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Syllabus Handouts

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Help define a Vision for your children

Summary

Every father wants their child 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 fathers just like you are discovering how help their child 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 what 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.³⁵ 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.³⁶ 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.³⁷

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.³⁸ 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

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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?

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)

Author(s)

Kevin Scott

Included Resources

1. How to Help Children/Teen Set a Vision
[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.

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

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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.

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

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 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

Talking and Listening to God

Objective:

Talking to God is important. However listening to God is imperative. Do we only know how to talk to God and ask or tell Him what to do or are we trying equally as hard to listen to what God wants from us?

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.

Catechism Readings

1. Catechism 308

The truth that God is at work in all the actions of his creatures is inseparable from faith in God the Creator. God is the first cause who operates in and through secondary causes: "For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Far from diminishing the creature's dignity, this truth enhances it. Drawn from nothingness by God's power, wisdom and goodness, it can do nothing if it is cut off from its origin, for "without a Creator the creature vanishes." Still less can a creature attain its ultimate end without the help of God's grace.

Small Group Questions

1. 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?
2. After the discussion above share your thoughts on the possibility you may not like what God wants you to do.
3. At this point in your life how do you shut God out of your life in terms of how you may listen to God?
4. Do you put God on a time table and if you don't get the answer you want you simply shut God Down?

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start thinking of various ways we can let God guide our lives. Take steps to ask God what God wants you to do – NO MATTER WHAT

Author(s)

Steve Green

Family Relationships

Summary

Do you have a family member who you haven't talked to in a long time? Perhaps a brother, sister, aunt or uncle that you just can't seem to get along with or that long standing grudge you don't even recall the cause of? How do we as fathers find the opportunity to reach out and show love for the people around us who make up our family?

Objective

Family is more than just your wife and children. You began with your parents and perhaps some siblings. Along the way you became close or at least associated with grandparents, aunts and uncles and cousins. Then you marry and pick up an even wider circle of family members. This ever expanding circle of family we gather along life's path can be difficult to manage, conflicts along the way are inevitable.

- How do we as fathers become role models for our children, and perhaps our extended family?
- Is there a damaged relationship you can try, AGAIN, to reach out to mend?
- Has someone moved away for work or school that might need a friendly contact?
- Are you able to be a voice of reason at family gatherings if conflict arises?
- When's the last time your family had a reunion besides just attending a funeral?
- As Christians how do we set a Christ-like example of how to deal with loved ones around us?

Bible Readings

1. 1 Timothy 5:1-8 (Pay attention to 8 the most

5:1 Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, **2** older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. **3** Honor widows who are truly widows. **4** But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. **5** She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, **6** but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. **7** Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. **8** But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

2. Isaiah 49 15-16

15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. **16** Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.

3. Luke 12:13-21

13 **6** Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me." **14** He replied to him, "Friend, who appointed me as your judge and arbitrator?" **15** Then he said to the crowd, "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions." **16** Then he told them a parable. "There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest. **17** He asked himself, 'What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest?' **18** And he said, 'This is what I shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods **19** and I shall say to myself, "Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!" **20** But God said to him, 'You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?' **21** Thus will it be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God." **7**

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 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.

2. Paragraph 2215

Respect for parents (filial piety) derives from gratitude toward those who, by the gift of life, their love and their work, have brought their children into the world and enabled them to grow in stature, wisdom, and grace. "With all your heart honor your father, and do not forget the birth pangs of your mother. Remember that through your parents you were born; what can you give back to them that equals their gift to you?"

3. Paragraph 2206

The relationships within the family bring an affinity of feelings, affections and interests, arising above all from the members' respect for one another. The family is a privileged community called to achieve a "sharing of thought and common deliberation by the spouses as well as their eager cooperation as parents in the children's upbringing."

4. Paragraph 2208

The family should live in such a way that its members learn to care and take responsibility for the young, the old, the sick, the handicapped, and the poor. There are many families who are at times incapable of providing this help. It devolves then on other persons, other families, and, in a subsidiary way, society to provide for their needs: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world."

Small Group Questions

1. Do you have family relationships that are in need of repair?
2. Do you have a family member that you have lost touch with because our lives are just too busy?
3. Who in your family, perhaps your wife, your sister or brother, sets the example of how to maintain a large and healthy family circle? What can you learn from them and how can you help or foster that example?
4. How many conflicts in the family are over money or possessions? See the reading above from Luke and discuss how possessions effect our relationships.
5. Is it possible that you treat your family members worse than you treat your friends?
6. Do you have family reunions? How large? How often? Who arranges that?

Recommended Resources

1. Family Feuds: Fixing the rift
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1002242,00.html>
2. Repairing relationships: Family relationship challenge:
<http://www.parentsconnect.com/questions/family-relationships-boot-camp-repair-relationship.jhtml>
3. No One's Family Is Normal
<http://www.revolutionhealth.com/healthy-living/relationships/friends-family/inlaws-extended-family/normal-family>

Accountability

1. What family relationship can you set a goal to repair?

2. How can you begin to set the example of how keep family relationships and traditions core to your families core values?

Author(s)

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Goals: Are you and your spouse on the same page, do you know her dreams?

Summary

Relationships are dynamic and are ever changing. Is your relationship with your wife growing closer or further apart? One way for the relationship to improve is to have common shared goals or dreams. Goals take many forms, you may call them “dreams, expectations, desire, ideals, vision, values”. Shared goals don’t happen by accident, they take work and communication. Here are some proven methods to set goals and execute the plan.

Objective

A relationship without goals or a common vision is subject entirely to external influences, regardless of whether they are desirable or not. Setting goals as a couple ensures that you always have something common to work towards. This common goal and vision may be the glue that binds you together in times of hardship.

Relationship goals--Where to begin:

First, pick an area of your relationship that you'd like to work on. Here are some examples:

1. Communication goals: How can you become a better communicator? This might involve asking your partner more questions about his/her job, not interrupting your partner while s/he is speaking, or stating your needs more directly.

2. Compassion/support goals: This might involve asking your partner what s/he needs, driving him/her to a doctor's appointment, or setting aside a certain amount of time each day to check in with each other.

3. Affection/love goals: How often and how clearly do you express your emotions? Being affectionate can take on many different forms: directly with loving statements; through touch, such as hand-holding or a shoulder rub; or by establishing special gestures that only the two of you share. Establish goals to be more demonstrative means finding creative ways to express loving feelings on a regular basis.

3. Negotiation/compromise goals: Being in a committed relationship means learning to compromise. Taking steps to appreciate your partner's viewpoint (even when you may not agree with him/her) sends the message that you take your partner's needs seriously. Negotiating and learning to "agree to disagree" are essential for the health of your relationship.

4. Commitment goals: You can't feel an intimate connection with another human being unless you first feel safe with him/her. When you demonstrate commitment, you lay the groundwork for emotional safety and therefore, for intimacy. Think of commitment like a safety net: even during difficult times, that commitment will be there to break your fall. Establishing commitment goals might involve spending

more time with your partner or making decisions that clearly demonstrate that your relationship is a top priority in your life.

5. Physical intimacy goals: Take steps to become a more attuned, responsive sexual partner. For instance, take the time to discover all the ways in which your partner would like to be sexually satisfied or come to an agreement with your partner regarding how often you'd both like to make love.

6. Shared interests/activities goals: The most successful married couples cite friendship as a key ingredient of their long-term success. Work toward developing activities that you both enjoy and that you both enjoy *sharing* with one another. You might try a new activity together each month, such as taking tennis lessons or learning to speak a new language.

7. Household responsibility goals: How involved are you with completing household chores? Does it feel like the work is equally or fairly divided? The mundane details of daily life (things like cooking, shopping, cleaning) should be negotiated, not just assumed by default. Find out if your partner is happy with the current arrangement by asking if there is more that you can do.

This list is by no means exhaustive. Reflect on the areas of your relationship that you'd like to improve. Do some introspecting on your own and also think back to feedback you may have already received from your partner. For instance, if your partner has questioned your commitment by noting, "You never call when you say you're going to," you can develop a goal to show your commitment by becoming more reliable in following through on your promises.

Bible Readings:

1. Ephesians 5:25-31

25Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26to make her holy, cleansing[b] her by the washing with water through the word, 27and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— 30for we are members of his body. 31"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh

Catechism Readings

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."

2. Paragraphs 373

In God's plan man and woman have the vocation of "subduing" the earth as stewards of God. This sovereignty is not to be an arbitrary and destructive domination. God calls man and woman, made in the image of the Creator "who loves everything that exists", to share in his providence toward other creatures; hence their responsibility for the world God has entrusted to them.

Goals: Are you and your spouse on the same page, do you know her dreams?

Small Group Questions

1. How have you used written goals to improve your life?
2. How do you get to shared goals from personal wants?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/CFS/CFS-747-W>.
2. http://www.ehow.com/facts_6184599_goal-setting-couples.html
3. http://www.goalsettingstrategies.com/goals_for_marriages.html

Accountability

1. Set a relationship goal with your wife this week
2. Make a list of 3 goals to improve your marriage

Author(s)

Sean Mullarkey

Love Thy Neighbor

Summary

Who are your neighbors and how do you get along? In this age of houses without front porches, privacy fences and automatic garage door openers how do we communicate with those around us? With our busy schedules and busy lives, what does love thy neighbor really mean any longer?

Objective

Ever hear the phrase “life comes at you fast”? Boy how true is that and it seems it will never slow down. We spend so much time rushing from event to event and place to place do we take time to love thy neighbor? How can we show appreciation for those around us that effect our lives, even if we barely know them? What about the lonely widower down the street that always seems to stop us at a bad time, is there ever a good time? What about the annoying bagger at the grocery store who spends too much time trying to start a conversation instead of bagging your groceries? What about the neighbor who always needs something when they stop you, so it’s easier to avoid them altogether?

Ever had a run in with someone over one of your children’s sporting events? Do you set the example of how to forgive and forget for your children, or do you set the example for the Hatfield and McCoy family feud?

Can we realize a better appreciation of those around us and how they affect our lives and how we can affect theirs? How can we teach our children the importance of loving thy neighbor by how we deal with those around us?

Bible Readings

1. Matthew 22:36-40

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

2. 1 John 4:20-21

If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2208

The family should live in such a way that its members learn to care and take responsibility for the young, the old, the sick, the handicapped, and the poor. There are many families who are at times incapable of providing this help. It devolves then on other persons, other families, and, in a subsidiary way, society to provide for their needs: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world."¹²

Small Group Questions

1. Who are your neighbors? Do you actually talk to them??

2. What does the second commandment really mean? Who is your neighbor that you should love as yourself?
3. When's the last time you experienced a random act of kindness and how did that make you feel?
4. Do you have a good example of Loving your neighbor as yourself that you are proud to share?
5. Do you have an example where you could have done better at loving your neighbor?

Accountability

1. Do you have a neighbor or acquaintance who you avoid at all costs? Can you put yourself in their shoes and try to communicate, just a little?
2. How can you change the way you show love for your neighbor? How can you set that example for your children?
3. Start small and work your way up. Can you make a commitment to grant that random act of kindness to someone else this week?

Author(s)

Dan Lape

Included Resources

<http://www.believers.org/believe/bel208.htm>

Love Your Neighbor As Yourself

Eight times in the Bible we are told to love our neighbor -- one of the Bible's most repeated commands.

Loving your neighbor is the opposite of selfishness -- the common human practice. Acting in divine love demonstrates that unselfishness is possible for a human -- showing a reality that cannot be ignored or denied.

Whether they appreciate you, or respond to your love, Jesus's command is still valid: You must show love to your neighbor in a practical way.

Who Is A Neighbor?

When Jesus was asked by someone who his neighbor was (Luke 10:29), Jesus responded by telling the story of the Good Samaritan -- who helped a stranger in need by the roadside. Then, in verse 37, Jesus told the man to go and do like the Good Samaritan.

A neighbor is someone who is near-by *wherever* you are.

<http://www.allaboutgod.com/love-thy-neighbor.htm>

Love Thy Neighbor - What's the Origin of this Phrase?

"Love thy neighbor" is a term that's become almost clichéd over the years. But where did it originate, and what does it really mean? In a time when neighbors, at least in America, are people we rarely see (thanks to garage door openers and busy lives), or are thought of as nuisances with barking dogs and noisy children, how can we possibly love our neighbors?

Love thy Neighbor - Christ's Answer to Religion

Love thy neighbor was, in part, Jesus' answer when the Pharisees, the chief religious sect of that day, asked Him about the greatest commandment in the Law (See Matthew 22:36-40). These religious leaders had made almost an art form of classifying all the various laws and giving them relative degrees of importance, so in asking Jesus this question, their aim was to test Him. His answer stunned them: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Jesus was summing up all the law in these two statements. If we love the Lord God with all our heart, soul and mind, loving our neighbor is the natural result. The question then is, who is our neighbor, and how do we love him or her?

Let's look at who Jesus says our neighbor is: *You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (Matthew 5:43)*

Is our neighbor more than the guy next door? Could he or she be someone in our community or almost anyone we meet? Could our enemies also be our neighbors? Jesus says that it's so. But how can we love someone who acts hatefully toward us?

When we love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, we grow to recognize that everyone is part of His creation. Will everyone be in heaven? No, but that's not because God doesn't desire that to be the case. His Word tells us that God desires that all would be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). So it's clear that God sees all of us as potential children. Because He lives outside of time and has seen the end from the beginning, He also knows who will choose salvation and who will not. For us, that is where faith comes in. It is not for us to know who will choose Him and who will not, but we are called to be His witnesses. In order to fulfill that calling, we must love others enough to desire their salvation just as He does.

Here's the good news for those who find this teaching difficult: Nowhere does it say we have to like our neighbor!

As for the how part of this formula, we turn to these words from the Apostle Paul. In Romans 13:8-10, Paul says:

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Love Thy Neighbor - Get to Know Jesus

"Love thy neighbor" is not as hard as it looks on the surface. It simply means respecting others and regarding their needs and desires as highly as we regard our own. Keeping this commandment, however, is likely to require the supernatural assistance only God, through Christ, can provide.

How can we learn to love the guy next door with the barking dog, especially when we don't even like him? Perhaps the secret is to recognize that our neighbor, whether it's the guy next door, the checker at the local grocery store, or the Sunday school teacher at church, is someone as worthy of God's love as you or I. In The Message paraphrase of the Bible, John 1:14 is expressed as follows:

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

Could it be that the way we love our neighbor is through getting to know Christ, the living Word of God? It's human nature to emulate those we admire most, so in getting to know Christ, we'll discover a God worthy of our whole-hearted love, and our neighbor will see that love in us.

The Mass vs. “Mega” Church Service

Summary

“Keep holy the Sabbath Day”, but how? The Mass vs. the Mega Church Service; how does God tell us that he wants to be worshiped? What did Christians inherit from the Jewish Liturgy? How did early Christians worship God? And what does the Bible say?

Objective

As Christians we hold to the Ten Commandments including the third “Remember to keep holy the Sabbath Day.” In the Catholic Church we celebrate the Mass. However, Mega Churches, which proclaim to be Bible based hold a worship services. But how does God wish to be worshiped? Let’s explore the Jewish Liturgy (which Jesus participated in by reading from the Scripture), how the early Christians worshiped and how God is worshiped in the Bible and the Biblical basis for the Mass.

