

## Objective

1Thess 4:3 “This is the will of God: your sanctification.” Our purpose in life should be to make it to heaven. To be with God. Forever. With all others who make it to heaven.

There are practical means by which we can strive for holiness in our everyday life. We don’t have to become a deacon or a missionary. By practicing virtues at work, at home, and at play we can become more holy. In fact, this is what God is calling most of to do – to become more holy in our everyday lives whether we are in client meetings, changing diapers, driving to work, or mowing the lawn.

## Bible Readings

1. 1 Peter 1:14-16

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

2. 2 Corinthians 7:1

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

3. 1 Thessalonians 4:7

For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

4. Leviticus 20:26

You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.

5. Isaiah 35:8

And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.

6. Romans 12:1

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

## Catechism Readings

1. 2013

“All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity.”<sup>65</sup> All are called to holiness: “Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”<sup>66</sup> (915, 2545, 825)

2. 2015

The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle.<sup>68</sup> Spiritual progress entails the asceticism and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes: (407, 2725, 1438)

3. 2024

Sanctifying grace makes us “pleasing to God.” Charisms, special graces of the Holy Spirit, are oriented to sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the Church. God also acts through many actual graces, to be distinguished from habitual grace which is permanent in us.

### **Small Group Questions**

1. What things about your job or family life do find the most mundane?
2. What things at home or at work (or at church) the most frustrating?
3. How can you turn those mundane and frustrating times into the most sanctifying acts of love?

### **Recommended Resources**

1. “Introduction to the Devout Life” by St. Francis deSales
2. Littleflower.org
3. “Holiness for Everyone” by St Josemaria Escriva
4. “Do Ordinary things with extraordinary love.” Saint Therese of Lisieux

### **Author(s)**

Bob Walton

# Child-Centric Parenting (or is it Helicopter Parenting?)

## Summary

As a parent, you want what is best for your child. We may not be able to choose our children's friends but if we make sure they are being surrounded by the "right" crowd, are we helicopter parents? And if so, is that a bad thing?

## Objective

For nearly 150 years, the Church has unequivocally taught that parents have the right and responsibility to serve as the primary educators of their children. In addition, parents are also the ultimate protectors of their children. Finally, the Church also teaches that parents are responsible for evangelizing their children.

Worrying and fretting about your children come with the job and can prompt needed action. Some parents, however, “over worry” and become “helicopter parents,” hovering over their children. As parents we are responsible for the process we use in raising our children- not the outcome. When all else fails (and hopefully before) turn it over to God. From their own experience, parents recognize that friends can have such a powerful influence over their kids – for good or for bad. Because of that influence, some parents enter into the trap of trying to control who their kids can have as friends.

Helicopter parenting refers to a style of parents who are over focused on their children. Often called over parenting, it is most often applied to parents of high school or college-aged students.

Some studies show that “helicopter parents” derived more happiness and meaning from parenthood than those who were less involved. A different term to describe these parents might be “child-centric”.

Even though parents may not effectively be able to control who their kids choose as friends, parents do have a lot of influence over building good relationships with their children’s friends (even the scary ones). As parents show confidence in their children’s ability to make good choices in friends, and then bring their friends within the arms of the family, parents can have a great deal of influence over the relationships and situations in which their kids get involved.

## Bible Readings

1. Luke Chapter 18, Verse 16

Jesus, however, called the children to himself and said, “Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

2. Colossians Chapter 3, verse 20

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord.

3. 1 John Chapter 5, Verse 21

Children, be on your guard against idols.

## Catechism Readings

### 1. 2223

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery - the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the "material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones."<sup>31</sup> Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them:

He who loves his son will not spare the rod. . . . He who disciplines his son will profit by him.<sup>32</sup>

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.<sup>33</sup>

### 2. 2224

The home is the natural environment for initiating a human being into solidarity and communal responsibilities. Parents should teach children to avoid the compromising and degrading influences which threaten human societies.

### 3. 2225

Through the grace of the sacrament of marriage, parents receive the responsibility and privilege of *evangelizing their children*. Parents should initiate their children at an early age into the mysteries of the faith of which they are the "first heralds" for their children. They should associate them from their tenderest years with the life of the Church.<sup>34</sup> A wholesome family life can foster interior dispositions that are a genuine preparation for a living faith and remain a support for it throughout one's life.

### 4. 2226

*Education in the faith* by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God.<sup>35</sup> The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents.

### 5. 2227

Children in turn contribute to the *growth in holiness* of their parents.<sup>36</sup> Each and everyone should be generous and tireless in forgiving one another for offenses, quarrels, injustices, and neglect. Mutual affection suggests this. The charity of Christ demands it.<sup>37</sup>

### 6. 2228

Parents' respect and affection are expressed by the care and attention they devote to bringing up their young children and *providing for their physical and spiritual needs*. As the children grow up, the same respect and devotion lead parents to educate them in the right use of their reason and freedom.

### 7. 2229

Child-Centric Parenting (or is it Helicopter Parenting?)

As those first responsible for the education of their children, parents have the right to *choose a school for them* which corresponds to their own convictions. This right is fundamental. As far as possible parents have the duty of choosing schools that will best help them in their task as Christian educators.<sup>38</sup> Public authorities have the duty of guaranteeing this parental right and of ensuring the concrete conditions for its exercise.

## Small Group Questions

1. Define a Helicopter Parent
2. Define an effective parent
3. Is one better than the other?
4. When do you cross over from being a responsible parent to a helicopter parent
5. Do you think this is good for the child or the parent?
6. Do you know a helicopter parent?

## Recommended Resources

1. "What is Helicopter Parenting?" [www.parents.com/parents](http://www.parents.com/parents)
2. "'Helicopter parents' have more meaningful lives, study finds" [www.telegraph.co.uk/health](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health)
3. [www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org)

## Accountability

1. Have a discussion with your wife about being a helicopter parent
2. Challenge whether you are being child-centric or a helicopter parent

## Author(s)

Chris Bergman

## Additional Resources

Helicopter parenting refers to a style of parents who are over focused on their children. Often called over parenting, it is most often applied to parents of high school or college-aged students.

Some studies show that "helicopter parents" derived more happiness and meaning from parenthood than those who were less involved. A different term to describe these parents might be "child-centric".

Here are some tips that parents can consider if they feel their kids are starting to make "the wrong kind of friends":

Parents can refrain from calling their kids' friends "bad." Since most people are not all bad, parents tend to lose credibility with their kids by calling their child's friend "bad," especially if that friend has ever done anything good for their kid.

Parents can ask their kids what they like about that specific friend. Not only will this show their child that they are interested in him or her and in their friends, but it will also give the parent information about what need the relationship with that friend is fulfilling for their child. Then parents might do things in order to help see that that need gets met in positive ways. Open, and non-judgmental, communication with kids about their friends can strengthen parent-child relationships and provide support for their kids as their kids learn to take responsibility for their own choices.

Parents can send messages to their kids that show confidence and leadership by saying things like, "That kid looks like he could use some good friends. I hope a lot of you rubs off on him. He is lucky to have a friend like you. I think it would be helpful if I got to know him; why don't you bring him around the house more."

Child-Centric Parenting (or is it Helicopter Parenting?)

Finally, parents can wrap their arms around the concerning kid and help that kid feel included and a sense of belonging. Many of the kids who concern parents may not come from stable homes or feel a sense of belonging or connectedness. Healthy adults have a great opportunity to reach out to these kids and help them feel that they do matter and they do belong. They can do so by inviting these kids to participate in family events or by simply inviting them to eat with the family. Good food can have a powerful and comforting effect on kids who lack stability.

# Defending Marriage

## Summary

Charitably defending the definition of marriage can be challenging with the current trends in society, how do we do it?

## Objective

The Catholic Church views marriage as not merely a necessary union in order to create more humans, but in fact as a holy covenant between a man and a woman which mirrors the relationship of Christ and His Church.

Marriage is the lifelong union of a husband and wife. It is timeless, universal, and unique, and benefits society – especially children – in ways no other relationship can. That’s why marriage policy is rooted in the reality that children need a mother and a father. While not every husband and wife will have children, every child still has, needs, and deserves a mom and a dad.

## Bible Readings

1. Genesis 2:22-24

Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

2. Mark 10:6-9

"But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

## Catechism Readings

1. 1625

The parties to a marriage covenant are a baptized man and woman, free to contract marriage, who freely express their consent; "to be free" means:

- not being under constraint;
- not impeded by any natural or ecclesiastical law.

2. 1604

God who created man out of love also calls him to love—the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love. <sup>90</sup> Since God created him man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man. It is good, very good, in the Creator's eyes. And this love which God blesses is intended to be fruitful and to be realized in the common work of watching over creation: "And God blessed them, and God said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.'"

### **Small Group Questions**

1. With the constant exposure to modern, politically correct media how do we teach our children that supporting traditional marriage is not being intolerant or mean?
2. How do we explain our position to our more liberal friends, and remain friends?

### **Author(s)**

Jack Voet

# No Regrets - 10 Ways to Make Time for Your Children

## Summary

Live every day if it were your last! How do you as a Father balance your faith, family and work in this hurried world, every day? Learn how Father's just like you are living a daily life of no regrets: making more memories with their family, deepening their faith and coming home from work on time!

## Objective

Help the Fathers to understand "How to Live a life of no regrets with your family" by learning how to spend more time with their children and family. It is suggested for the presenting small group, to focus the larger group time by sharing your team's personal "live a life of no regrets" experiences/examples on how you each have made a "step change" in your life to spend more time with family and your children.

## Bible Readings

1. Psalm 112  
"His children will be mighty in the land"
2. Romans 8:28  
"We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."

## Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2223  
"Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery - the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the "material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones." Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them."

## Small Group Questions

1. Do you regularly come home on time from work to your family and children?
2. Are your children's birthdays, recitals, soccer games, plays, etc. on your work calendar?
3. Do you schedule breakfast dates with your daughter/son?

## Recommended Resources

1. Robert Rogers - <http://www.mightyintheland.com>
2. Mary Beth Bonacci - Catholic Herald - Living Life with "no regrets"  
[http://www.catholicherald.com/stories/Living-with-no-regrets,12859?content\\_source=&category\\_id=13&search\\_filter=&event\\_mode=&event\\_ts\\_from=&list\\_type=&order\\_by=&order\\_sort=&content\\_class=&sub\\_type=stories&town\\_id=](http://www.catholicherald.com/stories/Living-with-no-regrets,12859?content_source=&category_id=13&search_filter=&event_mode=&event_ts_from=&list_type=&order_by=&order_sort=&content_class=&sub_type=stories&town_id=)

## Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to define "what is quality time with your family?"
2. Have you allowed any person or circumstance at work to rob you of your joy? Why?
3. Have you done your 100% best with your family, faith and job this week?

## Author(s)

Reid Rooney / Kevin McDonough

## Included Resources

Robert Rogers: 10 ways to live a life with no regrets with your family.

1. Sign-up for some organized activity together-chess club, a sports league, church groups, and so on as your free time activity that way, you can use the structure of the activity to help you spend time with your child.
2. Put birthdays, a recital, soccer games, plays, etc. on your work calendar. Tell co-workers that you wouldn't miss those events for the world, and ask them to help remind you.
3. Create regular rituals to connect with your kids with phone calls from the office, special "daddy" time when you walk in the door, or other weekly events that keep you in touch.
4. Discuss your priorities with your boss. Be candid with him or her about times when you need to flex your schedule for family events. Make it clear that you are dedicated to doing your best at work, but that family is also very important to you. Suggest your own "win-win" solutions or ask for his ideas to help reach a workable balance.
5. Create a "Next Year's Vacation" planning session with your children by having them share with your pictures/places of where they want to go and how they want to spend time with Dad on vacation!
6. Create a family devotional time. This is a time set aside during a time where all members of the family are required to be there. Then you as a father take the lead in sharing important things with your family. Read passages in Holy Scripture and pray together; share thoughts on certain historical events (Memorial Day) and what they should mean to us; talk about current events; peer pressure the kids are facing or how to look forward to an uncertain future with confidence.
7. As the Father, make the weekend Saturday or Sunday breakfast and have your kids help out as appropriate. Talk as you all prepare the meal about what was their "favorite thing" that happened in their life during the week.
8. Car Time. When traveling to the next sporting or activity event, instead of listening to the radio, try spending time with your kids by discussing with them: 1) What was the best part of today?; 2) What was your favorite thing that happened to you this week; 3) Tell me about something really cool that you saw today/this week?
9. Have a Breakfast time with Daddy with your children individually. No agenda's just go out to breakfast and spend time with your child 1 on 1. Do you know their favorite song, favorite teacher, who they think is the coolest kid @ school, who are the coolest parents, etc?
10. Support your company's "Take your children to work day". If your company does not have it, consider starting one. Many Cincinnati based companies like P&G, Kroger, and Macy's have established "Take your children to work" programs.

## 10 tips to make more time with your Children

Parents and their children are spending less time interacting with each other. As a result, many children are getting less personal love and attention than their parents did. American Demographics reported that parents today spend roughly 40 percent less time with their children than did parents a generation ago. To help families stay connected, below is a list of helpful family time tips. Keep in mind, quantity and quality time is important when choosing activities. So build memories around exciting events by keeping your family time creative and enjoyable. Print out the following tips as daily reminders.

1. Eat together & listen to each other

Most children today don't know the meaning of a family dinnertime. Yet the communication and unity built during this set-ting is integral to a healthy family life. Sharing a meal together allows the opportunity to talk about each other's lives. This is a time for parents to listen, as well as to give advice and encouragement. Attentive listening conveys a message that a person is really interested in another. It also imparts a sense of worth and helps develop trust. Therefore, listening is a critical link in successful parenting.

## 2. Read often

It's important for parents to read to their children. The latest research indicates that reading to your children cultivates an interest for knowledge and stimulates language development. It also increases their attention spans and helps them become more curious. Look for books that your child would enjoy reading. After reading, ask questions about the content.

## 3. Do chores together

Part of what goes on in the home is the development of teamwork. Functional family life depends on the contribution of everyone. Assigning chores is the most productive way of teaching responsibility and accountability to your children. Doing chores with your child will help foster good communication skills.

## 4. Help with schoolwork

A great way to spend quality time with children and light a fire of learning is to help children with their schoolwork. A parent's eagerness to help will cause a child to become more interested in school thus improving his or her grades. Regular trips to the library for school projects are an inexpensive and enjoyable way to spend time with children. Helping should begin with an understanding that children are responsible for homework. Parents are there to help their child get organized and to encourage them when they get stuck.

## 5. Start a hobby or project

Choose a fun activity that your child is interested in. Activities like cooking, crafts, fishing or biking will make great hobbies that can open the door to exciting family time. Once a child learns a new recipe or is able to cast a lure accurately, let him or her take the lead with your supervision.

## 6. Play games

New technology has made video games more prevalent. As a result, many children are spending long hours in front of the TV playing computer programs. Parents should find creative ways to spark an interest in family-oriented contests such as board games or card games. This will give parents additional time to talk and nurture their relationship.

## 7. Plan a family outing

Sometimes getting out of the house is important. Hop in the family car and go for a drive. Prepare a picnic lunch and visit a local park. Take time to play catch or ride a bike. A stroll in the woods will help parents interact with their children. Also, a visit to the zoo or museum will spark a child's enthusiasm and lead to lengthy discussions.

## 8. Encourage athletic activities

It is vital for children to exercise. Sports not only strengthen the body, but also build character and determination. Whether it's a father pitching a baseball to a son or a mother and daughter nature walking, finding time for athletic events is important for a child's emotional and physical development. This is a great opportunity for a family to interact.

## 9. Create a Family Time calendar

Since many parents have hectic schedules, time with children often becomes a low priority whether intended or not. Post a calendar on the refrigerator and have parents and children pencil in special events. Knowing when you're going to meet may also help you think of creative activities. Commit to keeping this schedule free from interruptions.

## 10. Pray together & attend a house of worship

Nothing is more special than taking a few minutes each day to pray with a child before bedtime. By explaining the purpose behind prayer, children will learn the importance of faith as the foundation for the family. Also, when parents go to religious services, they instill in their children a reverence for God.

# Evangelization

## Summary

Preach the Gospel at all costs, and if necessary use words.

## Objective

Evangelization might be said to be the sharing of the Gospel. And in particular it is the sharing of God's love as He has shown to you in your life. Some say that evangelization is not teaching nor preaching, but one's own testimony. How can anyone argue with that? We can get all caught up in not thinking that we are equipped well enough to *evangelize*. Or we might feel like we struggle too much in our own lives on a particular topic, and therefore can't preach what we don't practice well.

These thoughts and feelings are not where God wants us to focus. He wants us to reflect on the people, things and events in our lives where we have had an encounter with Him... Our story. We all have a story. And evangelizing is being prepared and willing to share our story. Primarily, we need to strive to live out the love, generosity, kindness, strength (all the virtues) of God... Preach the Gospel at all costs, and if necessary, use words." (some attribute this to St Francis of Assisi). When we need to use words, one way to evangelize is to be ready with a "3 Minute Testimony" where the 1<sup>st</sup> minute is spent on what our life was like before our encounter with God, the 2<sup>nd</sup> minute spent on the encounter, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> minute on what our life is like now. (See example at end of topic in Included Resources.)

And there are many times where we can point out where God has touched us in our lives in significant ways. For EACH of these times, we might have a three minute testimony ready to pull out of our toolbox of evangelical tools.

## Bible Readings

1. Matthew 28: 18-20

<sup>18</sup> Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

2. Mark 5:19

And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."

3. 1 John 5:10

Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.

## Catechism Readings

### 1. 848

Although in ways known to himself God can lead those who, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of the Gospel, to that faith without which it is impossible to please him, the Church still has the obligation and also the sacred right to evangelize all men."<sup>338</sup>

### 2. 849

*The missionary mandate.* "Having been divinely sent to the nations that she might be 'the universal sacrament of salvation,' the Church, in obedience to the command of her founder and because it is demanded by her own essential universality, strives to preach the Gospel to all men":<sup>339</sup> "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and Lo, I am with you always, until the close of the age."<sup>340</sup>

## Small Group Questions

1. Who has been an impactful witness to you in your life?
2. What is it about them that attracted you to God?
3. When was the last time you shared with a coworker or even a stranger your story or your faith?

## Recommended Resources

1. Evangelical Catholicism by George Weigel
2. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* by Pope Paul VI
3. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/evangelization/>
4. The New Evangelization:  
<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/>

## Accountability

1. Jot down your story and practice it with someone.
2. Practice it in the following weeks in small group.

## Author(s)

Bob Walton

## Included Resources

Example. When I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade my teacher asked us to give some pet peeves. While others gave ideas of fingernails screeching on a chalkboard and missing a free throw, I told her that my pet peeve was to be looking for something and forget what I was looking for. The pet peeve struck a chord with her, but it is the story of my life. When my dad died in 7<sup>th</sup> grade I remember being grateful that he was around as long as he was, and I wanted to make him proud of me. I thought the best way to make him proud of me was to be happy. I decided I was going to be happy by obtaining all those things I saw around me that other people said was making them happy. So In high school I wanted to run my own business, have a beautiful wife and kids, a spreading mansion with big picture windows, and a fishing lake. Fast forward after college and I was well on my way to getting a lot of those things. But I was still missing something. I still wasn't happy, and I forgot what I was looking for.

At the same time I started going to a nondenominational bible study and I met friends that were fun to be around (camping, picnics, songs, and good conversations). So I told my mom (over the phone) that I was thinking of leaving the Catholic Church and going somewhere else (that was more fun). She poked her finger in my chest (over the phone), and told me that if I leave I will find something else that I don't like in another church. If I wanted the Catholic Church to be fun, the Catholic Church will allow for it. She told me that I can *make* a difference and that I can *be* a difference for myself and for those around me. I knew she was right, so I decided to get involved with the youth group at my local Catholic Church.

As it stands now, I run my own small business, I have an incredibly loving wife and 6 great children. But there is something else that I found. The joy of Christ. And the peace that comes from knowing the love of God. My life is not perfect, nor am I perfect. But I know that I have a friend that I can go to at any time with my joys and struggles. A friend in Jesus that will take me back any and every time I fail. And a Father that I pray says "well done, good and faithful servant."

## Taking care of ourselves physically, emotionally

### Summary

We take care of our family and our responsibilities at work. What are we doing to take care of ourselves?

### Objective

We have a lot on our plates. We're fathers, husbands, children, friends and employees. Many of us are constantly juggling our responsibilities at work with our responsibilities at home. We take care of our wives, children, and perhaps parents. Do we take care of ourselves? Our emotional and physical health are interconnected – good physical health promotes good emotional health and vice versa. As we maintain healthy physical and emotional lives, we are better prepared to minister to our loved ones. What are we doing to ensure we have good physical and emotional health?

### Bible Readings

1. 1 Corinthians, Chapter 6, 19

Do you not know that your body is a temple\* of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

2. 1 Corinthians, Chapter 6, 20

For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body.

### Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2288

Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good.

2. Paragraphs 2290

The virtue of temperance disposes us to *avoid every kind of excess*: the abuse of food, alcohol, tobacco, or medicine. Those incur grave guilt who, by drunkenness or a love of speed, endanger their own and others' safety on the road, at sea, or in the air.

### Small Group Questions

1. Do you make time to work out on a consistent basis?
2. Do you schedule regular appointments with your health care professionals?
3. What are you doing to ensure your wife and children lead healthy lives?

