

A young boy with dark hair is looking down and to the right with a thoughtful expression. He is wearing a light-colored shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green and blue.

rebuilt  
FAITH

*Small-Group  
Leader's Guide*

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# Getting Started

Welcome! This discussion guide is designed for use in eight small-group meetings of one to two-hour duration, but this schedule can be adjusted to meet the needs of your particular group. Please note that some of the questions offered here for use in a small group are the same or very like those offered in the book for private reflection. We hope the two different approaches to spiritual reflection and growth will be mutually enhancing.

## Preparation Guidelines for Group Leaders

If your small group has been created specifically to discuss the spiritual themes of this book, you might want to have a short meet-and-greet gathering to distribute books and information about how members can download this guide. Before or after a weekend Mass is often a convenient time for this kind of brief meeting, but of course another time and setting may be more suited to your circumstances. Be creative and hospitable!

Use the following guidelines to help gatherings and conversations go smoothly. Respect for each person is, of course, paramount.

1. Ensure that each group member has a copy of *Rebuilt Faith: A Handbook for Skeptical Catholics* and a copy of the Small-Group Discussion Guide. If group members are using digital editions of either, a notebook for writing responses and notes by hand may be helpful. It is best to avoid using laptops, tablets, and phones during group meetings so that due attention can be paid to other group members.
2. Encourage every group member to read this or a similar guide to fruitful conversations at [learninginnovation.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ITF-H1-discussionguide-17h5iob.pdf](http://learninginnovation.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ITF-H1-discussionguide-17h5iob.pdf). As the group's leader, be sure to follow these yourself.
3. Make sure the space where you will meet is clean, comfortable, and welcoming. Ask another group member or two to bring snacks and beverages. Decide with your group if you want to enjoy these before, during, or after your discussions.
4. Consider some simple focal point to place in the center of the group, such as a prayer candle, a Bible, a cross, or another symbol of faith.
5. Be sure to read the text and prepare for your dual roles of participant and facilitator. The three norms listed on the next page for a group leader to follow and to ask others to follow are key to enjoyable and fruitful group interactions. Let your group know what these are and that you will use them.

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## Dialogue Norms for Small Groups

1. Confidentiality code. Begin each meeting by reminding everyone to maintain confidentiality. As mentioned in the guidelines linked in point two in the previous section, confidentiality doesn't mean never repeating an idea or insight picked up in the group. What is essential is to avoid sharing names in the group and any story that might be easily traced back to an individual.
2. The six-second rule. Silence in a group can feel threatening, particularly to extroverts. Try to allow six seconds to pass before redirecting the conversation or asking a follow-up question to dig deeper into what was last spoken.
3. The "ouch" rule. This rule permits anyone who is uncomfortable with something that has been said to say, "Ouch," in order to express his or her discomfort. The person who spoke can then say, "Oops." As leader, you can then invite further dialogue by simply asking if either person would like to say more. Some situations will need further conversation for the sake of the whole group either immediately or perhaps by returning to the tensions later.

**Small groups have great value and impact in parish life. Read below what Fr. Michael White and Tom Corcoran learned about small groups from their experience at Church of the Nativity in Timonium, MD.**

### 1. Small groups are small.

C. S. Lewis argues in *The Four Loves* that the best place to support a friendship is in a small circle of friends. Likewise, faith-based relationships need to be sustained and strengthened in groups that are small. Ideally a group wants to be made up of six to ten people. Any more than that and members start getting lost in the crowd and stop talking. And then they stop coming. Getting too small is another problem: Two people are a couple, not a group, and three or four people can find themselves with too much pressure to speak.

Since small groups are congregated with people whose life situations are constantly changing, the composition of groups will constantly be changing, even in a healthy group culture. Groups expand and contract, and the key for leadership is going to be managing the process, dividing groups that have grown too big and merging groups that have become too small. Groups will always resist these interventions, but that's what leadership is there to facilitate.

### 2. Small groups are integrated into the life of our parish.

This is extremely important: Small groups are not intended to be stand-alone communities, silos for independent efforts, parachurch gatherings for special interests, or circles for idle conversation and parish gossip. These are dangers that must carefully avoided or they will do harm to the fellowship of your parish. Groups arise out of the communion of both the parish and the universal Church, and they must remain in communion with their pastors, as Blessed John Paul II taught. That means they're moving and growing in the same direction as the whole community, and group members are contributing church members. That's why we actually look to groups to staff our parish initiatives like service projects. Groups that serve together in a particular ministry or mission are more solidly connected to one another and to parish life, too. Small groups have

# Getting Started

been invaluable in giving parishioners a vested interest in the life of the parish and moving them beyond the role of spectating consumer.

The key to make this happen is going to be the small-group leader. More and more we have been coming to understand how important our leaders are to the success of the group and their connection back to the parish. Connecting, supporting, training, and equipping the leaders as ministers and shepherds of the group are the keys.