It is suggested that the presenting group on a Sunday prior to presenting may want to attend Mass together and then also attend a service at a mega church such as Crossroads and then discuss the differences that they observed as part of the large group.

Bible Readings

1. Malachi 1:11

11 “For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, my name is great among the nations; And everywhere they bring sacrifice to my name, and a pure offering; For great is my name among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.”

2. Acts 2:42

42 “They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.”

3. Luke 22:19

19 “do this in memory of me.”

4. Psalm 116:13, 17

13 “I will raise the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. 17 I will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD.”

5. John 6:54

54 “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day.”

6. Hebrews 10:25

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

Catechism Readings

1. Glossary Mass

“Mass: The Eucharist or principal sacramental celebration of the Church, established by Jesus at the Last Supper, in which the mystery of our salvation through participation in the sacrificial death and glorious

Resurrection of Christ is renewed and accomplished. The Mass renews the paschal sacrifice of Christ as the sacrifice offered by the church. It is called "Mass" (from the Latin *missa*) because of the "mission" or "sending" with which the liturgical celebration concludes.

2. Paragraph 1096

"Jewish liturgy and Christian liturgy. A better knowledge of the Jewish people's faith and religious life as professed and lived even now can help our better understanding of certain aspects of Christian liturgy. For both Jews and Christians Sacred Scripture is an essential part of their respective liturgies: in the proclamation of the Word of God, the response to this word, prayer of praise and intercession for the living and the dead, invocation of God's mercy. In its characteristic structure the Liturgy of the Word originates in Jewish prayer. The Liturgy of the Hours and other liturgical texts and formularies, as well as those of our most venerable prayers, including the Lord's Prayer, have parallels in Jewish prayer. The Eucharistic Prayers also draw their inspiration from the Jewish tradition. The relationship between Jewish liturgy and Christian liturgy, but also their differences in content, are particularly evident in the great feasts of the liturgical year, such as Passover. Christians and Jews both celebrate the Passover. For Jews, it is the Passover of history, tending toward the future; for Christians, it is the Passover fulfilled in the death and Resurrection of Christ, though always in expectation of its definitive consummation."

3. Paragraph 1343

"It was above all on "the first day of the week," Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection, that the Christians met "to break bread." From that time on down to our own day the celebration of the Eucharist has been continued so that today we encounter it everywhere in the Church with the same fundamental structure. It remains the center of the Church's life."

Small Group Questions

1. What are the differences between the Mass and a Mega Church Service?
2. How do you think God wants to be worshiped?

Recommended Resources

1. "The Mass God's Most Precious Gift of Himself" By Bart Tesoriero, published by Aquinas Press
2. "The Lamb's Supper" By Scott Hahn, published by Doubleday
3. "Why is That in Tradition?" By Patrick Madrid, published by Our Sunday Visitor

Accountability

1. Before Mass this Sunday recall that you are about to take part in the Sacrifice that is based on the Bible and has its roots in the Jewish Faith and has been participated in by Christians beginning with the early church through today.

Author(s)

Michael Copfer

Included Resources

1. Jewish Liturgy:

The Navarre Bible Commentary on Luke 4:16-30

"For the Jews the Sabbath was a day of rest and prayer, as God commanded (Ex 20:8-11). On that day they would gather together to be instructed in Holy Scripture. At the beginning of this meeting they all recited the *Shema*, a summary of the precepts of the Lord, and the "eighteen blessings." Then a passage was read from the Book of the Law (the Pentateuch) and another from the Prophets. The president invited one of those present who was well versed in the Scriptures to address the gathering. Sometimes someone would volunteer and request the honor of being allowed to give this address-as must have happened on this occasion. Jesus avails himself of this opportunity to instruct the people (Luke 4:16), as will his apostles later

on (Acts 13:5, 14, 42, 44; 14:1; etc.). The Sabbath meeting concluded with the priestly blessing, recited by the president or by a priest if there was one present, to which the people answered :Amen" (Num 6:22)."

2. Early Christians:

1. *Didache* 14 circa A.D. 70

"Assemble on the Lord's day, and break bread and offer the Eucharist; but first make confession of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one. Anyone who has a difference with his fellow is not to take part with you until he has been reconciled, so as to avoid any profanation of your sacrifice. For this is the offering of which the Lord has said, 'Everywhere and always bring me a sacrifice that is undefiled, for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is the wonder of nations.'"

2. Mass as written by St. Justin Martyr in A.D. 155 and included in the Catechism as Paragraph 1345

"As early as the second century we have the witness of St. Justin Martyr for the basic lines of the order of the Eucharistic celebration. They have stayed the same until our own day for all the great liturgical families. St. Justin wrote to the pagan emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161) around the year 155, explaining what Christians did:

On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place.

The memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits.

When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things.

Then we all rise together and offer prayers* for ourselves . . .and for all others, wherever they may be, so that we may be found righteous by our life and actions, and faithful to the commandments, so as to obtain eternal salvation.

When the prayers are concluded we exchange the kiss.

Then someone brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together to him who presides over the brethren.

He takes them and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and for a considerable time he gives thanks (in Greek: eucharistian) that we have been judged worthy of these gifts.

When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all present give voice to an acclamation by saying: 'Amen.'

When he who presides has given thanks and the people have responded, those whom we call deacons give to those present the "eucharisted" bread, wine and water and take them to those who are absent."

3. The Mass from the Bible

"As the Mass moved on, however, something hit me. My Bible wasn't just beside me. It was before me-in the words of the Mass! One line was Isaiah, another from the Psalms, another from Paul. The experience was over whelming. I wanted to stop everything and shout, "Hey, can I explain what's happening from Scripture?" (Scott Hahn describing his first Mass in "The Lamb's Supper")

(The following list is not meant to be all inclusive but a representation):

OPENING RITE

Procession Song - Psalm 100:2

2 "worship the LORD with cries of gladness; come before him with joyful song."

Procession Song - Revelations 15:3-4

3 "and they sang the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb: "Great and wonderful are your works, Lord God almighty. Just and true are your ways, O king of the nations. 4 Who will not fear you, Lord, or glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All the nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

The Mass vs. "Mega" Church Service

Penitential Rite – Psalm 51:12

12 "A clean heart create for me, God; renew in me a steadfast spirit."

Gloria – Luke 2:14

14 "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

Psalm 92:2

2 "It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praise to your name, Most High,"

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Mathew 4:4

4 "He said in reply, "It is written: 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.'"

Alleluia – Revelations 19:1

1 "After this I heard what sounded like the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying: "Alleluia! Salvation, glory, and might belong to our God"

Romans 10:17

17 "Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ."

Homily - 1 Peter 4:11

11 "Whoever preaches, let it be with the words of God"

Homily -1 Thessalonians 2:13

13 "And for this reason we too give thanks to God unceasingly, that, in receiving the word of God from hearing us, you received not a human word but, as it truly is, the word of God, which is now at work in you who believe."

Profession of Faith – Hebrews 11:6

6 "But without faith it is impossible to please him, for anyone who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."

Profession of Faith – Mathew 10:32

32 "Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father."

Profession of Faith – Romans 10:9

9 "for, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Prayers of the Faithful – Hebrews 7:25

25 "Therefore, he is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them."

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Presentation of the Gifts – Malachi 3:10

10 "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, That there may be food in my house, and try me in this, says the LORD of hosts: Shall I not open for you the floodgates of heaven, to pour down blessing upon you without measure?"

Priest Washes Hands - Psalm 51:4

4 "Wash away all my guilt; from my sin cleanse me."

Holy, Holy, Holy – Isaiah 6:3

3 "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts!" they cried one to the other. "All the earth is filled with his glory!"

Holy, Holy, Holy – Revelations 4:8

8 "Day and night they do not stop exclaiming: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come."

Hosanna - Mark 11:9-10

9 "Those preceding him as well as those following kept crying out: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! 10 Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is to come! Hosanna in the highest!"

Hosanna - Mathew 21:9

9 "The crowds preceding him and those following kept crying out and saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest."

Eucharist - Mathew 26:26-28

26 "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body." 27 Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins."

Eucharist - Luke 22:17-20

"17 Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; 18 for I tell you (that) from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." 19 Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." 20 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you."

The Lords Prayer – Mathew 6:9-13

9 "This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread; 12 and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; 13 and do not subject us to the final test, but deliver us from the evil one."

Sign of Peace - John 14:27

27 "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid."

Breaking of the Bread – John 1:29

29 "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

1 Corinthians 5:7

7 "For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed."

Revelations 19:9

9 "Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These words are true; they come from God."

Luke 7:6-7

6 "And Jesus went with them, but when he was only a short distance from the house, the centurion sent friends to tell him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof. 7 Therefore, I did not consider myself worthy to come to you; but say the word and let my servant be healed."

THE DISMISSAL

Mathew 28:19-20

19 "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, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. ¹³ And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

OTHER

Alter – Revelations 8:3

8 “Another angel came and stood at the altar ... on the gold altar that was before the throne.”

Robed Clergy – Revelations 4:4

4 “Surrounding the throne I saw ... elders sat, dressed in white garments and with gold crowns on their heads.”

Candles – Revelations 1:12-13

12 “I saw seven gold lampstands 13 and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, wearing an ankle-length robe, with a gold sash around his chest.”

Incense – Revelations 5:8

8 “gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the holy ones.”

Incense – Revelations 8:3-4

3 “Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a gold censer. He was given a great quantity of incense to offer, along with the prayers of all the holy ones, on the gold altar that was before the throne. 4 The smoke of the incense along with the prayers of the holy ones went up before God from the hand of the angel.”

Understanding and Living God's Will

Objective:

Our job, our purpose is to understand and live in God's will and not be selective when times get tough.

Bible Readings

1. Passage Exodus 20:1-17, 20

And God spoke all these words: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. "You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor. Moses said to the people, do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."

Catechism Readings

1. Catechism 156

What moves us to believe is not the fact that revealed truths appear as true and intelligible in the light of our natural reason: we believe "because of the authority of God himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived". So "that the submission of our faith might nevertheless be in accordance with reason, God willed that external proofs of his Revelation should be joined to the internal helps of the Holy Spirit." Thus the miracles of Christ and the saints, prophecies, the Church's growth and holiness, and her fruitfulness and stability "are the most certain signs of divine Revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all"; they are "motives of credibility", which show that the assent of faith is "by no means a blind impulse of the mind".

Small Group Questions

1. Think about a situation you have been in lately where you did not live God's will.
Discuss that situation and what caused you to make the choice you made.
2. What action can you take the next time so the outcome is different?
3. At this point in your life what level of commitment do you have to living God's will and not your will?
Discuss ways you can improve upon making the right choice.

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start thinking of various ways we can let go of some of our selfish way are strive to live closer to God's will for our life.

2. Offer some thoughts to the small group or simply contemplate in your mind and heart how you can improve and become a better version of yourself.

Author(s)

Steve Green

The Father-Son and Father-Daughter Relationships

Summary

What do sons and daughters need from dad? How are the Biblical relationships of God the Father and Jesus; as well as, David and Solomon an example for fathers today.

Objective

Fathers need to realize that in contrast to what the culture says, they are indispensable to their children and that their children need specific things from dad including a role model, discipline, religious education and a spiritual example.

The Bible also gives us some key words from father to son at key points in the son's life.

It is suggested that the Team Hoyt YouTube Video (link below in Recommended Resources) may be shown as part of the large group time.

Bible Readings

1. Mark 1:9-11

9 "It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. 10 On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. 11 And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

2. Mathew 17:2, 5

2 "And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. 5 While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

3. 1 Chronicles 28:20

20 "Then David said to his son Solomon: "Be firm and steadfast; go to work without fear or discouragement, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or abandon you before you have completed all the work for the service of the house of the LORD."

4. Proverbs 22:6

6 "Train a boy in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not swerve from it."

5. Proverbs 13:24

24 He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him takes care to chastise him.

6. Ephesians 6:4

4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord.

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."

2. Paragraph 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.”

Small Group Questions

1. What type of spiritual example are you setting for your children?
2. Who is the primary disciplinarian in your family, you or your wife?
3. When was the last time that you publically or privately told your son or daughter (of any age) that you loved them and/or were proud of them or pleased with them?
4. As you children are about to face trials in their life (new school, exams, give a speech, new job, big sports game, get married, have their own child, etc.) have you ever encouraged them to be strong, courage and do the work without fear for God is with them?

Recommended Resources

1. Team Hoyt (www.teamhoyt.com) YouTube Video:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJMbk9dtpdY&feature=related>
2. Dr. Ray Guarendi interview on EWTN The World Over Live 6/18/2010, audio download available:
<http://www.ewtn.com/vondemand/audio/searchprog.asp?pgnu=15&T1=the%20world%20over>

Accountability

1. Look for ways to be engaged with your kids regarding disciple, setting a positive image and giving spiritual examples.
2. Think of your relationship with you children and how and when you can tell them that you love them and are pleased with them.
3. Are there any trials coming up in your son or daughter's life were they could benefit from your encouragement to be strong, courageous and do the work?

Author(s)

Michael Copfer

Included Resources

1. Dr. Ray Guarendi interview on EWTN “The World Over Live” 6/18/2010:

Fathers are indispensable to their children. The culture does not say this and as a result dads have stepped back and let the moms be the authority and heavy discipline lifters. Dad might say, “Do what your mom says.” Fathers need to reassert themselves into the role of authority and disciplinarian. The biggest problem today is that dad's don't take charge; WDS (Wussy Dad Syndrome). Dads don't protect the moms and allow the kids to mistreat their wives more than any other person. Dads need to step up and say, “That's not just your mom you're talking to, that's my wife.” The dad needs to step in and be engaged and linked with the mom. Let the kids know that if the mom has to discipline them that they will have to deal with dad as well. The father can not just be “good time Disney dad” or he will come home to chaos.

Faithful religious guys need to be high profile to their kids. For example, their children should see them pray. For every one spiritual thing that the kids see dad do, it has the impact of five spiritual things that they see mom do because dads typically don't do that. Therefore, it speaks louder because of its rarity. Studies show that dad has more influence than mom does when it comes to teaching and passing on the faith. A study said that if mom and dad both bring their child to church, then there is an 80% that the child will stay with the faith. However, if only the mom brings the child it drops down to only a 40% chance that the child will stay with the faith. But if only the father brings the child to church, then the chance of the child dropping the faith is only slightly lower than if both parents bring the child. This indicates that the male spiritual presence is critical.

Sons in particular need authority and discipline from dad. They need to know that if mom has to discipline them that they will have to deal with dad as well. They also need dad to model proper behavior, spend time with them and teach them as boys look more at actions than just words.

Daughters form their image of what a man is suppose to be and how a man is suppose to treat them and the type of man that they are to look for based on their image of their father. If the dad's image is absent or warped, then the daughter has to form her own image, which can lead to attraction to the wrong thing. However, if she sees her dad as not only a protector but also someone who treats her with dignity, love and respect, then that is her image of what a guy is suppose to be.

2 Biblical Examples of Father Son interaction:

As Jesus is about to enter trials in his life (40 days in the desert tempted by the devil and preparing to make his way to Jerusalem for his crucifixion), God the Father both publically expresses his love for his son and gives him positive affirmation that he is well pleased with him.

Similarly, as David's reign is winding down and Solomon will soon be taking over and given the task to build the Temple, David encourages him to be strong, courageous and do the work without fear for God is with him.