### Recommended Resources

1. <http://healthpsychology.org/health-psychology-promotes-emotional-and-physical-health/>
2. <http://www.everydayhealth.com/emotional-health/understanding/index.aspx>
3. "Younger Next Year" by Chris Crowley & Henry S. Lodge, MD

## Accountability

1. Take a health risk assessment if offered by your insurance company.
2. Commit to starting an exercise routine. Invite your wife or a friend to join you to ensure accountability.
3. Commit to making changes to improve your diet.
4. What skills/behaviors will promote an emotionally healthy you? eg: Meditation

## Author(s)

Ken Mai

Revised 2014/Walt Moll

## Included Resources

<http://healthpsychology.org/health-psychology-promotes-emotional-and-physical-health/>

Health Psychology Promotes Emotional and Physical Health

Written by [Dr. Cheryl MacDonald, RN, Psy'D.](#) on July 28, 2011 in [Health](#) - [No comments](#)

A *Health Psychology* belief is with developing an understanding of how biological, sociological, environmental and cultural factors relate to *physical and emotional health*. Studies are beginning to explain that negative emotions such as anger, rage, depression, anxiety, jealousy and envy, have a connection to one's physical condition. One common example of the mind-body relationship is when people experience anxiety or stress the blood pressure rises. Complete health depends on a healthy mind and body, and I will be explaining the basic understanding of this relationship along with providing a few tips to maintain health.

### What is the Physical Connection between Mind and Body?

There is a physical connection between what the mind is thinking and those parts of the brain that control bodily functions. According to Charles Goodstein, MD, clinical professor of psychiatry, New York University School of Medicine, the brain directly connects to the endocrine system, which secretes hormones or chemicals that can have a powerful influence on emotional health. "Thoughts and feelings that generate within the mind can influence the outpouring of hormones from the endocrine system, which in effect controls much of what goes on within the body," says Dr. Goodstein.

Simply put, to be healthy people must take care of not only their emotional health, but also their physical health. If one is neglected, the other will suffer. People who visit their doctors reporting symptoms of headache, lethargy, weakness, or vague abdominal symptoms often end up with the diagnosis of depression; even though they may not discuss feelings associated with depression. While sad or anxious feelings may not directly cause poor physical health, they are certainly contributing factors associated with physical health and an individual's quality of life.

The field of health psychology focuses on promoting health which includes the prevention and treatment of physical diseases. The Health Psychologists focus is on understanding how people react, cope and recover from illness, along with improving the quality of lives of people with chronic and terminal illnesses. When there is little hope of recovery, it is the health psychologist who can improve the quality of life by helping people work with the loss and recover at least some sense of emotional well-being. One other interest is with identifying the best ways for providing therapeutic services for the bereaved in coping with the loss of a loved one.

### Tips for Taking Care of Emotional and Physical Health

Take care of yourself physically. Many people do not understand the fact that when they take care of themselves physically, they take care of themselves emotionally. There is a relationship between neglecting

Taking care of ourselves physically, emotionally

the body and the development of emotional and physical problems. This neglect creates a toxic cycle. To end this cycle, strengthen the body with enough rest, food, and liquids. Make sure that there is enough air, nutritious food and exercise in your life. Warm and refresh yourself when needed. Eat right; a healthy, proper diet is beneficial for the body and mind. Research has proven that exercise improves mood and has numerous benefits for physical and emotional health. I am aware that this is limited information; however, many people do not understand these basic facts. People do not have to be perfect and try to not to let physical care become an obsession, which may then become a problem. Consider the fact that when people ignore the physical needs of their body this abandonment will create an emotional and a physical problem, which in turn creates a toxic life cycle. Therefore, people feel physically and emotionally unstable.

**Pay attention to body signals.** When the body is in need of something, we experience feelings that correspond to what their body is lacking. One example of ignoring a signal is when people do not pay attention to hunger when trying to loose weight and they begin to starve themselves. This starvation, in turn, slows down the metabolism and will in the long run prevent weight loss. The body sends messages when to eat, sleep, relax, calm down, play and comfort ourselves. Go to bed on time. Loosing sleep is hard on the heart, may increase weight, and undeniably sparks up the crankiness meter. Do not ignore the protective bodily signals. Listen to what it is saying.

**Be socially active.** The bottom line is that love and attention are almost as valuable as the air that we breathe. Most will crave it unless they receive it, so seek it out, for your emotional health. Take time out for relaxation and socializing as this is beneficial for emotional and physical health. Give and receive love and attention to both others and yourself. As quoted, from C.J. Lewis, "Affection is responsible for nine-tenths of whatever solid and durable happiness there is in our lives". People are social beings from birth to death.

**Take care of yourself with relaxation.** People should be spending a third of their time on leisure and/or play. Relaxation is another form of nurturing mental health as the mind needs the opportunity to re-charge. People also need time to process or understand thoughts and feelings. If people stay busy all of the time, then they are not giving themselves enough time to process and strengthen the mind and body. If a third of your time is too much to ask for, then at least set aside an hour or two a day, just for you. Set aside some time to relax and have fun.

**When you fail at something have the courage to try again.** Everyone makes mistakes in life. Try to work at forgiving yourself for making those mistakes. Trying again improves self esteem and creates an overall sense of feeling empowered, which in turn increases endorphins, thereby lifting mood.

**Visit the appropriate Doctor, the one that is the perfect match for your condition.** Going to the right doctor can make all the difference in overall health, especially if there is a complex illness that requires a specialist. Try to be open to seeing a mental health professional, if feelings and emotions are getting in the way of recovery.

How do people get in touch with their body?

Take deep breaths and listen to what your body is saying. Once people are in touch with the feeling, they then need to determine how they are going to manage or control the feeling. Sometimes feelings are not true or based on facts, and people can perceive situations incorrectly, as they are of the imagination. If the feeling is not based on facts, then attempt to undo this misperception, as people are only hurting themselves. Try not to get caught up with feelings of shame and guilt as these emotions are a waste of valuable time and for most of us are by products of the imagination.

However, for short periods of time if the imagination or dreaming makes people happy, it is acceptable to enjoy the feeling. Just remember that this is wishful thinking and that people are tricking themselves into feeling pleasure. To learn new ways to cope with feelings, start with a small baby step. For example, if there is a problem with anger, attempt to be aware of the feeling, and take a few deep breaths before reacting.

Health Psychology Promotes Emotional and Physical Health

Health psychology principles' and cognitive behavioral therapies continue to be overlooked by the general population and the medical profession. These methods require the physician to be aware of other successful treatment modalities. Health Psychology requires individuals to make a commitment to take responsibility for their own physical and emotional health. Until health psychology principles are accepted by the medical community and until the client begins to follow these principles, the emotional and physical condition will continue to ravage the mind and body.

In conclusion, unhealthy behaviors, from smoking cigarettes and poor diet, to living a sedentary lifestyle and having poor coping skills, are all significant factors leading to death and disability. Take the time to care for

Taking care of ourselves physically, emotionally

both the mind and body. People can make positive, healthy changes in their life by learning specific skills. Practice the above, few steps consistently in life and over time people will indeed notice improvements in their physical and emotional well being. This is the joyful news!

<http://www.everydayhealth.com/emotional-health/understanding/index.aspx>

## Happiness and Emotional Well-Being

*A healthy diet and exercise are great for your body, but don't neglect your emotional health and well-being. Reducing stress, getting enough sleep, and having fun are all ways to find happiness.*

By Diana Rodriguez

Medically reviewed by Pat F. Bass III, MD, MPH

When your mind is frazzled and stressed, and your emotions are taking over your thoughts and affecting your everyday activities, it's time to take a step back, take a deep breath, and relax. Of course focusing on your physical health is crucial, but so is treating your mind and spirit to the same attention. Your happiness goes a long way in protecting your overall well-being.

### Happiness and Well-Being: Why It's Important

Emotions are one aspect of a person's health that often get neglected. But if your **emotional health** is suffering, your physical health will too.

Your emotional health is just a term for how you feel — your overall happiness and well-being. Are you stressed? Unhappy? Unsatisfied? Worried and anxious? Then your emotional health needs some serious attention, or your body will start paying the price.

### Happiness and Well-Being: How It Feels

Being emotionally healthy is a huge plus. People with good emotional health:

Believe that there is a good balance to their life between leisure time, activity, and work

Feel good about themselves, and don't suffer from self-esteem issues

Believe that there is a purpose to their lives

Are able to accept changes better and just go with the flow

Enjoy living, and know the value of fun and laughter

Have less stress, and are better equipped to deal with **stress**

Have better **relationships** with others

Are contented with their lives

### Happiness and Well-Being: When All's Not Well

"If we do not care for ourselves, frustration, tension, anger, and poor health can develop," says Sally R. Connolly, a clinical social worker, therapist and co-founder of CounselingRelationshipsOnline.com, an online counseling service.

Even when you know how important it is to take good care of your emotions, it can still be a tall order. It can be tough to find time for yourself, and some people may feel guilty about pampering or spoiling themselves from time to time. Others may just ignore their feelings and stressors and hope they just go away. However, they usually don't — and at some point, unaddressed emotional problems often result in serious consequences, from illness to relationship problems to harmful behavior.

"Many of us, women especially, have the irrational belief that caring for ourselves or putting our own mental and emotional health first is selfish," says Connolly. "Women are reared to be caregivers and usually put themselves last."

### Happiness and Well-Being: Getting Started

Taking care of ourselves physically, emotionally

Make a decision to do something nice for yourself every day and stick to it.

"For many people it has to be a conscious process," says Connolly. "They must take time to do it. I often recommend some simple ritual as a way of honoring themselves." She recommends something as simple as daily meditation to inspire peace and relaxation.

Other rituals might involve:

Getting up a few minutes early to drink your morning coffee in peace

Taking a walk every day

Having regularly scheduled events with close friends or family

Finding time to be alone with your spouse

## **Happiness and Well-Being: Tips for Emotional Health**

Focusing on your emotional health isn't hard, but it may be an adjustment for you. Some simple — and really enjoyable — changes are all it takes to boost happiness and well-being. Follow these ideas to strengthen your emotional health:

**Exercise.** It protects physical and emotional health, relieves stress, and makes you feel good.

**Make time for laziness.** You don't have to be constantly on the go — that's how you get run down. Spend a little time each day or each week doing something you enjoy that is completely frivolous. For example, watch TV or a silly movie, chat on the phone, play a game, or just listen to music.

**Spend some time in the sun.** With sunscreen, of course. But sunlight is a great natural way to boost your mood.

**Deal with your emotions.** Learn how to properly deal with stress, anger, and anxiety instead of keeping them bottled up inside.

**Be healthy inside.** This means avoiding junk food and sticking to a healthy diet. You should also steer clear of smoking, drug use, and too much alcohol.

**Treat your senses.** Do little things that make you happy and stimulate your senses, like lighting a scented candle, buying some fresh-cut flowers, indulging in a [massage](#), or treating yourself to your favorite food or drink.

**Sleep.** Everyone gets cranky without enough sleep, so dedicate adequate sleep time every night. Or treat yourself to a nap every now and then.

**Be creative.** Spend some time learning new things, like a new language or skill (for example, music or knitting). Even just working in your garden can help you relax and feel satisfied.

**Adopt an animal.** Pets offer fun, relaxation, and a whole lot of love. They can encourage you to exercise, and tear your attention away from stressful activities.

The bottom line is pretty simple: take time for happiness. Allow yourself to enjoy life, fun, and relaxation. Be thankful for what you have, and enjoy it.

## Shared Dreams...Got'em?

### Summary

You might have dreams. Your wife might have dreams. But do they align? More importantly, do you have some common dreams? Shared dreams aren't realized by accident, they take work and communication.

### Objective

We jobs, met, got married, bought a house, had children, etc. and started to do what we had to do every day. We became doers instead of dreamers. Perhaps we need to make time to dream again. Perhaps we need to take time to go beyond our daily routine. A relationship without goals (dreams) or a common vision is subject entirely to external influences, regardless of whether they are desirable or not.

Developing dreams as a couple ensures that you always have something common to work toward. Assess the state of the dreams we have (if any) with our wives. Share a process to help explore, develop, and pursue our shared dreams.

### Bible Readings

#### 1. 1 Kings 3:5-15

5 In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said: Whatever you ask I shall give you. 6 Solomon answered: "You have shown great kindness to your servant, David my father, because he walked before you with fidelity, justice, and an upright heart; and you have continued this great kindness toward him today, giving him a son to sit upon his throne. 7 Now, LORD, my God, you have made me, your servant, king to succeed David my father; but I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act— 8 I, your servant, among the people you have chosen, a people so vast that it cannot be numbered or counted. 9 Give your servant, therefore, a listening heart to judge your people and to distinguish between good and evil. For who is able to give judgment for this vast people of yours?" 10 The Lord was pleased by Solomon's request. 11 So God said to him: Because you asked for this—you did not ask for a long life for yourself, nor for riches, nor for the life of your enemies—but you asked for discernment to know what is right— 12 I now do as you request. I give you a heart so wise and discerning that there has never been anyone like you until now, nor after you will there be anyone to equal you. 13 In addition, I give you what you have not asked for: I give you such riches and glory that among kings there will be no one like you all your days. 14 And if you walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and commandments, as David your father did, I will give you a long life. 15 Solomon awoke; it was a dream! He went to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, sacrificed burnt offerings and communion offerings, and gave a feast for all his servants.

#### 2. Luke 14:28-33

28 Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? 29 Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him 30 and say, 'This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.' 31 Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down and decide whether with ten thousand troops he can successfully oppose another king advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops? 32 But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms. 33 In the same way, everyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.

#### 3. Philippians 3:12-16

12 It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ [Jesus]. 13 Brothers, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us, then, who are "perfectly mature" adopt this attitude. And if you

have a different attitude, this too God will reveal to you. 16 Only, with regard to what we have attained, continue on the same course.

## Catechism Reading

### 1. Paragraph 1605

Holy Scripture affirms that man and woman were created for one another: "It is not good that the man should be alone." The woman, "flesh of his flesh," his equal, his nearest in all things, is given to him by God as a "helpmate"; she thus represents God from whom comes our help. "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." The Lord himself shows that this signifies an unbreakable union of their two lives by recalling what the plan of the Creator had been "in the beginning": "So they are no longer two, but one flesh."

## Small Group Questions

1. Do you have individual dreams? Does your wife have dreams?
2. Do you have shared dreams? If so, how did you develop them?
3. How do you review and update your dreams?

## Recommended Resources

1. The Dream Manager by Matthew Kelly
2. <http://www.simplemarriage.net/dream-together.html>
3. [http://www.goalsettingstrategies.com/goals\\_for\\_marriages.html](http://www.goalsettingstrategies.com/goals_for_marriages.html)
4. <http://marriageisacommithment.wordpress.com/2013/02/09/goals-in-marriage-why-bother/>
5. <http://www.maritalmediation.com/2011/10/tips-for-setting-goals-with-your-spouse/>

## Accountability

1. Set aside some time this week to plan a "dream sharing" meeting with your wife.

## Author(s)

Steve Frazer (updated Walt Moll, Tony Heekin, & Sean Mullarkey)

## Included Resources

### Why are Dreams important to me and my wife?

What are your dreams? What are your wife's dreams? If you don't know the answer to these questions you have a great opportunity to know yourself and your wife better. Dreams are invisible but powerful. You cannot see them but they keep everything going. Your life may not be easier when you are actively dreaming, but it will be more exciting when you include your dreams in your daily routines.

The heart of every marriage is rooted in communications. When you and your wife have open communications your marriage has the fabric to be strong, happy, and exciting.

To paraphrase Matthew Kelly's terminology, to be the best version of yourself, and to have the best version of your marriage, get beyond your daily routine. A great way to get beyond your daily routine is to tap into your individual and shared dreams.

So if we are looking for a great way to open additional doors for communications with our wives it seems sharing our dreams is made to order to do just that.

## How do I share my dreams?

The first step to initiate sharing dreams with your wife is to get a Dream Book. This is a notebook dedicated to recording and following up on your individual and shared dreams.

Now that you have your Dream Book take some time to write your dreams in the book. You might find it easier to write individually at first and then discuss your individual dreams. When it comes to your shared dreams, you will probably want to meet together to talk about your dreams as you record them. Organize your Dream Book to meet your needs as a couple.

The most important step is to write your dreams. The process of writing and sharing your dreams helps to make them real, and achievable. To help a new dreamer get started Matthew Kelly suggested these categories.

Physical	Material	Legacy
Psychological	Adventure	Spiritual
Creative	Intellectual	Financial
Emotional	Professional	Character

Remember, nothing is too wild or wonderful. There are no limitations.

Now that you are meeting with your wife, sharing your dreams; you'll need to do some prioritization to help you focus on the dreams you agree are most important now. Be sure and schedule your next dreaming meeting as a part of each session.

The process of writing, discussing, and prioritizing your dreams will provide the additional communications SHARED DREAMS promised.

## Our Dreams help make us great!

"Never underestimate the power of your dreams and the power of the human spirit.  
The potential for greatness lives within each of us."

- Wilma Rudolph (Olympic Gold Medalist)

"To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream, not only plan, but also believe."

- Anatole France

"A person is not old until their regrets take the place of their dreams."

- John Barrymore

"When you write things down, they sometimes take you places you hadn't planned."

- Melanie Benjamin

"Believe you can and you're halfway there."

-Theodore Roosevelt

"I once had a dream, or should I say, my dream once had me." -

- Beatles

Here is a form that might help bring dreams to reality. Once you have a dream prioritized as important, you and your wife might take the time to complete this detailed plan.

## Dream Detail

What do you want to accomplish? Be specific.

What is the schedule? Set a deadline.

What is the estimated cost?

What action steps do you need to take?

1-

2-

3-

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4-

5-

To keep yourself on track remember, why is this relevant?

# Are the Saints Relevant?

## Summary

Are the Saints relevant? Is asking for their intercession truly beneficial or is it superstition?

## Objective

Our purpose in life should be to make it to heaven...

To be with God.

Forever.

With all others who make it to heaven.

Who of us doesn't need help? Raise your hand if you can get there alone.

The Church teaches us that it (the Church) exists in 3 forms:

1. Those in heaven in full communion with God, praising God, who love us dearly, and who intercede for us,
2. Those still going through the tribulations of the world, in the process of learning to love God,
3. Those who have already gone through the tribulations of this world, but are not yet ready to be presented before God (those in purgatory).

The focus of "Are the Saints Relevant?" is on the purpose of those in heaven in full communion with God, interceding for us. (see section on "Included Resources")

## Bible Readings

1. Luke 5:19 (Luke 5:12-26)

But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle *of the crowd*, in front of Jesus

2. Psalm 103, 20-21

Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word! Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will!"

3. Psalm 148

"Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the heights! Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his host!"

## Catechism Readings

### 1. 2683

The witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom,<sup>41</sup> especially those whom the Church recognizes as saints, share in the living tradition of prayer by the example of their lives, the transmission of their writings, and their prayer today. They contemplate God, praise him and constantly care for those whom they have left on earth. When they entered into the joy of their Master, they were “put in charge of many things.”<sup>42</sup> Their intercession is their most exalted service to God’s plan. We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world. (956)

### 2. 2684

In the communion of saints, many and varied *spiritualities* have been developed throughout the history of the churches. The personal charism of some witnesses to God’s love for men has been handed on, like “the spirit” of Elijah to Elisha and John the Baptist, so that their followers may have a share in this spirit.<sup>43</sup> A distinct spirituality can also arise at the point of convergence of liturgical and theological currents, bearing witness to the integration of the faith into a particular human environment and its history. The different schools of Christian spirituality share in the living tradition of prayer and are essential guides for the faithful. In their rich diversity they are refractions of the one pure light of the Holy Spirit. (917, 919, 1202) The Spirit is truly the dwelling of the saints and the saints are for the Spirit a place where he dwells as in his own home, since they offer themselves as a dwelling place for God and are called his temple.

### 3. 2030

It is in the Church, in communion with all the baptized, that the Christian fulfills his vocation. From the Church he receives the Word of God containing the teachings of “the law of Christ.”<sup>72</sup> From the Church he receives the grace of the sacraments that sustains him on the “way.” From the Church he learns the *example of holiness* and recognizes its model and source in the all-holy Virgin Mary; he discerns it in the authentic witness of those who live it; he discovers it in the spiritual tradition and long history of the saints who have gone before him and whom the liturgy celebrates in the rhythms of the sanctoral cycle. (828, 1172)

### 4. 946-959

After confessing “the holy catholic Church,” the Apostles’ Creed adds “the communion of saints.” In a certain sense this article is a further explanation of the preceding: “What is the Church if not the assembly of all the saints?”<sup>479</sup> The communion of saints is the Church. (823)

### 5. 828

By *canonizing* some of the faithful, i.e., by solemnly proclaiming that they practiced heroic virtue and lived in fidelity to God’s grace, the Church recognizes the power of the Spirit of holiness within her and sustains the hope of believers by proposing the saints to them as models and intercessors.<sup>303</sup> “The saints have always been the source and origin of renewal in the most difficult moments in the Church’s history.”<sup>304</sup> Indeed, “holiness is the hidden source and infallible measure of her apostolic activity and missionary zeal.”<sup>305</sup> (1173, 2045)

## Small Group Questions

1. Which saint do you like the most, or are the most interested in? Why?
2. Do you believe that that saint is able to go before God and intercede for you on your behalf?

Are the Saints Relevant?

## Recommended Resources

1. A list of patron saints: <http://www.catholic.org/saints/patron.php?letter=A>
2. Google search on Novenas

## Author(s)

Bob Walton

## Included Resources

<http://www.catholic.com/tracts/the-intercession-of-the-saints>

Fundamentalists often challenge the Catholic practice of asking saints and angels to pray on our behalf. But the Bible directs us to invoke those in heaven and ask them to pray with us.

Thus, in Psalm 103 we pray, "Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word! Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will!" (Ps. 103:20–21). And in the opening verses of Psalms 148 we pray, "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the heights! Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his host!"

Not only do those in heaven pray *with* us, they also pray *for* us. In the book of Revelation, John sees that "the twenty-four elders [the leaders of the people of God in heaven] fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Rev. 5:8). Thus the saints in heaven offer to God the prayers of the saints on earth.

Angels do the same thing: "[An] angel came and stood at the altar [in heaven] with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne; and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God" (Rev. 8:3–4).

Jesus himself warned us not to offend small children, because their guardian angels have guaranteed intercessory access to the Father: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 18:10).

Because he is the only God-man and the Mediator of the New Covenant, Jesus is the only mediator between man and God (1 Tim. 2:5), but this in no way means we cannot or should not ask our fellow Christians to pray with us and for us (1 Tim. 2:1–4). In particular, we should ask the intercession of those Christians in heaven, who have already had their sanctification completed, for "[t]he prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects" (Jas. 5:16).