## 3. Small groups are our delivery system for pastoral care.

Small groups are the place where our great big church can get small and personal, where we're known, loved, and cared for. As such, we like to say that small groups are our primary delivery system for pastoral care. If they're in a small group, people can get the pastoral care they need, and so much more than our staff could ever give them. Unfortunately, from time to time, someone will bring to our attention their disappointment about the lack of care they've experienced in our parish. And inevitably we learn they weren't in a small group.

In a parish of our size, no matter how much attention the staff lavishes on pastoral care, people will fall through the cracks. This is liable to happen, but with small groups it doesn't have to happen. We'll go even further and assert that the day has passed when clergy and staff are solely, or even primarily, responsible for all such efforts in the life of the parish. Emphatically, this expectation needs to end! It's just setting us up for frustration and failure, and it can't be sustained anyway, given current forecasts for vocations. Besides, if we're really going to be the Church that Christ calls us to be, we all need to care for one another. The Bible commands us to do it.

**TOM:** Perhaps the main reason people don't care for one another is because there is no system for them to do it. But care can easily happen in small groups. Here's an example a group leader recently shared with us:

A woman joined our group who had been carrying a very large burden for a long time. Her husband has been in a bad place physically, emotionally, mentally, career-wise, you name it. But he had been insisting that no one know about his problems and so she had no real support. When she joined our group, I got the sense very quickly that she was holding something big back. The comments she made were like someone dipping their toe in the water to feel the temperature but never actually taking the plunge. After months she finally opened up to our group, which was a huge step. Some of the women gave her very tangible, practical steps she could take to pursue health and healing in her marriage. Things have not improved yet, but she comes to group knowing that she is accepted, supported, loved, and prayed for; and she leaves group with hope and resolve.

Parishioners absolutely can provide pastoral care for one another, and they will if they're in a small group. Looking after members who are sick; checking in on people dealing with family problems; offering the helping hand that's sometimes needed to get through a difficult week; providing a meal or a ride; watching the kids or walking the dog during a period of loss, these are little things that can be big things of great value in the life of the whole parish community. And when, from time to time, tragedy shows up, you've already got a team ready to help.

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We know of a group who learned of a member's inoperable cancer and moved in to support and care for him and stand with his heavily burdened caregiver wife. Day after day they were there for them, laughing and crying with them and loving them all the while. What more effective pastoral care could our parish possibly offer?

**FATHER MICHAEL:** I presided at a heartbreaking funeral for a baby girl. In spite of the sadness, it was an extremely beautiful service, mostly because of the mom's small group. Those ladies just stepped in and took care of everything. They greeted guests, made and handed out programs, and generally ensured that everything ran smoothly. One of their number offered a eulogy that was truly amazing (think about it, a eulogy for an infant).

Afterward, they went home with the family and stayed with them that day, as well as the difficult days that followed. The family was completely surrounded by the love and support of that group and with a depth and breadth that our parish staff could never have provided. For me, it was one of the most striking examples ever of our church being the church we're supposed to be.

## 4. Small groups are about life-change.

Everything that we're discussing when it comes to parish life has to do with life-change. But small groups promote life-change at a fundamental level that rarely happens in a weekend congregation, and will not happen elsewhere.

The power of small groups comes from forming relationships in which conversations lead to conversion. God made us to learn from other people's experiences and examples. When people sit in a circle and listen to other people's stories, they grow in an understanding of what works in life and how life itself works. As one author describes it: It is no etymological fluke that conversation and conversion have the same roots in the Latin.

Throughout our lives our conversations change us and move us and often convert us. The root connection between conversion and conversation is more than fun with words. The etymological connection tells an important truth. It tells us a story about our humanness. And our divineness.

Our format for small-group meetings is as simple as can be. Groups gather in members' homes (not at church, which would be unnecessary work for us). There is usually up-front time for socializing and refreshments, perhaps food. Next comes brief prayer time, followed by some opening questions that we provide to get members on the same page and thinking about the meeting's topic. Sometimes this is followed by a DVD presentation we've prepared. There are also plenty of free resources that many churches make available.

Our message, typically given by Tom, parallels the weekend message Father Michael gave the previous Sunday, but probably with a different approach. So, by the time members start their discussion, they've already heard two messages on the topic. The point of the discussion is not an intellectual exchange of ideas; it's a sharing from the heart about where members are on this specific topic—practical things like money, marriage, or anger—and where they need to go. Before leaving, the group prays together. We suggest that gatherings typically run ninety minutes. It's amazing what can happen in ninety minutes of honesty and transparency.

# Getting Started

**TOM:** A friend of ours shares this life challenging experience when it came to her career: A few years ago I was very unhappy at work and it seeped into other areas of my life and dominated my thoughts. Thankfully I had the support of my group every week who encouraged me. This helped me hear and eventually follow what God was calling me to do—start my own business. I never in a million years would have thought it was my path. But thanks to the message series at Nativity and the support of my small group, I finally realized it, made the decision to quit my job and start my own business. I have never been happier.

**FATHER MICHAEL:** I was in a group a few years ago (our staff members belong to groups), and a guy courageously shared with us that he was struggling with a serious porn addiction. Another guy in the group had already been through the same thing and could discuss with him, step by step, how he tackled his problem. This turned out to be a lifechanging exercise when it came to the guy's marriage. I've seen examples of groups helping people to quit smoking, lose weight, get in shape, restore broken relationships.