How to be the best Husband money can buy!

Summary

One sign of a great husband is a happy wife. Learn the secrets all great husbands know about making wives feel extra special. We will draw on the experience of several husbands of the happiest wives on earth to learn their time tested secrets of successful wife appreciation.

Objective

Discover ways to provoke feelings of appreciation and contentment in your wife. So how do we provoke feelings? What are feelings? Feelings are psychological and emotional responses' to stimuli. There are positive responses and negative responses. As a husband you want to minimize negative feelings and promote positive feeling or emotional responses in your spouse. Example: how you respond to the following question from your spouse will generate a feeling of appreciation or a feeling of severe resentment. Question: Honey, how do I look in this dress? This is not so much a question as it is an opportunity to express your love and admiration of your wife while preserving your health and well being. A good answer would be telling her how she makes that dress look fabulous!

From this example you can see that you have an impact on how your wife feels, although you cannot make anyone 100% happy, you can do your part in making your wife feel special and appreciated. What are some concrete ways you can show appreciation toward your wife? 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. Check out this web site for 101 ways to show her your appreciation, <http://hubpages.com/hub/101ways2sayiloveyou-wife>

Acknowledgement is another method of showing appreciation. 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. 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?

Tell her you love her every day. 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.

Bible Readings

1. Prov 18.22, 5.18-19

He who finds a wife finds a good thing,
And obtains favor from the Lord.
Let your fountain be blessed,
And rejoice with the wife of your youth.
As a loving deer and a graceful doe,
Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;
And always be enraptured with her love.

How to be the best Husband money can buy!

2. 1 Peter 3:7 (New International Version)

⁷Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1616

This is what the Apostle Paul makes clear when he says: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her," adding at once: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one. This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church."

2. 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. How do your children perceive your affection or lack of, toward your wife?
2. How do you keep your affection fresh and sincere?

Recommended Resources

1. http://www.ehow.com/how_2172035_wife-feel-appreciated.html
2. <http://hubpages.com/hub/101ways2sayiloveyou-wife>

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start kissing your wife good bye....
2. How will you show your wife appreciation this week

Author(s)

Sean Mullarkey

Relationships with friends/families of other faiths and beliefs

Summary

Learn how to defend your faith with humility and kindness.

Objective

Many non-Catholic Christians misunderstand our faith.

It is the responsibility of each of us as practicing Catholics to be properly Catechized. Be prepared to defend the faith and answer our friends and family of other faiths with respect and humility.

Bible Readings

1. Mt. 28-19

Go ye therefore, and TEACH all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

2. Mk. 16-15

Jesus states – And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and PREACH the gospel to every creature.

3. Mk 16-20

And they went forth, and PREACHED everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 905

Lay people also fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, "that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life." For lay people, "this evangelization . . . acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world."

2. Paragraph 1072

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

Small Group Questions

1. Do you get annoyed when other Christians misrepresent the Catholic Faith? Are you prepared to defend the faith?
2. When defending the faith to non-Catholic Christians, do you present your arguments with humility?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/2004/0403fea5.asp>
2. <http://www.2heartsnetwork.org/apologetics.htm>

Accountability

1. Take steps to learn more about your Catholic faith so you are prepared to defend it.
 - a. Listen to Catholic radio.
 - b. Study the Catechism

Author(s)

Tony Heekin

Included Resources

Apologetics Primer

By John S. Martignoni

The word *apologetics* is derived from the ancient Greek word *apologia*. An *apologia* was the case a lawyer would build on behalf of his client. So apologetics is about building the case for our faith—learning how to explain and defend our faith.

There are three types of apologetics: natural apologetics, Christian apologetics, and Catholic apologetics. My local bishop, in one of his regular columns in our diocesan newspaper, once wrote, "There comes a time when we, as Catholics, have to be able to defend and explain certain teachings of our Catholic faith. . . . Our faith is based on reason and logic. The explanation of what we believe and why we believe it is called apologetics."

Most people might say that this apologetics stuff is fine for priests or theologians or ex-Protestant pastors, but what does this have to do with me? In that statement from the bishop, he wasn't talking to priests and theologians and ex-Protestant pastors; he was talking to all Catholics. He said that we, as Catholics, have to be able to defend and explain our Catholic faith.

The question I ask Catholics is: "If necessary, can you defend your faith?" If a Baptist were to ask you for scriptural reasons for the Catholic belief in purgatory, would you be able to give him an answer? Could you answer an Evangelical's question on where in Scripture it says anything about the Catholic belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist? Can you explain to a person from the Church of God that praying the rosary is not equivalent to worshipping Mary?

And, going beyond what the bishop said, listen to what Scripture says: In 1 Peter 3:15, the author tells us, "Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you." *Always* be prepared! The bishop in his column simply was echoing what God says to us through the sacred author of Scripture: We must be prepared to defend our faith. God wouldn't tell us to do something that we are incapable of doing.

Why is it so important that we be able to defend our faith? Because it contains the fullness of God's revealed truth—our faith and only our faith. There is truth in other creeds, but not the fullness of truth that is contained in the Catholic faith. Therefore, we must be equipped to explain and defend it so that others may come to believe in the truth—the whole truth.

In 1 Timothy 2:4 we read, "[God] desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." In John 8:32, "And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." God desires that all men know the truth, and man needs to know the truth to be set free. God desires that all men be saved, and he wants you and me to participate in the process. What will your response be?

There are those who rationalize not learning more about the faith, and who pass up opportunities to explain and defend the faith, by saying things like "I'm not all that concerned about doctrine; I just want to show people the love of Jesus Christ." Well, the love of Jesus Christ is the truth of Jesus Christ! In John 18:37, Jesus says, "For this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice."

Relationships with friends/families of other faiths and beliefs

Doctrines and dogmas are nothing more than the truth given to us by Jesus Christ. They are lampposts lighting the path that leads to Christ. When you consider all the Scripture passages on truth, it becomes clear that if you want to share the love of Jesus Christ with others, you have to share the *truth* of Jesus Christ with them.

We need to understand that truth is not a concept that each person can bend according to their individual whims, truth is a person. Jesus Christ is the truth. And Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The fullness of revealed truth that rests in the person of Jesus Christ resides in the Catholic faith.

If we truly love our non-Catholic brothers and sisters, would we not want them to have the truth—the whole truth—that sets them free? And how will they know this truth if we are unwilling to share our faith with them or unable to explain our faith to them? Will you stand up for the faith, or slink quietly into a corner, when the faith is questioned? Will you act as if you're a member of the Church Militant or the Church Milquetoast?

Does publicly sharing our faith mean that we have to go around beating people over the heads with Catholicism to get them to convert? Hardly. Look again at 1 Peter 3:15: "Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you." That's not telling you to stand on the street corner preaching the good news (although there's nothing wrong with that, either). It's not telling you to alienate all of your friends or co-workers by shoving Catholicism down their throats; it's simply telling you to be prepared when someone comes to you.

You do not have to go looking for people to convert to Catholicism. All you have to do is let it be known that you are a Catholic, and they will come and try to convert you. The more you live and practice your faith, the more opportunities God will give you to defend it.

So, in order to be prepared to defend your faith—in order to become a Catholic apologist—what must you do? The only thing you need to do is to learn a little bit more about your faith each day and every day. That's it. Gain a greater understanding of your faith daily. Notice that I did not say that you have to have a *complete* understanding of your faith. The Catholic faith is deeper than the oceans, and no one in this lifetime will plumb its depths. I also did not say that you have to have a master's degree in theology or a bachelor's degree or anything else of that nature. All you need is an earnest desire to learn more about your faith and then simply act on that desire.

Pray. Read Scripture. Read books on or by the saints. Read the *Catechism*, even if it's just a little bit at a time—*especially* if it's a little bit at a time, as it will stick with you if you take it in small doses and meditate on what you have read. Get books and tapes on apologetics. Subscribe to Catholic periodicals that are loyal to the pope and the magisterium.

To become a Catholic apologist you need simply to have a desire to learn more about your faith and the will to act upon that desire. As you do so, God will bring you into situations in which you will have the opportunity to share your faith, explain it, and defend it.

Seven rules of engagement

Here are some important points to remember when engaging in an explanation or defense of your faith:

1. Pray. Pray before, during, and after you engage someone in a conversation on the Catholic faith. You and I do not convert anyone; it is the Holy Spirit who changes the hearts and minds of men.

2. Remember Luke 5:10: "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men." Jesus said this to Simon Peter, but he is also saying it to us. Will you make mistakes? Will you get into tight spots? Of course. Peter did. Yet Jesus told Peter not to be afraid. Why? Because if we are sincere in our desire to share the truth with others, to share Jesus with others, Jesus will find a way to make something good come out of even our mistakes. He will bless our efforts. But you must be sincere in your desire. Do not become an apologist for your faith in the hope of winning an argument about Scripture with your Evangelical friend or your Fundamentalist brother-in-law. Apologetics is not about winning arguments. It is about sharing the truth; it

Relationships with friends/families of other faiths and beliefs

is about planting seeds.

3. When presented with an opportunity to defend your faith, never be afraid to say, "I don't know." But always follow "I don't know" with "But I will find out and get back to you." Once someone questions or attacks the Catholic faith in front of you, the door has been opened. Do not let that door shut! Get back to that person with further dialogue, books, pamphlets, tapes, whatever—but do not let that door shut!

4. Always look at an attack on your faith or a question about your faith as an opportunity. Most Christians who say something about Catholicism to you do so in good faith. Sometimes they are simply curious and want to learn more. Other times they think you are going to hell because you are a Catholic, and they want to save your soul from eternal damnation. That is a wonderful thing! They are practicing the love of Christ for you. So view any question or attack on the Church as God opening a door for you.

5. Never get frustrated. You may be brilliant in your explanation of a particular doctrine or practice of the Catholic faith, and the person you are talking to simply may refuse to hear it. And he may say the most irrational and illogical things imaginable in response. That's fine. As I said earlier, just think of yourself as planting seeds. You and I are not capable of converting anyone. You do what you can and then offer the rest to God.

6. Stay focused. If you have ever engaged a non-Catholic in any serious conversation about your faith, you probably are familiar with what I call the "doctrinal dance." He will ask you a question about purgatory, and, right in the middle of your answer, he will say something like "Well, why do you guys worship Mary?" As you respond to that, he will say, "Why do you believe the pope can't sin?" As you explain papal infallibility, he will say, "Why do you confess your sins to a man instead of to God?" The doctrinal dance. Some non-Catholics switch the subject whenever you have an answer to their questions. Don't let them do it. Keep bringing the conversation back, in a firm but gentle way, to one main topic until you have said all that you want to say on that topic. *Then* you may move on.

7. Know to whom you're talking. For our purposes, there are two main types of apologetics: Catholic apologetics for non-Catholics and Catholic apologetics for Catholics. The people I have had the most trouble convincing on any given truth of the Catholic faith are not Protestants but Catholics—people who attend Mass every Sunday and who pick which of the Church's teachings they want to believe, just like you would choose or reject items of food as you go down the line in a cafeteria. The term often used to describe such people is "cafeteria Catholics."

When talking to Protestants, you have to stick mostly to Scripture. You can use logic and plain old common sense as well, but you almost always will find yourself coming back to Scripture. So don't let Scripture scare you! And do not be intimidated by any Protestant's seemingly superior knowledge of Scripture. The average Protestant has memorized maybe twenty or so Scripture verses to deal with Catholics. Most of these verses, if not all, have been taken out of context. The average Protestant is hardly a Scripture scholar. He loves it, and he probably reads it more than the average Catholic (a habit we should strive to emulate), but his is not such a scriptural juggernaut that you should be afraid to engage him in a discussion of Scripture.

If you run into scriptural difficulty, what do you do? Always remember point 3: "I don't know, but I will find out and get back to you."

The Bible is a Catholic book. The Catholic Church gave it to the world. The Catholic faith can be defended on purely biblical grounds much more easily than any non-Catholic Christian faith. So do not be afraid to engage non-Catholics in a discussion of Scripture.

When talking to cafeteria Catholics, you can use Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition (which you cannot use with Protestants) as well as logic and common sense—and none of it may do you any good. Some of the Catholics I have talked to are more irrational and illogical even than some atheists I have talked to. When I run across a Catholic of the cafeteria kind, I simply ask if he says the Creed every Sunday at Mass. "Of course I do," he'll respond inevitably. Then I say to him that when he recites the Creed, he needs to skip the part that says, "I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church." Because he doesn't.

All or nothing

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Which brings us to an important point: Do not try to defend the Catholic faith unless you believe what the Catholic Church teaches in its entirety and you can say that you believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. Because if you do not believe what the Catholic Church teaches in its entirety, then sooner or later the part that you don't believe will be thrown back in your face. Your disbelief of a particular doctrine or doctrines will cause all of your arguments for believing the other Catholic doctrines to come crumbling to the ground. It's the same authority behind the doctrines you choose to believe as the ones you choose not to believe.

How do we know what the Church believes? A good start is the *Catechism*. As the Pope writes in the introduction, "The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is offered to every individual who asks us to give an account of the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15) and who wants to know what the Catholic Church believes." The Pope, and each bishop in the world, is telling us that the *Catechism* contains what the Catholic Church believes. That, then, is what we as Catholics believe.

Bishop Anthony Pilla, a former president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, stated at one of the group's national meetings, "Essential to true reconciliation within the Church is the principle that being Catholic is not a purely personal and subjective matter but is something that involves accepting Church teaching and practice."

The *Catechism* gives us Church teaching and practice. We need to accept these teachings and adhere to them with a religious assent. If we don't, what happens? If you call yourself Catholic but you want to pick and choose which of the Church's teachings you will accept and which you will reject, you give everyone else who calls himself "Catholic" the right to do the same.

For example, let's say you believe women should be allowed to be priests. Turn to the *Catechism*, paragraph 1577, which states, "Only a baptized man validly receives ordination. . . . For this reason the ordination of women is not possible." You reject that teaching? Okay, that's fine. Please rip that page out of your *Catechism*. There. You just made it the *Catechism of your* Catholic Church, but not of mine.

Remember, if you can throw doctrines out, so can everyone else who calls himself Catholic. That gives Joe Parishioner over at St. Doubting Thomas Catholic Church the right to throw out the Church's social justice teachings. He doesn't feel like feeding the hungry, caring for the poor, and all that other bleeding-heart stuff, so he rips out paragraphs 2401–2463. He just made it the *Catechism of his* Catholic Church, not mine and not yours.

You believe contraception is okay? Rip out paragraph 2370, which says contraception is "intrinsically evil." Joe Parishioner doesn't like what the Church teaches on the Eucharist? Paragraphs 1322–1419?—Rip! Someone else doesn't like what it teaches in paragraphs 200–205?—R-r-i-i-p! Or in paragraphs 1560–1580?—R-r-r-i-i-i-p!

Can you see what is happening? Can you see where this is leading? I've heard it said that there is a shortage of vocations to the priesthood in the United States, but that there is no shortage of vocations to the papacy. If we don't believe in all of it, if we each appoint ourselves pope and throw out a doctrine here or a doctrine there, then our faith is no longer Catholic.

Once we accept the principle that adherence to Church teaching is a matter of personal preference, once we accept the principle that cafeteria Catholicism is legitimate—that anyone may pick and choose which truths of the faith to accept and which to reject—then we no longer believe in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

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"

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:

He who loves his son will not spare the rod. . . . He who disciplines his son will profit by him.