As the following passages show, the early Church Fathers not only clearly recognized the biblical teaching that those in heaven can and do intercede for us, but they also applied this teaching in their own daily prayer life.

# How to Practice Your Faith during the Work Week

## Summary

As men of faith, we are able to conduct ourselves as Christians at Mass on Sunday, during Friday morning Fathers' Team meetings and even at home with our families. It gets more difficult in the hardscrabble working world where secular values predominate. Explore ways to "preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words" with the boss, coworkers, clients, etc. who may not share our values.

## Objective

If you think about it, most of us will likely spend the majority of our adult lives in the workplace. A typical eight hour work day accounts for 1/3rd of the total day, with the other 2/3rds devoted to sleeping, family, friends, faith, etc. In the practice of our faith, do we consider the workplace as an opportunity to be open about our Catholic beliefs or do we ignore this vital time and only think about being Catholic the other 16 hours a day?

## Bible Readings

1. Matthew 5:18-19

As Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."

2. Matthew 5: 13-16

You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket: it is set on a lamp stand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

## Catechism Readings

1. 863

The whole Church is apostolic, in that she remains, through the successors of St. Peter and the other apostles, in communion of faith and life with her origin: and in that she is "sent out" into the whole world. All members of the Church share in this mission, though in various ways. "The Christian vocation is, of its nature, a vocation to the apostolate as well." Indeed, we call an apostolate "every activity of the Mystical Body" that aims "to spread the Kingdom of Christ over all the earth."<sup>377</sup>

2. 900

Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth. This duty is the more pressing when it is only through them that men can hear the Gospel and know Christ. Their activity in ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it.<sup>433</sup>

3. 2472

The duty of Christians to take part in the life of the Church impels them to act as witnesses of the Gospel and of the obligations that flow from it. This witness is a transmission of the faith in words and deeds. Witness is an act of justice that establishes the truth or makes it known.

## Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.catholicgentleman.net/2014/03/how-to-be-catholic-in-the-cubicle>
2. <http://www.catholicgentleman.net/2014/03/catholic-in-the-cubicle-part-2-interacting-with-co-workers>
3. <http://www.catholicgentleman.net/2014/04/catholic-in-the-cubicle-part-3-workplace-conflicts>
4. <http://www.catholicgentleman.net/2014/05/catholic-in-the-cubicle-part-4-setting-up-your-work-space>
5. Book: The Catholic Briefcase: Tools for Integrating Faith and Work by Randy Hain (Liguori Press)

## Small Group Questions

1. What will we do differently to be fully Catholic in the workplace and not leave our faith at the door?
2. What are specific impediments to faith sharing at your workplace? What can you do to change those impediments into opportunities for faith sharing?

## Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start comparing our Sunday or Friday morning personalities to our workweek personalities.
2. Have we been a good witness to God's saving love to our co workers and customers?
3. Have we experienced a sense of inner peace because our faith and work lives are more integrated?

## Author(s)

Vince Phelan

## Included Resources

Also by Randy Hain:

<http://www.integratedcatholiclife.org/2012/05/randy-hain-six-practical-ideas-for-integrating-our-catholic-faith-with-work/>

There are numerous obstacles preventing the integration of our faith with our work, but in my experience three of them consistently surface: *Silos*, *Time* and *Surrender*. Let's "unpack" each of these obstacles:

### **Obstacle #1 – Silos**

Does the earlier statement, "I just leave my faith at the door when I get to work" resonate with you? Having operated within silos for my most of my life, I have learned how to recognize this challenge in others and it is very, very common. Yet, I would suggest that many of us desire a more *integrated life*, a life in which Christ is at the center of our daily thoughts and actions at work and at home.

I believe that promoting this integration will help us all become better Christians and reverse the negative effects — emotional, moral, and spiritual — of keeping our faith separate from the rest of our lives. My friend Charlie Douglas, an author, speaker and senior executive with a leading banking institution says: *"Perhaps part of the problem today is that there is a growing cultural demarcation*

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*between the sacred and the secular. Increasingly, love and faith are reserved for Church on Sundays, while the workplace demands a focused self-interest and a competitive edge to survive.”*

Overcoming this obstacle is not easy, but following the guidance I shared earlier from Saint John Paul II’s words in *Christifideles Laici*, we must see our daily activities, including our work, as opportunities to join ourselves to God and serve His will. We all play multiple roles in life: parents, spouses, siblings, leaders, employees, students, etc. But, the most important role and responsibility we have is to be faithful Catholics. Being faithful Catholics in thought, word and deed at all times will allow us to seamlessly unify our lives and transcend our natural tendencies towards compartmentalization. Easy to say, possibly difficult to do... but necessary nonetheless.

### **Obstacle #2 – Time**

Do you struggle, like me, with having enough time each day? Most days my work calendar is completely filled with meetings and phone calls. Outside of the work day, I am focused on helping my wife get the kids ready for school, family dinner time, evening time with the kids, youth sports, bed time reading and prayers with the kids, time with my wife, infrequent exercise, answering emails I couldn’t get to during the day and then falling asleep exhausted after reading three pages of the book that has been on my night stand for three months! Sound familiar?

Now, let’s discuss what is more important than everything else I just mentioned – *Christ and our relationship with Him*. The key here is to recognize that Christ should never compete for our time and that living our busy lives and putting Him first are NOT mutually exclusive! He is not to be considered an addition to our lives... He is the reason for our lives. If we recall the point I made about the need to remove our silos, then we need to integrate our lives with Christ at the center of everything we do instead of viewing the daily practice of our faith as adding more time to already packed schedules.

### **Obstacle #3 – Surrender**

*“Few souls understand what God would accomplish in them if they were to abandon themselves unreservedly to Him and if they were to allow His grace to mold them accordingly.”* – St. Ignatius of Loyola

Surrender – giving up control of your life to Christ, is an enormous obstacle to living out our faith in the workplace or any place for that matter. I remember very well what my life was like before surrendering to the Lord and putting Him first in my life in 2005. All I had was family and work prior to that point and I was in charge (I thought) of my own destiny. I dealt with life’s challenges as they came and pridefully took the credit when things were going well. I thought I was being the strong husband and father that *my* father had been when I was growing up. I thought I was in control. But, God had other plans for me and as St. Bernard said centuries ago, *“He who is his own master is a scholar under a fool.”*

Please know that I still struggle with pride and placing Christ first in every aspect of my life and I have challenges like everyone else. But, knowing that He will forgive me, love me, guide me and bless me keeps me coming back again and again to the place where I pray the words, “I surrender Lord, please lead me.” *Surrendering* to Christ is the key to overcoming the other obstacles of *silos* and *time*.

You may face different challenges to being Catholic at work, but these obstacles have consistently been issues for me and countless others who I have encountered on my faith journey. The point of this article is to find some answers to this critical question:

## Did you get your call from God? Or did it go to Voicemail?

### Summary

- We are all comfortable getting text messages, email messages, voice mail messages and lots of snail mail. But with all that noise and distraction are you missing your call from God? Did it go to voicemail? Do you need to review your messages and listen more carefully?
- Have you determined your real purpose? Do you know what God is asking you to do with your time, talent and treasure?
- We want to spend time discussing how to be receptive for God's call.

### Objective

Ideally, the result of this discussion is to have you more clearly reflect on if and how you are being called to serve God. We hope that after this meeting you will set aside some time alone or with your small team to discern your call. We want you to support each other in hearing and understanding the calls we get from God. We want to look at examples of people in our lives and throughout history who have heard and responded to God's call so we can create the environment in our lives to be receptive to the call when it comes and not let it go to voicemail. There are some things you can do to prepare yourself to hear and understand the call.

### Meeting Discussion

Hearing the call – what are some examples that you have heard that can help sensitize you to better hear the call? We have all heard of people who have been called to serve God, like a former Father's Team member who quit his job at P&G to help Matthew Kelly, Robert Rogers who lost his wife and four young children in a flash flood or priests and deacons that have come in and out of our lives. Consider some of these examples or others that can inspire you to listen harder.

#### Get yourself ready to hear the call.

1. Your relationship with God - Before you can discover God's calling for you specifically, you must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus offers salvation to every person, and he wants to have an intimate friendship with each of his followers, but God reveals a calling only to those who accept him as their Lord and Savior and thus follow his commands in your pursuit of holiness.
2. Above all, know your Bible and saturate your mind with it. - The Bible shapes our minds for mission durability, and makes us burn for Christ. Saint Jerome (a Doctor of the Church) tells us "Ignorance of the Scripture is ignorance of Christ".
3. Know your gifts and know yourself. - Every Christian has gifts. Knowing them shapes your convictions about your calling. And knowing yourself deepens your sense of fitness for various ministries.

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4. Ponder the need of the world. - The Christian heart of love is drawn by perceived needs, whether near or far. Therefore God uses what we know to awaken the measure of our desire that pushes us over the edge of commitment.
5. Know your circumstances- Parents, health, houses, lands, children, age, etc. All of them matter in our calling, but none of them is decisive. They can all be overridden. "I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, to come eternal life".
6. Pray for God to put you where you can be best used for his glory - The point is pray! Ask God to use you to the fullest for his glory and then be quiet and listen.
7. Listen humbly to the spiritual people in your life.- They not only confirm your gifts. They are the instruments of God to awaken in you possibilities and joys of missionary service that you never dreamed.
8. Cultivate absolute surrender of all you are and have to Christ - This is the person that God leads to the greatest fruitfulness of life. Woe to the person who tries to be a half-Christian and never says from the heart: "I renounce everything for you, Lord Jesus. I am willing to go anywhere and do anything at any cost, if you will go with me be my everlasting joy."
9. Your Job is Not Your Calling - You may be surprised to learn that your job is not your calling, and here's why. Most of us change jobs during the course of our life. We may even change careers. If you're in a church-sponsored ministry, even that ministry can end. We will all retire someday. Your job is not your calling, no matter how much it may allow you to serve other people. Your job is an instrument that helps you carry out your calling.
10. Patience is important - We don't recognize our calling overnight; rather, God reveals it to us gradually over the years. As we use our talents and gifts to serve others, we discover certain types of works that **feel right**. They bring us a deep sense of fulfillment and happiness. They feel so natural and good that we know this is what we were **meant** to do.

## Bible Readings

1. Luke 24:32

They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us<sup>3</sup> while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

2. Isaiah 30:21

"And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left."

3. John 10:27

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

4. Luke 14:27

"Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

5. Romans 12:1-2

Did you get your call from God? Or did it go to Voicemail?

"I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

## Catechism Reading

### 1. Paragraph 144

To obey (from the Latin ob-audire, to "hear or listen to") in faith is to submit freely to the word that has been heard, because its truth is guaranteed by God, who is Truth itself. Abraham is the model of such obedience offered us by Sacred Scripture. The Virgin Mary is its most perfect embodiment.

### 2. Paragraph 2653

The Church "forcefully and specially exhorts all the Christian faithful... to learn 'the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ' (Phil 3:8) by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures.... Let them remember, however, that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that a dialogue takes place between God and man. For 'we speak to him when we pray; we listen to him when we read the divine oracles.'"

## Small Group Questions

1. Have you heard a calling yourself?
2. Have you experienced examples of close friends that have been called?
3. What are your plans to prepare yourself to better hear the call for you?

## Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/10-ways-to-determine-gods-calling-in-your-life-1326623.html>
2. <http://christianity.about.com/od/topicalbiblestudies/a/godcalling.htm>
3. [http://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/spiritual\\_development/finding\\_gods\\_will\\_for\\_my\\_life.aspx](http://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/spiritual_development/finding_gods_will_for_my_life.aspx)
4. "Surrender! The Life-changing Power of Doing God's Will" by Fr. Larry Richards (Our Sunday Visitor)
5. "Finding God's Will For You" by St. Francis De Sales (Sophia Press)

## Accountability

1. Talk to your small team members or a close friend to have them hold you accountable over the next month(s) to help you better listen and remind you about exploring your call.

## Author(s)

Rich Del Core/Michael Copfer

Did you get your call from God? Or did it go to Voicemail?

# Drugs and Depression in Today's Youth

## Summary

To understand the signs and effects of drugs and depression in today's Youth, and to know how to respond

## Objective

### Depression, Drugs, and Alcohol

Parents often assume that teens try alcohol and drugs to rebel or to "fit in" with their peer group. However, teens with undiagnosed emotional or behavioral problems often use drugs and alcohol as a way to relieve their frustrations. A depressed teen may self-medicate with alcohol to escape the terrible sense of hopelessness. Unfortunately, alcohol only exacerbates the problem. Drugs like ecstasy and other club-drug uppers may even make them feel "normal" when for weeks they have felt miserable. The impact of such drugs on serotonin, dopamine, and endorphins, chemicals in the brain that regulate mood, can be devastating for children and adolescents. The damage they do to receptors in the brain can make the road back from depression even harder. Often parents approach the issue of drug and alcohol use as simply a discipline issue for a child who is "bad." However, your child may be sick. They may be unable to express to you exactly how they feel. Therefore, contacting a mental health professional such as a psychologist or psychiatrist who specializes in the treatment of adolescents, is your first step in nailing down the source of the problem. If your child is self-medicating to treat depression, anxiety, or other emotional or behavioral disorders, simply applying more discipline and creating more rules will not impact the underlying problem that led to substance abuse in the first place.

### Drugs and Alcohol Can Bring About Depression

While some teens self-medicate to treat depression, other teens end up with a serious mental disorder due to abuse of drugs or alcohol. Abusive drinking or drug use can seriously undermine your child's physical, emotional, and psychological health. Some drugs, such as methamphetamines, can seriously affect the neurotransmitters, which are known as the "messengers of the brain." Recent studies suggest this damage can be long lasting and even permanent. Many teens have the mistaken notion that club drugs are benign. In fact, while they might feel "good" while taking them, they can make it difficult for the child to feel good naturally for a long time to come. The longer children use these drugs, the more difficult treatment and the higher rate of relapse due to their inability to "feel good" or even "normal" because of the damage to their neurotransmitters.

## Bible Readings

1. Galatians 5:16-26

16 I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may

not do what you want. 18 But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, 21 occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ (Jesus) have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit. 26 Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another.

2. Mathew 5:8

8 "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God."

3. Romans 12:21

21 "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

4. Romans 12:21

What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? 36 As it is written: "For your sake we are being slain all the day we are looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things,\* nor future things, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth,\* nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2288

Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God. We must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good.

*Concern for the health* of its citizens requires that society help in the attainment of living-conditions that allow them to grow and reach maturity: food and clothing, housing, health care, basic education, employment, and social assistance.

2. Paragraph 2290

The virtue of temperance disposes us to *avoid every kind of excess*: the abuse of food, alcohol, tobacco, or medicine. Those incur grave guilt who, by drunkenness or a love of speed, endanger their own and others' safety on the road, at sea, or in the air.

3. Paragraph 2291

The *use of drugs* inflicts very grave damage on human health and life. Their use, except on strictly therapeutic grounds, is a grave offense. Clandestine production of and trafficking in drugs are scandalous practices. They constitute direct co-operation in evil, since they encourage people to practices gravely contrary to the moral law.

## Small Group Questions

1. What will you do with this information?
2. How can you protect your family from drugs?

## Recommended Resources

1. <http://family.go.com/parenting/pkg-tween/article-778715-warning-signs-your-teen-is-using-drugs-t/>

2. <http://www.about-teen-depression.com/drugs-alcohol.html>
3. [http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression\\_teen.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_teen.htm)

## **Accountability**

1. This week would be a good time to start talking with my kids about drugs and depression
2. Keep communication open with your kids by showing that you are interested in their lives and the lives of their friends
3. Ask you kid if he/she would like to pray for one of their friends or their friend's family
4. This shows that you care about your kid and their friends.

## **Author(s)**

Jon Stahlberger

## **Included Resources**

1. <http://family.go.com/parenting/pkg-tween/article-778715-warning-signs-your-teen-is-using-drugs-t/>
2. [http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression\\_teen.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_teen.htm)

Is Your Teen Drug Dependent?

Consider these warning signs:

Stressors as noted above.

Change in peer group.

Decrease in school performance.

Staying out late at night.

Breaking house rules.

Secretive behavior.

Fatigue, lethargy and apathy (lack of motivation).

May admit to some drug use, but rationalizes and "enjoys" it.

Adamantly denies drug use in a manner disproportionate to the question.

Normal healthy teens may show a few of these signs anyway, but a drug-dependent youth will show several signs. If you suspect your teen may be drug dependent, you should take action including:

Talk to your teen about your concerns (if non-responsive, you talk; they listen).

Although controversial, consider searching their room for drugs and drug paraphernalia (destroy if found).

Set curfews, limits on behavior and reasonable expectations for appropriate performance.

Look to engage your teen in activities that are fun and incompatible with drug use.

Consider attending counseling with your teen.

Consult your physician.

If your teen is drug dependent, by definition, they are out of control. It will be necessary for you to take control in the short turn at least to help them overcome their dependency. Never fall into the trap of denying their problem, because it is too difficult for you to admit! A drug-dependent teen can use clean and sober parents for support and direction.

Signs and symptoms of depression in teens

Sadness or hopelessness	Restlessness and agitation
Irritability, anger, or hostility	Feelings of worthlessness and guilt
Tearfulness or frequent crying	Lack of enthusiasm and motivation
Withdrawal from friends and family	Fatigue or lack of energy
Loss of interest in activities	Difficulty concentrating
Changes in eating and sleeping habits	Thoughts of death or suicide

If you're unsure if an adolescent in your life is depressed or just "being a teenager," consider how long the symptoms have been present, how severe they are, and how different the teen is acting from his or her usual self. While some "growing pains" are to be expected as teenagers grapple with the challenges of growing up, dramatic, long-lasting changes in personality, mood, or behavior are red flags of a deeper problem.

Effects of teen depression

The negative effects of teenage depression go far beyond a melancholy mood. Many rebellious and unhealthy behaviors or attitudes in teenagers are actually indications of depression. The following are some the ways in which teens "act out" or "act in" in an attempt to cope with their emotional pain:

Problems at school.

Depression can cause low energy and concentration difficulties. At school, this may lead to poor attendance, a drop in grades, or frustration with schoolwork in a formerly good student.

Running away.

Many depressed teens run away from home or talk about running away. Such attempts are usually a cry for help.

Drug and alcohol abuse.

Teens may use alcohol or drugs in an attempt to "self-medicate" their depression. Unfortunately, substance abuse only makes things worse.

Low self-esteem.

Depression can trigger and intensify feelings of ugliness, shame, failure, and unworthiness.

Internet addiction.

Teens may go online to escape their problems, but excessive computer use only increases their isolation, making them more depressed.

Reckless behavior.

Depressed teens may engage in dangerous or high-risk behaviors, such as reckless driving, out-of-control drinking, and unsafe sex.

Violence.

Some depressed teens—usually boys who are the victims of bullying—become violent. As in the case of the Columbine and Newtown school massacres, self-hatred and a wish to die can erupt into violence and homicidal rage.

# Are You a Consumer or Disciple?

## Summary

Living in a consumer culture, it is easy for that attitude to transfer over to our spiritual lives. At times we make demands of God and the Church as if we were God's customers rather than his children. Come find out how become a disciple rather than a consumer.

## Objective

We live in a culture that orders our lives toward consumption. Marketing campaigns tell us to fill the emptiness in our lives with products, power, lust, status or any number of things can be purchased or acquired. However, God is the only one who can fill our emptiness. As the People of God, sometimes we come to God as if he owes us something, as though we deserve something. Sometimes we view the life of faith as following rules rather than following a Savior. A disciple follows Jesus, observes how he lived, who he spent time with, what he said, and how he loved. Jesus was very clear on how to follow him: through self-sacrifice.

## Bible Readings

### 1. Luke 18:9-14

He then addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. "Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity—greedy, dishonest, adulterous—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.' But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.' I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

### 1. Luke 15:11-32

Then he said, "A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."' So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began. Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.' He

Are You a Consumer or Disciple?

said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'"

2. Luke 9:23-26

Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself? Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

## Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2544

Jesus enjoins his disciples to prefer him to everything and everyone, and bids them "renounce all that [they have]" for his sake and that of the Gospel. Shortly before his passion he gave them the example of the poor widow of Jerusalem who, out of her poverty, gave all that she had to live on. The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven.

2. Paragraph 2011

*The charity of Christ is the source in us of all our merits* before God. Grace, by uniting us to Christ in active love, ensures the supernatural quality of our acts and consequently their merit before God and before men. The saints have always had a lively awareness that their merits were pure grace.

## Small Group Questions

1. When have I been a spiritual consumer rather than a disciple?
2. What are the qualities of a disciple?
3. What can I do to be a better disciple?

## Recommended Resources

1. Video – Making Disciples (2 minutes); this is from a Pentecostal church, but it succinctly brings up themes addressed in a Catholic context by people like Fr. John Riccardo, Fr. Michael White, and Tom Corcoran : [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJWkQ9UP\\_m8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJWkQ9UP_m8)
2. Podcast – Fr. John Riccardo homily (2014) on spiritual consumers, disciples, and evangelization (17 minutes): [http://ec.libsyn.com/p/4/b/5/4b5870e9fad8a1bb/Homily051814.m4a?d13a76d516d9dec20c3d276ce028ed5089ab1ce3dae902ea1d06c88232d0c9550e7f&c\\_id=7194228](http://ec.libsyn.com/p/4/b/5/4b5870e9fad8a1bb/Homily051814.m4a?d13a76d516d9dec20c3d276ce028ed5089ab1ce3dae902ea1d06c88232d0c9550e7f&c_id=7194228)
3. Podcast – *Rebuilt*, "Growing Disciples" with Tom Corcoran and Fr. Michael White (36 minutes; start at the 8 minute mark): <http://vimeo.com/80830808>

## Accountability

1. This week think about where you are going through the motions in your faith life. How can you reconnect with the person of Jesus, who is the reason for your faith?
2. This week watch to see if you find yourself making demands of God or the Church. Then consider instead what God is asking of you.