**TOM:** One of my favorite examples of this kind of modeling life-change came from a small group I was a part of. A member told the story of how his relationship with one of his daughters improved from a critical decision he made. She had gone away to college and was having a difficult time. She called home to share her struggles, and her father decided he would drop everything and make the five-hour drive to her school to demonstrate his love and support. The next morning, he showed up outside her dorm. Instantly, she understood, in a new way, his love for her, and, afterward, their relationship, which had been tenuous, was transformed. About a year later, another member of the group found himself in exactly the same situation and immediately knew what he had to do.

A group leader shared this example of life change:

A member of our group has been struggling for over eighteen months with his business: His partner is driving the company under; he has had to lay off half his employees, and his personal money is tied up in the company. His brother-in-law, and good friend since grammar school, is suffering from an addiction, creating great stress for his sister and nephew; his interventions have not been successful. His son has begun to experience significant depression as a result of the death of a close relative. He has a strong marriage, but feels the need to protect his family from all that's going on. When he first came to the group two years ago, he would often "pass" when we went around the circle at the end of group to pray. Now, he'll often start our prayer circle; his prayers, clearly from the heart, are some of the most moving and powerful in our group. Last week he talked about his need for the group, "It's the only place I have in my life where I don't have to put up a good front." His courage and faith have touched all of us deeply.

In a sin-stained world, all of us have struggles. We are not always the person we want to be or even the one we appear to be. Neither do most of us have any place to bring our struggles and problems. We have nowhere to share our joys and sorrows. We're taught to hide our hurts and hang-ups and to fudge on our faults and fears. Especially in church settings, we wear masks or create images that are time-consuming to maintain and ultimately too fragile not to eventually fail. It's a heavy burden. Ironically, when the mask sometimes slips and people are exposed for who they really are, they often walk away from church because they no longer feel worthy or welcome. Just when they could use the help of a church family the most, they give up on it because everyone's found out their secret: they're not perfect and their lives are messy.

# Getting Started

In a small group we can trust people to know our story and accept us despite our imperfections. Small groups are the opportunity for us to do what the Bible tells us to do for other Christians, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). Small groups are definitely a place we can find support, but they’re not “support groups.” Neither are they talk-therapy exercises or 12-step programs. They are not meant to be platforms for individuals to focus only on their own needs in a way that dominates the life of the group.

Since groups are about doing life together, we encourage members to be as real and authentic as possible, to be honest about who they are and where they are in their walk with the Lord. Members love and support one another whoever they are, wherever they are in their journey. Group members also hold one another accountable to change and growth. If we’re going to be serious about life-change, serious issues will be raised. That is why confidentiality is key. Confidentiality creates a safe environment where members can be honest. Lack of it can kill a group’s trust, and then it will kill the group. One thing that helps foster this safe and comfortable atmosphere is that we encourage the groups to remain stable. Members remain in the same group for an agreed-upon period of time. When individuals are not hopping from group to group but are committed to specific others, the level of comfort rises with this sense of stability.

## 5. Small groups are our schools for discipleship.

Small groups are about life-change, but the biggest change we are looking for is growth in disciples. The primary purpose of our small groups is to help people become growing disciples of Jesus Christ. Healthy churches aren’t just growing; they’re growing disciples. Small groups are our schools for discipleship. We hope this especially happens through the application of God’s word to their daily lives. But we don’t push Bible study, or any kind of study, per se, because when people start focusing on content, they can easily stop sharing themselves. Our small groups are “schools” not in the sense of adult education or even just faith formation—they’re about life transformation.

**TOM:** From our small-group experience, probably the most remarkable story of conversion, lifechanging outcomes, and discipleship concerns our friend, Jack. This was a guy trying to put his life back together after a painful divorce and an unexpected transition in his career. Jack was in the pew but skeptical of many of our new initiatives. When it came to small-group life, his skepticism was deeply cynical. However, after repeated invitations,

Jack reluctantly gave it a try, mostly just to prove that he was right, we were wrong, and small groups were a deeply dumb idea. But little by little, the experience opened Jack’s mind and then reshaped his heart. He started caring about the guys in the group; he found himself moved that they cared about him. He began to value the refreshment he felt from getting things off his chest and out in the open. He found himself changing and growing. Jack grew to be an enthusiastic group member and a more committed disciple. Eventually, he became the group leader and even a member of our steering team. When, recently, we had the opportunity to add a Small-Group Director to our part-time staff, Jack was the logical choice. In view of his complete conversion from persecutor to champion, we call him the “St. Paul” of our small group program.



# Getting Started

## Want to know more/go deeper?

Listen to our small-group team leader discuss getting and keeping people on a discipleship path through small groups. Go to [rebuiltparish.com/chapter-9](http://rebuiltparish.com/chapter-9) and watch the video "Small Groups."