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

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?

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)

Kevin Scott

Included Resources

1. Robert Rogers Website <http://www.mightyintheland.com>

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.

2. 10 tips to make more time with your Children

10 TIPS TO BETTER FAMILY TIME

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. Churches can also offer invaluable support to families.

Respect (my wife and) your mother

Summary

As a child's independence is developed, mothers are often treated poorly by their offspring. This can be particularly difficult 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.

Small Group Questions

1. How do you deal with issues of “respect” in your family?
2. Have you discussed with your wife how you will handle disrespect from children?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/teaching-children-respect.html>
2. <http://www.drrobysilverman.com/2008/04/12/10-tips-on-teaching-respect-to-children-you-cant-get-it-if-you-dont-give-it/>

Accountability

1. Talk to your wife about how you are 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 being disrespectful of your wife....try it.

Author(s)

Reid Rooney

Included Resources

<http://www.teach-nology.com/tutorials/teaching/respect/>

Respect- How to teach it and how to show it

by Steve McChesney

One of the most important things you can teach your child is respect.

Keep in mind that respect is not the same as obedience. Children might obey because they are afraid. If they respect you, they will obey because they know you want what’s best for them.

The best way to teach respect is to show respect. When a child experiences respect, they know what it feels like and begin to understand how important it is.

Keep in mind the saying “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Respect is an attitude. Being respectful helps a child succeed in life. If children don’t have respect for peers, authority, or themselves, it’s almost impossible for them to succeed.

A respectful child takes care of belongings and responsibilities, and a respectful child gets along with peers.

Schools teach children about respect, but parents have the most influence on how respectful children become. Until children show respect at home, it’s unlikely they will show it anywhere else.

How can you show respect to your child?

Be honest – If you do something wrong, admit it and apologize.

Be positive – Don’t embarrass, insult or make fun of your child. Compliment them.

Be Trusting – Let your child make choices and take responsibility.

Be fair – Listen to your child’s side of the story before reaching a conclusion.

Be polite – Use “please” and “thank you”. Knock before entering your child’s room.

Be reliable – Keep promises. Show your child that you mean what you say.

Be a good listener – Give your child your full attention.

Respect (my wife and) your mother

Children learn from everything we say and do. Make sure that you are modeling respectful behavior. Some of things you can do are:

Obey laws – Follow rules. Be caring – Show concern for people, animals and the environment.

Avoid poor role models – When you see examples of disrespect, discuss them. (more)

Apologetics – Defending the Catholic Faith

Summary

Why be Catholic? Apologetics, the lost art of defending the faith that is regaining popularity as a tool needed to fulfill the mission of the church.

Objective

Explore what the Bible and Church say about defending the faith. Also, touch on what is Apologetics and why every Catholic should be familiar with it? And then discuss the question of why be catholic?

Bible Readings

1. 1 Peter 3:15-16
15 "Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, 16 but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame."
2. Philippians 1:7
7 "you who are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel."
3. Psalms 119
46 "I will speak openly of your decrees without fear even before kings."
4. Mathew 10:16-20
16 "Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves. 17 But beware of people, for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues, 18 and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake as a witness before them and the pagans. 19 When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. 20 For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."
5. Luke 12:8-9
8 "I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God. 9 But whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God."
6. John 6:67-69
67 Jesus then said to the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?" 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."
7. Mathew 16:18
18 "And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it."

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 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": "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."

2. Paragraph 856

"The missionary task implies a respectful dialogue with those who do not yet accept the Gospel. Believers can profit from this dialogue by learning to appreciate better "those elements of truth and grace which are found among peoples, and which are, as it were, a secret presence of God." They proclaim the Good News to those who do not know it, in order to consolidate, complete, and raise up the truth and the goodness that God has distributed among men and nations, and to purify them from error and evil "for the glory of God, the confusion of the demon, and the happiness of man."

3. Paragraph 905

Lay people also fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, "that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life." For lay people, "this evangelization . . . acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world. This witness of life, however, is not the sole element in apostolate; the true apostle is on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, either to unbelievers...or to the faithful."

Small Group Questions

1. Share with the group how you have defended or shared the faith
2. If you are Catholic, why? If not, why not?
3. What are some reasons to be Catholic?

Recommended Resources

1. "A Pocket Guide to Catholic Apologetics" By Patrick Madrid, published by Our Sunday Visitor
2. "Why be Catholic" (DVD) By Tim Staples it is also available on You Tube
3. "Top Ten Reasons It's Great to be Catholic" Posted on Catechism on Call:
<http://catechismoncall.wordpress.com/2008/11/23/top-ten-reasons-its-great-to-be-catholic/>
4. website: <http://www.catholic.com/> (Catholic Answers website)

Accountability

1. Pray for opportunities and the gifts of the Holy Spirit to share and defend the faith.
2. This week do at least one thing to increase your knowledge of the faith and what the church teaches such as listen to "Catholic Answers" from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM on Sacred Heart Radio (EWTN Radio), watch "Why be Catholic" by Tim Staples on You Tube or spend some time reading from the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Author(s)

Michael Copfer

Included Resources

1. "Strangers at Your Door" By Albrt J. Nevins, M.M., published by Our Sunday Visitor

What is Apologetics and why do we should we be familiar with it?

"Apologetics is that branch of theology devoted to the defense (through reason) of the origin, authority and teachings of the Church. Apologetics is not to be regarded as a purely defensive measure. It should indicate a readiness to share one's faith with another. Vatican II saw the whole church in mission, and the Code of Canon Law reminds each Catholic that his or her basic vocation is a missionary one. Apologetics is not to be made combatively but in a way that allows our own missionary vocation free rein. Faith, like love, cannot be forced. It must be won by truth and charity."

"Apologetics must be a familiar science for the believer in order to confirm his or her own beliefs, and by doing so to be able to present those beliefs to others, not in a watered-down version to approximate the level of the unbeliever, but as an uncompromising presentation of the teachings of Jesus "

2. **“CHRISTIAN, YES... BUT WHY CATHOLIC?”** By Rev. JOSEPH M. ESPER, This Rock Magazine October 1999 and at <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/1999/9910fea1.asp>

Summary of his 10 Reasons of Why to be Catholic (Description of each item is available at the link above):

- (1) Only the Catholic Church can trace its roots back to Christ Himself.
- (2) The Eucharist—the Real Presence of Christ—is not found in Protestant churches.
- (3) Unlike other Christians, Catholics have a fully sacramental understanding of God’s saving activity.
- (4) Because of the Church’s magisterium, Catholics have the assurance that their beliefs are divinely revealed truths, not human interpretations and opinions.
- (5) The Catholic Church, more than any other, gives fitting honor to the Mother of God.
- (6) More than any other Christian religion, Catholicism takes Scripture seriously.
- (7) The Church has survived and even thrived for almost two thousand years, in spite of every form of persecution, opposition, and difficulty.
- (8) Of all Christian religions, Catholicism has the most accurate and complete understanding of human nature.
- (9) Catholicism reflects the nature of heaven more accurately than any other religion.
- (10) Because it is rooted in, but also transcends, time and history, the Church is able to help its members discover and live by God’s unchanging truth.

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 what the Seven Deadly Sins are? It is a great value to know and begin to understand these deep drives of sin in us. They are more than just sins per se, they are drives or patters of sin and from them issue many other sins. The more we can know and distinguish them the more we can grow in self knowledge. We can begin to understand better how we “tick.” 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 (or alot!) 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. Each of the Deadly Sins has an opposite Virtue, which can be used to combat the sin.

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

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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?

Recommended Resources

1. ***The Seven Capital Sins*** By Benedictine Convent of Perpetual Adoration Clyde, Missouri, Tan Books and Publishers, Inc. (2000), Originally published in 1959, ISBN: 0-89555-679-0, Available from Tan 1-800-437-5876; review: <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/2001/0107revw.asp>
2. ***Seven Deadly Sins and Seven Lively Virtues (DVD)*** By Rev. Robert E. Barron
3. What Movies Best Exemplify the Seven Virtues? <http://www.insidecatholic.com/8012-what-movies-best-exemplify-the-seven-virtues.html>

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.)

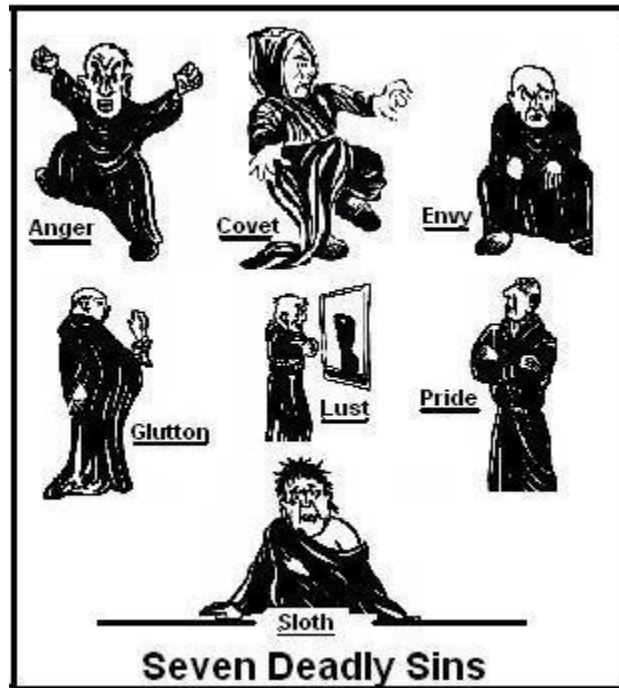
Author(s)

Michael Copfer

Included Resources

1. The Seven Deadly Sins: Memorize and Understand Them, By: [Msgr. Charles Pope](#)

<http://blog.adw.org/2010/03/the-seven-deadly-sins-just-memorize-them/>



Briefly stated though here are the Seven Deadly sins listed for you:

- **Pride** - The sinful drive that distorts proper self love so that we esteem ourself more than is proper and at the same time denigrate the goodness of others. There is such a thing as well ordered self love and self esteem but Pride is love of self which is perverted causes us unjustly to think of others as beneath us or less worthy. Pride also stirs us to reject lawful authority of others over us including God and refuses appropriate submission. Pride is at the root of every sin for through it we pridefully think we have a way better than what God has set forth or that we alone can be the judge of right and wrong. Adam and Eve wanted to “be like Gods” and wanted themselves to determine what was right and wrong. Hence they demanded to eat of the tree of the “Knowledge of good and evil.” This is Pride.
- **Greed** - The sinful drive that stirs excessive desire for wealth and possessions. It is the insatiable desire for more. It is not wrong to desire what we need but through greed we hoard things and acquire far beyond our needs or what is reasonable, and we fail to be generous and bless the needy and poor. Through greed we can also come to see the things of this world as more precious than the things of heaven.
- **Lust** - The sinful drive that leads to an excessive or inappropriate desires or thoughts of a sexual nature. It is not wrong to experience sexual desire *per se* but lust perverts this either to become excessive (all that matters), or for the object of it to be inappropriate (e.g. sexually fantasizing about someone other than a spouse). More broadly, lust is thought of as an excessive love for others that makes the love of God secondary.
- **Anger** - The sinful drive that leads to inordinate and unrestrained feelings of hatred and wrath. It is not always wrong to experience anger, especially in the presence of injustice. But anger here is understood as a deep drive which we indulge and wherein we excessively cling to angry and hateful feelings for others. This kind of anger most often seeks revenge.
- **Gluttony** - The sinful drive to over-indulge in, or over consume anything to the point of waste. We usually think of food and drink but gluttony can extend to other matters as well. This sin usually leads to a kind of laziness and self-gratification that has little room for God and the spiritual life. Over indulging in the world leaves little room for God and the things of the spirit. Gluttony may also cause us to be less able to help the poor.
- **Envy** - The sinful drive that leads to sorrow or sadness at the goodness or excellence of another person because I take it to make me look bad or less excellent. If I envy someone I want to diminish or undermine their excellence. Envy is not

Avoiding the 7 Capital (“Deadly”) Sins

the same as jealousy. If I am jealous of you, I want what you have. If I am Envious, I want to diminish or destroy what is good or excellent in you. St. Augustine called Envy THE diabolical sin because of the way it seeks to eliminate excellence and goodness in others.

- **Sloth** - The sinful drive that leads to sorrow or sadness at the good things God wants to do for me. Instead of being joyful at the offer of holiness, chastity, self control, etc. I am sad or averse to it. I avoid the call to embrace a new life. Most people think of sloth as laziness. But what sloth really is, is an avoidance of God and what He offers. I fear or dislike what He can do for me so I avoid him. Some avoid God by laziness, but others avoid him by becoming workaholics, claiming they are too busy to pray, get to Church or think about spiritual things.

2. Each of the Seven Deadly Sins has an opposite corresponding virtue.

Seven Capital Sins	Theological Virtues
1. Pride	1. Faith
2. Envy	2. Hope
3. Wrath	3. Charity
	Cardinal Virtues
4. Sloth	4. Prudence
5. Greed (Coventousness)	5. Temperance
6. Gluttony	6. Fortitude
7. Lust	7. Justice

3. Gilligan's Island and the 7 Deadly Sins

If I described to you a hit television show with deep Christian underpinnings and hidden meanings about a bunch of people being stranded on a strange island which had some audience speculating that the characters were in "Hell," what show would you say we were discussing?

Gilligan's Island, of course.

Sherwood Schwartz, the creator of Gilligan's Island, said he patterned the 'seven stranded castaways' after the seven deadly sins but he didn't admit it until years later in his book about the show.

I'm sure you can attribute the sins to the proper characters but here they are:

- The Professor – Pride
- Thurston Howell III - Greed
- Ginger - Lust
- Mary Ann - Envy (of Ginger's looks)
- Mrs. Lovey Howell - Gluttony
- The Skipper - Anger or wrath
- Gilligan – Sloth

4. Bishop Fulton Sheen calls the seven capital sins, “the seven pall-bearers of the soul” and names them Self-love, inordinate love of money, illicit sex, hate, jealousy, over-indulgence and laziness.”

Dealing with loss, tragedy, issues with friend or neighbor

Summary

What do you do when a friend or neighbor is dealing with a loss or tragedy? Do avoid the issue because you don't know what to say or do? Do you offer help?

Objective

Help us to recognize when others are going through tough times and have the courage and empathy to offer help.

Bible Readings

1. Matthew 25:31-46

31. When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32. And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth [his] sheep from the goats: 33. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36. Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed [thee]? or thirsty, and gave [thee] drink? 38. When saw we thee a stranger, and took [thee] in? or naked, and clothed [thee]? 39. Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40. And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done [it] unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done [it] unto me. 41. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: 42. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43. I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45. Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] not to one of the least of these, ye did [it] not to me. 46. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

2. Luke 11:5-13

Then He said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and from inside he answers and says, 'Do not bother me; the poor has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs. "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. "For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. "Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1889

Without the help of grace, men would not know how "to discern the often narrow path between the cowardice which gives in to evil, and the violence which under the illusion of fighting evil only makes it worse." This is the path of charity, that is, of the love of God and of neighbor. Charity is the greatest social

commandment. It respects others and their rights. It requires the practice of justice, and it alone makes us capable of it. Charity inspires a life of self-giving: "Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it."

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."