## Author(s)

Pete Caccavari

## Included Resources

***Evangelium Gaudii: Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World***

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html#\\_ftn55](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html#_ftn55)

89. Isolation, which is a version of immanentism, can find expression in a false autonomy which has no place for God. But in the realm of religion it can also take the form of a spiritual consumerism tailored to one's own unhealthy individualism. The return to the sacred and the quest for spirituality which mark our own time are ambiguous phenomena. Today, our challenge is not so much atheism as the need to respond adequately to many people's thirst for God, lest they try to satisfy it with alienating solutions or with a disembodied Jesus who demands nothing of us with regard to others. Unless these people find in the Church a spirituality which can offer healing and liberation, and fill them with life and peace, while at the same time summoning them to fraternal communion and missionary fruitfulness, they will end up by being taken in by solutions which neither make life truly human nor give glory to God.

***Rebuilt: The Story of a Catholic Parish* by Michael White and Tom Corcoran**

In fact, [spiritual] consumer culture erodes sustainability of church communities because it allows the congregant to assume the posture of shallow commitment and the attitude of ceaseless demands. Author Rodney Clapp puts it this way:

The consumer is schooled in insatiability. He or she is never to be satisfied, at least not for long. The consumer is taught that persons consist basically of unmet needs that can be requited by commodified goods and experiences. Accordingly, the consumer should think first and foremost of himself or herself and meeting his or her felt needs. (*Rebuilt*, p. 9-10)

***Centesimus Annus: St. Pope John Paul II's Encyclical Letter on the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum***

[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_01051991\\_centesimus-annus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus_en.html)

55. Christian anthropology therefore is really a chapter of theology, and for this reason, the Church's social doctrine, by its concern for man and by its interest in him and in the way he conducts himself in the world, "belongs to the field ... of theology and particularly of moral theology".<sup>111</sup> The theological dimension is needed both for interpreting and solving present-day problems in human society. It is worth noting that this is true in contrast both to the "atheistic" solution, which deprives man of one of his basic dimensions, namely the spiritual one, and to permissive and consumerist solutions, which under various pretexts seek to convince man that he is free from every law and from God himself, thus imprisoning him within a selfishness which ultimately harms both him and others.

# Talking and Listening to God

## Summary

What kind of relationship do you have with God? Relationships require communication – both talking and listening. How do you communicate with him? When and how do you talk to God? More importantly, are you listening to Him? God is communicating with you all the time. Do you notice? Are you listening?

## Objective

The really sad thing about not talking and listening to God, is that you miss a golden opportunity to draw closer to God, to get to know him better, and to let him know that you realize that you want and need his help. When you fail to talk and listen to God, you greatly limit God's ability to accomplish the things that he wants to do in your life. You pretty much tell him that you don't need him, and that you can do things on your own. Not a good strategy.

Talking to God should be the same as if you were talking to your best friend. You should tell him your thoughts, desires, hurts, and problems, as well as giving him your thanks and praise. Talking to God not only tells God that you have knowledge of him but that you also have faith in him, and that you have a desire for his presence in your life.

Listening to God is like listening to anyone—before you can hear Him, you must be ready to listen. Just as in a conversation, you cannot hear the other person if you are talking or if your mind is distracted. So it is with God. If you want to hear Him speak, you must be quiet and you must be focused on what He is saying. Listening to God requires a deliberate choice to shut out the chaos around you and focus your thoughts.

Regular conversation with God can transform your life! Consider identifying a place and time to meet with God everyday.

## Bible Readings

1. 1 Samuel 3:9  
'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'
2. Proverbs 12:15  
The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.
3. James 1:19-20  
My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.
4. 1 Kings 19:11-13  
Then the LORD said: Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will pass by. There was a strong and violent wind rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the LORD—but the LORD was not in the wind; after the wind, an earthquake—but the LORD was not in the earthquake; after the earthquake, fire—but the LORD was not in the fire; after the fire, a light silent sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice said to him, Why are you here, Elijah?

## Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2584

In their "one to one" encounters with God, the prophets draw light and strength for their mission. Their prayer is not flight from this unfaithful world, but rather attentiveness to The Word of God. At times their prayer is an argument or a complaint, but it is always an intercession that awaits and prepares for the intervention of the Savior God, the Lord of history

2. Paragraph 2598

The drama of prayer is fully revealed to us in the Word who became flesh and dwells among us. To seek to understand his prayer through what his witnesses proclaim to us in the Gospel is to approach the holy Lord Jesus as Moses approached the burning bush: first to contemplate him in prayer, then to hear how he teaches us to pray, in order to know how he hears our prayer.

3. Paragraph 2564

Christian prayer is a covenant relationship between God and man in Christ. It is the action of God and of man, springing forth from both the Holy Spirit and ourselves, wholly directed to the Father, in union with the human will of the Son of God made man.

## Small Group Questions

1. Have you experienced God talking to you in deep prayer or even just quiet time? Share how that happens, how you get there, how it changes you.
2. Do you talk to God on an everyday basis? Is it formal or informal?
3. Think about a situation you have been in lately and note if you have stopped to listen for God or if you are simply choosing what you think is best to do?
4. After the discussion above share your thoughts on the possibility you may not like what God wants you to do.

## Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.allaboutgod.com/listening-to-god.htm>
2. <http://christianity.about.com/od/womensresources/a/hearingfromgod.htm>
3. [http://www.intouch.org/you/sermon-outlines/content?topic=listening\\_to\\_god\\_walking\\_with\\_god\\_sermon\\_outline](http://www.intouch.org/you/sermon-outlines/content?topic=listening_to_god_walking_with_god_sermon_outline)
4. <http://robertwells.tripod.com/listeningtogod.html>

## Accountability

1. Commit to one action you will make to talk and/or listen to God and share your experiences next week.

## Author(s)

Steve Frazer (updated from previous material from Rich Delcore and Graham Galloway)

## Included Resources

From “listening to God, walking with God” sermon

### How do we listen to God?

1. **Read the Bible.** He will never tell you something that contradicts His Word.
2. **Listen to the Holy Spirit.** One of His jobs is to guide you by speaking to *your* spirit.
3. **Pray.** Prayer is talking *and* listening to God. Read at least a small portion of Scripture each day, and ask God to speak through it.
4. **Be watchful.** Look for the Lord to reveal Himself to you through circumstances. When life takes you by surprise, ask Him what He is doing. Watch for Him to guide you through open and closed doors.
5. **Expect Him to guide you through others.** He will use pastors, parents, friends, family members, and at times even strangers to lead you. Just be careful to evaluate everything in the light of Scripture.

### What's the appropriate “posture” of listening to God?

1. **Reflective**—Meditate on biblical passages. That is, slowly and thoughtfully read a section over and over.
2. **Prayerful**—As you read God’s Word, ask for His help in applying it.
3. **Submissive**—Be willing to obey whatever the Lord tells you to do.
4. **Expectant**—God promises to speak to us; anticipate that He will meet you in a personal way.
5. **Patient**—On important decisions, it's sometimes necessary to pray for weeks before understanding what the Lord is saying.

From “hearing from God”

### How Can I Tell if God is Talking to Me?

Here are some common ways God talks to us:

**His Word** - In order to actually "hear" from God, we have to know some things about God's character. We have to develop an understanding of who God is, and the way he does things. Fortunately for us, all that information is available in the Bible. The Book goes into a lot of detail about how you can expect God to react, what kinds of expectations he has for us, and most specifically, how he expects us to treat other people. It's actually a pretty good book, given its age.

**Other People** - Many times God will use other people to try to get through to us. It's possible for God to use anyone at any time, but I find more messages coming from people who are practicing Christians than non-practicing ones.

**Our Circumstances** - Sometimes the only way God can teach us something is to allow circumstances in our life to lead us to and through the very thing we need to discover. One of my favorite authors, Joyce Meyer, says, "There's no such thing as a drive-through break-through."

**The Still Small Voice** - Most of the time God uses a tiny voice inside us to let us know when we're not on the right path. Some people call it "the voice of peace." Whenever we're contemplating something and we don't have peace about it, it's a very good idea to stop and carefully look at the options. There's a reason you don't feel peace about it.

**The Actual Voice** - Sometimes we're able to "hear" something in our spirit that sounds to us like an actual audible voice. Or all of a sudden, you just know you heard something. Pay attention to those occasions because it is very likely God trying to tell you something.

**When God Talks, Shut Up and Listen!**

# How Do You Make Your Spouse Feel Appreciated?

## Summary

Whether it has been one year or fifty since your wedding, what are you doing to let the awesome person you married know that you appreciate them? Routine is a good thing, but making your wife feel special is a GREAT thing and everyone likes to feel appreciated. Get your creative juices flowing and demonstrate to your wife how special she is!

## Objective

A majority of the problems that occur in a marriage can be attributed to the fact that one or both partners feel unappreciated. Boredom with the relationship, jealousy, nagging and a general sense of discontent are marriage relationship problems that find their roots in a sense of not being appreciated. Your goal as a husband is to realize this, then take action. Improve your marriage relationship "by doing" and let your wife know she is appreciated by you.

## Bible Readings

1. Ephesians 5:25-30

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So (also) husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

2. Colossians 3:19

Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them.

## Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1639

The consent by which the spouses mutually give and receive one another is sealed by God himself. From their covenant arises "an institution, confirmed by the divine law, . . . even in the eyes of society." The covenant between the spouses is integrated into God's covenant with man: "Authentic married love is caught up into divine love."

## Small Group Questions

1. What is something unique that you have done that made your spouse feel appreciated?
2. What are the root causes that may make your wife to feel unappreciated by you?
3. What will you do in the next week to show your wife she is appreciated by you?

## Recommended Resources

1. 10 Ways to Love Your Spouse  
<http://www.simplecatholicliving.com/reflections/10-ways-to-love-your-spouse>
2. Do You Tell Your Wife That You Appreciate Her?  
<http://respectedhusband.wordpress.com/2013/01/04/do-you-tell-your-wife-that-you-appreciate-her/>

## Accountability

1. Do one thing for your wife this week that she will be able to tell her friends about that you have never done before. Complement her in front of others!
2. Investigate and search fun things going on in town and recommend that the two of you need to make a plan to attend or participate.
3. Secretly do a chore around the house you have never done and see if anyone notices.

## Author(s)

Reid Rooney

## Included Resources

1. The 5 Step Secret to making your wife Feel Appreciated

Step 1 Understanding: Although you cannot make anyone 100% happy, you can do your part in making your wife feel special and appreciated. The wife (like the husband) has a unique and key role in the marital partnership. If she feels abandoned, neglected, or otherwise unappreciated it will be difficult for her to maintain that positive ambiance.

Step 2 Show Direct Appreciation: Women need the small things that may be easily overlooked. A phone call in the middle of the day for no reason; fresh flower arrangements; date night; unexpected tokens of affection, etc. Keep note of her interests and use them to personalize your surprises i.e. if she's dieting do not get her chocolates.

Step 3 Acknowledgement: You may not understand her emotional needs but you definitely need to acknowledge them. Take the time to actively listen to her. Be the initiator of conversations. Be nonjudgmental with your opinions.

Step 4 Pick your Battles: Let the small things pass. Arguing or a domineering attitude will only fester and eventually poison the love you share. If it irritates you that she isn't the best housekeeper, try to hire help or help clean up when you have time. Remember that you are not perfect either. Was it her laugh you fell in love with or her clean kitchen?

Step 5 Tell her you love her everyday. Tell others you love her. Hearing it and saying it will keep the love alive. Love is a chain reaction. The more love you give the more love you receive.

2. Other ideas to show direct Appreciation to your wife:

Acts of service.

Doing something special for your wife is an easy and free way to show your appreciation. A foot rub after a long day of work would be greatly appreciated. Use some scented lotion for a bit of aromatherapy as well. Clean the house! Coming home to a messy house can be very stressful. If you are home during the day on a weekend, keeping the house clean shows your appreciation for the hard work your wife does.

Making your spouse's favorite meal or dessert on an ordinary day is a terrific way to make her feel special, especially if you don't make it very often. Or make something new for dinner to try together; the same old things can get boring after a while.

Whatever your spouse's job around the house is, give her a day off. Who wouldn't feel special and enjoy not having to do a chore? Folding the laundry, doing the dishes for once and let your spouse enjoy a little well-deserved rest.

Offer a massage. Don't do it because you want one in return. Don't wait until your wife asks. Just offer one to show that you really enjoy the act of touching the person that you're in a love with.

Treats and Surprises.

A simple and inexpensive way to surprise your wife with a treat is to pick up her favorite treats at the grocery store. Then you can sneak them into a her purse or computer bag for your wife to find and enjoy at work or out running errands. Or leave a treat on the pillow or nightstand, or in a coat pocket.

Leave your spouse alone to do a hobby, with no strings attached. She is probably tired of hearing you complain when she is watching TV while the laundry is not done. Let her have a night off to do her own thing, and don't be looking over her shoulder. Or your wife might enjoy a night out

Show your appreciation.

If your spouse works hard at a job, thank her for working hard for you and your family. A simple thank you can mean a lot. Send an "I love you" text message, or leave a message on your spouse's voicemail. If your spouse travels out of town on business, write love notes and hide them in the luggage. Put one in her purse, in reading materials, tucked in a shoe etc. You could even have the kids write notes, or draw pictures so your wife will know how much she will be missed by you and your family. Hiding love notes around the house works just as well.

Say thank you.

It turns out that it's the little things that count. Mom and Dad probably taught you that you're supposed to say thanks when someone does something nice for you but you may have picked up their bad habits of failing to say it to one another. Don't take anything that your wife does for you for granted.

Create an appreciation scrapbook.

Take the time to sit down and put together a list of all of the things that you appreciate about your wife. Go through magazines and find images that go along with each item. Use these images to create pages for a scrapbook that depicts the things that you appreciate. Your wife will appreciate this gift for a long time.

Try to notice the small things.

The small haircut that she got on the way home from the store or the new seasoning that was used on a meal are all really small things but noticing them goes a long way towards making your wife feel like you're actually paying attention and appreciating what you've got.

Do things that your wife likes.

When figuring out what you want to do over the weekend, consider trying things that you don't love but you know your wife really enjoys. It won't kill you to sit through a chick flick and it will make your wife feel appreciated.

The Husband does not feel appreciated by his wife.

In some cases, the husband may often wish that his wife would do things to show us that we are appreciated. Try to think in the reverse instead; make an effort to show your wife that you're appreciative of the marriage. This will improve things drastically and probably produce the results that you as a husband are looking for.

# Theology of the Body

## Summary

"Theology of the Body is the working title Pope John Paul II gave to the first major teaching project of his pontificate. In 129 talks delivered between September, 1979 and November, 1984 the Pope offered the Church and the world a rich, biblical reflection on the meaning of human embodiment particularly as it concerns sexuality and erotic desire."

## Objective

Pope John Paul work on TOB is deep and not easy for the novice. Christopher West's "Theology of the Body Explained" and "Theology of the Body for Beginners" reduce the complexity a great deal, but it still takes some study to comprehend. Our objective, in a short Fathers' Team segment, will be to tackle a small slice of the masterpiece. We will (1) share and explain a piece of JP II teaching and Christopher West's interpretation, (2) see what challenges/questions it raises, and (3) discuss how these might be applied/understood in our lives. The hope would be that you (and perhaps with your wife and/or older children) take another step and delve deeper into these teachings. Perhaps you would then understand why "Catholic theologian George Weigl describes JP II's Theology of the Body as 'one of the boldest reconfigurations of Catholic Theology in centuries—a kind of theological time bomb set to go off with dramatic consequences...perhaps in the twenty first century.'"

## Bible Readings

### 1. Ephesians 5:21-32

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, and is Himself its Savior. As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present the Church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church, because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two will become one flesh. This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

### 2. Tobit 8:5-8

She got up, and they started to pray and beg that deliverance might be theirs. He began with these words: Blessed are you, O God of our fathers praised be your name forever and ever. Let the heavens and all creation praise you forever. You made Adam and you gave him his wife Eve to be his help and support; and from these two the human race descended. You said 'it is not good for the man to be alone; let us make him a partner like himself.' Now, Lord, you know that I take this wife of mine not because of lust, but for a noble purpose. Call down your mercy on me and on her; and allow us to live together to a happy old age. They said together, "Amen, Amen."

### 3. Romans 12:1

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

### 4. Genesis 2: 25

The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame.

5. Genesis 3:9-11

The Lord God then called to the man and asked him, Where are you? He answered, I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself. Then He asked, Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten then from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat.

Others: Gen 2:24, Eph 6: 13-17, Matt 19:3-12; 5: 27-28, Gen 2: 23-24, 1Jn 4:18, Gen 4:1, 1Cor:7, Eph 4:17-18 & 22-24, Luke 22:25-26, Song of Songs

## Catechism Readings

1. 1615:

This unequivocal insistence on the indissolubility of the marriage bond may have left some perplexed and could seem to be a demand impossible to realize. However, Jesus has not placed on spouses a burden impossible to bear, or too heavy—heavier than the burden of Moses. By coming to restore the original order of creation disturbed by sin, he himself gives the strength and grace to live marriage in the new dimension of the Reign of God. It is by following Christ, renouncing themselves, and taking up their crosses that spouses will be able to “receive” the original meaning of marriage and live it with the help of Christ. The grace of Christian marriage is a fruit of Christ’s cross, the source of all Christian life.

2. 1642:

Christ is the source of this grace. Just as of old God encountered his people with a covenant of love and fidelity, so our Savior, the spouse of the Church, now encounters Christian spouses through the sacrament of Matrimony. Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another’s burdens, to be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ, and to love one another with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love. In the joys of their love and family life he gives them here on earth a foretaste of the wedding feast of the Lamb: How can I ever express the happiness of a marriage joined by the Church, strengthened by an offering, sealed by a blessing, announced by angels, and ratified by the Father?...How wonderful the bond between two believers, now one in hope, one in desire, one in discipline, one in the same service! They are both children of one Father and servant of the same Master, undivided in spirit and flesh, truly two in one flesh. Where the flesh is one, one also is the Spirit.

Others: 42, 221, 239, 477, 505, 1015, 1146, 1616, 2360.

## Small Group Questions

1. Where does my responsibility lie for understanding TOB?
2. Why is TOB important?
3. Why is TOB important now?

## Accountability

1. In the coming week I will check out one of the TOB websites.
2. In the coming month I will read one chapter of TOB for Beginners and discuss it with my wife.
3. In the coming year I will finish TOB for Beginners and determine how it applies in my life.

## Author

Charlie Pfizenmayer

## Included Resources

Theology of the Body Explained by Christopher West  
Theology of the Body for Beginners by Christopher West  
Innervisionsbooks.com  
ruahwoods.org  
tobinstitute.org

A few key passages from TOB for beginners:

“(Satan) knows that God created the union of the sexes as a sharing in divine life, and his goal is to keep us from this. So he aims his attack at the very heart of that unity that had from the beginning been formed by man and woman, created and called to become one flesh.” (p 35)

“When lust tempts you, or even overwhelms you, you might say a prayer like this, Lord, I thank you for the gift of my sexual desires. I surrender this lustful desire to you and I ask you please, by the power of your death and resurrection, to untwist in me what sin has twisted, so that I might experience the transformation of sexual desire as you intend, as the desire to love in your image.” (p 48)

“So, many ask, will there be sex in heaven? It depends what we mean by the term. Sex is not first what people do. It is who people are as male or female. JP II mentions three times in his audiences of Dec 2, 1981..that we will be raised as male and female. So in this sense, yes, the signs of masculinity and femininity associated with human sexuality will be manifest in heaven. But, as we learn from Christ’s words about the resurrection, the union of the sexes as we know it now will give way to an infinitely greater union. Those who are raised in glory will experience a bliss so far superior to earthly sexual union that our wee brains cannot even begin to imagine it. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it even dawned on us what God has prepared for those who love Him (see 1 Cor 2:9).” (pp 52-3)

“Celibacy does not cause sexual disorder. Sin does. Simply getting married does not cure sexual disorder. Christ does.” (p65)

“Joseph and Mary remained sexual virgins not because ‘sex is bad.’ As a married couple they were given the exceptional calling to live their sexuality according to its ultimate meaning—total self-donation to God....Recall that sexual union, from the beginning, was meant to foreshadow the union of God and man, Christ and the Church. Undoing Eve’s ‘no,’ Mary, the new Eve, represents the whole human race in giving her ‘yes’ to God’s marriage proposal. In a sense, even in her journey on earth, Mary was already participating in the ‘nuptials’ of heaven.” (p 72)

“As a practical example of husbands living a redeemed sexuality in subjection to their wives, I often point to this eye-opening passage from the Pope’s book Love and Responsibility...it calls men to self- control and tenderness out of deep respect and reverence for their wives...if a husband is to truly love his wife, ‘it is necessary to insist that intercourse must not serve merely as a means of allowing (his) climax...the man must take (the) difference between male and female reactions into account...so that climax may be reached (by) both...and as far as possible occur simultaneously. The husband must do this ‘not for hedonistic, but for altruistic reasons.’” (pp 82-3)

"At the conclusion of this chapter, I observed that all questions of sexual morality come down to one: Does this given act truly image God's free, total, faithful, love or does it not?...If it challenges you, my challenge to you is to let it challenge you...Does masturbation image God's free, total, faithful, fruitful love or does it not? Does fornication (pre-marital sex) image God's free, total, faithful, fruitful love or does it not? Does adultery? Does homosexual behavior? Does lusting after pornographic images?...Does an intentionally sterilized act of intercourse between spouses image God's free, total, faithful, fruitful love or does it not? If today you hear this voice, harden not your hearts (heb 3:15) (p 108)

## Help define a Vision for your children

### Summary

Every Father wants their child/teen to experience things in life which make them happy. How do you as a Father, help your child define their Vision, in a world of a wants and wishes, which can often bring unhappiness to their life? Learn how Father's just like you are discovering how help their child/teen set and achieve their vision to realize what God has planned for them.

### Objective

Help the Father define a vision for their child/teen, to inspire them and help them create and achieve their goals. As Father's work with their child to create a Vision, it provides an invaluable opportunity to learn more about their child/teen's hopes and desires.