## YOU CAN DO THIS!

### Steps You Can Take in Your Parish

- Start a small group with a few of your parishioners who are willing to give it a try. Meet weekly September through May, with a break for Christmas.
- The small-group resources our groups use are available for free on our website. This will keep you focused on the Sunday readings. Bring your bibles (and use them). If you want to go in another direction, there are lots of other great resources (start your search with Ave Maria Press).
- Select a group leader, whose job is to make sure no one dominates, everyone talks, and the conversation doesn't get stuck in content. Be open, be honest, be loving.
- Keep inviting other parishioners to join you, but don't let people just come and go. They have to make a commitment to show up. When you grow beyond a dozen members, divide into two groups. The leader will have to be the one to encourage the members to do this. Repeat the process. But be sure to stay in close contact with new group leaders.
- Encourage your pastor to mention small groups from the pulpit, as a way of beginning to plant it in the culture of your parish.

This excerpt has been taken from *Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, Making Church Matter*.

# FIRST SESSION

## MEET AND GREET

### Opening Prayer:

The group facilitator or another designated person calls the group to prayer and prays. Allow a few seconds of silence so members can focus on God.

*Let us pray. Lord God, Creator of all that is good, bless this gathering of your people, and guide our search to know and love you more fully. Help us open our hearts and minds to learn from and love one another. Teach us kindness, patience, and gentleness of spirit.*

*In Jesus's name, we pray.*

*Amen.*

### Preface and Introduction:

Invite those gathered to briefly introduce themselves, maybe sharing something about their home life, or how long they've been members of the parish, or simply one fun fact about themselves.

Next, take a few minutes to review the dialogue norms provided in the Getting Started section of this discussion guide and at the link from Duke University about fruitful conversations. Ask members to agree to follow the norms outlined via the link provided, or amend these to fit the needs of your group.

Distribute the *Rebuilt Faith* books and the Small-Group Discussion Guide (optional).

### READING FOR THE NEXT SESSION:

Thank everyone for attending today. Ask your group members to read the Introduction and Week One: Get to Know Jesus in *Rebuilt Faith* pp. 1-43

### NOTES:

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# SECOND SESSION

## WEEK ONE: GET TO KNOW JESUS

### Opening Prayer:

*God, our heavenly Father, reveal to us the truth about your Son who he is and who he can be in our lives. We want to get to know him better. We desire a closer relationship with him. During these forty days, strengthen our resolve, and give us courage to believe.*

*We pray through Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

### Watch Week One Video:

Invite your members to share their initial thoughts and reactions to the video. Then segue into the reflection questions below.

### Reflection Questions:

Feel free to choose those questions that most resonate with you and/or your group.

#### DAY ONE:

1. How do you know someone is wise?
2. Who are people you respect for their wisdom?
3. Why does Jesus's wisdom stand out in human history?

#### DAY TWO:

1. What have you pursued over and over again, thinking that it would fill the ache in your heart for happiness but instead has consistently left you unfulfilled?
2. What have you invested in heavily—an opportunity, a relationship, or an ongoing activity—that ultimately disappointed?
3. If you say that Jesus is Lord, how can you show in your actions, pursuits, or decisions that he really can fulfill your longing for more?

#### DAY THREE:

1. What were you taught about Jesus and what it means to follow him?
2. Do you consider yourself to be a Christ follower? What might the Lord be asking you to give up in order to follow him more closely?
3. Do you believe in Jesus's promise of rewards? Why or why not?

# SECOND SESSION

## WEEK ONE: GET TO KNOW JESUS

### DAY FOUR:

1. Do you like Jesus? Why or why not?
2. What are your thoughts on having a friendship with Jesus?
3. What are the character traits of people you like? Do you think Jesus shares these same traits?

### DAY FIVE:

1. When have you been bored in church? When have you been distracted in prayer?
2. What about church or prayer do you find boring? Why?
3. Growing up, what images did you have of Jesus of Nazareth?

### DAY SIX:

1. In what areas of your life do you have trouble “seeing” things clearly or knowing the way forward that’s right for you?
2. Who are the voices in your life discouraging you, and who are the voices encouraging you?
3. What do you want Jesus to do for you today? How confident are you that he cares and really can help?

### DAY SEVEN:

1. Do you agree that following Jesus is simple but not easy? Why or why not?
2. Rank in order which of the STEPS interest you most.
3. What STEPS are present in your life right now? Which would be the most challenging step for you?

*(This excerpt of the STEPS explanation is reproduced here for quick reference during your small group discussion.)*

Through the course of this book, we are going to look at five STEPS we have found essential for helping us grow as fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. These steps, developed over years of trial and error in our parish, take us in the direction of conforming our character, to become more like Jesus.

The five STEPS are not a checklist. Unfortunately, among churchgoers in general and Catholics in particular, it can be very easy to fall into a “check the box” mentality. We have been guilty of that ourselves. Go to Mass to fulfill your “obligation.” Pray so that you can say you did. Do good and avoid evil to win God’s favor or avoid his wrath. That is not what we are talking about.