Small Group Questions

1. Do you offer to help friends, neighbors and family members when they are going through tough times?
 - a. Offer to watch kids
 - b. Make meals
2. Do you avoid people that are going through tough times because you don't 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

Author(s)

Tony Heekin

Included Resources

"If you're going through hell, keep going." – Winston Churchill

Every now and then life throws you a curve ball. Your best friend gets cancer, your wife loses her job or your daughter breaks up with her first high school love. In these trying times it is important to support your loved one's and be a rock for them to lean on. But this can be harder than it sounds, especially when you are emotionally affected by the event as well.

In this post I want to show you a few ways to support a loved one through a tough time based on my own experiences. Hopefully it will give you a bit of inspiration for when tough times strike your loved ones.

Dealing with feelings of helplessness

One of the most difficult things about supporting a loved one through a tough time is how utterly helpless you feel. You might be the person's mother, father, sister or brother – it doesn't matter – when a loved one is suffering you feel helpless.

Imagine if your spouse was diagnosed with a serious illness tomorrow. This is the person who you have loved and supported for years and years. Someone with whom you have cried, laughed, fought and made love. Someone who has been there for you whenever you were down. And now they are sick. And there is nothing that you can do to change that.

It is a shit feeling.

But it is just a feeling. It is in your head. And it is natural. So let this be a warning to you. When tough times strike someone you love be ready for those feelings of helplessness because they will always arise. But don't let them get you down. If you let them get you down you won't be any help to anyone.

How to support a loved one through tough times

Now I would like to get into the bulk of this post and share with you some things I have learned over the years about how to support a loved one through tough times. I am by no means an expert on these matters

Dealing with loss, tragedy, issues with friend or neighbor

but it seems like I have spent a considerable part of my life trying to support friends and family who were experiencing some hardship. I'll try to pass on what I have learned.

Don't judge

When someone is suffering because of a mistake they have made 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.

Let's look at an example. Let's say your daughter is in high school and she has just fallen in love with the football quarterback. You think he is a bit of a "player" and you know your daughter is going to end up heart broken. After a few months he cheats on her and she comes home in tears, her heart is broken and life cannot go on. If you decide to say "I told you so" she will never come to you again because she is afraid of being judged. The pain she is going through is lesson, she doesn't need another one from you.

When people are going through suffering because of mistakes they made it is a bad idea to judge them. Just be there for them and don't inject your values or opinions in the situation unless they ask for them. 99% of the time they won't want to hear them.

Don't make it about you

When I was a young man I was fanatically in to soccer. I played for one of the top teams and took it extremely seriously. I would get up and train at 5am every morning before class and then had training at the club after school four times a week. I lived and breathed soccer. And when the finals came around I became what I now consider to be a bit of a monster. I was crazy. I trained so hard and stressed out so much. So you can imagine how I felt when we lost the grand final because I missed a penalty kick...

I will never forget that day as long as I live. When I see my old soccer buddies they still ask me if I have been practicing my penalties! It burns. And I will never forget sitting in the car with my father after the match and hearing him jabber on for what seemed like an hour about how he had been a great sportsman as a teenager and that even he had made mistakes. I really didn't want to hear about it.

When I look back I realize that, in his own spastic way, he was just trying to help. But at the time it seemed like he just wanted to talk about how much better he was than me. And it made me really angry. 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.

When someone in your family gets sick everybody goes a bit crazy. They mobilize the relatives, take time off work and run around like headless chickens. And this is understandable. A family illness is one of the toughest things anyone can go through. When something tragic is happening people don't want to stop and sit down because then their mind will automatically turn to the bad stuff. Keeping busy means keeping distracted. But you have to take care of yourself.

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.

I tried to take on a lot of my family's problems when I was younger. I tried to be the knight in shining armor that saved the day and I tried to be everybody's rock. But there was a limit to how much I could handle. There was a limit to how much I could absorb without bursting. It is important to acknowledge these limits.

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. But non-religious people can find other non-theistic sources of inspiration to help them reach the other side.

Some people find inspiration in God. Others find inspiration in the Dalai Lama, Gandhi or Oprah. They rely on these people or the ideals that they represent to give them strength. The strength could come from praying to this figure or by just recalling their example and feeling revitalized. During tough times I always find inspiration in my Bodhisattva Vow. This is a vow I was given by my Buddhist teacher where I promised to spend my life working for the benefit of others. I promised to dedicate every thought, word and action to the benefit of other sentient beings and never to put my own selfish pursuits ahead of the needs of others. This gives me great strength during tough times and I feel has made me better equipped to deal with hardships.

Take some time to find something that inspires you. Inspiration is not just for religious or spiritual people. Basketball players, great leaders, doctors, nurses etc. – they all have sources of inspiration that they rely on when things get tough. Make sure you have one too.

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. This is one of the best pieces of advice I can give you.

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.

Make sure you bring everything back to love when you are supporting a loved one. If you don't quite know what to do just make sure you love them. Make sure they know you love them. Many times you will find that this, in itself, is enough.

Conclusion

Supporting a loved one through a tough time can be extremely difficult. It can be tiring, emotionally draining and sometimes depressing. But it is in these trying times that we learn who our closest friends and family members are. This is where the true bonding occurs and allows us to take our relationships to new heights.

Sex in the Marriage: as God intended it

Summary

Is there anyone we can talk to about sex in our marriage, can you talk to your spouse about it; are your relations in the bedroom an indicator of the health of your overall relationship? Ever wonder what's normal for couples in their 30's, 40's or 50+? Join us for our first ever discussion on this subject.

Objective

While we all joke about sex in our marriage, for some couples, there is no sex in the relationship. One definition of a 'sexless marriage' is having sex less than 10 times per year. Also, surveys suggest that over 20% of couples report they in a sexless marriage.

We want to try to provide a forum for the men of the Father's team to be able to have a discussion with their spouse about the health of their sex life and how it reflects on the overall relationship and the teachings of the church.

We also hope to engage a Catholic Sex Therapist to join us for the large group discussion.

According to the Church, humans are sexual beings whose sexual identity extends beyond the body to the mind and soul. The sexes are meant by divine design to be different and complementary, each having equal dignity and made in the image of God. The sexual act is sacred within the context of the marital relationship that reflects a complete and life-long mutual gift of a man and a woman. Sexual sins thus violate not just the body but the person's whole being.

Spousal love, according to Church teaching, is meant to achieve an unbroken, twofold end: union of husband and wife as well as transmission of life. The unitive aspect includes a person's whole being that calls spouses to grow in love and fidelity "so that they are no longer two but one flesh". The sacrament of matrimony is viewed as God's sealing of spousal consent to the gift of themselves to each other. Church teaching on the marital state requires spousal acceptance of each other's failures and faults and the recognition that the "call to holiness in marriage" is one that requires a process of spiritual growth and conversion that can last throughout life.

Throughout Church history, various Catholic thinkers have offered differing opinions on sexual pleasure. Some saw it as sinful, while others disagreed. There was no formal Church position in the matter until the 1546 Council of Trent decided that "concupiscence" invited sin but was "not formally sinful in itself". In 1679, Pope Innocent XI also weighed in by condemning "marital sex exercised for pleasure alone". The Church position on sexual activity can be summarized as: "sexual activity belongs only in marriage as an expression of total self-giving and union, and always open to the possibility of new life." Sexual acts in marriage are considered "noble and honorable" and are meant to be enjoyed with "joy and gratitude".

Bible Readings

1. Corinthians 7:1-5

Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 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.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1646

By its very nature conjugal love requires the inviolable fidelity of the spouses. This is the consequence of the gift of themselves which they make to each other. Love seeks to be definitive; it cannot be an arrangement "until further notice." The "intimate union of marriage, as a mutual giving of two persons, and the good of the children, demand total fidelity from the spouses and require an unbreakable union between them."

Small Group Questions

1. Based on the discussion today – are you in a sexless marriage – can you use today's topic to start a discussion with your spouse?
2. Thinking about your marriage and the commitment with your spouse. Is your first priority what is best for them or do you put yourself and your wants first?
3. If life is too busy or stressful for a physical relationship is this a subject that you and your spouse can talk about?
4. Do you and your spouse feel that your Conjugal Relationship helps to complete you as a couple?

Accountability

This week try to find a way to talk to your spouse about taking your Marriage a Conjugal Relationship to a better level that will allow the two of you to grow even closer to one another and to God.

Recommended Resources

1. Theology of the Body - Russ Feldkamp would be a great candidate to give that presentation
2. Will explore support from a sexual therapist, Dr. Bill Wester

Author(s)

Rich DelCore, Walt Moll, Dave Shea, Steve Green

Relativism – How to defend your Family

Summary

Moral relativism is the view that ethical standards, morality, and positions of right or wrong are culturally-based and therefore subject to a person's individual choice. We can all decide what is right for ourselves. You decide what's right for you, and I'll decide what's right for me. Moral relativism says, "It's true for me, if I believe it." This idea of interpreted truth and morals utilized for the convenience of Society poses a real threat to our Catholic faith and to our individual families.

Objective

Moral relativism has steadily been accepted as the primary moral philosophy of modern society, a culture that was previously governed by a Christian view of morality. While these Christian standards continue to be the foundation for civil law, most people hold to the concept that right or wrong are not absolutes, but can be determined by each individual. Morals and ethics can be altered from one situation, person, or circumstance to the next. Essentially, moral relativism says that anything goes, because life is ultimately without meaning. Words like "ought" and "should" are rendered meaningless. In this way, moral relativism makes the claim that it is morally neutral.

In describing her view on morality, the President of Planned Parenthood Federation of America once stated, "...teaching morality doesn't mean imposing my moral values on others. It means sharing wisdom, giving reasons for believing as I do - and then trusting others to think and judge for themselves." She claims to be morally neutral, yet her message is clearly intended to influence the thinking of others... an intention that is not, in fact, neutral.

Evidence that moral relativism is seen as more "fair" or "neutral" than a "hardline" stance on morality is seen in a column from Fox News analyst Bill O'Reilly, who asked "Why is it wrong to be right?" In his article, O'Reilly cites recent poll findings regarding what is being taught in American universities. Studies indicate 75% of American college professors currently teach that there is no such thing as right and wrong. Rather, they treat the questions of good and evil as relative to "individual values and cultural diversity." The problem with this, according to O'Reilly, is that "they see the world not as it is, but as they want it to be. And annoying questions about moral absolutes and unacceptable behavior are usually left unanswered."

In our culture, relativism challenges our ability to tell the truth because it claims there is no objective truth. This attitude undermines the distinction between truths and lies; it leads to an environment of deceit. In such an atmosphere, even with Christ's teachings based on a divine truth, fail to persuade those whose trust in the possibility of objective truth has disappeared. This is the climate in which the Church needs to call people back to the reality of objective truth and the link between doctrinal truth and everyday life.

Bible Readings

1. Romans 8:9-17

⁹You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

¹²Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. ¹³For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, ¹⁴because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

2. Mathew 28:19-20

19 "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, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

3. Mathew 19:17

17 "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."

4. John 8:31-32, 43-45

31 "Jesus then said to those Jews who believed in him, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

43 "Why do you not understand what I am saying? Because you cannot bear to hear my word. 44 You belong to your father the devil and you willingly carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks in character, because he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 But because I speak the truth, you do not believe me."

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 30

"Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice." Although man can forget God or reject him, He never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness. But this search for God demands of man every effort of intellect, a sound will, "an upright heart", as well as the witness of others who teach him to seek God."

2. Paragraph 1731

"Freedom is the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one's own responsibility. By free will one shapes one's own life. Human freedom is a force for growth and maturity in truth and goodness; it attains its perfection when directed toward God, our beatitude."

3. Paragraph 1749

"Freedom makes man a moral subject. When he acts deliberately, man is, so to speak, the father of his acts. Human acts, that is, acts that are freely chosen in consequence of a judgment of conscience, can be morally evaluated. They are either good or evil."

4. Paragraph 1756

"It is therefore an error to judge the morality of human acts by considering only the intention that inspires them or the circumstances (environment, social pressure, duress or emergency, etc.) which supply their

Relativism – How to defend your Family

context. There are acts which, in and of themselves, independently of circumstances and intentions, are always gravely illicit by reason of their object; such as blasphemy and perjury, murder and adultery. One may not do evil so that good may result from it.”

5. Paragraph 2286

“Therefore, they are guilty of scandal who establish laws or social structures leading to the decline of morals and the corruption of religious practice, or to "social conditions that, intentionally or not, make Christian conduct and obedience to the Commandments difficult and practically impossible." This is also true of business leaders who make rules encouraging fraud, teachers who provoke their children to anger, or manipulators of public opinion who turn it away from moral values”

Small Group Questions

1. How does the lack of objective truth in society impact how you teach your kids?
2. Will your kids have a moral compass to judge right and wrong?
3. Is it acceptable for us to bend our morals to fit society?
4. Does the Bible teach situational ethics?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.moral-relativism.com/>
2. <http://www.christianbook.com/relativism-feet-firmly-planted-mid-air/francis-beckwith/9780801058066/pd/58066?event=AFF&p=1011693&>
3. <http://www.gotquestions.org/situational-ethics.html>

Accountability

1. Talk to your kids about moral dilemmas.
2. Challenge your kids to discuss their views of right and wrong?

Author(s)

Dave Fisk

Does God Really Care?

Objective:

If God does indeed care for us then why will God let bad things happen to good people?

Bible Readings

1. 1 Peter 3: 13-19

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

Catechism Readings

1. Catechism 385

God is infinitely good and all his works are good. Yet no one can escape the experience of suffering or the evils in nature which seem to be linked to the limitations proper to creatures: and above all to the question of moral evil. Where does evil come from? "I sought whence evil comes and there was no solution", said St. Augustine, and his own painful quest would only be resolved by his conversion to the living God. For "the mystery of lawlessness" is clarified only in the light of the "mystery of our religion". The revelation of divine love in Christ manifested at the same time the extent of evil and the superabundance of grace. We must therefore approach the question of the origin of evil by fixing the eyes of our faith on him who alone is its conqueror.

Small Group Questions

1. Think about a situation you have been in lately and discuss if you feel that God has let you down or not treated you fairly.
2. After the discussion above share your thoughts on how you think God could act in a better manner.
3. At this point in your life how do you handle what God places in your life?
4. Do You: A) Try to get out of certain situations? B) Do you sit and wait for God to take some kind of action? C) Do you try and work with the cards God has dealt you and make the situation better for everyone involved?

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start thinking of various ways we can let God have more control in our lives.
2. Offer some thoughts to the small group or simply contemplate in your mind and heart how you can improve living in God's will.

Author(s)

Steve Green

Getting Through Spiritual Dry Spells

Summary

Have you gone through a spiritual dry spell? Are you experiencing one now?

Objective

It seems like a lot of people go through spiritual dry spells. People sometimes feel apathetic about their relationship with God and/or feel like God's voice is silent during a difficult time.

The objective is to provide some practical tips for getting through times of spiritual dryness.

Bible Readings

1. Job 9:16

Even if I summoned him and he responded, I do not believe he would give me a hearing.

2. Job 30:20

"I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer; I stand up, but you merely look at me.