Children/Teen's are like a magnet. As a Father, it is critical to help them set a vision and help them to attract want they want in their lives in God's purpose.

### Bible Readings

1. Proverbs 22:6

"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."

### Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph's 2226 -2230

**2226** *Education in the faith* by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God.<sup>35</sup> The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents.

**2227** Children in turn contribute to the *growth in holiness* of their parents.<sup>36</sup> Each and everyone should be generous and tireless in forgiving one another for offenses, quarrels, injustices, and neglect. Mutual affection suggests this. The charity of Christ demands it.<sup>37</sup>

**2228** Parents' respect and affection are expressed by the care and attention they devote to bringing up their young children and *providing for their physical and spiritual needs*. As the children grow up, the same respect and devotion lead parents to educate them in the right use of their reason and freedom.

**2229** As those first responsible for the education of their children, parents have the right to *choose a school for them* which corresponds to their own convictions. This right is fundamental. As far as possible parents have the duty of choosing schools that will best help them in their task as Christian educators.<sup>38</sup> Public

authorities have the duty of guaranteeing this parental right and of ensuring the concrete conditions for its exercise.

**2230** When they become adults, children have the right and duty to *choose their profession and state of life*. They should assume their new responsibilities within a trusting relationship with their parents, willingly asking and receiving their advice and counsel. Parents should be careful not to exert pressure on their children either in the choice of a profession or in that of a spouse. This necessary restraint does not prevent them - quite the contrary from giving their children judicious advice, particularly when they are planning to start a family.

## Small Group Questions

1. Have you had a discussion with your child about their goals, hopes and dreams (Vision)?
2. What are practical examples that you can share with your small group of how you as a Father are helping your child/teen set goals that achieve their vision (or hopes, or dreams)?
3. Are you role modeling for your child/teen your vision and how you are following God's plan to achieve your vision in his likeness?

## Recommended Resources

1. How to Help Children/Teen Set a Vision
2. The Bible: the power of Affirmative prayer to help set a Vision for your child/teen

## Accountability

1. How will you use this week to understand what are your child/teen's goals, hopes, desires?
2. If you know what your child/teen's vision (dreams/hopes) are, how are you helping them understand God's purpose in their life to achieving their vision?
3. Have you talked to your son/daughter about the power of Affirmative Prayer? Are they using a Dream Board or Gratitude Journal to visualize their Affirmative Prayer? (see Resources)

## Included Resources

How to Help Children/Teen Set a Vision | eHow.com

The Bible: the power of Affirmative prayer to help set a Vision for your child/teen | The Law of Attraction: The Basics of the Teachings of Abraham – Esther & Jerry Hicks

How to Help Children Set a Vision

Step 1 En"vision" the Best Possible Outcome

Vision Setting Begins Early: A goal is a vision of the best possible outcome. It's usually something big that we want or need to accomplish. It's written, measurable and shared with others. The rewards and consequences of the goal should also be clear. Depending on your child's age, there are various ways to address these four criteria.

Help define a Vision for your children

For instance, if your child is a toddler, the goal could be related to sharing toys. Rather than writing the goal, you and your child might choose pictures of smiling children playing together and a photograph of you hugging your child. Research has shown that goals that are visible (written or images) are more likely to be achieved.

#### Step 2-

##### Track and Celebrate Progress

Track Progress: Each time your child shares his toys, place a sticker on the goal chart. After a pre-determined number of successes, there should be a reward. However, don't wait to celebrate his achievements. Throughout the process, discuss how he's doing on his goal. Ask questions about his feelings related to sharing. Is it more [fun](#) to play when everyone gets along? Was it harder to share that special toy? How did he feel when he achieved his goal? Also, let him know how you feel about his progress.

#### Step 3:

##### Planning to succeed

As your child grows, the goals will get bigger and more complex. They will need to be divided into achievable tasks. Consider the girl who wants to play on a winning soccer team. Simply writing down her goal and showing up for try-outs won't result in success. There are major tasks she'll need to accomplish such as: Practicing, Conditioning, Developing Plays, etc. Help her identify and quantify those tasks. How often will she need to practice? What is her conditioning routine? Again, you'll want to help her develop a visible system for tracking her progress, reflecting on her achievements and rewarding her for working toward her goal.

#### Step 4:

##### Succeed As A Team

A real test of the Vision setting process will come when your child is asked to work in a team to accomplish a task. This may be the first time your child is faced with the situation of someone else not meeting their obligations. When this happens, it will be a valuable and stressful learning experience for your child. You can help by reviewing the goal setting procedures: Was the goal written, measurable and shared? Was appropriate time allotted to the task? Were the rewards and consequences clearly identified? It is most likely that the answer to one or more of these questions will be No. In particular, young people are often too optimistic about how quickly a task can be accomplished. It's important to allow enough time to do a complete job. Remind them that everyone's busy with a host of commitments: School, Family, [Sports](#), Extra Curricular, Friends, [Dating](#), Jobs, etc. Learning to get a feel for how long tasks will take is an ongoing process. As a rule of thumb, assume a task will take 2 ½ times longer than you expect.

By incorporating Vision setting into your child's world as early as possible, you'll be providing them the tools they need to succeed.

### The Bible: the power of Affirmative prayer to help set a Vision for your child/teen

The Bible has said that we, human beings, are the image of God. It also says the results that we experience are due to the actions we have taken in the past. That is we create and by that we are God, endowed with power of creation. We can co-create what we desire by our unwavering focus on our thoughts. Prayer is a

Help define a Vision for your children

beautiful way to ask for God's help and the best prayer is to imagine that we already have what we desire and express gratitude for the same. This is called affirmative prayer. The more we express gratitude for the blessings bestowed upon us, the more the blessings will come into our life. Our thoughts and true prayer can help us achieve a lot.

Affirmative Prayer "How to" examples:

Children: Develop a Vision "dream board" with inspiration words that inspire them, pictures that speak to them help find out who they are/ what they want.

Teens: Write in their "Gratitude journal" to help define clarity, action and purpose of their life.

Using Goal Setting to achieve their Vision. The new school year is the perfect time to develop new goals and make plans for meeting them. Many students flounder because they don't have a clear idea of where they want to go and the steps needed to get there. By sitting down with a child/teen and helping them focus on their priorities, you can help them target their efforts and be more successful. Goals can be of a personal or academic nature. It's best to start out with only a handful of goals; otherwise, the student can easily become overwhelmed and discouraged. Goals should also be, as much as possible, student driven. Having a goal thrust upon them without their input does nothing for motivating a teen. If your student comes up blank, try this. Ask the child/teen to envision him as he would like to be at the end of the school year. What does he see that is different from how things are now? Start making a list of ideas: more involved in activities, more close friendships, making the honor roll, etc. These ideas can serve as a springboard to a discussion about what the child/teen really wants to accomplish

## Dealing with loss

### Summary

It is inevitable. At some point in most everyone's life, the pain of the loss of a loved one must be confronted. You may be going through it. Perhaps a friend of yours is going through it. What do you do when you face the numbing loss of a family member or friend? How do you live through it? What can you do to help yourself or others?

### Objective

Help us to recognize that recovering from the death of a loved one takes time and patience. Our human nature causes us to grieve, but we as Catholics are comforted in the faith that our loved ones have merely completed their earthly lives and are at peace with their creator. Despite that, it is still a difficult process, and one that must be gone through. It's important to remember that healing is a journey, not a destination. Grieving is a personal process that has no time limit, nor one "right" way to do it. There are stages to go through. There are no shortcuts. We will review these stages and discuss ways to effectively support going through them.

### Bible Readings

1. John 11: 25-26

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

2. John 14: 1-4

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where (I) am going you know the way.

3. 2 Cor 1:3-5

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement, who encourages us in our every affliction, so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God. For as Christ's sufferings overflow to us, so through Christ does our encouragement also overflow.

4. Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack.

In green pastures he makes me lie down; to still waters he leads me; he restores my soul.

He guides me along right paths for the sake of his name.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff comfort me.

You set a table before me in front of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Indeed, goodness and mercy will pursue me all the days of my life; I will dwell in the house of the LORD for endless days

5. Mt 5: 4

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

## Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1889

In this new universe, the heavenly Jerusalem, God will have his dwelling among men. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away."

2. Paragraph 1932

The duty of making oneself a neighbor to others and actively serving them becomes even more urgent when it involves the disadvantaged, in whatever area this may be. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

3. Paragraph 1012

The Christian vision of death receives privileged expression in the liturgy of the Church: Lord, for your faithful people life is changed, not ended. When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven.

## Small Group Questions

1. Have you experienced the loss of a loved one, or been close to someone who has? Did you recognize the stages of grief?
2. If so, are there any techniques that you found successful in going through the process?
3. Do you avoid people who are going through tough times because you don't know how to act or know what to say?

## Recommended Resources

1. "Why Bad Things Happen to Good People" – Harold S. Kushner
2. <http://www.thedailyind.com/how-to/how-to-support-a-loved-one-through-tough-times>
3. <http://www.freewebs.com/kindnesshandbook/> - The Kindness Handbook
4. <http://psychcentral.com/lib/the-5-stages-of-loss-and-grief/000617>
5. <http://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/depression-grief>
6. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/end-of-life/in-depth/grief/art-20045340?pg=1>

## Accountability

1. Think through the reality of losing a friend or loved one and give thought to actions you should take.
2. Give some thought to losses you have endured and actions that you wish you would have taken.

## Author(s)

Steve Frazer (updated from previous material by Reid Rooney / Tony Heekin)

## Included Resources

When you lose someone or something dear to you, it's natural to feel pain and grief. The grief process is a very normal response, and most people experience it. But when grief encompasses your life and you begin to feel hopeless, helpless, and worthless, then it's time to talk to your doctor about grief and depression.

### What Is Grief?

Grief is a natural response to death or loss. Each year, between 5% and 9% of the population sustain the loss of a close family member. But that's not the only kind of loss that can cause grief. People can feel loss when:

They become separated from a loved one

They lose a job, position, or income

A pet dies or runs away

Kids leave home

They experience a major change in life such as getting a divorce, moving, or retiring

### How Do People React to Grief and Loss?

There are specific stages of grief. They reflect common reactions people have as they try to make sense of a loss. An important part of the healing process is experiencing and accepting the feelings that come as a result of the loss. Keep in mind — all people grieve differently. Some people will wear their emotions on their sleeve and be outwardly emotional. Others will experience their grief more internally, and may not cry. You should try and not judge *how* a person experiences their grief, as each person will experience it differently.

Here are the common stages of grief that people go through:

#### Denial and Isolation

The first reaction to learning of terminal illness or death of a cherished loved one is to deny the reality of the situation. It is a normal reaction to rationalize overwhelming emotions. It is a defense mechanism that buffers the immediate shock. We block out the words and hide from the facts. This is a temporary response that carries us through the first wave of pain.

#### Anger

As the masking effects of denial and isolation begin to wear, reality and its pain re-emerge. We are not ready. The intense emotion is deflected from our vulnerable core, redirected and expressed instead as anger. The anger may be aimed at inanimate objects, complete strangers, friends or family. Anger may be directed at our dying or deceased loved one. Rationally, we know the person is not to be blamed. Emotionally, however, we may resent the person for causing us pain or for leaving us. We feel guilty for being angry, and this makes us more angry.

#### Bargaining

The normal reaction to feelings of helplessness and vulnerability is often a need to regain control—

If only we had sought medical attention sooner...

If only we got a second opinion from another doctor...

If only we had tried to be a better person toward them...

Secretly, we may make a deal with God or our higher power in an attempt to postpone the inevitable. This is a weaker line of defense to protect us from the painful reality.

#### Depression

Two types of [depression](#) are associated with mourning. The first one is a reaction to practical implications relating to the loss. Sadness and regret predominate this type of depression. We worry about the costs and burial. We worry that, in our grief, we have spent less time with others that depend on us. This phase may be eased by simple clarification and reassurance. We may need a bit of helpful cooperation and a few kind

Dealing with loss

words. The second type of depression is more subtle and, in a sense, perhaps more private. It is our quiet preparation to separate and to bid our loved one farewell. Sometimes all we really need is a hug.

#### Acceptance

In time, an individual can move into this stage of grief and come to terms with all the emotions and feelings that were experienced when the death or loss occurred. Healing can begin once the loss becomes integrated into the individual's set of life experiences.

Throughout a person's lifetime, he or she may return to some of the earlier stages of grief, such as depression or anger. Because there are no rules or time limit to the grieving process, each individual's healing process will be different.

### How to support a loved one through tough times

#### Don't judge

When someone is suffering because of a bad situation the last thing they want to hear is your judgments. It really doesn't help the situation at all and, in fact, can make your loved one less likely to come to you for support.

#### Don't make it about you

When someone is suffering it is really important not to talk about yourself too much. Even if you have been through something similar to what your loved one is going through it is a good idea just to keep quiet. Make sure you just support them. Don't make it about you.

#### Take care of yourself too

If you are going through a long term tough time it is important that you take care of yourself as well. If you neglect to do this you will be a tired and emotional wreck and you will struggle to support those around you.

If you are going through a tough time make sure you are sleeping properly. Make sure you are eating properly. Make sure you are taking care of yourself. If you get run down you will be less able to support your loved ones.

#### Get yourself some support

One important part of supporting a loved one is getting some support for yourself. Many people who are helping people through difficult situations neglect to address this issue. And it is a shame. You cannot do it all alone. You cannot take on everybody's problems without having an outlet. It is just too difficult. If you try to do it alone you could end up breaking down yourself.

If you are spending a lot of time supporting a loved one I strongly recommend you go and get some counseling. Don't be afraid to do this. Counselors are not for crazy people. Counselors are for people who need someone to talk to without having to worry about weighing them down with your problems. If your loved one is suffering you might feel like you can't talk to them because you don't want them to have more worry. If this is the case book in to see a counselor and have a chat, debrief and get some advice on how to proceed.

#### Find a source of inspiration

Something that religious people always say after a tough time is that their "faith" got them through. While many non-religious people may find the notion of relying on "faith" to be off-putting there is an extremely good logic to it. If religion is good for anything it is good for giving one strength.

#### Learn as much as you can

Knowledge is power. It is also a powerful way for you to support someone. The more you know about what they are going through the more supportive you will be able to be.

Imagine your wife or husband has depression but you don't know much about it. You might take all the symptoms to be attacks on you and just think they are just being moody, grumpy or mean. In actual fact they are suffering from a disease and the mood swings and angry responses are symptoms of their illness and need to be dealt with carefully.

If you educate yourself on the problem, whatever it is, you will find yourself better able to deal with the person and more able to support them.

Bring everything back to love

Love is an extremely potent thing when you are feeling terrible. In all situations, whatever your loved one is going through make sure they know they are loved.

When you are depressed, sick or sad the best thing in the world is knowing that someone loves you. It might be someone telling you that they love you or you might see it in the way they look at you or the way they treat you. However it is expressed it is very uplifting to know that you are loved.

# Supporting Aging Parents

## Summary

Once an adult – twice a child. Our parents made decisions for us, and provided us guidance. When we become adults and parents, our parents become peers and mentors as we raise our own family. As our parents reach old age, they depend on us to give guidance, support, and understanding. This session seeks to explore issues that our parents may be experiencing, how we are engaged and affected, and share ideas and experiences of how to help our parents deal with the physical, emotional, financial challenges, and to enjoy their old age as best they can.

## Objective

Growing old can be fun and it beats the alternative – early death. However as our parents grow old things change and can cause huge burdens on their daily lives. Perhaps a spouse has died and the remaining parent has to deal with loneliness, new challenges like balancing the checkbook when the other handled finances, or finding people that can relate to their stage in life.

Alternatively, perhaps both parents are still alive, but one requires care from sickness like surgery, Alzheimer's, or just sedentary ways. It might be easy for us to ship them off to a retirement home and have others deal with them, or you might experience deep guilt in not being able to deal with a parent's need without external help.

Could you take your father's car keys away and tell him he can't drive anymore? Could you tell your mother she has to move out of her home of 30 years or more because she can't keep up?

How you and your wife team with family and friends to support your parents needs when they can't handle everything they used to? Discuss ways to preserve your parent's dignity while helping them through their aging and "Golden Years".

## Bible Readings

### 1. Matthew 25:31-40

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

### 2. Leviticus 19:32

Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the old, and fear your God. I am the LORD.

3. Proverbs 10:1

A wise son gives his father joy, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

## Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2251

Children owe their parents respect, gratitude, just obedience, and assistance. Filial respect fosters harmony in all of family life.

## Small Group Questions

1. Are you in a situation where your parents need your assistance: financially, daily care giving, illness recovery, disability? How do you help them?
2. If your parents are younger, do you keep a close relationship to them so that later in life that closeness will keep you together?
3. Importantly – what are you and your spouse doing to prepare for your golden years to limit the burden on your children?

## Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.agingcare.com/>
2. <http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/the-best-life/2011/07/18/10-tips-for-caring-for-aging-parents>  
financial resources focused
3. [http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2005-07-13-alzheimers-caregivers\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2005-07-13-alzheimers-caregivers_x.htm)
4. Caring for elderly parents catches many unprepared. -  
<http://www.usatoday.com/money/perfi/basics/story/2012-03-25/caring-for-an-elderly-parent-financially/53775004/1>
5. Technology that can Help the Elderly
6. <http://elderhelpers.org/blog/>

## Accountability

1. Make a family care giving plan today: Care Giving Brochure AARP  
<http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/home-and-family/caregiving/2012-10/prepare-to-care-lores.pdf?intcmp=AE-SEARCH-AARPSUGG-HF-CRC-PREPARE-CARE>
2. Take a small step, make an effort to see your parents – or talk to them, more often. Don't make it awkward when they really need you.
3. Make a meeting with your spouse to talk about your plans!

## Author(s)

Dan Lape/Rich DelCore

# Reinventing Date Nights

## Summary

Simply spending quality time together is probably not enough to prevent a marriage relationship from getting stale. Keeping the butterflies of early romance from quickly fluttering away after marriage is a desire shared by both the husband and wife. So how do guys just like you, keep their marriages from slipping into familiar, predictable feelings of long-term attachment – Date Night!

## Objective

The objective is for the Fathers Team member to find ways to keep injecting novelty into the relationship by focusing on “Date Night” with their wife.

As background, most studies of love and marriage show that the decline of romantic love over time is inevitable. However, marriage studies, real-world experiments and even brain-scan data, scientists & therapists can now offer long-married couples a simple prescription for rekindling the romantic love that brought them together in the first place. Rather than visiting the same familiar haunts and dining with the same old friends, couples need to tailor their date nights around new and different activities that they both enjoy.

Fun date night ideas are a great way to help blossom a marriage by doing things you both enjoy. There are so many places to go and things to do – so, go play! Fun date ideas are the best way to get closer as a couple. Your wife wants to see your creative, playful side and when you put your own thoughts and effort into it, you’ll be surprised how well she will respond to your romantic date idea simply because the date idea came from you. And don’t be shy, if you are aiming to surprise your wife, don’t be afraid to ask her preferences so you can create fun date ideas that both of you will enjoy.

The activity can be as simple as trying a new restaurant together or something a little more unusual or thrilling — like taking a hot air balloon ride together or riding horseback through a vineyard, then having a secluded wine & cheese picnic.

## Bible Readings

1. 1 Corinthians 7:4-5

The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

2. Proverbs 18:22

Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.

## Catechism Readings

1. 1613

On the threshold of his public life Jesus performs his first sign—at his mother’s request—during a wedding feast.<sup>105</sup> The Church attaches great importance to Jesus’ presence at the wedding at Cana. She sees in it the confirmation of the goodness of marriage and the proclamation that thenceforth marriage will be an efficacious sign of Christ’s presence.

## Small Group Questions

1. What is the best “date night” that you have had with your wife so far?
2. What was the novelty in the “date night” that excited her?
3. Review the list of 100 Great Date nights, which one will you try with your wife in the next week?

## Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.happy-together.net/six-dates-for-catholic-couples/>
2. <http://www.focusonthefamily.ca/marriage/great-date-ideas/>

## Accountability

1. Pick a date NOW and call your spouse on the way to work and get her to put a date on the family calendar.
2. Share your plans for the “first date” this week with your small team (from the 100 Great Date Nights list or other)
3. Share with your small team next week how the date night went, what was the novelty in it for you and your wife?
4. Plan out the next 10 date nights with your wife, and then go on the dates! Share with the small team after 90 days.

