

## High School Home Study

Week of February 15

### Discipleship

#### **ABOUT THIS WEEK**

What does it look like to be a disciple of Jesus? This Life Night helps teens understand that the call to discipleship impacts every part of our lives. Teens are challenged to commit wholeheartedly to their faith in God, considering how Jesus models that our day-to-day choices reflect what we believe.

#### **GOAL**

Encourage teens to live out the call to be Jesus' disciples by conforming their lives to his in daily moments.

#### **MAIN POINTS**

1. Faith is not just an intellectual assent to proposed truths. It is a commitment to God and a decision to follow him with everything we have.
2. Jesus calls each of us to be his disciples. Discipleship entails a complete transformation of life according to the lifestyle of the master.
3. Our response to Jesus' call to be his disciples plays out in the day-to-day choices of our lives. How we live is a testament to who we follow and what we believe.

**SCRIPTURE** Matthew 7:21-23 | Mark 8:34-35 | John 10:27 | John 13:34-35

**CATECHISM** 520 | 562 | 1693-1694 | 1814-1816 | 2013-2015

#### **KEY TERMS**

**Discipleship** - The lived experience of following Jesus, seeking to learn from him and become like him. Disciples are those called to live out the example of their master, conforming their thoughts, words, and actions to the mind of Christ. (CCC 1693, 1816)

**Faith** - Both a gift of God and a human act by which the believer gives personal adherence to God, who invites his response, and freely assents to the whole truth that God has revealed. (CCC 26, 142-143, 150)

**Main Point 1: Faith is not just an intellectual assent to proposed truths. It is a commitment to God and a decision to follow him with everything we have.**

Hiking a mountain trail can be a strenuous but rewarding way to explore the world we have been given. After completing a tough hike, reaching the top of the trail and being rewarded with a beautiful view can often make the effort it took to get there feel more than worthwhile.

- However, just one hike and a beautiful view are not enough to consider yourself a “hiker.” The reality is that to get good at anything in an authentic way, we have to commit and really put in the work.
- What does it mean to commit to something? Our culture today places great value on achievement, but not always on the commitment it takes to become the sort of person capable of achieving our goals.
- Consider athletes or entertainers who put in the work and invest deeply in their field. If your goal is to be a professional soccer player, you would pour yourself into that goal: early morning conditioning, weightlifting, specialized lessons to work on particular skills, and more. If your goal is to be a Tony-winning actor on Broadway, you’re going to need more than just a good singing voice. You will need acting skills honed through experience, top-notch choreography, and thick skin against rejection. Being a Broadway star or professional athlete requires repetition, practice, instruction, and the risk of consistently putting yourself out there.
- If either of these were your dream, how far would you be willing to go? To make it, you have to commit and invest fully. The same is true, even more so, when we consider our faith.

Read the following from CCC 1814: “Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that the Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself. By faith ‘man freely commits his entire self to God.’ For this reason the believer seeks to know and do God’s will.”

- Faith lived well is not just a feeling or a one-time prayer in response to a powerful experience on a retreat or during a youth ministry event. Those things are good and are gifts from God! However, when we live our faith well, it comes from a deeper place that brings about tangible change in our lives.
- Faith is a theological virtue, meaning it’s a gift from God, but also something we need to foster with our own cooperation and choices. When we choose faith, we make the decision to follow God with everything we have. From this habit of faith, our lives begin to transform to reflect the God we profess to love. (CCC 1803, 1812-1814)

- Jesus teaches us that it is not enough to simply know the right words or teachings or even to do mighty deeds in his name! Our lives must match who it is we say we follow. (Matthew 7:21-23)

- This living out of our faith is discipleship — responding to who Jesus is, what he has done for us, and his call to follow him:

Grab your bible and read Mark 8:34-35

**Main Point 2: Jesus calls each of us to be his disciples. Discipleship entails a complete transformation of life according to the lifestyle of the master.**

- The notion of “disciple” was not originally exclusive to Jesus. There were many preachers with followers in Jesus’ time. However, Jesus was no ordinary rabbi. He did not follow the usual pattern: he had not studied under the instruction of another rabbi, nor did he seek permission to teach. His authority came from himself.

- His disciples were not training simply to learn and gain intellectual knowledge. They were studying a person and a way of life. They weren’t just learning what Jesus said; they were learning to become like Jesus. For his closest followers, discipleship was aimed at being fully formed into him who calls us to take up the cross and leave all things behind. Jesus invites each of us to do the same. (CCC 562)

- Jesus is the only one truly worthy of imitation. He is the beloved Son of God and our Savior, who laid down his life for us on the cross and conquered death in the Resurrection. He is the “perfect man” who reveals our identity to us and shows us what it means to live a full human life. (CCC 520)

- To be a disciple is to pattern our lives after the lifestyle of the Master. Discipleship should transform every aspect of our lives, including what we watch and listen to, how we speak, how we engage in our schoolwork, and how we spend our free time.

The following prayer, often attributed to Fr. Pedro Arupe SJ, offers a great illustration of the impact of a relationship with God and what it means to let discipleship change our lives: *Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.*

- The work of being a disciple of Jesus is the work of a lifetime. It’s something we are always growing in and practicing. It doesn’t happen overnight, but through the little choices we make day after day to listen and learn from Jesus and, ultimately, to live like him.