3. Matthew 8:26

He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2088

The first commandment requires us to nourish and protect our faith with prudence and vigilance, and to reject everything that is opposed to it. There are various ways of sinning against faith:

Voluntary doubt about the faith disregards or refuses to hold as true what God has revealed and the Church proposes for belief. Involuntary doubt refers to hesitation in believing, difficulty in overcoming objections connected with the faith, or also anxiety aroused by its obscurity. If deliberately cultivated doubt can lead to spiritual blindness.

2. Paragraph 2610

Just as Jesus prays to the Father and gives thanks before receiving his gifts, so he teaches us filial boldness: "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will." Such is the power of prayer and of faith that does not doubt: "all things are possible to him who believes." Jesus is as saddened by the "lack of faith" of his own neighbors and the "little faith" of his own disciples as he is struck with admiration at the great faith of the Roman centurion and the Canaanite woman.

Small Group Questions

1. Have you fallen out of the will of God through some disobedience?
2. Are you holding a grudge against someone?
3. Do you have an active prayer life?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.conversiondiary.com/2009/07/9-tips-for-spiritual-dry-spells.html>

Getting Through Spiritual Dry Spells

2. <http://www.conversiondiary.com/2009/01/more-thoughts-on-spiritual-dry-spells.html>

Accountability

1. Ask yourself – is there anything I am doing to block God’s voice? Take time to reflect on what you have been doing lately.
2. Have you been praying, receiving the sacraments, etc.?
3. Are you filling your life with other distractions?

Author(s)

Tony Heekin

Included Resources

1. From <http://www.conversiondiary.com/2009/07/9-tips-for-spiritual-dry-spells.html>

It seems like a lot of people I know are going through spiritual dry spells lately, feeling apathetic about their relationship with God and/or feeling like God's voice is silent during a difficult time. In case it's helpful to anyone, I thought I'd post a list of some practical tips I've heard on the subject that I learned during my own times of spiritual dryness:

1. Make sure you're not doing anything to block out God's voice

As I've talked about before, my conversion started in a spiritual dry spell; I didn't feel God's presence in my life at all. It all changed for me after I read the C.S. Lewis quote that I discussed in this post, in which he pointed out that asking God to dwell in a heart filled with darkness would be like asking the sun to reflect off of a dusty mirror.

Though it's not as simple as cutting out sin = feeling great spiritual consolation (since, as we'll talk about in #9, God sometimes has a purpose behind letting us experience spiritual dry spells), there are some cases, like me at the beginning of my conversion, where it's mostly just an issue of the filth of sin blocking out God's light. I've found that it's easy for me to slide into "little" daily sins like gossip, envy, uncharity and especially pride, and when I do, I'm often left feeling distant from God until I make a serious effort to amend my ways.

2. Keep praying (no, seriously, keep praying)

I know that when I'm feeling distant from God, the first thing to go is my prayer life. "Why bother?" I'll even catch myself thinking sometimes. It's during these times that it's most important to remember that prayer is not all about what we get out of it, that God is worthy of our praise and worship even if we don't get nice experiences or emotions in return. Also, the only hope for getting out of a spiritual dry spell is increased communication with God, not decreased. A prayer through gritted teeth saying, "I feel abandoned, I feel like I'm talking to myself when I pray," is better than no prayer at all.

Along these lines, my spiritual director once pointed out that a spiritual dry spell is not the time to start subtracting spiritual practices that you once felt called to do. For example, if a few months ago during a period of closeness to God you felt strongly led to pray a Psalm every morning, don't stop doing it just because you're experiencing a spiritual dry spell. Wait until you've regained the peace of the Holy Spirit to abandon things you once felt called to do.

3. Receive the sacraments

If you're Catholic, increase the frequency with which you receive the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confession. As with prayer, it's tempting to slack off on going to Mass or Confession if it doesn't lead to an emotional experience, but the sacraments are channels of grace regardless of how we feel when we receive them. If you need some good motivation, here's an article about the power of the Eucharist, and here's some great info about Confession. (If anyone's interested, here are my own thoughts on receiving the Eucharist and confessing my sins to a priest.)

4. Read inspiring spiritual books

I never cease to be amazed at what a boon it is to my spiritual life to always have a good, inspiring book going (in addition to the Bible, which I think of more as prayer than as light reading). A while back I noticed that I'd drifted into feeling lukewarm about my faith, and then I remembered that I'd been steeping myself in only secular reading material for the past few months. I found a good book that challenged me to live my faith more fully, and found that it alone reignited much of my lost zeal. I still read many secular books, but I try to always have an inspiring book about the faith going as well, and it works wonders for keeping me energized. If you're looking for some specific recommendations, all of the following books are all excellent:

Mother Teresa's Secret Fire

In the Shadow of His Wings

Come Be My Light

He Leadeth Me

Finding God's Will for You

10 Prayers God Always Says Yes To

If you have some book recommendations, please let us know in the comments!

5. Make sure there's not a physical cause

As I talked about back here, I once went to my spiritual director to get advice about my slack prayer habits, and her surprising response was to tell me to get more sleep. After a lot of prayer and thought, I realized that not taking care of myself physically can have seriously negative repercussions in my spiritual life.

Though we always have free will to turn to God no matter what the circumstances (as I was recently reminded), I've found that if I'm staying up too late, constantly eating junk food, not exercising, pushing myself too hard, etc., I'm far more tempted to turn away from God than when I'm feeling good physically -- and this alone can lead to spiritual dry spells. Again, there's not always a direct cause-and-effect relationship to your physical wellbeing and your spiritual life, but if you're in a spiritual dry spell it's worth at least taking a look at what's going on physically to see if there are any contributing factors in that department.

6. Make sure you're recharging your batteries

This is similar to the above, but it's so important yet so often overlooked that I think it's worth addressing as a separate point. A few years ago I took a Birkman personality inventory where I learned about the critical importance of understanding how you recharge your batteries, i.e. knowing what activities give you energy vs. what activities drain your energy.

I cannot overstate the impact this had on my life. I learned that I am an introvert, which means not that I don't like people (in fact one of my great pleasures in getting together with friends and meeting new people), but that the way I recharge my batteries is by having quiet time alone or just with my husband -- and when I don't get that time I end up in a state of psychological distress. Once I understood the high importance of making sure that I got regular introvert time to recharge my batteries, not only did my ability to deal with daily life increase, but my spiritual life improved significantly as well since I found myself spending much more time in a peaceful, calm state of mind.

All that is to say: especially if you're experiencing a spiritual dry spell, spend some time reflecting on how you recharge your batteries, and then make sure you're carving out time for those activities. Introverts who aren't getting any down time or extroverts who are constantly cooped up in the house are going to have a hard time functioning, let alone deepening their relationships with God.

7. Find a spiritual director

I've found it invaluable to meet regularly with a trained spiritual director to help me grow in my faith, especially when I'm experiencing times of spiritual dryness. Spiritual directors can help you work through questions like, "Am I doing something to block out God's voice?", "What could be the purpose for God's silence in my life right now?", "How can I keep praying when I feel so unmotivated?", etc. Here's a post about how to find a spiritual director.

8. Consider counseling

If you think you might have serious unresolved issues in your life that are impacting your relationship with God, you may want to consider finding a Christian counselor to help you gain peace in those areas of your

life. For example, I once heard someone who had an abusive father say that she had a major block relating to God as Father because of her experiences growing up, and it really helped her relationship with God to resolve that issue through counseling. Here's a site for finding Christian counselors, and here's one for finding Catholic counselors. Also, I've heard rave reviews of the Pastoral Solutions Institute's telecounseling service, which offers Christian counseling over the phone.

9. Research the Christian understanding of spiritual dry spells

If you've done all of the above and nothing is better, it may simply be that God is withholding spiritual consolation from you for a reason. I once posted a great email I received addressing why God allows us to have spiritual dry spells, which I highly recommend reading. Also, in addition to reading the thoughts of great historical Christian thinkers who experienced spiritual darkness like John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, you may also find inspiration in reading up on the life of Mother Theresa. She once wrote in a letter:

[I have] this terrible sense of loss, this untold darkness, this loneliness, this continual longing for God, which gives me that pain deep down in my heart. Darkness is such that I really do not see, neither with my mind nor with my reason. The place of God in my soul is blank. There is no God in me. When the pain of longing is so great I just long and long for God and then it is that I feel He does not want me, He is not there...Sometimes I just hear my own heart cry out 'My God' and nothing else comes. The torture and pain I can't explain.

If you're experiencing something like this, take comfort in knowing that you're not alone; some of the greatest saints in history, including our own Mother Teresa, went through terribly difficult periods in their faith. One of the books I mentioned above, *Come Be My Light*, specifically address how Mother Teresa overcame her own darkness and might be a source of inspiration for anyone experiencing something similar.

Again, I'm not a theologian, spiritual director or pastor -- this is just a list of practical tips I've collected in my own research and reading on the subject over the past few years.

2. From <http://www.conversiondiary.com/2009/01/more-thoughts-on-spiritual-dry-spells.html>

After my last post highlighting a great email I got about dark nights of the soul and spiritual dry spells, I received this comment which I also thought was worth sharing since it offers another important perspective to consider. I had to smile when I read it, because these are definitely areas that I need to consider when evaluating the possible causes of my own recent spiritual dry spell:

I think a much safer and more useful approach to such dry periods is to take "the dark night of the soul" or "the dark night of the senses" as the least likely explanation of my predicament.

Before entertaining the notion that my condition is evidence that I am scaling the spiritual heights and that John of the Cross and I have much in common besides our communion in the Sacraments of the Church, it may be very helpful to consider other possibilities first:

Have I fallen out of the will of God through some disobedience? Of course we are all sinners, but have I refused to follow His inspirations in a particular matter? Have I refused clear inspirations that I should cut down on my eating or drinking, that I should rid the house of television or be more faithful in tithing, etc.? Am I here and now in state of disobedience? If so, then God and I are simply not in the communion of wills that is the prerequisite for making great strides in the spiritual life such as entering on a way of passive purification. Moreover, my lack of communion is causing me interior distress.

Am I carrying a grudge against anyone for anything? My dad, my wife, the IRS, Muslims, other drivers, my boss, President Bush, my fifth grade teacher, God? My refusal to love is a barrier to grace -- hence my inner emptiness and pain. My "dark night" is merely interior coldness.

Am I allowing the gift of faith to be eroded by my immersion in the mass media and myriad activities? An unrecollected soul has no possibility of entering on the way of passive purification.

Do I have a substantial prayer life to sustain my life of faith and grace? If not, my "dark night of the soul" is a chimera. I am merely running on empty, really "out of grace."

Personal experience and reflection...leads me to suspect that unless a person is something like a daily communicant and weekly penitent in the Confessional, and one way or another soaked in prayer, exposed daily to the word of God in the Scriptures, and the lives of the saints and their writings, the likelihood that his interior distress corresponds to "passive purification" is unlikely.

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All things are possible with God, of course, including that he can take a disobedient, worldly, unloving and prayerless individual by the hair of the head and set him straight on the way to great sanctity, but all the more mundane possibilities ought to be considered first in my humble opinion.

This strikes me as good advice to use spiritual dry spells as an opportunity to take a basic inventory of our lives and see if there are any obvious ways in which we've distanced ourselves from God, in addition to learning about the topics discussed in the last post.

When communication breaks down & barriers build up

Summary

Real marital communication takes time, effort, and planning. It is not for the fainthearted. If you want to have good communications with your wife you will need to put some effort into it. Marriage depends on good communications; poor communication is the number one reason for failed marriages. We can get so wrapped up in our daily struggles that we avoid putting in the effort needed to communicate with our wives and children.

Objective

Understand the barriers to meaningful communication. Here is a list of five barriers.

1. First, we all carry some baggage with us from our upbringing. Our parents may have never communicated with each other or with us. They may have told us that children are to be seen and not heard.
2. We live in an isolating culture. Things like television, the Internet, and video games isolate us from those nearest and dearest to us. We get comfortable finding our own meaning, purpose, and values without having to interact and communicate with others.
3. We are bombarded with outside pressures. Jobs, car pools, church meetings, and the like, can steal the quality time needed for real communication between husbands and wives.
4. We tend to be lazy, gravitating to the nearest comfort zone. Real marital communication takes time, effort, and planning. It is not for the fainthearted.
5. We may be fearful of showing our emotions or of being rejected if we communicate openly and honestly.

Bible Readings

1. Proverbs 18:21

The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

2. James ws3: 2-12

For we all stumble in many ways. If someone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect individual, able to control the entire body as well. 3 And if we put bits into the mouths of horses to get them to obey us, then we guide their entire bodies. 4 Look at ships too: Though they are so large and driven by harsh winds, they are steered by a tiny rudder wherever the pilot's inclination directs. 5 So too the tongue is a small part of the body, yet it has great pretensions. Think how small a flame sets a huge forest ablaze. 6 And the tongue is a fire! The tongue represents the world of wrongdoing among the parts of our bodies. It pollutes the entire body and sets fire to the course of human existence – and is set on fire by hell. 7 For every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and sea creature is subdued and has been subdued by humankind. 8 But no human being can subdue the tongue; it is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse people made in God's image. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. These things should not be so, my brothers and sisters. 11 A spring does not pour out fresh water and bitter water from the same opening, does it? 12 Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers and sisters,

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or a vine produce figs? Neither can a salt water spring produce fresh water.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2333

Everyone, man and woman should acknowledge and accept his sexual *identity*. Physical, moral, and spiritual *difference* and *complementarity* are oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends in part on the way in which the complementarity, needs, and mutual support between the sexes are lived out.

Small Group Questions

1. How have your parents communication style effected your communications with your wife, and what are your children learning from you?
2. What barriers do you struggle with the most and how can you overcome them?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.crosswalk.com/1193737/>
2. <http://ezinearticles.com/?Ten-Road-Blocks-to-Satisfying-Marital-Communication&id=158513>
3. <http://www.helpstartshere.org/real-life-stories/teaching-marital-communications.html>
4. http://www.ncfr.com/pdf/press_releases/firean_1.pdf
5. Barry & Mary Leventhal for Two Becoming One

Accountability

1. Take 15 minutes each day without interruption or distractions to talk and listen to your wife.
2. Reflect on how your communication with your wife impacts your children now and in the future.

Author(s)

Sean Mullarkey

Tell the Truth

Summary

Oh what a better world it would be if we all would just....Tell the Truth. How do we live a life of truthfulness that sets an example for our children and cause them to Tell the Truth?

Objective

"If you always tell the truth, you do not need to have a good memory," is an often used quote. Beyond just telling the truth, the facts, we need to instill in our children the practice of being truthful in all of their dealings, especially in regard to individuals. Today's society is thick with gross exaggeration and outright lying to achieve objectives, maintain image, and tear down others. Our children are exposed to untruths regularly in personal relationships, in the media, via the internet, and in social networking. We fathers need to make sure they do not accept this as "normal" and be certain that they are sensitive to the harm and personal pain lying can cause. We have all experienced small lies turning to large ones, reputations being damaged, and relationships broken. Demonstrating truthfulness over time in front of our children in interactions with merchants, strangers, friends, and relatives goes a long way toward developing a young adult who recognizes the benefit being truthful. Beyond "being" truthful, we should also encourage our children to expect the truth in what they hear from friends and other sources.