## Author(s)

Rich DelCore

## Included Resources

100 Fun Date Night Ideas & Activities

1. Go get pampered or have massages together at a local day spa
2. Go schooner sailing at sunset
3. Take a Segway Tour through out a park
4. Reserve a spot on a yacht party cruise
5. Try your hand at indoor rock climbing
6. Go on a kayaking adventure tour – sight see from a kayak or canoe
7. Take an archery class together
8. Try skydiving, take lessons or try a tandem jump
9. Go on a harbor excursion – watch marine life or go whale or dolphin watching
10. Take a romantic horse-drawn carriage ride thru the city
11. Day adventure to any beautiful garden-park or arboretum, together
12. Enjoy a secluded beach and swim and/or enjoy the sun, together
13. Take a winery tour, or vineyard/winery tour on horseback if possible
14. Rent canoe, kayak or paddle boat and have a floating picnic on a lake
15. Go river rafting or inter tubing on a creek, river or lake
16. Go camping together
17. Become restaurant critics, find the most romantic restaurant by trying ones you haven’t

18. Go to the zoo and/or aquarium
19. See a play at the local suburb theater or at the High School
20. Hang out at a high-class cocktail lounge or restaurant, request a song from a piano man
21. Book an experience activity such as driving a real race car together
22. Take a Hot Air Balloon ride
23. Go Para-sailing together
24. Make your own wine, beer or root beer together
25. Take your dog(s) to the local dog park
26. Go fishing, or teach each other how to fish
27. Take a romantic walking tour of your city – pretend to be a tourist for a day
28. Spend the day with binoculars and a camera and go bird watching
29. Visit a U-Pick farm and pick fruit together, make sure you feed each other the samples!
30. Go Ice Skating together, and then warm up together!
31. Go to a baseball game, football game or Basketball game.
32. Tour new homes together
33. Learn to scuba dive together
34. Go on a haunted ghost tour together
35. See a local jazz band, concert, or orchestra in Cincinnati
36. Make it a romantic mission to ride a Ferris wheel together, kissing each other at the top!
37. Take a romantic afternoon walk or picnic at a park together
38. Go on a hiking trip together
39. Go to your local bookstore to pick out a surprise book for each other
40. Take turns reading a book to each other
41. Relive and go to the first place you ever went out together
42. Go shopping for new clothes, pick out clothes for each other
43. Go to a local gym to exercise together or to join together
44. Go tanning at a salon together and then go get pedicures
45. Spring time walk to pick wildflowers together
46. Go on an afternoon sightseeing drive and explore places you haven't seen before
47. Spend the morning going to local garage sales to go treasure hunting
48. Visit an old cemetery
49. A date to have ice-cream together, make sure you feed each other a few bites
50. Window shop at local antique shops
51. Go moonlight bowling
52. A date to a karaoke bar for some singing (or watch others sing)
53. A roller-blade or roller skating date
54. A date to take pictures of each other
55. Go to a supermarket to pick out a meal and then back home to cook it, together
56. A date to wash and wax your cars together, make sure you spray each other with the hose!
57. Spend an evening to write poems for each other
58. A date to roast marshmallows over a campfire or fire pit in the back yard
59. Park near the airport to watch planes take off – feel the thunder of the planes –dream of your next trip together
60. Go to a park and star watch together
61. Bake cookies, make popcorn and watch a scary movie at midnight
62. A date to wash each other's hair and then give back rubs to each other
63. Have a shaving cream fight and pillow fight
64. Go dancing or take dancing lessons together
65. Take a scenic drive in a rented convertible, or your own sports car
66. Schedule a dinner cruise on a train or boat
67. Take a charter fishing trip or whale watching tour
68. Go skiing or hang out around the snow, at the lodge
69. Visit a town or city you've never been to
70. Play a round at a fancy golf course
71. Take a helicopter or airplane site seeing tour together
72. Go visit the art gallery or art museum together
73. Go to the beach and build a sand castle together
74. Rent a limo and drive nowhere in particular
75. Visit the planetarium or Museum Center

76. Play in the water at the Beach Water park
77. Learn a new game at a casino
78. Visit a wax museum or find the historical landmarks in your area
79. Play arcade games together or play games on your home console
80. Patio/deck picnic
81. Watch a meteor shower in the evening, with wine and snacks
82. Go on a ferry boat ride to nowhere in particular
83. Go to a classic car show
84. Play miniature golf
85. See a Broadway show together
86. Take a helicopter ride together
87. Go to a high school or college sports event
88. Go to a Roller Derby event
89. Visit a dog or horse race track, together
90. Play laser tag or paint ball tag
91. Go target shooting or go to a shooting range together
92. Make it a mission to ride as many roller coasters you can find
93. **Go on a hay ride in the fall during the evening;** remember to bring a blanket to snuggle under!
94. **Watch the sunset.** Just pick a scenic spot, grab a bottle of wine (or your favorite beverage) and enjoy!
95. Reminisce Together – Share journals, pictures, letters, home videos, etc.
96. Bake Dessert Together - cake decorating, banana split, sundae, berry or chocolate smoothies
97. Build a snowman or snowwomen together, then warm up with hot chocolate and a blanket
98. Ride go-carts or “bump m” cars at the carnival
99. Visit the pumpkin farm or Christmas Tree Farm and talk a long slow walk in the nearby woods
100. (Fill in your favorite Date Night Idea Here )

# Respect (my wife and) your mother!

## Summary

As a child's independence is developed in teen-age years, mothers are often treated poorly by their offspring. This can be particularly difficult period for moms. How do we, as fathers, act to support our wives during this time?

## Objective

Each of us goes through a period in our teen years where we begin to establish our independence as an individual. This development of our independence often includes us abruptly distancing ourselves from those we have been very dependant on, most of all, our mothers. Talking back, ignoring, and ultimately condescension of our mothers provide a "safe test" of our ability to be independent, because mothers always "take us back." We, as husbands and fathers, need to stay involved in this mother-child relationship. We need to let our child know that before their mother was their mother, she was our girlfriend, then our bride. We need to create a family environment that lets the child know that we love and support their mother, and expect them to do the same. With our wives, we must delicately manage the child's growth and independence, while avoiding a breakdown in relationships.

## Bible Readings

### 1. Sirach 3

Children, pay heed to a father's right; do so that you may live. For the LORD sets a father in honor over his children; a mother's authority he confirms over her sons. He who honors his father atones for sins; he stores up riches who reveres his mother. He who honors his father is gladdened by children, and when he prays he is heard. He who reveres his father will live a long life; he obeys the LORD who brings comfort to his mother. He who fears the LORD honors his father, and serves his parents as rulers. In word and deed honor your father that his blessing may come upon you; For a father's blessing gives a family firm roots, but a mother's curse uproots the growing plant.

### 2. Luke 27-35

He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, he took him into his arms and blessed God, saying: "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel." The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

## Catechism Readings

### 1. Paragraph 2217

As long as a child lives at home with his parents, the child should obey his parents in all that they ask of him when it is for his good or that of the family. "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. "Children should also obey the reasonable directions of their teachers and all to whom their parents have entrusted them. But if a child is convinced in conscience that it would be morally wrong to obey a particular order, he must not do so.

As they grow up, children should continue to respect their parents. They should anticipate their wishes, willingly seek their advice, and accept their just admonitions. Obedience toward parents ceases with the emancipation of the children; not so respect, which is always owed to them. This respect has its roots in the fear of God, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Respect (my wife and) your mother!

## Small Group Questions

1. How do you deal “respect” in your family, particularly that of your children for your wife?
2. Have you discussed with your wife how you will handle disrespect from children?
3. How do you let children know that when they show disrespect, it can hurt more than the intended individual? In fact, it reflects poorly on them.

## Recommended Resources

1. [http://www.connectionparenting.com/parenting\\_articles/respect.html](http://www.connectionparenting.com/parenting_articles/respect.html)
2. <http://www.kevinathompson.com/obey-mother-respect-wife/>
3. R-E-S-P-E-C-T ....find out what it means to me! Aretha Franklin

## Accountability

1. Talk to your wife about how you are now handling or will handle respect issues. One parent handing out punishment and then asking the other for support after the fact can be challenging.
2. Demonstrate to your children that you and your wife are a “team.”
3. Referring to your wife as your “girlfriend” or “bride” changes the perspective of children (particularly sons) being disrespectful to their mother....try it!

## Author(s)

Reid Rooney / Kevin McDonough

## Included Resources

10 Tips on Teaching Respect to Children: You can't get it if you don't give it!

<http://www.drrobysilverman.com/parenting-tips/10-tips-on-teaching-respect-to-children-you-cant-get-it-if-you-dont-give-it/>

# What do you do when your adult children reject your values?

## Summary

How can it be that after you and your spouse worked so hard to bring your child up in the catholic faith that they now reject or ignore the values that you worked over time to instill in them? It is a depressing feeling that reaches deep. They may openly challenge the beliefs that you hold dear, and even worse, be non-caring about the vital spiritual component of their lives. They are adults now and you have done your best, hopefully, to bring them to make God-centered choices for themselves and their families. What options do you have?

## Objective

Whether your children are young single adults or married and now raising families, you probably feel that your primary duty as a parent was to instill in them spiritual awareness and ideally, active participation in their Catholic faith. In many cases we find that our adult off-spring, exposed to unending glamorization of worldly gratification and desire for goods, reject our focus on the Catholic faith and spiritual growth. They list boring “old fashioned” church rituals, out of touch services, priest scandals, and other circumstances as reasons for them not to be practicing Catholics and believers anymore. Worse yet, they may not even care.

If you find yourself concerned about the spiritual health of your adult children...join the crowd! You are not alone. Each of us as individuals have travelled a journey of faith and in many cases it has been less (sometimes much less) than a straight and flat path. We can each tell of times when we felt much the same way as our children, put-off with the teachings of the church and perhaps were even at a point of defiance.

But something in our lives changed that point of view and changed our lives. God found a way to come into our lives. Maybe it was a tragic experience, a loving relationship, the birth of a child, or someone that just “paid it forward” for us. In fact, we can likely look back and see that had we not gone through that period of denial, rejection, or defiance, we would not be as strong a Catholic today.

So the question is, what are you doing to bring about the spiritual awakening in the adult child that has rejected, or at least is not recognizing, the gift of Catholic faith? You can only do your part, just do it! Do what you can by living your faith each day. Be confident that they will see the strength you receive from your faith and that God will find a way into their lives. It may not be a “St. Paul moment,” but be assured that God does put a fire in each of our hearts that ultimately draws us to Him.

## Bible Readings

### 3. Isaiah Chapter 55 6 - 9

Seek the LORD while he may be found, call him while he is near.

Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked his thoughts; let him turn to the LORD for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

What do you do when your adult children reject your values?

As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways  
and my thoughts above your thoughts.

For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your savior.

4. Acts 22 12 - 16

"A certain Ananias, a devout observer of the law, and highly spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, came to me and stood there and said, 'Saul, my brother, regain your sight.'

And at that very moment I regained my sight and saw him.

Then he said, 'The God of our ancestors designated you to know his will,  
to see the Righteous One, and to hear the sound of his voice;

for you will be his witness before all to what you have seen and heard.

Now, why delay?

Get up and have yourself baptized and your sins washed away, calling upon his name.'

## Catechism Readings

2. Paragraph 154

When St. Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus declared to him that this revelation did not come "from flesh and blood", but from "my Father who is in heaven".<sup>24</sup> Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him. "Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and 'makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth.'"

3. Paragraphs 1147

God speaks to man through the visible creation. The material cosmos is so presented to man's intelligence that he can read there traces of its Creator.<sup>16</sup> Light and darkness, wind and fire, water and earth, the tree and its fruit speak of God and symbolize both his greatness and his nearness.

## Small Group Questions

1. How did you view the Catholic faith as a young adult? Young parent?
2. Do you have a "conversion story?"
3. Where are your children on their faith journey? Are you part of it?
4. Share the reasons your adult child may be rejecting the Catholic way of life.

## Recommended Resources

1. When Your Adult Child Chooses a Different Path -  
<http://www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Aug2002/Feature3.asp>
2. Children fallen away from the Church | Catholic Psychology  
[http://www.chastitysf.com/q\\_children.htm](http://www.chastitysf.com/q_children.htm)
3. Parenting Your Adult Child: Keeping the Faith (and Your Sanity) by Susan V. Vogt

## Accountability

1. Contact your children this week and find a way to weave an example of your spiritual life into the exchange....without preaching to them.
2. Do you have a "conversion story?" Have you shared it with your children?

## Author(s)

Reid Rooney

What do you do when your adult children reject your values?

# What do I do with the rest of my life?

## Summary

You have been working for a while, but it seems like the “same old, same old”. Am I in a rut? Or, maybe I have been pretty successful, and life seems good, but maybe I need a little excitement. Is this a mid-life crisis? Or, perhaps I am just getting ready to retire, or even in retirement, but wondering how I can keep busy. Is this all there is? In any case, the key question you really might be asking is: What am I going to be when I grow up?

## Objective

Instead of focusing on what you do and how successful you are, focus on the fundamentals – happiness, a sense of purpose, and living as God wants us to live. An objective should be to dedicate time to learning – learning about yourself through exploration and experiences, learning and growing your relationship with God, and learning new things to broaden your mind and open new possible interests. Recognize that you are on a journey – both in your faith and in your profession. This journey is hopefully a long one – one filled with ups and downs, trials and tribulations, and joys and sorrow. All of these should lead to personal and spiritual growth – and finding your mission in life. As Matthew Kelly might say – become the best version of yourself.

## Bible Readings

1. Jeremiah 29:11

For I know well the plans I have in mind for you—oracle of the LORD—plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope.

2. Romans 12:2

Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

3. Romans 4:3-8

For by the grace given to me I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than one ought to think, but to think soberly, each according to the measure of faith that God has apportioned. For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness..

4. John 15:16

It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.

5. Romans 8:28

We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

## Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2461

True development concerns the whole man. It is concerned with increasing each person's ability to respond to his vocation and hence to God's call.

2. Paragraph 1704

The human person participates in the light and power of the divine Spirit. By his reason, he is capable of understanding the order of things established by the Creator. By free will, he is capable of directing himself toward his true good. He finds his perfection "in seeking and loving what is true and good."

## Small Group Questions

1. What would my family and friends say is the driving force of my life? What do I want it to be?
2. What am I enjoying, and excited and happy about in my life right now?
3. God deserves my best. How can I make the best use of what God has given me?
4. What fears have kept me from fulfilling the mission God made me to accomplish?

## Recommended Resources

1. The Purpose Driven Life – Rick Warren & related website - [purposedriven.com](http://purposedriven.com)
2. The Rhythm of Life: Living Every Day with Passion and Purpose – Matthew Kelly
3. Your Retirement Quest – Alan Spector & Keith Lawrence & related website – [yourretirementquest.com](http://yourretirementquest.com)
4. <http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2014/01/30/answering-the-question-what-should-i-do-with-my-life/>

## Accountability

1. If you had time to learn or explore something new, what would that be? How can I set aside some time to do that?
2. Find some quiet time with God to reflect and pray about what my contribution should be toward the Body of Christ.

## Author(s)

Steve Frazer

## Included Resources

People don't succeed by migrating to a particular industry or job. They thrive by getting curious about answering questions about who they really are and doing work they truly love. In doing so, they unleash unthinkable creative and productive energy. To truly be happy, our work must have meaning.

This is not a new idea. For decades, psychologists have known that humans are more motivated by personally meaningful goals than by external rewards such as money or status. Put simply: When you love what you do, it shows. You're lit up by your passion, you put in extra effort, you're a source of great ideas. Others envy your confidence.

The first step is to simply explore your whims — those little sparks of interest you're not sure what to make of yet. To help you figure out what you find meaningful and inspiring in your life, try answering some of these questions:

Name the top 3 peak experiences in your life. What do they have in common? What does this tell you about yourself?

If money weren't a problem, what would you spend your every day doing?

What's your favorite way to spend your free time?

What activity are you doing when it feels like time just flies by?

When do you feel the most alive?

What kind of impact do you want to have?

What are things (a language, a sport, a hobby) you want to learn?

What are you excited, happy, and enjoying most in your life right now?

### From Your Retirement Quest:

Here are four questions to ask yourself to determine when it is time for you to retire. When the answer to all four questions is "Yes," you are ready.

1. Do I have enough? - This is the question that assesses your level of financial security. It is not a question of the size of your nest egg, but rather a question of whether your financial resources will support your holistic retirement life plan.

2. Will I have enough to do? - Another way to pose this question is, "Do I have a holistic retirement life plan?" Building that plan based on the ten key elements of a fulfilling retirement will help ensure that your retirement is fulfilling.

3. Have I had enough? - There is nothing wrong with continuing to work in your primary career if you are still energized and fulfilled by it. However, if that time comes to an end, the answer to question three would be, "Yes."

4. Is my partner excited about our new and different future together? - Your retirement will impact those closest to you, and they will affect how successful your retirement will be. Whether it is a spouse, partner, child, parent, or friend, have the crucial conversations about your retirement plan with them—this will increase the odds of both your retirement satisfaction and theirs.

### From the Purpose Driven Life:

The Purpose-Driven Life is a manifesto for Christian living in the 21st century...a lifestyle based on eternal purposes, not cultural values. Using biblical stories and letting the Bible speak for itself, Warren clearly explains God's five purposes for each of us:

We were planned for God's pleasure - so your first purpose is to offer real worship.

We were formed for God's family - so your second purpose is to enjoy real fellowship.

We were created to become like Christ - so your third purpose is to learn real discipleship.

We were shaped for serving God - so your fourth purpose is to practice real ministry.

We were made for a mission - so your fifth purpose is to live out real evangelism.

What do I do with the rest of my life?

One day you will stand before God and He will do an audit of your life, a final exam, before you enter eternity. Fortunately, God wants us to pass this test, so he has given us the questions in advance. From the Bible we can surmise that God will ask us two crucial questions:

What did you do with my Son, Jesus Christ? – God won't ask about your religious background or doctrinal views. The only thing that will matter is, did you accept what Jesus did for you and did you learn to love and trust him? Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one come to the Father except through me."

What did you do with what I gave you? – What did you do with your life – all the gifts, talents, opportunities, energy, relationships, and resources God gave you? Did you spend them on yourself, or did you use them for the purposes God made you for?

What do I do with the rest of my life?

# Who is Pope Francis and Where is He Leading the Church?

## Summary

When we look beyond the media's sound bites and their agendas, what is Pope Francis really saying? If we dig a little deeper, we may find that he is challenging each of us, in different ways, to see the Gospel of Jesus as bigger and more demanding than we think.

## Objective

According to many news reports, Pope Francis is revolutionizing the Church and Catholic teaching. Is he changing doctrine on marriage, abortion, human sexuality, the priesthood, and more? Is that really the case, or is the media being selective in their listening? In Cincinnati there were billboards that read, "Would Pope Francis Sign the Catholic Teacher's Contract?" Is the Pope Francis of the billboard the real Pope Francis? Does Pope Francis make some Catholics nervous?

Pope Francis chose his papal name to honor St. Francis of Assisi (*poverello* or "the poor little man," as Italians call St. Francis) and to emphasize Jesus' love for the poor. Pope Francis' own simplicity of lifestyle is his effort to lead by example. While Pope Francis is not changing Church doctrine, he is trying to live the New Evangelization in a new way. He takes a highly pastoral approach with an inviting tone. For example, while affirming the Church's teaching on the male priesthood, he has called for further reflection on a theology of women and a greater role for women in the Church. He is taking the approach of "they don't care what you know until they know that you care." He also says some very challenging things about economics and their effects on human dignity, for example, that may call for us to reflect on our assumptions and blind spots.

## Bible Readings

### 1. Luke 6:20-26

And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger. Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets."

### 2. John 8:3-11

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?" This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." And once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus looked up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again."

## Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 782

Its [The People of God's] *law* is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us.

2. Paragraph 2443

God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them: "Give to him who begs from you, do not refuse him who would borrow from you"; "you received without pay, give without pay."<sup>232</sup> It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones.<sup>233</sup> When "the poor have the good news preached to them," it is the sign of Christ's presence.<sup>234</sup>

## Small Group Questions

1. What is one way that people have been selective about Pope Francis' message?
2. In what way is Pope Francis challenging me to become a better disciple of Jesus?

## Recommended Resources

1. Video – Charlie Rose interview with Cardinal Dolan (10 minutes): <http://www.charlierose.com/watch/60362663>
2. Video - Charlie Rose interview with the editor of *America* and the president of Fordham University on Pope Francis' *America* interview (25 minutes): <http://www.charlierose.com/watch/60270327>
3. Interview with Pope Francis in *America* (full text): <http://americamagazine.org/pope-interview>

## Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to read something Pope Francis said or wrote.
2. Pray this week about something that Pope Francis said or wrote that challenges you. Is God asking you to do something more or different through the Pope's words?
3. When you read the media's account about something the pope said or wrote, go to the original source to understand it in context.

## Author(s)

Pete Caccavari

## Included Resources

"A Big Open Heart to God": Pope Francis's Interview in *America*:

<http://americamagazine.org/pope-interview>

"I see clearly," the pope continues, "that the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds.... And you have to start from the ground up.

"The church sometimes has locked itself up in small things, in small-minded rules. The most important thing is the first proclamation: Jesus Christ has saved you. And the ministers of the church must be ministers of mercy above all. The confessor, for example, is always in danger of being either too much of a rigorist or too lax. Neither is merciful, because neither of them really takes responsibility for the person. The rigorist washes his hands so that he leaves it to the commandment. The loose minister washes his hands by simply saying, 'This is not a sin' or something like that. In pastoral ministry we must accompany people, and we must heal their wounds.

“How are we treating the people of God? I dream of a church that is a mother and shepherdess. The church’s ministers must be merciful, take responsibility for the people and accompany them like the good Samaritan, who washes, cleans and raises up his neighbor. This is pure Gospel. God is greater than sin. The structural and organizational reforms are secondary—that is, they come afterward. The first reform must be the attitude. The ministers of the Gospel must be people who can warm the hearts of the people, who walk through the dark night with them, who know how to dialogue and to descend themselves into their people’s night, into the darkness, but without getting lost. The people of God want pastors, not clergy acting like bureaucrats or government officials. The bishops, particularly, must be able to support the movements of God among their people with patience, so that no one is left behind. But they must also be able to accompany the flock that has a flair for finding new paths.

## ***Evangelium Gaudii: Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World***

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html#\\_ftn55](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html#_ftn55)

104. Demands that the legitimate rights of women be respected, based on the firm conviction that men and women are equal in dignity, present the Church with profound and challenging questions which cannot be lightly evaded. The reservation of the priesthood to males, as a sign of Christ the Spouse who gives himself in the Eucharist, is not a question open to discussion, but it can prove especially divisive if sacramental power is too closely identified with power in general. It must be remembered that when we speak of sacramental power “we are in the realm of function, not that of dignity or holiness”.<sup>[73]</sup> The ministerial priesthood is one means employed by Jesus for the service of his people, yet our great dignity derives from baptism, which is accessible to all. The configuration of the priest to Christ the head – namely, as the principal source of grace – does not imply an exaltation which would set him above others. In the Church, functions “do not favour the superiority of some vis-à-vis the others”.<sup>[74]</sup> Indeed, a woman, Mary, is more important than the bishops. Even when the function of ministerial priesthood is considered “hierarchical”, it must be remembered that “it is totally ordered to the holiness of Christ’s members”.<sup>[75]</sup> Its key and axis is not power understood as domination, but the power to administer the sacrament of the Eucharist; this is the origin of its authority, which is always a service to God’s people. This presents a great challenge for pastors and theologians, who are in a position to recognize more fully what this entails with regard to the possible role of women in decision-making in different areas of the Church’s life.