# SECOND SESSION

## WEEK ONE: GET TO KNOW JESUS

We call them steps for three reasons. First of all, what we are proposing is a journey. As we noted yesterday, Jesus's original disciples were called "followers of the Way." Jesus introduced a new path forward for humanity that was radically different from anything history had witnessed before. Following Jesus means moving step by step down that path; it's a pilgrimage, and every step takes us forward. Second, we call them steps because as we take steps on a staircase, we achieve a higher level; we ascend to the place we want to go. Finally, we call them steps because, in all honesty, it makes for a great acronym, as we'll see.

Each step builds on a different aspect of our Catholic faith and can be repeated over and over again. We can practice them our whole life long. Think of them like the diet and exercise we might undertake in the interest of health and wellness. Exercise and endurance, cardio and carbs, and fruits and vegetables all form elements of a fitness regime. The same is true for these steps. Take one out, and you could limit your spiritual fitness.

Not all the steps will appeal to you in the same way. Some will fire you up and powerfully impact your faith. Others will be a greater challenge for you, and that's okay. The five STEPS both build your personal faith and build up the corporate Body of the Church. Jesus wants to grow and strengthen your personal relationship with him, and he wants to do the same for his community of believers. These two goals go hand in hand.

One other thing: they come in no particular order. You can start anywhere, wherever you want

### **So, what, precisely, are the STEPS?**

#### **"S" IS FOR "SERVE"**

To follow Jesus means to serve others and develop a servant's heart. We can serve in our family, in our church family, and also further afield. Jesus came to serve. If we follow him, we will do the same.

#### **"T" IS FOR "TITHE AND GIVE"**

We can tell you from personal experience and from the testimony of many parishioners that God became real for us when we started giving. And that's because giving reflects the character of God.

#### **"E" IS FOR "ENGAGE IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY"**

Jesus built a community of followers who formed a relationship with him and one another. We need friends in faith if we are to become more like Jesus.

#### **"P" IS FOR "PRACTICE PRAYER AND SACRAMENTS"**

We say practice prayer because it is something we have to do repeatedly. It takes practice to improve in prayer and to connect with God in the sacraments. Even the Eucharist, the source and summit of our faith life, requires practice to truly appreciate. We also say practice because our prayer and sacramental life were never meant to live in isolation from our day-to-day life. We put into practice what we discover in prayer.

# SECOND SESSION

## WEEK ONE: GET TO KNOW JESUS

### **"S" IS FOR "SHARE YOUR FAITH"**

Specifically, we mean sharing your faith with people who do not have faith or have lost hold of it. Along with tithing, this might be the most challenging of the STEPS for Catholics. Having a heart for people who do not know Jesus and helping them to connect to Jesus can really grow our faith.

### **Conclusion:**

Thank the members for attending and sharing their thoughts and reflections. Invite them back for next week's session. Instruct the group members to read Week Two: Serve, pp. 46–85

### **Concluding Prayer:**

*God, our heavenly Father,  
thank you for the clear instruction your Son, Jesus, gave  
so that I might grow in my love for you and others.  
May I honor you today by loving the people around me.  
In Jesus's name.  
Amen.*

### **NOTES:**

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# THIRD SESSION

## WEEK TWO: SERVE

### Opening Prayer:

*God, our heavenly Father, through your Son's life and death on the Cross, you have taught us that the path to greatness comes through service. In the course of this week, allow me to grow to be more like your Son, who came not to be served but to serve.*

*I pray through Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

### Watch Week Two Video:

Invite your members to share their initial thoughts and reactions to the video. Then segue into the reflection questions below.

Feel free to choose those questions that most resonate with you and/or your group.

#### DAY EIGHT:

1. Whom do you admire because they use their influence or position in service to others?
2. As you look at your day-to-day life, who are the people you have an opportunity to serve?  
How can you serve them?
3. Rank on a scale of one to five how well you serve and add value to others. Why do you give yourself this number?

#### DAY NINE:

1. What obstacles keep you from embracing a servant's heart?
2. What are the mundane tasks around you that no one else wants to do that you can do?
3. Who is an example of someone you know who does not mind serving in mundane ways?  
How do you think they grew into such maturity?

#### DAY TEN:

1. How do you think serving in your parish will draw you closer to Christ?
2. Why does Paul connect serving and spiritual maturity?
3. What opportunities do you see for volunteering in your parish?

# THIRD SESSION

## WEEK TWO: SERVE

(This excerpt from *Rebuilt Faith* is reproduced here for quick reference during your small group discussion.)

Paul lists three outcomes when it comes to serving in the Church:

1. **Building Unity of Faith:** Parish communities that are divided have stopped working on common goals. When we serve with other Christ followers, we become more unified, forming connections with them. If you are someone who hates to see infighting and loves to promote mutual cooperation and teamwork, then serving in the parish is a great way to build a bond of unity.
2. **Growing in Knowledge of the Lord:** Every time we serve in our parish so that another will connect to Jesus Christ, we develop greater intimacy with him.
3. **Developing Maturity:** We “grow up” when we serve. Putting aside some of the time we would spend on ourselves and our own pleasures and pursuits and giving it away to serve God and his people develops maturity. It makes us a little less self-centered. Think about it: the only people who don't serve or undertake chores in a family household are the babies. Every other member is usually expected to do something.