Bible Readings

1. Sirah 5

Rely not upon deceitful wealth, for it will be no help on the day of wrath. Winnow not in every wind, and start not off in every direction. Be consistent in your thoughts; steadfast be your words. Be swift to hear, but slow to answer. If you have the knowledge, answer your neighbor; if not, put your hand over your mouth. Honor and dishonor through talking! A man's tongue can be his downfall. Be not called a detractor; use not your tongue for calumny; For shame has been created for the thief, and the reproach of his neighbor for the double-tongued.

2. Proverbs 8

Does not Wisdom call, and Understanding raise her voice? On the top of the heights along the road, at the crossroads she takes her stand; By the gates at the approaches of the city, in the entryways she cries aloud: "To you, O men, I call; my appeal is to the children of men. You simple ones, gain resource, you fools, gain sense. "Give heed! for noble things I speak; honesty opens my lips. Yes, the truth my mouth recounts, but the wickedness my lips abhor. Sincere are all the words of my mouth, no one of them is wily or crooked; All of them are plain to the man of intelligence, and right to those who attain knowledge.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2464

The eighth commandment forbids misrepresenting the truth in our relations with others. This moral prescription flows from the vocation of the holy people to bear witness to their God who is the truth and wills the truth. Offenses against the truth express by word or deed a refusal to commit oneself to moral uprightness: they are fundamental infidelities to God and, in this sense, they undermine the foundations of the covenant.

2. Paragraph 2468

Truth as uprightness in human action and speech is called truthfulness, sincerity, or candor. Truth or truthfulness is the virtue which consists in showing oneself true in deeds and truthful in words, and in guarding against duplicity, dissimulation, and hypocrisy.

Small Group Questions

1. How do you create an atmosphere of truth in your household? Outside of your home?
2. When is exaggeration dishonesty?
3. Can you offer an example of how you or someone in your family has been hurt by others not telling the truth? How has this impacted your family?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.paintedgold.com/Kids/children-tell-truth.html>
2. <http://www.teachkidshow.com/teach-your-child-to-tell-the-truth/>

Accountability

1. Try to bring up with your children the issue of telling the truth some time this week. Does telling the truth matter if you do not get caught?
2. Don't pass on an e-mail with exaggerations that will cause harm to someone.
3. Commend the next person you see being truthful when they did not "have to be."

Author(s)

Reid Rooney

Included Resources

Dealing with Telling the Truth ...

<http://www.kellybear.com/TeacherArticles/TeacherTip41.html>

It is normal for young children to deny allegations, blame others for their mistakes or make up stories. They find it hard to distinguish fiction from reality. Until the age of six or seven, fantasy is a part of children's lives. However, children beyond that age can develop a pattern of deception that can negatively affect their social and emotional development. Children in elementary school typically know when they are lying. They may lie because they feel trapped, fear punishment, want to please adults, or because the adults around them are dishonest. They may also tell lies to avoid humiliation, escape from work or failure, boost their self-esteem, receive special attention, protect themselves or others, receive peer acceptance, gain something they want, or hide an antisocial behavior such as drug use. Here are some ideas for educators on how to address this issue.... (MORE)

<http://www.christianpost.com/blogs/parenting/2010/05/to-tell-the-truth-28/>

To Tell the Truthby Mark Gregston

To Tell the Truth "A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin." -- Proverbs 26:28

There seems to be an avalanche of dishonesty across all sectors of our society today. And when kids see dishonesty as a strategy to get ahead - as is the focus of most reality TV shows, or as a way to gain power - as it is in the political realm, it's natural for them to emulate that. Sadly, it's hard to find an unimpeachably honest public figure or champion of honesty today. Kids lie for the same reasons that adults lie...to lift themselves up, to get ahead, to destroy their competition, or to protect themselves and avoid consequences. When they spend hours daily making up puffed-up stories about themselves on the Internet, or using cruel dishonesty to tear down their enemies or competition, the lines between the virtual world and the real world begin to fade. Kids being dishonest in a fantasy world are likely to bring that over to the real world as well. (MORE)

Living Relationship with God

Objective:

Every relationship involves some type of risk. Do we have a living relationship with God or are we simply trying to practice religion?

Bible Readings

1. Colossians 2:12-14:

You were buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

When you were dead in your sins and in the un-circumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

2. Luke 11:12-14:

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

Catechism Readings

1. Catechism 820 / Paragraphs 2780 - 2782

We can invoke God as "Father" because he is revealed to us by his Son become man and because his Spirit makes him known to us. The personal relation of the Son to the Father is something that man cannot conceive of nor the angelic powers even dimly see: and yet, the Spirit of the Son grants a participation in that very relation to us who believe that Jesus is the Christ and that we are born of God.³²

When we pray to the Father, we are in communion with him and with his Son, Jesus Christ.³³ Then we know and recognize him with an ever new sense of wonder. The first phrase of the Our Father is a blessing of adoration before it is a supplication. For it is the glory of God that we should recognize him as "Father," the true God. We give him thanks for having revealed his name to us, for the gift of believing in it, and for the indwelling of his Presence in us.

We can adore the Father because he has caused us to be reborn to his life by adopting us as his children in his only Son: by Baptism, he incorporates us into the Body of his Christ; through the anointing of his Spirit who flows from the head to the members, he makes us other "Christs."

Small Group Questions

1. What habits do you have in your daily life or at certain times of the year that put you in a position to have a living relationship with God?
2. Aside from births, deaths, and sacraments, when do you feel closest to God?

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start thinking of various ways to let God know that you are thinking of Him.
2. Possibly try saying the rosary or visiting the adoration chapel. Do something for another person without being asked.'

Author(s)

Steve Green

Why should I even try?

Summary

Why should I even try? At times everything seems to be out of control and I find myself wondering why I should even try to make a difference.

Objective

Have you ever felt that everything is out of control in your life and the more you try the worse things seems to get. Your wife and your kids don't appreciate you. At work it feels like no one appreciates you. It's like Groundhog Day everyday. You get up, get in the shower, and it feels like the same day is repeated over and over. Do you stop and remember when you feel like this to ask God to help you? Do you just say, "God help me" or do you really take the time to talk to God, to just LISTEN to God in silence and see what He's saying to you?

Bible Readings

1. Psalms Chapter 116

¹ I love the LORD, who listened to my voice in supplication, Who turned an ear to me on the day I called. ² I was caught by the cords of death; the snares of Sheol had seized me; I felt agony and dread. Then I called on the name of the LORD, "O LORD, save my life!" Gracious is the LORD and just; yes, our God is merciful. The LORD protects the simple; I was helpless, but God saved me. Return, my soul, to your rest; the LORD has been good to you. For my soul has been freed from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling. ³ I shall walk before the LORD in the land of the living. ⁴ I kept faith, even when I said, "I am greatly afflicted!" I said in my alarm, "No one can be trusted!" How can I repay the LORD for all the good done for me? ⁵ I will raise the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people. ⁶ Too costly in the eyes of the LORD is the death of his faithful. LORD, I am your servant, your servant, the child of your maidservant; you have loosed my bonds. I will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people, In the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Hallelujah!

Footnotes

¹ [Psalm 116] A thanksgiving in which the psalmist responds to divine rescue from mortal danger (Psalm 116:3-4) and from near despair (10-11) with vows and temple sacrifices (Psalm 116:13-14, 17-19). The Greek and Latin versions divide the psalm into two parts: Psalm 116:1-9 and 10-19, corresponding to its two major divisions.

² [3] The cords of death: death is personified here; it attempts to capture the psalmist with snares and nets. Cf Psalm 18:6.

³ [9] The land of the living: the phrase elsewhere is an epithet of the Jerusalem Temple (cf Psalm 27:13; 52:5; Isaiah 38:11). Hence the psalmist probably refers to being present to God in the temple.

⁴ [10] I kept faith, even when I said: even in the days of despair, the psalmist did not lose all hope.

⁵ [13] The cup of salvation: probably the libation of wine poured out in gratitude for rescue. Cf Exodus 25:29; Numbers 15:5, 7, 10.

⁶ [15] Too costly in the eyes of the LORD: the meaning is that the death of God's faithful is grievous to God, not that God is pleased with the death. Cf Psalm 72:14. In Wisdom 3:5-6 God accepts the death of the righteous as a sacrificial burnt offering.

2. Matthew 19:26

But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

3. Psalm 34:17-20

When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2091

The first commandment is also concerned with sins against hope, namely, despair and presumption:

By *despair*, man ceases to hope for his personal salvation from God, for help in attaining it or for the forgiveness of his sins. Despair is contrary to God's goodness, to his justice - for the Lord is faithful to his promises - and to his mercy.

1. Paragraph 2086

"The first commandment embraces faith, hope, and charity. When we say 'God' we confess a constant, unchangeable being, always the same, faithful and just, without any evil. It follows that we must necessarily accept his words and have complete faith in him and acknowledge his authority. He is almighty, merciful, and infinitely beneficent. Who could not place all hope in him? Who could not love him when contemplating the treasures of goodness and love he has poured out on us? Hence the formula God employs in the Scripture at the beginning and end of his commandments: 'I am the LORD.'"⁸

2. Paragraph 30

"Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice."⁵ Although man can forget God or reject him, He never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness. But this search for God demands of man every effort of intellect, a sound will, "an upright heart", as well as the witness of others who teach him to seek God.

You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom is without measure. And man, so small a part of your creation, wants to praise you: this man, though clothed with mortality and bearing the evidence of sin and the proof that you withstand the proud. Despite everything, man, though but a small a part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.⁶

3. Paragraph 2710

The choice of the *time and duration of the prayer* arises from a determined will, revealing the secrets of the heart. One does not undertake contemplative prayer only when one has the time: one makes time for the Lord, with the firm determination not to give up, no matter what trials and dryness one may encounter. One cannot always meditate, but one can always enter into inner prayer, independently of the conditions of health, work, or emotional state. The heart is the place of this quest and encounter, in poverty and in faith.

Small Group Questions

1. What do you do when everything seems to be going wrong?
2. What do you do when you feel hopeless?
3. How do you pick yourself up at these times or keep yourself going?

Why should I even try?

Accountability

1. What are you going to do this week to break the cycle of spiritual hopelessness or to help yourself avoid it?

Author(s)

Mark Oliva

How your relationship with your Mother affects your relationship with your kids and your wife?

Summary

For Dads: Who comes first, your mom or your wife? Your mother may put you on a pedestal, or alternatively, knock you off a pedestal, which may affect your relationship with your wife and kids. Learn how Father's just like you are discovering how to ensure Mom's love is not taken for granted and their wife and children remain the most special people in a man's life.

Objective

Help the Father's to understand their present day relationship with their Mother as an adult son and how best to manage this to ensure their wife and kids are positive.

Note: As a Father's Team, there is a range of Mother-Adult son relationships that vary from positive to negative, which impacts a fellow Father's relationship with their wife and children. The intent of the topic is to focus on the Mother-Adult son relationship and the how to ensure the relationship between the Father and his wife and kids remains positive.

Bible Readings

1. Genesis 2 verse 24

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh..."

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2199 -2200

2199 The fourth commandment is addressed expressly to children in their relationship to their father and mother, because this relationship is the most universal. It likewise concerns the ties of kinship between members of the extended family. It requires honor, affection, and gratitude toward elders and ancestors. Finally, it extends to the duties of pupils to teachers, employees to employers, subordinates to leaders, citizens to their country, and to those who administer or govern it. This commandment includes and presupposes the duties of parents, instructors, teachers, leaders, magistrates, those who govern, all who exercise authority over others or over a community of persons.

2200 Observing the fourth commandment brings its reward: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you."⁸ Respecting this commandment provides, along with spiritual fruits, temporal fruits of peace and prosperity. Conversely, failure to observe it brings great harm to communities and to individuals.

Small Group Questions

1. Is there a conflict in your life with your mom, as she has crossed the line between love and dominance with you as an adult-son and/or your wife & kids?
2. Does your mom know she has a special place in your heart and you respect her?

How your relationship with your Mother affects your relationship with your kids and your wife?

3. Are you role modeling for your son, your mom/adult-son relationship, so he can have a great relationship as an adult with your wife (his mom)?

Accountability

1. This week would be a good time to start to define what should be your mother and son relationship (have you defined the difference a mother's love and dominance?).
2. Have you told your Mom how you really feel if she is constantly putting you on a pedestal or knocking you off and the impact it has with your wife and kids?
3. Does your wife feel she is the #1 women in your life?

Included Resources

1. Tips to Strengthen the Mother-Adult Son Bond.

The most delicate aspect of mother and adult-son relationship comes, when another woman enters into his life, either as a girlfriend or as a wife. This is the time, when almost every mother starts feeling insecure and becomes apprehensive. From being the only woman in her adult-son's life, she has to share the affection with someone, who is as important in her adult-son's life as she is. This is the time for the adult-son to make his mother understand that she has and will always be the most special person in his life and that someone else can never take her place. On the other hand, a mother should also understand that she has to stop holding on to her adult-son all the time and let go of him.

There is a thin line between love and dominance. When the love turns into domination, it is then that the mother adult-son relationship starts turning strenuous. The delicate balance of a mother and adult-son relationship should always be maintained and the effort should be from both the sides. A mother should never interfere in her adult-son's life, but at the same time, she should always be there when he needs her. Similarly, an adult-son should never take his mother's love for granted and should always give her due respect.

Tips To Strengthen the Mother/Adult-son Bond

Communication holds the key for any relationship and a mother and adult-son bond is no exception. Conversing with one another can prove to be very beneficial as well as advantageous.

Listening is another important aspect of a bond. A mother should listen to everything that her adult-son says to her, even if it sounds silly and stupid. On the other hand, an adult-son should listen to whatever advice or suggestion that his mother gives. He should realize that whatever she is saying is for his own benefit.

Every adult-son looks at his mother as a best secret sharer. To be his confidante, every mother should build in confidence and make her adult-son get that feeling that she is the best person he can look up to.

Author(s)

Kevin Scott

What is really going on during the Mass?

Summary

A new found respect for the Catholic Mass once you know what is truly happening, you will never say you are bored again.

Objective

Not every Mass is going to be a great and deeply moving experience. Lifelong Catholics may have grown so used to the ritual that they aimlessly go through the motions and find that their minds often wander. The objective is to help us understand the Mass and learn to appreciate this most sacred gift from our Lord Jesus Christ. May you learn to embrace the gift of the Eucharist and share it with everyone you encounter.

Bible Readings

1. 1 Cor. 11:23-26

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant of my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes"

2. Matthew. 5:23–24

Assemble on the Lord's day, and break bread and offer the Eucharist; but first make confession of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one. Anyone who has a difference with his fellow is not to take part with you until he has been reconciled, so as to avoid any profanation of your sacrifice.

3. Luke 22:19

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me'.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1382

The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's body and blood. But the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed toward the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through communion. To receive communion is to receive Christ himself who has offered himself for us.

2. Paragraph 1378

Worship of the Eucharist.

In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord. "The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession.

Small Group Questions

1. What effort do you put in to understanding what is going on during Mass? You only get out of it what you put in.

What is really going on during the Mass?