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53. Just as the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say “thou shalt not” to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape.

Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a “throw away” culture which is now spreading. It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society’s underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised – they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the “exploited” but the outcast, the “leftovers”.

54. In this context, some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system. Meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting. To sustain a lifestyle which excludes others, or to sustain enthusiasm for that selfish ideal, a globalization of indifference has developed. Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people’s pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else’s responsibility and not

Who is Pope Francis and Where is He Leading the Church?

our own. The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are thrilled if the market offers us something new to purchase. In the meantime all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us.

# Be a Man: Living a Masculine Spirituality

## Summary

Where have you gotten your models of what it means to be a man? Does your idea of manhood come from sports celebrities, from difficult fathers, or from Jesus? Fr. Larry Richards shows men how to be true disciples of Jesus in his book, *Be a Man! Becoming the Man God Created You to Be*.

## Objective

Where have you gotten your models of what it means to be a man? Too often we make our heroes people whose lives are far from God. Or we let the broken models of manhood in our lives deform our ideas of what a true man is. We are often shown images of men in popular culture who are fools, or men who are focused on power, pleasure, or wealth. Certain kinds of feminism portray men and masculinity as threatening and dominating. And, in fact, often we live lives as men that do fall short of what God has called us to be. But if we pay attention to the Gospels, we can observe how a faithful masculinity is imaged in Jesus, and then we can imitate him. Fr. Larry Richards, a priest from the diocese of Erie, often speaks on issues of men and Christian discipleship, and he does this most directly in his book, *Be a Man! Becoming the Man God Created You to Be*. Fr. Richards especially talks about repentance, mercy, love, service and sacrifice as being important qualities of a man.

## Bible Readings

1. Genesis 1:26-27  
"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
2. Mark 1:11  
"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

## Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 372  
Man and woman were made "for each other" - not that God left them half-made and incomplete: he created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be "helpmate" to the other, for they are equal as persons ("bone of my bones. . .") and complementary as masculine and feminine.
2. Paragraph 2214  
The divine fatherhood is the source of human fatherhood; this is the foundation of the honor owed to parents.

## Small Group Questions

1. Who are the men in your life who have modeled how to be disciples of Jesus?
2. Do you think much about God as Father? What does that mean for you? How can his fatherhood help you in your fatherhood to your children?

## Recommended Resources

1. Video – Fr. Larry Richards, “A Story of Love” (4 minutes):  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wMVOI7UXtY>
2. Podcast – Fr. Larry Richards, “Confession” (11 minutes):  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v= ql8wi-wSpM>
3. Video – Fr. Larry Richards on *EWTN Live* interviewed by Fr. Mitch Pacwa (56 minutes):  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mG3k6YWUMZA>

## Accountability

(all taken from *Be a Man!*)

1. Be a man who becomes another Christ. This week spend time with Jesus reading the Gospels and write down the qualities of manhood that He possessed and ask Him to make them your own. (p. 195)
2. Be a man who lives with your end in mind. This week write down what you want God and others to say about you when you die. These should be your new goals in life. Now set up a plan what you need to do to reach these goals. Be practical! (p. 192)
3. Be a man who reads the Bible. This week decide to spend time reading Scripture every day, for it is here that God will speak to you and reveal His will to you. Live “No Bible, no breakfast; no Bible, no bed!” (193)

## Author(s)

Pete Caccavari

## Included Resources

*Be a Man!:*

First off, this means that you lead by example. You must be a man of prayer. For it is only as a son who listens to his heavenly Father that you can bring the will of the Father to your family. You cannot be a good and true leader unless you are a true and good follower. You must daily spend committed time in prayer with God, then lead your family in prayer. Do you have daily committed time with your family in prayer? And no, grace before meals is not enough! You need to be the spiritual leader by being a man of sacrifice. You exist to give your life away for others, like Jesus did. If you are married that means you give your life for your family first and foremost. (p. 148)

When we usurp the position of God in our lives, we make ourselves God and we worship our will instead of obeying God. That is not being a man—that is being a coward.” (p. 53)

Husbands are called to love God primarily *through* their wives. Your wife is the sacrament of Christ to you. You are the sacrament of Christ to your wife. When she looks at you, she is supposed to see Jesus Christ. (p. 118)

Be a man who tells the people you love that you love them. Write a letter to your family members telling them how much you love them and then commit yourself to tell them that every day for the rest of your life. (p. 194)

# Avoiding the 7 Capital (“Deadly”) Sins

## Summary

Being able to name our demons is an essential part of growth and healing. Learn to combat the vice in our life with the contrary Theological and Cardinal Virtues.

## Objective

Do you know about the Seven Deadly Sins or the opposing virtues that can be used to combat these sins? It is a great value to know and begin to understand these deep drives of sin in us. They are more than just sins; they are drivers or patterns of sin that can lead us into mortal sin. The more we can know and distinguish them the more we can grow in self-knowledge. Further, being able to know and name these seven deep drives of sin helps us to know their moves and gain mastery over them. As they stir deep within us we can see evidence of their stirrings and begin to take greater authority over them.

Too many Christians know little about twisted nature of sin. They just know they’re a little messed up and can’t seem to figure out why. Have you ever gone to the doctor, not knowing what was wrong and left feeling better just because you finally knew what ailed you had a name and a cure? Being able to name our demons is an essential part of growth and healing. Did you know that each one of us has a weakness to one of the capital sins, and that weakness makes us more likely to commit that sin over and over again?

## Bible Readings

### 1. Galatians 5:16-26

16 I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. 18 But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, 21 occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ (Jesus) have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit. 26 Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another.

### 2. Romans 1:28-32

28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God handed them over to their undiscerning mind to do what is improper. 29 They are filled with every form of wickedness, evil, greed, and malice; full of envy, murder, rivalry, treachery, and spite. They are gossips 30 and scandalmongers and they hate God. They are insolent, haughty, boastful, ingenious in their wickedness, and rebellious toward their parents. 31 They are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Although they know the just decree of God that all who practice such things deserve death, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

### 3. Mathew 5:8

8 "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God."

4. Mathew 7:13-14

13 "Enter by the narrow gate: for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter are by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few."

5. Romans 12:21

21 "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

## Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1865

"Sin creates a proclivity to sin; it engenders vice by repetition of the same acts. This results in perverse inclinations which cloud conscience and corrupt the concrete judgment of good and evil. Thus sin tends to reproduce itself and reinforce itself, but it cannot destroy the moral sense at its root."

2. Paragraphs 1866

"Vices can be classified according to the virtues they oppose, or also be linked to the capital sins which Christian experience has distinguished, following St. John Cassian and St. Gregory the Great. They are called "capital" because they engender other sins, other vices. They are pride, avarice (greed/covetousness), envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth or acedia."

3. Paragraph 1869

"Thus sin makes men accomplices of one another and causes concupiscence, violence, and injustice to reign among them. Sins give rise to social situations and institutions that are contrary to the divine goodness. "Structures of sin" are the expression and effect of personal sins. They lead their victims to do evil in their turn. In an analogous sense, they constitute a social sin."

4. Glossary: Vice

"Vice: A habit acquired by repeated sin in violation of the proper norms of human morality. The vices are often linked with the seven capital sins. Repentance for sin and confession may restore grace to a soul, but the removal of the ingrained disposition to sin or vice requires much effort and self-denial, until the contrary virtue is acquired."

## Small Group Questions

1. Is one of these vices (Capital Sins) a problem for you at this time in your life? How is your practice of the corresponding virtue?
2. Does your spouse or children struggle with any of the Capital Sins? How can you bring the corresponding virtue into the family?
3. What do you do to increase virtue?

## Accountability

1. Take some time this week to read the description of each of the Capital Sins.
2. Is there one that seems more prevalent in your life? Make a conscious effort to focus on practicing the corresponding virtue.
3. As you go through the week see if you can identify the Capital Sins in your life and the world around you (movies, tv, books, newspaper, etc.)

## Author(s)

Jon Stahlberger

## Included Resources

### The Virtues, Sister Virtues, and the Seven Deadly Sins

Virtues	Definition
Faith	This Theological Virtue from God makes us able to believe in Him and all that He teaches us.
Hope	This Theological Virtue from God enables one to desire God above all things and to trust Him for our salvation.
Charity	This Theological Virtue from God enables one to love as God Himself loves. By this virtue, we love God above all things and one's neighbor as oneself.
Fortitude	The Cardinal Virtue of being able to complete God's work (the right thing), even if it is difficult.
Temperance	The Cardinal Virtue of balance, self-discipline, and self-control over people and things of this world.
Prudence	The Cardinal Virtue that directs us toward the good and helps us choose the correct means to achieve that good.
Justice	The Cardinal Virtue that guides us to give God and others what is due to them.

### The Seven Virtues / Deadly Sins

The seven virtues are:

Sister Virtue (Virtue)	Definition
Kindness (Charity)	The sister virtue of having care and concern for others. Picks friends based on who they are and not what they have or their status.
Modesty (Temperance)	The sister virtue of dressing in a way that shows respect for yourself and treats your body as a temple for the Holy Spirit.
Perseverance (Fortitude)	The sister virtue of being able to complete work, even if it is difficult.
Meekness (Temperance)	The sister virtue of being calm, polite, caring, and being able to work well with others. Solves

Avoiding the 7 Capital ("Deadly") Sins

	problems by talking.
Temperance	The virtue of balance and self-discipline
Humility (Justice)	The sister virtue of needing God and other people, and knowing that everyone has a special gift from God
Generosity (Justice)	The sister virtue of giving <u>freely</u> to those that are in need

The seven deadly sins (vices) are:

Sin (Vice)	Definition
Wrath	The sin of wanting to repel everything that is displeasing through verbal or physical violence, and always wanting to fight to solve problems.
Lust	The sin of excessive desire for sexual pleasure. This causes us to see a person as an object, and not a person made in the image and likeness of God.
Sloth	The sin of ultimate laziness; not responding to God's plan of betterment
Envy	The sin of not being happy with what God has given you, and wanting what other people have; their live and successes (jealously).
Pride	The sin of believing that you are better than everyone else, you don't need other people or even God. Excessive love of one's self
Greed	The sin of excessive desire for wealth and possessions
Gluttony	The sin of over-eating, drinking, and the use of medicine

The Virtue and its opposing sin (vice)

Virtue	Sin
Temperance	Gluttony
Generosity	Greed
Humility	Pride
Kindness	Envy
Perseverance	Sloth
Chastity	Lust
Meekness	Wrath

Avoiding the 7 Capital ("Deadly") Sins

# Friendships as Men

## Summary

Friendships can have a major impact on your health and well-being, but it's not always easy to build or maintain friendships. Understand the importance of friendships in your life and what you can do to develop and nurture friendships.

## Objective

We all have friends, some of us have many people we refer to as friends, some have only a few select friends. The objective is to take a serious look at our existing friendships and not just take them for granted. Another thought to consider, do we have all the friends we need?

## Bible Readings

1. Proverbs 18:24  
A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.
2. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10  
Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

## Catechism Readings

1. 1939  
The principle of solidarity, also articulated in terms of “friendship” or “social charity,” is a direct demand of human and Christian brotherhood
2. 1829  
The *fruits* of charity are joy, peace, and mercy; charity demands beneficence and fraternal correction; it is benevolence; it fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested and generous; it is friendship and communion:

## Small Group Questions

1. Am I taking my existing friendships for granted, do I need to work at deepening my current friendships?
2. Do I need to keep myself open to new friendships and why?

## Recommended Resources

1. <http://catholiclane.com/people-who-need-people-a-view-on-friendship/>
2. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/adult-health/in-depth/friendships/art-20044860>

## Accountability

1. Make a point of contacting a friend you haven't talked to in a while.
2. Think of a way to deepen one of your existing friendships and do it.
3. Get to know someone better this week, make an acquaintance a friend.

## Author(s)

Jack Voet

## Included Resources

What are the benefits of friendships?

Good friends are good for your health. Friends can help you celebrate good times and provide support during bad times. Friends prevent loneliness and give you a chance to offer needed companionship, too. Friends can also:

Increase your sense of belonging and purpose

Boost your happiness and reduce your stress

Improve your self-confidence and self-worth

Help you cope with traumas, such as divorce, serious illness, job loss or the death of a loved one

Encourage you to change or avoid unhealthy lifestyle habits, such as excessive drinking or lack of exercise

Why is it sometimes hard to make friends or maintain friendships?

Many adults find it hard to develop new friendships or keep up existing friendships. Friendships may take a back seat to other priorities, such as work or caring for children or aging parents. You and your friends may have grown apart due to changes in your lives or interests. Or maybe you've moved to a new community and haven't yet found a way to meet people.

Developing and maintaining good friendships takes effort. The enjoyment and comfort friendship can provide, however, makes the investment worthwhile.

What's a healthy number of friends?

Quality counts more than quantity. While it's good to cultivate a diverse network of friends and acquaintances, you also want to nurture a few truly close friends who will be there for you through thick and thin.

# True Discipleship

## Summary

What does it mean to you to be a true disciple of Jesus? Jesus knew what he wanted when he chose Peter. He chose an intelligent, capable, proven leader. Over the course of his ministry on earth, Jesus trained Peter to be the shepherd he needed to pastor the Church in its early years. Peter was a brilliant man of deep faith who was open to the grace of the Holy Spirit and learned that the true shepherd is the one who lays down his life for his flock.

## Objective

After receiving the mandate of Jesus to “Feed my Sheep” and the life-giving Holy Spirit on Pentecost, Peter spent about thirty years on the road proclaiming Jesus. He followed the way Jesus had set him on, even knowing it could not help but bring him suffering and rejection in the world. Ultimately, Peter would glorify God in his death.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus shows the glory of God through his death on the cross in obedience to the Father revealing God’s love for the world. With his unconditional acceptance of Jesus’s mandate to become the shepherd of his people, Peter follows Jesus on his own way of the cross as pastor of Jesus’s flock. Peter ultimately glorifies God through his discipleship in service to others and his death on a cross.

## Bible Readings

1. John Chapter 21 Verses 18-19

Amen, amen, I say to you,<sup>j</sup> when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.”

He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, “Follow me.”

2. John Chapter 4 Verse 34

Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work

3. John Chapter 17 Verses 1-5

**When Jesus had said this**, he raised his eyes to heaven\* and said, “Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your son, so that your son may glorify you,<sup>a</sup> 2\* just as you gave him authority over all people,<sup>b</sup> so that he may give eternal life to all you gave him. 3\* Now this is eternal life,<sup>c</sup> that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ. 4 I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the work **that you gave me to do**. 5 Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began

## Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2233

Becoming a disciple of Jesus means accepting the invitation to belong to *God's family*, to live in conformity with His way of life: "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother."

## Small Group Questions

1. In what areas of your life are you being called to be a true shepherd of Jesus?
2. What must you learn so you may follow Peter to accompany Jesus on the way of the cross?

## **Recommended Resources**

1. “Every Man’s Journey, Becoming the Man God Intended” by James P. Campbell

## **Accountability**

1. Drawing on your education, your training, and your experiences, think about one of your talents that can be used to be a true shepherd of Jesus.
2. Do you know who your flock is? Is it your family? The team you led and manage at work? Some other group?

## **Author(s)**

Chris Bergman

## Christian/Catholic One Team

### Summary

Celebrate “The unity in diversity within Christianity”; Quote from Pope Francis

### Objective

This is not intended to be an intellectual treaty dissecting Catholicism and the major Protestant sects. Rather this topic is intended to be a celebration of the wonders of Jesus Christ as He is recognized as God in all Christian religions. Our goal might be to encourage one another to embrace our fellow Christians as we celebrate our oneness.

We acknowledge the primary difference between Catholicism and other Christian sects lies in the “real presence” of God in the Bread and Wine within our celebration of mass. This is a non-negotiable pillar of our faith.

Looking at all of Christianity we see many shared beliefs and life principles. We share the Bible; the acceptance of Jesus Christ as God; our need for redemption; Christ as the perfect sacrifice; the resurrection of the body; the ten commandments; the command to love God and love your neighbor.

We are all on our journey seeking to be with God in heaven. How can we help one another live up to our beliefs, thereby praising God with our lives.

### Bible Readings

#### 1. John 17 20-26

I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their work.

So that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.

And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one,

I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.

Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me.

I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them.

### Catechism Readings

#### 1. Paragraph 820

"Christ bestowed unity on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time."<sup>277</sup> Christ always gives his Church the gift of unity, but the Church must always pray and work to maintain, reinforce, and perfect the unity that Christ wills for her. This is why Jesus himself prayed at the

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hour of his Passion, and does not cease praying to his Father, for the unity of his disciples: "That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us, . . . so that the world may know that you have sent me."<sup>278</sup> The desire to recover the unity of all.

## 2. Paragraph 838

"The Church knows that she is joined in many ways to the baptized who are honored by the name of Christian, but do not profess the Catholic faith in its entirety or have not preserved unity or communion under the successor of Peter."<sup>322</sup> Those "who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church."<sup>323</sup> *With the Orthodox Churches*, this communion is so profound "that it lacks little to attain the fullness that would permit a common celebration of the Lord's Eucharist."<sup>32</sup> Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit.<sup>279</sup>

## Small Group Questions

1. What can we learn about Christ and how to serve Him from our non-catholic Christian friends and associates?
2. What can we do to help our non-catholic Christian brothers get to heaven?
3. What might we do to celebrate the whole Christian community?

## Recommended Resouces

1. "The Ship and the Rafts" by Steve Ray  
<http://www.catholic-convert.com/wp-content/uploads/ShipAndRafts.pdf>
2. "The 95 Theses" by Martin Luther  
<http://www.luther.de/en/95thesen.html>

## Author(s)

Walt Moll

## Our Relationship with our Spouses – Fighting Fair

### Summary

All married couples have arguments, or rather fights. How you fight is the key to whether or not you will have a successful, long term marriage. This Father's Team topic will help you discover/learn this critical marital skill. Are you treating this as a competition to win – or an opportunity to grow together?

### Objective

1. We'll need to discuss the importance of fighting. Rather than avoiding conflict in marriage, we must embrace healthy conflict as a way to enjoy and love our spouse. Avoiding or denying the inevitable mix-ups of marriage only postpones having to really deal with them and grow through them.
2. Then we'll see that resolving conflict is a balancing act. By purposefully holding back honest communication, the silent partner in marriage can stunt the growth of the relationship. The opposite characteristic – being the overly dominant spouse – also has its pitfalls. By finding appropriate balance between these extremes, we create a better marriage. More importantly, these characteristics often carry over into our relationship with God.
3. Lastly, we need to examine the role of emotional and sexual intimacy in marriage. We honor God when we consistently resolve marital conflict without letting it build into resentment. Sexual intimacy, then, stems from emotional safety in marriage.

Here are some suggested principles to guide you through the process of fighting fair:

- Emotions are nothing to avoid or be afraid of. Emotions just are. God gave them to us. Let's celebrate them in all their messiness, complexity, joy and pain.
- Emotions are signposts that help you navigate the journey of marriage. Embrace the emotional expressions of your spouse and look for the message behind the words. What does your spouse's anger mean about their current experience and satisfaction in marriage? Learn from these.
- You make a better marriage when you work through conflict and honestly confront emotions.
- Are you the spouse that needs to 'win' an argument? Do you talk about how a situation makes you feel or do you lash out at your spouse bringing up past issues?
- Maybe you're the spouse using words to tip the balance of power in your favor. You trample on your spouse's feelings, self-esteem and dignity with every hurtful verbal exchange. Maybe you find yourself rationalizing your communication style by saying, "She needed to hear that," or, "I know the truth hurts, but somebody has to tell her." If this is you, I'd caution that there are very rare, limited cases when a married individual should take this stance of being marital judge and jury.
- Find balance in your style of managing marital conflict. Silence hurts. So does verbally lashing out. Neither is a healthy way to resolve conflict in your marriage. In extremes, both styles of resolving conflict are futile relational power-grabs. If you're the quiet one, learn from your blabber-mouth spouse. If you're the talker that shoots verbal darts non-stop, learn from your tight-lipped

spouse. Stop doing things the way you've always done them, and begin looking for different results.

- Most importantly, though, don't focus solely on the balance of power in your marriage. Focus on the balance of power between you and your Maker. Balance this scale, and the rest tends to take care of itself. Are you talking with God? Or are you the silent partner?

Here is a checklist of items to consider:

1. Don't let little things bother you build up until one of you explodes into a large fight. That's not fighting fair in your marriage.
2. If you are angry about something and don't try to talk about it with your spouse within 48 hours, let it go.
3. If your spouse doesn't want to discuss the matter, set an appointment within the next 24 hours to have your fair fight. It is okay to go to bed angry. You need your sleep. Just make sure that the issue is addressed the next day.
4. Fighting fair means you know what the issue is. Then, both of you stick to the subject.
5. Keep your fight between the two of you. Don't bring in third parties like your mother-in-law, his best friend, or your children.
6. Fighting fair means you don't bring up past history.
7. Fighting fair means no name calling. Even endearing terms and pet names can be hurtful when you are using a sarcastic tone.
8. Be careful how you use humor. Laughter is good, but teasing can be misinterpreted and can be hurtful.
9. Listen to one another fully while you fight. This includes watching body language. Look at one another while you speak.
10. Don't interrupt during your fight.
11. Fighting fair means you don't blame one another make accusations.
12. Try to use 'I' sentences instead of 'you' sentences.
13. Be open to asking for forgiveness and being willing to forgive.

## **Bible Readings**

1. Ecclesiastes 3:1

There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens.

2. Ecclesiastes 3:7

A time to rend, and a time to sew: a time to be silent and a time to speak.

3. Ephesians 4:25-26

Therefore, putting away falsehood, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry but do not sin, do not let the sun set on your anger.

## **Catechism Readings**

1. Paragraph 1638

“From a valid marriage arises a *bond* between the spouses which by its very nature is perpetual and exclusive; furthermore, in a Christian marriage the spouses are strengthened and, as it were, consecrated for the duties and the dignity of their state *by a special sacrament*.”