### **DAY ELEVEN:**

1. Does serving people in need because of faith in Jesus inspire you, or do you find serving others to be more challenging?
2. Are you more inclined to serve people directly or eliminate the larger issues that cause poverty? Why is it important to keep both approaches in mind when serving people in need?
3. What are the opportunities around you to serve those in need right now?

### **DAY TWELVE:**

1. What problems in the world bother you that you would like to solve?
2. Have you ever made excuses for not addressing issues you care deeply about? What are they?
3. What intimidates you about God calling you to serve?

### **DAY THIRTEEN:**

1. How do you view your work and day-to-day responsibilities — as a job, a career, or a calling?
2. What's on your heart? What and who is at hand to help? What can you do today to pursue God's call on your life?
3. What excuses are you using to keep you from serving God and pursuing his mission for your life?



# THIRD SESSION

## WEEK TWO: SERVE

### DAY FOURTEEN:

1. Considering today's challenge, what one action step do you need to take to strengthen your commitment to serving others?
2. In what ways do you need to guard your heart against poor attitudes about service?
3. After spending a week on the first of our STEPS, serve, why would you say it is a privilege to serve God and his purposes?

### Conclusion:

Thank the members for attending and sharing their thoughts and reflections. Invite them back for next week's session. Instruct the group members to read Week Three: Tithe and Give, pp. 88–125

### Concluding Prayer:

*God, our heavenly Father, you have made me for ministry and to serve the Church through my parish. May my service bring unity to our community, help me grow in knowledge of your Son, and develop maturity in my faith. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.*

Amen.

### NOTES:

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# FOURTH SESSION

## WEEK THREE: TITHE AND GIVE

### Opening Prayer:

*God, our heavenly Father, through your Son's life and death on the Cross, you have taught us that the path to greatness comes through service. In the course of this week, allow me to grow to be more like your Son, who came not to be served but to serve.*

*I pray through Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

### Watch Week Three Video

Invite your members to share their initial thoughts and reactions to the video. Then segue into the reflection questions below.

### Reflection Questions:

Feel free to choose those questions that most resonate with you and/or your group.

#### DAY FIFTEEN:

1. Do you find it easy to believe that God is generous? Why or why not?
2. What gifts has God given you recently?
3. What do you have in abundance that you could share with others?

#### DAY SIXTEEN:

1. On a scale of one to five, how much do you worry about money? (Five means you worry all the time and one means barely ever.) Why did you place yourself where you did on the scale?
2. What, specifically, are you worrying about currently? What do you worry about consistently?
3. How can you seek God and his will in the situations that cause you worry? How might God want to provide a solution for you?

#### DAY SEVENTEEN:

1. What is your natural attitude toward money? What did your family teach you about money? What lessons have you learned from the culture?
2. When has your heart been moved because of how you spent your money?
3. In what ways can you use your money to serve God and grow closer to him?

# FOURTH SESSION

## WEEK THREE: TITHE AND GIVE

### DAY EIGHTEEN:

1. What reaction do you have to the idea that you are a steward and not an owner of money and possessions?
2. What do you think Jesus means by true riches?
3. How can you remind yourself that your money and possessions are temporary and not eternal?

### DAY NINETEEN:

1. Have you ever felt prompted by God to give? How did you react? What was the result?
2. How does the concept of giving as worship change your approach to worship?
3. What is your reaction to the four Ps of giving? Does it make sense? Are you likely to implement it?

(This excerpt from *Rebuilt Faith* is reproduced here for quick reference during your small group discussion.)

To honor God, we suggest the four Ps of giving from Andy Stanley's *Fields of Gold*. We encourage parishioners to be sure their giving meets all of the following criteria:

- **PLANNED:** Tom's spontaneous giving on vacation notwithstanding, give thoughtful consideration to what you are going to offer to God. Be intentional about your giving. Make giving to God a line item in your budget.
- **PRIORITY:** Establish giving as priority in your budget. As you are determining what to give back to God, make that your first line item. Give to God first.
- **PERCENTAGE:** Choose a percentage of your income to give away. We believe this is the real game changer when it comes to your relationship with God and a spiritually mature view of money. We encourage people to choose a percentage, keeping in mind the biblical standard of the tithe, which is giving 10 percent of your income. Tithing is established as the consistent standard for worship giving throughout the Bible beginning in Genesis. In the context of his worship, Abraham gives the priest Melchizedek a tenth of what he has (Genesis 14:18–20). We acknowledge that seems like a high bar for most people (it was for us). So start with any percentage; choose 5 percent, 2 percent, 1 percent. Determine to become a percentage giver.
- **PROGRESSIVE:** Look to progress in your giving so that God receives a growing percentage of your income as you move closer to the tithe. At the same time, increasingly make financial decisions that allow you to do that.

# FOURTH SESSION

## WEEK THREE: TITHE AND GIVE

### DAY TWENTY:

1. Who are some people around you in need? Who is the Lazarus outside your door?
2. Who are the people in need you naturally feel a tug on your heart to help?
3. What charities do you currently support? Why do you support them?