2. Do you challenge your family to participate and be attentive during Mass.

Recommended Resources

1. "The Holy Mass- The Testimony of Catalina" – Document is on the Father's Team website
2. "The Lamb's Supper – Scott Hahn
3. "Jesus Present Before Me, Meditations for Eucharistic Adoration" – Father Peter John Cameron, O.P.
4. <http://forcatholicolymass.blogspot.com/2010/03/what-really-happens-during-each-part-of.html>

Accountability

1. Read "The Holy Mass – the Testimony of Catalina and try to apply her insights the next time you go to Mass.

Author(s)

Tony Heekin

Included Resources

[What really happens during each part of the Mass?](#)



What really happens during each part of the Mass?
You have to watch this exceptional video

The Catholic Mass is the most sacred act of worship a person can participate in upon earth. At the Last Supper, Jesus Christ, sat down with his chosen Apostles for what He knew would be their last meal together. At that supper, Jesus does something new, something never done before, and yet something which continues until the end of time.

Knowing more about the Mass, we can be closer to Christ and to the miracle He left us on that Holy Thursday night.

"The Catholic Mass...Revealed!" (www.catholicmass.org) is designed to help all people, whether Catholic or not, to better understand the miracle of the Mass. We can come to appreciate its beauty, its rhythm, even why many in history have faced death rather than be deprived of the opportunity to participate in the Mass.

Our prayer is that you come to know and love the Mass as making present again the sacrifice of Christ's love for us, and a continuation of His Last Supper with his apostles. You too can come to know and love Jesus Christ who both commands and invites us to encounter Him in this very special way.

Some Articles to Ponder

Understanding the Spiritual Dimension of the Mass

Rediscovering the Sacramental Sense

The Mass is not Entertainment

If Mass Is Boring

What is really going on during the Mass?

Memorial and Presence in the Eucharistic Body of Christ
The (Remarkable) Preface Dialogue
Is the Mass a Eucharistic Banquet or a Holy Sacrifice?
The case for Catholic Mass vs. Protestant services
How to Participate More Actively in the Celebration of Mass
“Top 10” reasons to go to Mass
What really happens during each part of the Mass?
How the Fathers of Vatican II intended for us to celebrate Mass

What is really going on during the Mass?

Be a Man

Summary

What does it mean to be a man in today's world? What does God expect of us?

Objective

Everyone can think of the qualities that make up a man's man — even a lady's man. But what does it take to be God's man, a man of faith, prayerfulness and spiritual strength?

For Father Larry Richards, author of *Be a Man!, Becoming the Man God Created You To Be*, being a Catholic man means accepting some hard truths about faith and expectations.

It is Jesus Himself who reveals to us what it is to be a man. He was a man for others; He gave Himself away; He challenged people; He loved people. You are being invited to be a man, in the sense of putting others' needs above your own. To do this you will need to acknowledge your own faults and live according to the Holy Spirit. Men need to find strength, real strength in faith and genuine love to overcome their sins and faults. To be like Christ and all great men, you need to be ready to commit. Are you ready?

Bible Readings

1. Mark 1:11
And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."
2. Mark 1:15
"This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."
3. 2 Timothy 1:7
For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control.
4. 1 Corinthians 16: 13-14
Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong. Your every act should be done with love.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 804
One enters into the People of God by faith and Baptism. "All men are called to belong to the new People of God" (LG 13), so that, in Christ, "men may form one family and one People of God" (AG 1).
2. Paragraph 1878
All men are called to the same end: God himself. There is a certain resemblance between the unity of the divine persons and the fraternity that men are to establish among themselves in truth and love.¹ Love of neighbor is inseparable from love for God.
3. Paragraph 2713
Contemplative prayer is the simplest expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a gift, a grace; it can be accepted only in humility and poverty. Contemplative prayer is a covenant relationship established by God within our hearts.⁹ Contemplative prayer is a communion in which the Holy Trinity conforms man, the image of God, "to his likeness."

Small Group Questions

1. Do you live for today or eternity?
2. What would a person who is honest say about you if you died today? What would you want them to say?
3. Who are some of your heroes who are men? What qualities do they possess that make them strong?

Recommended Resources

1. *Be a Man!, Becoming the Man God Created You To Be*, Father Larry Richards

Accountability

1. What have you done this week to become a better man?

Author(s)

Mark Oliva

Habits – Good & Bad

Objective

Habits are routines of behavior that are repeated regularly and tend to occur subconsciously, without one being conscious about them. Habitual behavior often goes unnoticed in persons exhibiting it, because a person does not need to engage in self-analysis when undertaking routine tasks.

We all have good and bad habits. Step back and take an objective view of what you do daily, weekly, monthly. If your life was being recorded, what would make the highlight reel and what would you prefer be deleted? How can we focus on improving /adding the good habits and getting rid of the bad ones?

Bible Readings

1. 1 Timothy 5:13

Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to.

2. Hebrews 10: 15-16, 23-25

The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds. Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1735

Imputability and responsibility for an action can be diminished or even nullified by ignorance, inadvertence, duress, fear, habit, inordinate attachments, and other psychological or social factors. Imputability - to lay the responsibility or blame for often falsely or unjustly

Small Group Questions

1. How can over-doing some habits be as bad as under-doing some things?
2. What habits might distract you, affecting your faith, family life, work, or your health?
3. What habits are you willing to give up, or practice more? Start with ONE

Recommended Resources

1. Rediscovering Catholicism by Michael Kelly; Chapter 9, Page 129.
2. 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, by Dr. Steven Covey

Author(s)

Rich Delcore

Raising children in a Digital Age

Summary

iPhone, iPod, iPad,iParent, in a networked world. It is critical that fathers stay involved in the technology of the day to understand what your child is experiencing in an environment of “uber” communication.

Objective

The line-up changes all the time. The toys of technology are turning over at an incredible rate and fathers need to stay in the loop to understand how their children use them. Generational differences in the approach to technology are profound. Children aggressively adapt the use of phones, text, video, social networking, etc. Unfortunately, they often do so without proper consideration being given to the ramifications of communications, once recorded, are recorded forever. Additionally, the exposure your child has to illicit material and worse yet, predators, demands that you understand technology, understand how your child uses it, and that you provide necessary guidance in its use.

Bible Readings

1. Deuteronomy 4:9-10

Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when he said to me, “Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children.”

2. Deuteronomy 6:6-9

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 2489

Charity and respect for the truth should dictate the response to every request for information or communication. The good and safety of others, respect for privacy, and the common good are sufficient reasons for being silent about what ought not be known or for making use of a discreet language. The duty to avoid scandal often commands strict discretion. No one is bound to reveal the truth to someone who does not have the right to know it.

2. Paragraph 2492

Everyone should observe an appropriate reserve concerning persons' private lives. Those in charge of communications should maintain a fair balance between the requirements of the common good and respect for individual rights. Interference by the media in the private lives of persons engaged in political or public activity is to be condemned to the extent that it infringes upon their privacy and freedom.

Small Group Questions

1. What do you do to keep your kids safe on-line and on other mobile devices?
 - a. Parental control software
 - b. Keep workstations in a “public” area of the house
 - c. Monitor messaging

2. What are the latest technologies you have come across that your children are using?

Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.safetyweb.com/modern-dad>
2. <http://www.4troubledteens.com/unplugging.html>

Accountability

1. Get with the “program.” Be a “friend” to everyone in your family on Facebook.
2. Discuss the habit of never venting frustration in a text, e-mail, or video.
3. Learn the language of technology, ask your child to explain it.

Author(s)

Reid Rooney

Included Resources

<http://www.byparents-forparents.com/blog/2010/05/raising-children-in-a-digital-age.html>

Raising Children in a Digital Age

Too often, parents who are misinformed about today’s social networking sites (such as Facebook and MySpace) will simply prohibit their kids from logging on to them. Unfortunately, most kids will do it anyway, so the best thing parents can do is education themselves about the benefits and dangers on online social networking.

"If [parents] engage and have their own experiences on Facebook, LinkedIn, [etc], they will better understand the attraction, the possibilities, and the issues that their teenagers face," said Sue Blaney, author, speaker and teen parenting blogger at PleaseStopTheRollercoaster.com." [Source: Mashable]

Blaney goes on to suggest that parents guide their teenagers through the process of creating privacy settings on social networking sites. If there are things you don’t understand about a certain site, ask your teenager, he’s probably an expert -- and asking for his help shows that you recognize and appreciate his level of expertise.

Of course, permitting children to use the Internet and social media sites isn't the same as allowing them unfettered access to the online world. Responsible parents should work with their children to develop realistic plans to limit and supervise children's use of computers and other technology.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1156136/Children-exposed-pornography-prostitution-drugs-Twitter.html>

Children 'exposed to pornography, prostitution and drugs on Twitter'

The rise of Twitter, the instant lifestyle blogging service, has opened children up to pornography, prostitution and pro-drugs propaganda, it is claimed.

The problem stems from the fact there is no system to monitor the age of users or police the content to ensure adult or illegal material is not being promoted.....(more)

Making Dinner Table Conversations Count

Summary

Dads, do you make good use of dinner table time to communicate with your children? Do you even make time for dinner as a family? How can you take an ordinary meal and turn it into a time to listen to your children and reach them on a new level?

Objective

Our lives are so busy with work, taking Jimmy to football, taking Mary to soccer, and oh the many engagements and obligations we have to deal with. How can we as fathers:

- Preserve and enhance family values by eating together as a family
- Take the opportunity to hear what our children have to say about their lives
- Take the opportunity to create learning moments of our Christian values
- Take the opportunity to see how our children interact with each other
- Strengthen the example we can set as Husband and Wife as a team in front of our children

Bible Readings

1. Deuteronomy 6:6-7

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

2. Hebrews 12:7-11

7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

3. Matthew 18:10-14

10 "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. [4] 12 What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? 13 And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. 14 So it is not the will of my [5] Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Catechism Readings

1. Paragraph 1601

"The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament."⁸⁴

2. Paragraph 2199

Jesus said to his disciples: "Love one another even as I have loved you."¹

The fourth commandment is addressed expressly to children in their relationship to their father and mother, because this relationship is the most universal. It likewise concerns the ties of kinship between members of the extended family. It requires honor, affection, and gratitude toward elders and ancestors. Finally, it extends to the duties of pupils to teachers, employees to employers, subordinates to leaders, citizens to their country, and to those who administer or govern it.

This commandment includes and presupposes the duties of parents, instructors, teachers, leaders, magistrates, those who govern, all who exercise authority over others or over a community of persons.

3. 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:

He who loves his son will not spare the rod. . . . He who disciplines his son will profit by him.

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

4. Paragraph 1784

The education of the conscience is a lifelong task. From the earliest years, it awakens the child to the knowledge and practice of the interior law recognized by conscience. Prudent education teaches virtue; it prevents or cures fear, selfishness and pride, resentment arising from guilt, and feelings of complacency, born of human weakness and faults. The education of the conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart.

Small Group Questions

1. How often do you have dinner together as a family? Have you and your wife made this a priority? Do you have a target number of days where you make an effort to make this happen?
2. How important was dinner as a family to your upbringing? Do you engender that same or an improved experience?
3. Who is the first up from the dinner table? Is it you because you have so much to do?
4. Do you encourage each of your children to talk during dinner? Do you take the time to reinforce positive values and actions. Can you do this without passing judgment in front of everyone?
5. How do you manage to talk to your children and communicate Christian values without being too much of a preacher?

Recommended Resources

1. Dinner Conversations with Kids
<http://life.familyeducation.com/family-time/communication/34395.html>

Accountability

1. If you don't have a set goal of having dinner as a family, discuss this with your wife and set a goal.
2. When you do have dinner as a family, set a goal to listen and be the LAST one up from the table.
3. Look for ways to increase family discussion and bonding around the dinner table, you'll be amazed how it carries through in their adult lives as siblings.

Author(s)

Dan Lape

Included Resources

1. <http://ezinearticles.com/?Eating-Dinner-With-the-Family---Its-More-Important-Than-You-Might-Think&id=2450865>

When was the last time you had dinner with your family? It is the meal we often skip because we work late, the kids have sporting events or we get tired from daily activities. But, skipping dinner with the family is not a good practice. In fact, it is detrimental to the family dynamic.

There are some interesting facts surrounding family dinner time. For instance, teens that spend dinner time eating with their family are less likely to get involved in drugs, alcohol or other illicit activity. This is a point many parents will find interesting. Out of all of the things you do to try to keep your kids away from bad influences, the one thing that is the greatest influence is still the event that we skip routinely.

Family dinners are more than just a meal. It is about the only time that families have to share time through the week. Whether you sit down to the dinner table or enjoy a meal and a movie on tray tables in the family room, the important thing is that you are together.

The main point is that conversation is taking place. The average parent talks to their child less than 40 minutes a week. It takes a second to say "Hi" when you come in at night, but that isn't effective communication. When dinner is shared by the family, you spend at least 45 minutes to an hour talking about everything and anything that may be on your mind. Even if you are watching a television program, engaging questions can arise from topics addressed in the program.

Why is dinner so important? For one thing, it is a time to share thoughts and feelings. All day, kids are influenced by teachers, friends and the outside world. At the dinner table, they get a chance to connect with their parents on tough issues like schoolwork, peer pressure, friendships and other things. Children can each share and help one another with helpful suggestions. Parents can even talk about work or family finances over a meal.

Young children learn how to communicate with their siblings and parents. They are the center of attention with questions about their day and it makes them feel happy. You know that kids always want to be in the limelight when they are a certain age and this helps them learn to share the spot with others.

For teenage girls, body image is often a very relevant issue. Through family dinners, they can learn to prepare and eat healthy meals, learn that eating right will keep their bodies in shape, and of utmost importance, learn not to avoid food. Teen girls are less likely to become the victim of an eating disorder and more likely to develop a healthy view of food and their bodies when they eat dinner with their families.

There are many benefits to eating dinner with the family. It is a time for meaningful communication that leads to stronger self-images, as well as a greater resistance to the urges of drugs, alcohol, peer-pressure, and other destructive behaviors in your kids and teens. For all these reasons as well as to help unite the family, a concerted effort should be made to make family dinners a common practice.

Eronne Ward is a mother of three, guardian to kids in need, activist for the protection of children online and runs a kids entertainment and education website - <http://www.cackleberries.com>

If you want some great resources to reward your child with, make sure to check out Eronne's parenting club where you can receive access to free stuff for your kids and more helpful parenting tips - The Cackleberries Club [<http://www.cackleberriesclub.com/offer2>]

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Eronne_Ward

2. FAMILY DINNER CONVERSATION STARTERS.....

http://www.iespta.org/files/FAMILY_DINNER_CONVERSATION_STARTERS.pdf

<p>What was the nicest thing you did for someone else today? What was the nicest thing that someone else did for you today?</p>	<p>If you were writing a newspaper article about your day, what would the headline be?</p>	<p>Tell us three adjectives that describe your day today.</p>	<p>In 60 seconds, tell us as much about your day as you can.</p>
<p>Teach us one thing that you learned today that you think we don't yet know.</p>	<p>If you were president, name three things that you would change about the country right away.</p>	<p>You are going to be alone on a deserted island for a year and you get to take one book/DVD/CD. What would you take?</p>	<p>Describe your perfect day, from the time you wake up until you go to bed.</p>
<p>If you could invent something that would make life easier, what would it do?</p>	<p>If you were running for mayor, what would be your campaign platform?</p>	<p>What movie character would you want to be?</p>	<p>If you could meet a person from history, who would it be?</p>
<p>Tell us the last joke that you can remember hearing.</p>	<p>If you could be an Olympic athlete, what event would you do?</p>	<p>If you could go on a vacation anywhere in the world, where would you go?</p>	<p>If you could make a movie, what would it be about?</p>