## **Small Group Questions**

1. Consider your last ‘fight’ with your spouse – and then look at the checklist above - how many of those principles did you break?
2. Examine your last ‘fight’ with your spouse – what role did you play – aggressor or silent?

## **Recommended Resources**

1. Focus on the Family –  
[http://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/communication\\_and\\_conflict/fighting\\_fair.aspx](http://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/communication_and_conflict/fighting_fair.aspx)
2. About.com – Marriage – <http://marriage.about.com/cs/conflictandanger/ht/fightfair.htm>

## **Accountability**

1. Can you commit this week to start a conversation with your spouse about this topic?
2. Can you call your spouse on the way to work and schedule a date to talk?
3. Think about talking to your spouse about how important this topic is to show a good example to your kids.

## **Author(s)**

Rich DelCore

# True Devotion to Mary

## Summary

Mary as your copilot. Connecting with your wife through Mary. Discuss ways that we can grow our devotion to Mary as a way to deepen our relationship with our wives.

## Objective

We should learn the virtues of the Blessed Mother. We should see how she lived out those virtues. She is God's greatest treasure, overflowing with grace from her own conception, fully devoted in faith to the will of God, the new Eve, the new Ark, who said "to do what He (Jesus) tells you." We should understand that the True Devotion to Mary is really meant to say True Devotion to Jesus through Mary. She is our Mediatrix. She cleanses and purifies our offerings/requests. Our charge is to apply her virtues in all our actions, most especially with our wives and families. Mary was pleasing to Jesus, so to imitating her is in effect imitating Jesus.

## Bible Readings

1. Luke 1:46-49:

And Mary said, my soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for He who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is His Name.

2. 1 Cor 2: 9-10:

But as it is written, what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him. God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

3. Luke 1:30:

And the Angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

4. IS 66:10-13:

Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad because of her, all you who love her; Exult, exult with her, all you who were mourning over her! Oh, that you may suck fully of the milk of her comfort, That you may nurse with delight at her abundant breasts! For thus says the Lord; Lo, I will spread prosperity over her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing torrent. As nurslings, you shall be carried in her arms, and fondled in her lap. As a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you, in Jerusalem you shall find your comfort.

5. Jn 2:5:

His mother said to the servants, Do whatever He tells you.

6. Luke 1:35:

And the angel said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

## Catechism Readings

### 1. 148-149:

The Virgin Mary most perfectly embodies the obedience of faith. By faith Mary welcomes the tidings and promise brought by the angel Gabriel, believing that “with God nothing will be impossible” and so giving her assent. “Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word.” Elizabeth greeted her, “Blessed is she who believed that there would be fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” It is for this faith that all generations have called Mary Blessed. Throughout her life until her last ordeal when Jesus, her son died on the cross, Mary’s faith never wavered. She never ceased to believe in the fulfillment of God’s word. And so the Church venerates in Mary the purest realization of faith.

### 2. 967-969:

By her complete adherence to the Father’s will, to His Son’s redemptive work, and to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary is the Church’s model of faith and charity. Thus she is a preeminent and...wholly unique member of the Church, indeed she is the exemplary realization of the Church. Her role in relation to the Church and to all humanity goes still further. In a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Savior’s work of restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace. This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation...Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix.

Other Readings: 494, 505, 533-534, 726, 2617-2618, 2676-2677.

## Small Group Questions

1. What aspect of your spirit is most like Mary? What aspect of your spirit is most unlike, and opposed to her?
2. Why is genuine humility such an important virtue for the spiritual life?
3. The things you say, especially those said when you are in private or when you are frustrated, what do they indicate about the state of your heart?

## Accountability

1. Choose one of the Blessed Mother’s virtues and practice it throughout the day
2. In your life, where do you experience the greatest need for the grace of God? In your prayers today place this aspect of your life in the hands of Mary and ask her to obtain from her Son the grace that you need.
3. It is very common to do what is good so that others might see and notice us and notice us and not for a truly holy motivation. Look for an opportunity to be generous in a hidden way and do it.
4. Deny one of your sensual appetites today.

## Recommended Resources

1. True Devotion to Mary by St Louis De Monfort
2. The Secret of the Rosary by St Louis De Montfort
3. Real Men Pray the Rosary by David Calvillo
4. The Seekers Guide to Mary by Maria Ruiz Scaperlanda
5. Total Consecration by Fr Hugh Gillespie

True Devotion to Mary

6. <http://www.catholic-pages.com/bvm/hahn.asp> Scott Hahn on Our Lady article
7. <http://saints365.blogspot.com/2014/04/31-ways-to-grow-in-devotion-to-mary.html> 34 Ways to Grow in Devotion to Mary article
8. <https://campus.udayton.edu/mary/> The Marian Library and International Marian Research Institute

## Author(s)

Charlie Pfizenmayer

## Included Resources

From "The Seekers Guide to Mary"

"In the Catholic Church today, Mary is frequently presented as an example of piety, trust, and obedience, a faithful woman whose actions are heralded by some as unique manifestations of radical feminism. A strong and free woman, Mary is active, courageous, and intelligent, an example of a good woman who attests to a feminine capacity for grace and glory. At times she is introduced as a representative of the feminine power of God. And although Mary is said to be a point of division between Catholics and Protestants, she remains central to the beliefs of all Christians." (pp x-xi)

From "Total Consecration to Jesus Christ Through Mary"

"True devotion to Mary is holy. That is, it leads us to avoid sin and to imitate the virtues of Mary. Her ten principal virtues are: deep humility, lively faith, blind obedience, unceasing prayer, constant self-denial, surpassing purity, ardent love, heroic patience, angelic kindness and heavenly wisdom." (p 36)

"Presumptuous devotees are sinners who give full reign to their passions or their love of the world, and who under the fair name of Christian and Servant of our Lady, conceal pride, avarice, lust, drunkenness, anger, swearing, injustice, and other vices...When you tell them that such a devotion is only an illusion of the devil and a dangerous presumption which may well ruin them, they refuse to believe you. God is good and merciful, they reply, and He has not made us to damn us. No man is without sin. We will not die without confession and a good act of contrition at death is all that is needed. Moreover, they say they have devotion to Our Lady. Nothing in our Christian religion is so deserving of condemnation as this diabolical presumption." (pp 37-38)

"It is better not to burden ourselves with a multitude of prayers and pious practices but rather adopt only a few and perform them with love and perseverance in spite of opposition from the devil and the world and the flesh." (p 40)

"We have discovered that without the grace of God to aid us and to sustain us, we cannot make more than tentative, awkward and inconstant movements toward genuine spiritual growth. Mary is that one who is truly Full of Grace, not only for herself, but marvelously for us as well...Our intentions are impure and even our best attempts at generosity are colored by a hidden and prideful selfishness...Therefore we learn how to place, with great confidence, all that is best about our lives into her care, secure that its value will never be diminished and will, in fact, only be purified and increased through her stewardship...This knowledge of her...rests...upon our need for her and a humble willingness to turn to her in trust, and upon the generosity of the Lord who grants us the grace of knowing her." (p 70)

"God has established only one enmity—but it is an irreconcilable one which will last and even go on increasing to the end of time. That enmity is between Mary, His worthy Mother, and the devil, between the children and the servants of the Blessed Virgin and the children and followers of Lucifer. The most fearful enemy that God has set up against the devil is Mary, His holy Mother...Satan fears her not only more than

True Devotion to Mary

angels or men but in a certain sense more than God Himself. This does not mean that the anger, hatred and power of God are not infinitely greater than the Blessed Virgin's, since her attributes are limited. It simply means that Satan, being proud, suffers infinitely more in being vanquished and punished by a lowly and humble servant of God, for her humility humiliates him more than the power of God." (p79-80)

# Showing Love for Our Kids by Setting Boundaries

## Summary

Set standards for your children that will help them make good choices.

## Objective

Raising kids today, we are not supported by the culture to set boundaries. Movies, television, the internet and social media all espouse no limits on behavior, idolizing material goods, unethical conduct, etc.. Even our kids' friends sometimes aren't raised in a God centered household. But in the long run, our children will be happier with knowing what is expected of them.

Because families are not supported by the culture, we fathers need to be focused on bringing our children up "in the discipline and discipleship of the Lord Jesus Christ"

Discuss with the large group how you and your wife can decide appropriate boundaries that will make your kids feel secure and also allow them to know how to make good decisions for themselves as adults one day.

## Bible Readings

1. Proverbs 22: 5-6

Thorns and snares are on the path of the crooked. He who would safeguard his life will shun them. Train a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not swerve from it.

2. Deuteronomy 4:9

Take care and be earnestly on your guard not to forget the things which your own eyes have seen, nor let them slip from your memory as long as you live, but teach them to your children and to your children's children.

## Catechism Readings

1. Section 2223

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by *creating a home* where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for *education in the virtues*. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery—the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the "material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones."

## Small Group Questions

1. Have I set boundaries for myself?
2. When is it appropriate to show tough love by letting my child "suffer" with a decision he/she has made.
3. Is it appropriate for me to set boundaries for my adult child?

## Accountability

1. Assess your view of boundaries in your own life
2. Talk with your wife about the boundaries already in place for your kids and what changes should be made to improve your child's growth in discipleship of the Lord.

## Recommended Resources

1. [www.drray.com/addenda](http://www.drray.com/addenda)

## Included Resources

<http://www.ewtn.com/library/family/famhndbk.txt>

When father and mother give living evidence of their faith in God, they no longer need spend so much time trying to decide which course to pursue in bringing up their children. They usually know what to do, because they have a standard to guide them. They only ask: What does God want of us as parents? When they seek to understand His way and to follow it, they free themselves of the confusion which besets parents without standards upon which to rest.

Children in a home where God is worshipped also know where they stand. They are taught to respect the Creator and, in respecting Him, to respect all lawful authority. They learn in a precise way what conduct is acceptable and what is forbidden. In their study of religion and religious truths, they learn at an early age that punishment will inevitably follow wrongdoing; thus they learn the major principle which will guide their conduct throughout their lives.

## Author(s)

Vince Phelan

# God, You want me to do what ???

## Summary

As young adults we often feel that we have our lives pretty well planned out. We have finished school, are becoming established in our professions, are pursuing relationships and planning families. Little do we realize the vocation that God has prepared for us. As we get older (and hopefully wiser) we see the value in seeking new pursuits that will not only lead us to our personal salvation, but help us to lead others to their salvation as well.

## Objective

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines a vocation as “The calling or destiny we have in this life and hereafter. God has created the human person to love and serve Him; the fulfillment of this vocation is eternal happiness.”

When we are young we often dream of what we want to be or do when we grow up. We are all familiar with the many occupations that are available, but we are faced with a choice of one of three vocations: 1) single, 2) married or 3) religious. Pick one of these, no more, no less. We view our vocation as something static, a state of life that never changes. As Lee Corso would say “Not so fast, my friend.” Our vocation is anything but static, it is very much alive and dynamic. God makes sure that it changes.

Do we take the time during the day to listen to what God is calling us to do? Do we hear that little voice or feel that little urge that we are destined for greater things? Are we reluctant to move from that comfort zone that took us so long to establish and to move out into dangerous and uncharted territory? Do we seriously discern daily God’s plan for us? A vocation is not a once in a lifetime decision. A vocation is a lifelong process, and to properly prepare ourselves we must be attentive to God’s plan of salvation for us.

If we do make this move what does the future hold for us? The biggest obstacle in making this choice is fear. The most repeated quote in the bible is “Do not be afraid”. Our prayer now should be that God replace that fear with faith. Give us the faith to realize that God has given us the potential and the talents to achieve his goal. After all he knew us before the beginning of time and loves us unconditionally, something we cannot personally experience until we see him face to face.

## Bible Readings

### 1. Romans 8:9

But you are not of the flesh; you are in the spirit, since the spirit of God dwells in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

### 2. Romans 12:6-8

We have gifts that differ accordingly to the favor bestowed on each of us. One’s gift may be prophecy: its use should be in proportion to his faith. It may be the gift of ministry: it should be used for service. One who is a teacher should use his gift for teaching; one with the power of exhortation should exhort.

3. 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

After all who is Apollos? And Who is Paul? Simply ministers through whom you became believers, each of them doing only what the Lord assigned. I planted the seed and Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. This means that neither he who plants nor he who waters is of any special account, only God, who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters work to the same end. Each will receive his wages in proportion to his toil. We are God's co-workers, while you are his cultivation, his building.

4. 1 Corinthians 12: 12-14

The body is one and has many members, but all the members, many though they are, are one body; and so it is with Christ. It was in one Spirit that all of us, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free were baptized into one body. All of us have been given to drink of the one Spirit. Now the body is not one member, but it is many.

## Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, he invited men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.

2. Paragraph 873

The very differences which the Lord has willed to put between the members of his body serve in its unity and mission. For "in the Church there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission. To the apostles and their successors Christ has entrusted the office of teaching, sanctifying, and governing in his name and by his power. But the laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ; they have therefore, in the Church and in the world, their own assignment in the mission of the whole people of God."

3. Paragraph 898

By the reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will. It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are closely associated that these may always be effected and grow according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer.

4. Paragraph 1700

Human beings make their own contribution to their interior growth; they make their whole sentient and spiritual lives into means of this growth. With the help of grace they grow in virtue.

## Small Group Questions

1. Do I spend time daily listening to God's call? Do I spend time daily on prayer with God? Am I open to that call or is my life too busy or prearranged already?
2. How do others guide and/or influence me in my discernment process? Do I seek others counsel and take to heart what others see in me that I don't see?
3. Do I actually follow through with the prompting of the Spirit or do I make excuses as to why this is not "the right time"?
4. Will this have a positive effect on me and my family or will it cause division?

## Recommended Resources

1. Theological Reflection – Connecting Faith and Life  
Joye Gros, O.P., D.Min  
Loyola Press - 2002

## **Accountability**

1. If something has been calling to you, take the time to “check it out”.
2. Talk to your family if you have been discerning a vocation. Their support is critical for your success.
3. Ask for others to pray for you during this time of discernment. Prayer is the best gift that one can offer.

## **Author(s)**

Paul Feie

## **Included Resources**

This exercise is the Daily Examine. The Examine involves a review of one’s day, listening for where God was present the last 24 hours. To make this prayer more accessible there are five traditional steps to the examination 1) the prayer to the spirit for inspiration, 2) thanksgiving, 3) examination of conscience, 4) firm resolve to improve and 5) trust and hope for the future.

Paralleling St. Ignatius’s five steps are the 5 “P”s of the examine.

- 1) Presence- Slow down and be aware of God’s presence not only within the past 24 hours but also at the present time. God’s presence fills us with peace and joy that is available to us any time of the day if we choose to use it.
- 2) Praise – We need to be aware of goodness of God and how it effects our lives. We often take for granted the gifts that God gives. By taking a few moments each day to praise God who makes our lives pleasant and possible to maintain sanity.
- 3) Process – What have you been thinking about the past 24 hours. What do you want to think about and what are you thinking about. The examine opens us up to the transformational power/grace of God. We need to free ourselves from desolation and concentrate on consolation. The examine can become our habitual source of discernment.
- 4) Penance – Penance is not an exercise in beating ourselves up for our faults and failures. Real penance is like coaching, corrections help us live holier and better lives. Doing some small thing can actually set in motion larger and positive dynamics.
- 5) Promise – God’s promise to us is that we have life and we have to the full. Can we name what God is doing presently for us? We can trust God’s promise that such small and seemingly insignificant choices will blossom into meaningful and transformational events in our lives.

God, You want me to do what ???

## Relationship with Our Children – Stages of Fatherhood

### Summary

We recognize stages of marriage; here we will examine the stages of Fatherhood. From birth to 8 years old – you are the most important man in your child’s life. Your children look at you like you are superman. From ages about 9-16 your children are developing the social skills they will use throughout their adult lives. Our children are transitioning from total involvement in the nuclear family toward the community family. Fathers have a very special role with their preteen/early teen daughters. These girls are looking to their dads to see how to act with and what behaviors to expect from boys and men. Through these years Fathers need to show sincere interest in their childrens scholastic, social, sports, etc. lives. As our children grow through the teen years their focus shifts toward their peers. Our role as fathers shifts also into one of listening, encouraging and providing a role model for our developing youths/young adults. As our children transition into adults we must once again make fatherly adjustments. We need to continue to bring our knowledge and experience, but now we are bringing it to adults. We need to recognize our children are not the responsible adults we have been working toward. We advise they decide. Join us to understand how to cope with these stages.

### Objective

Our objective in this discussion is to better recognize and deal with the various stages of lives that our children are going through so we can better respond as a parent/father to help them develop and to give us a chance, as fathers, to enhance and preserve our relationship with our children.

#### Parenting an infant/toddler

- “The challenge for first-time dads is learning how to be patient and to be a server. Infants and toddlers feel like their world revolves around them and it does — they need to be taken care of and can’t do things on their own.”
- Prioritize. People tell you a baby will change your life but until it actually happens to you, it’s hard to comprehend the time and investment but also the joy.
- Keep your sense of humor. A dad who laughs when his son wakes him up 50 times a night, accidentally sprays him in face with urine, and poops in the tub will be a happier dad.
- Being an involved dad means changing diapers, feeding and disciplining from the beginning. That kind of dad will also remain more involved when his child is a teen.
- Support mom. She’s overwhelmed. Make time for each other.
- Play with your child. Dads tend to be less verbal and more hands-on, and research suggests that’s important for children.
- Take an interest in whatever your child is interested in: If you have a daughter who loves to dress up, do some make-believe with her, have a tea party.
- Read to your child starting at a very young age. Cuddle when you read: Touch is huge in terms of attachment — hug, kiss, hold hands.

## Parenting school-age kids

- “These are formative years, the time when a child develops trust issues, social interaction, overall personality. The challenge is to be consistent, provide security, establish routines. Older dads regret they didn’t spend enough time with their children. Fathers mistakenly feel that their most important task as a father is to work and earn money.” Kids will ask 500,000 questions before they are 15 years old. That’s a lot of opportunities to teach about life.
- Spend time alone with your kids.
- Laugh with your kids. Enjoy the child within yourself.
- Teach independence, confidence, competition and self-reliance.
- Teach an appreciation for the outdoors and respect for nature.
- Keep promises. Dads are role-models for strength and accountability in the family.
- Never use sarcasm and ridicule to discipline. Be fair and consistent.
- Use words and tone of voice wisely. Teach children to respect you, not fear you.
- Be consistent. Don’t laugh at bad behavior and then punish the same behavior later.
- Role model love. Love the children’s mother and demonstrate it. Children raised in loving environments fare better in all aspects of life.

## Parenting Teens

- “There are tremendous pressures on teens that were not there in the previous generations. At times the adolescent seems to have it all together and then five minutes later does something impulsive and unbelievably childish. The teenage years are a time when children are practicing how to be an adult. Remember that their friends are their world.”
- One of the foremost challenges for fathers is to keep pace with a changing society that increasingly blends traditional parental roles of provider and nurturer. A father can offer his girls the opportunity to learn that men can treat women with respect/dignity. He can show his sons that he can be an athlete, businessman, scientist who is also a feeling person.
- Listen more than talk, and try to listen to their friends too.
- Talk to them about their goals and encourage them to live their dreams.
- If you are not good at something for which they need help, help them find someone who is.
- Attend some if not all of their events — especially if they are performing or playing a sport.
- Have one-on-one time with each of your children even if it only 10 minutes a couple of times per week. Play and laugh as well as have the difficult conversations.

## Parenting an adult child

- “Fathers often forget that their offspring actually is an adult. Parents tend to lapse into old patterns that renew the parent-child dichotomy rather than enlisting the adult-to-adult transactions that are so empowering. This is exacerbated by the fact that the child also forgets that he/she is an adult. It is a very common dynamic that adult children, when in the presence of their parents, actually regress to a former stage of development.”

- Remember that most adult children do not need parenting per se. They need to be in the presence of mature adults who can be wisdom figures. Remember that your child is a budding individual who will learn from trial and error. Do not expect your 20-year-old adult child to carry the knowledge and wisdom of your 50-year-old self.
- Remember the choices we may think of as “mistakes” are really part of the learning curve. Help your offspring accept this and accept their choices (which may carry harsh consequences) as learning opportunities.
- Listen to your adult children and have compassion for what they are undergoing. Try to remember what it was like for you at whatever stage of their life they are in before jumping in with advice-giving.
- Create some clear boundaries with yourself so you can be emotionally supporting without feeling you must rescue your children from the lessons they may be in the middle of learning. This will be most empowering for your children, and this will require great patience on your part.
- Learn to let go of the outcome. If you are involved in your adult child’s life in such a way that you try to orchestrate any outcome, you are probably guilty of projecting your own wants/needs/desires onto your children. Although it seems loving, it may circumvent their independence and personal journey. Each of us must find our own way.
- Many adults are returning “home” as they are unable to find work or otherwise are unable to fully support themselves or their families. In such situations many parents have legitimate and pressing questions on how to “be” with their adults kids. In these situations it is helpful for communication about expectations be forthcoming — clear yet flexible.
- If you get stuck in wanting to “fix” things for your children, try this: Take a quiet breath and then ask in a loving and inquisitive tone: What are you going to do? This pre-empts the idea that the parent is responsible for finding a way out of the quagmire. (Note that this works in other relationships as well.)

## **Bible Readings**

1. Deuteronomy 11:19 ESV

You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

2. Colossians 3:20 ESV

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

## **Catechism Readings**

1. 2214

The divine fatherhood is the source of human fatherhood; this is the foundation of the honor owed to parents. The respect of children, whether minors or adults, for their father and mother is nourished by the natural affection born of the bond uniting them. It is required by God's commandment.

## **Small Group Questions**

1. Where are your children in the stage of their life/your relationship?

Relationship with Our Children – Stages of Fatherhood

2. Have you considered what you can do to leverage today's lesson to improve your relationship with your child?

### **Recommended Resources**

1. <http://www.daytondailynews.com/lifestyle/negotiating-the-stages-of-fatherhood-772163.html>

### **Accountability**

1. This would be a good week to talk to your spouse about this lesson – what is your plan?

### **Author(s)**

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