### DAY TWENTY-ONE:

1. Do you tend to have an abundance mindset or a scarcity mindset? Why do you think you lean toward one mindset or the other?
2. Who has provided for you? Whom do you need to thank God for because they have given generously in your life?
3. When have you given cheerfully and found yourself grateful for the opportunity to give to others? How has this week's focus on tithing and giving affected your attitude toward giving?

### Conclusion:

Thank the members for attending and sharing their thoughts and reflections. Invite them back for next week's session. Instruct the group members to read Week Four: Engage in Christian Community, pp. 126-166

### Concluding Prayer:

*God, our heavenly Father, I praise and thank you that you have called me to be a cheerful giver, embracing an abundance mentality. Heal me of my scarcity mindset that believes I have to compete with others for resources. Allow me to see you as my Provider, and help me to be a provider for others.*

*Amen.*

### NOTES:

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# FIFTH SESSION

## WEEK FOUR: ENGAGE IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

### Opening Prayer:

*God, our heavenly Father, you have designed me and formed me, and I give thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made. In your wonderful design you have created me for connections and community, which I need to grow in faith. Bring people of faith into my life to help me grow in faith.*

*All these things I pray through Christ, our Lord.*

*Amen.*

### Watch Week Four Video

Invite your members to share their initial thoughts and reactions to the video. Then segue into the reflection questions below.

### Reflection Questions:

Feel free to choose those questions that most resonate with you and/or your group.

#### DAY TWENTY-TWO:

1. On a scale of one to five, how much of a problem is loneliness for you? Why did you assign the number you did?
2. When have you experienced relief that someone understood you and your point of view?
3. Do you tend to see faith as a solitary exercise, or are you more open to community?

#### DAY TWENTY-THREE:

1. Who were the people who were helpful in your faith formation when growing up?
2. When have you seen the benefit of gathering with other Christ followers? How have such gatherings nourished your soul and built up your faith?
3. Are you part of a faith community? If so, what do you love about it? If not, what makes you resist being part of a faith community?

# FIFTH SESSION

## WEEK FOUR: ENGAGE IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

### **DAY TWENTY-FOUR:**

1. Who are the people who sharpen you and help you grow? Are they people who help you grow in faith?
2. Do you have close friends with whom you can share both the Gospel and what is happening in your life?
3. Of the three reasons given for joining a small group (friends in faith, encouragement from others' faith, and conversion), which one most appeals to you?

### **DAY TWENTY-FIVE:**

1. Is there someone you are struggling to get along with right now? What would it look like to apply the Golden Rule to that relationship?
2. Who are the people helping you to process struggles with others? Whom do you help?
3. How would having a small Christian community help you grow to be a better person in the roles you play?

### **DAY TWENTY-SIX:**

1. What is your reaction to the idea that God can use others' faith to bring his grace into your life? How do you feel about that?
2. Who are the people you could ask for faith-based support when you are struggling to believe?
3. Whom can you encourage to lean on your faith when they are weak?

### **DAY TWENTY-SEVEN:**

1. What's the difference between sharing our pain and problems and complaining?
2. What burdens are you carrying right now? How would sharing them with others lessen their weight?
3. After reflecting on Christian community this week, what action step do you need to take?

### **DAY TWENTY-EIGHT:**

1. Why do you think it is helpful to see ourselves as enjoying fellowship with the saints?
2. Is there a biblical hero or saint whom you admire or whose story has resonated with you? What can you do to know their story better?
3. How has this week, focused on engaging in Christian community, changed how you view its importance in our faith life?

# FIFTH SESSION

## WEEK FOUR: ENGAGE IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

### Conclusion:

Thank the members for attending and sharing their thoughts and reflections. Invite them back for next week's session. Instruct the group members to read Week Five: Practice Prayer and the Sacraments, pp. 168–205.

### Concluding Prayer:

*God, our heavenly Father, your Son has taught me that I don't have to have faith all on my own. My friends in faith can walk with me and sometimes even carry me when I am struggling to believe in you. Show me the people you want to be a part of my faith journey, and help me to share honestly with them when I need them to believe for me. At the same time, may I be someone who can believe for others.*

*In Jesus's name.*

*Amen.*

### NOTES:

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# SIXTH SESSION

## WEEK FIVE: PRACTICE PRAYER AND THE SACRAMENTS

### Opening Prayer:

*God, our heavenly Father, thank you for the great gift of prayer and the opportunity to enter into conversation with you. Setting aside a time and a place to connect with you on a daily basis, may I open my heart to your heart and grow closer to you.*

*In Jesus's name.*

*Amen.*

### Watch Week Five Video

Invite your members to share their initial thoughts and reactions to the video. Then segue into the reflection questions below.

### Reflection Questions:

Feel free to choose those questions that most resonate with you and/or your group.

#### DAY THIRTY:

1. Why is it important to have adoration as part of our prayer practice?
2. Do you regularly turn to worship and adoration? When and how?
3. As a result of this reflection, what is one action you can take to add more praise and adoration into your prayer practice?

#### DAY THIRTY-ONE:

1. What prayers of contrition do you pray now? What is a prayer of contrition you could add to your prayer routine?
2. Prayers of contrition help us to course correct and get rid of guilt. Which of those two benefits appeals most to you?
3. When was the last time you went to Confession? Should you make plans to go? What prevents you from going to Confession?



# SIXTH SESSION

## WEEK FIVE: PRACTICE PRAYER AND THE SACRAMENTS

### DAY THIRTY-TWO:

1. Over the last twenty-four hours, what is something in creation you witnessed that you can thank God for?
2. When have you felt grateful for Jesus's death on the Cross?
3. What is a struggle you are currently facing? What might God want to grow in your character through this struggle?

### DAY THIRTY-THREE:

1. When have you been disappointed that prayer did not seem to make a difference?
2. Have you ever experienced a clear answer to prayer? If so, what was it?
3. What can you specifically pray for today?

### DAY THIRTY-FOUR:

1. Has there ever been a time you have heard from God?
2. What scripture verses about listening in prayer speak to your heart?
3. When in your day can you cultivate silence so you can hear from God?

### DAY THIRTY-FIVE:

1. Has prayer become a habit for you? What has helped it become habitual? What motivates or encourages you to persevere in prayer?
2. What frustrates you about prayer and makes you tempted to give up? How can you overcome that temptation?
3. How has your understanding of practicing prayer and the sacraments grown through our focus on this STEP this week?

# SIXTH SESSION

## WEEK FIVE: PRACTICE PRAYER AND THE SACRAMENTS

### **Conclusion:**

Thank the members for attending and sharing their thoughts and reflections. Invite them back for next week's session. Instruct the group members to read Week Six: Share Your Faith, pp. 208–230 (and bonus days if you wish.)

### **Concluding Prayer:**

*God, our heavenly Father, thank you for your Son's teaching about prayer. Thank you that he knows when I am tempted to give up and stop praying. Grant me a resilience and perseverance to keep on praying even when it doesn't feel as if it is making a difference. Transform me so that the inclination to pray grows more and more.*

*Amen.*

### **NOTES:**

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# SEVENTH SESSION

## WEEK SIX: SHARE YOUR FAITH

### Opening Prayer:

*God, our heavenly Father, your Son calls me to go deeper in my relationship with him by sharing my faith. May I lay aside any fears or self-centeredness and increasingly become open to seeing how I can share the Good News of the Gospel as did the first apostles.*

*In Jesus's name.*

*Amen.*

### Watch Week Six Video

Invite your members to share their initial thoughts and reactions to the video. Then segue into the reflection questions below.

### Reflection Questions:

Feel free to choose those questions that most resonate with you and/or your group.

### Reflection Questions:

#### DAY THIRTY-SEVEN:

1. What good deeds do you do that you can connect to your faith in Jesus?
2. How has a relationship with Jesus healed you? Do you know someone who needs that same healing?
3. Is it a struggle for you to believe that we are only saved through Jesus? What thoughts come to your mind when you hear Peter say there is no other way we can be saved?

#### DAY THIRTY-EIGHT:

1. Do you tend to get annoyed or angry at people who are lost, or do you have compassion for them?
2. Who is one person you know that you would describe as "lost"?
3. What would it look like for you to love the lost? How can you specifically love the one person whom you described as lost?

# SEVENTH SESSION

## WEEK SIX: SHARE YOUR FAITH

### DAY THIRTY-NINE:

1. What have you lost that you have felt responsible for? What did you do when you realized it was missing?
2. How can we increase our sense of responsibility for reaching the “lost,” those people disconnected from Christ?
3. Who is one person disconnected to Christ that you feel responsible for reaching and would rejoice if they came to know Jesus?

### DAY FORTY:

1. Who is someone God is putting on your heart right now to invest in?
2. What is the next step you can take to invest in that person?
3. What church environment would you invite this person into?

### BONUS DAY ONE:

1. When was a time you saw the goodness or mercy of God in your life?
2. Was there ever an experience when you felt the presence and power of God in a palpable way?
3. People are attracted to God in various ways. Which of the ways in today's reflection speak to your heart?

### BONUS DAY TWO:

1. What about Jesus's character needs to increase in you? What needs to decrease in your character?
2. As you reflect on these forty days, where have you seen growth in your faith in Christ? How have you uncovered what matters during this time?
3. Which of the five STEPS—serve, tithe and give, engage in Christian community, practice prayer and the sacraments and share your faith—have you found the most challenging? Which was the easiest for you to embrace? What do you see as the next step in your walk with Christ?

# SEVENTH SESSION

## WEEK SIX: SHARE YOUR FAITH

### **Conclusion:**

Thank the members for attending and sharing their thoughts and reflections during the last seven weeks.

### **Concluding Prayer:**

*God, our heavenly Father, thank you for my journey of these last forty days. I want my joy to be complete in your Son. May his spirit increase within me as I continue to take steps of faith and so change and transform into the image of Christ.*

*In his most holy name.*

*Amen.*

### **NOTES:**

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### **OPTIONAL: Eighth Session**

Have a celebration during the Easter season with your small-group members to continue getting to know one another and supporting each other.