- The saints and the apostles model for us what it means to fully follow Jesus with our lives. Their examples of holiness can bolster us along our journey of faith and discipleship.
- Saint Pier Giorgio Frassati loved to hike and spend time in the mountains. He was known for his phrase, “verso l’alto” or “to the heights.” The phrase captured the idea that the higher he ascended up the mountain, the closer he felt to God. Even more so, this phrase had a connection to the spiritual life: we must continue the journey of faith, climbing higher in prayer and virtue, and growing in holiness as we grow closer to the Lord.

#### “Discipleship in Focus: Sister Clare Crockett”

Sister Clare Crockett was a spirited young girl from Ireland who lived at the turn of the 21st century. She displayed great talent for acting and a zest for life. From a young age, her greatest ambition was to be famous. She liked to party, indulge in copious amounts of alcohol, and seek the companionship of men. Sister Clare would go on to encounter God in a transformative way through a retreat during Holy Week — a trip she thought was going to be a vacation with substantial partying. Instead, she found herself on a religious pilgrimage. When she went up to venerate the cross during a Good Friday service, it was as if the Gospel and Paschal Mystery finally made sense to her. Speaking to others at the time, she kept saying, “He [Jesus] loves me. He died for me.” She began to change her life and orient her habits towards prayer and seeking the Lord, but she ended up going back to her old ways. Through a series of encounters with God, she eventually fully committed to a life of discipleship and discerned a call to religious life. During her religious life, Sister Clare used all of her talents for acting and storytelling to tell the story of the Gospel and share it with others all over the world. As she continued to grow in her faith, her desires for fame and success diminished, and her desire for humility, to serve others, and to be the smallest grew. Sr. Clare is a great modern example to us of discipleship — growing to become more like the master, Jesus, and to respond with generosity to the call to holiness.

For more on Sister Clare, consider watching the documentary of her life on YouTube “All or Nothing: Sr. Clare Crockett” The entire movie is under 90 minutes.

#### **Main Point 3: Our response to Jesus’ call to be his disciples plays out in the day-to-day choices of our lives. How we live is a testament to who we follow and what we believe.**

- Our journey of discipleship can be punctuated by transformative moments of prayer and significant events in our lives, like retreats, conferences, or other moments of profound encounter. As great as the moments are, we are more fully formed by the way we live each day — that in all things we become people of prayer, service, and compassion whose lives reflect Jesus’. (CCC 1694)

- Pope Saint John Paul II said that “Life with Christ is a wonderful adventure,” and so it is! When we look to the example of the apostles, saints, and martyrs, we can see a rich variety of personalities and stories that each display the life of discipleship in a unique way: no two are exactly the same.

*Authenticity in Discipleship: It can be tempting in our walk of discipleship to try to emulate the example of saints or others we admire. It is great to learn from their examples and imitate some of their behaviors. At the same time, it's essential to acknowledge the truth that God isn't looking for St. John Paul II or St. Therese 2.0. God created each of us individually. He desires for you to become the best and most authentic version of yourself, living a wild life of holiness and reflecting the glory of your Father. This includes our unique personalities, gifts, and struggles. There is no such thing as a cookie-cutter saint. Drawing inspiration from the saints, we need to accept that we are each unique and unrepeatable individuals, called to be open to how God is working in our own lives and circumstances. As Thomas Merton said, “For me to be a saint is to be myself.*

- When we look at the examples of these saints who have gone before us, walking the trail of discipleship, we can see that while there are defining moments of prayer and experiencing the call, the fuller story is a daily habit of following Jesus.
- The saints all had good days and bad days. They experienced many of the same things we experience: loneliness, joy, great friendships, family life, all aspects of the human experience. The saints sought to live their call to holiness in each of these parts of their lives.
- The words “disciple” and “discipline” come from the same root word, showing us that it is impossible to be a disciple without discipline. First and foremost, we need God's grace. However, without incorporating disciplines and habits that lead to a life of virtue, we won't grow in the likeness of Jesus. (CCC 2013)
- Growing in our individual prayer life is a vital aspect of discipleship — in order to become like Jesus, we must know him. Short, spontaneous prayers throughout the day are a good start, but to really advance in the spiritual life, we must prioritize time with him.
- We make time for what we value. Does the way we use our time reflect our desire to grow closer to God? To grow in discipleship, choose a time of day to pray and a method of prayer, such as going to Adoration or praying the Liturgy of the Hours, and commit to it. If someone asks if you are available during that time, the answer is no. Show up for your appointment with God and honor it the way you would a practice, rehearsal, or previously made plans with a good friend.

- We also need to encounter Jesus through the sacraments. The sacraments offer us real grace that empowers and sustains us on our journey of faith. We need to make use of Reconciliation when we are struggling with sin and participate in Mass at least every Sunday. (CCC 2014)
- Growing deeper in knowledge through the study of Scripture or spiritual reading goes hand-in-hand with a commitment to prayer. We come to know Jesus through his word and through conversation with him.
- As Catholics, we also have the beauty of Sacred Tradition and the lives of the saints, who give us many examples of how to live lives of heroic virtue.
- Reading the Bible must go beyond a haphazard approach that just chooses a random passage to read at sporadic times. When looking to dive deeper into Scripture, consider doing Lectio Divina with the daily readings each day or reading one of the Gospels with friends and discussing it.
- Lastly, our faith was never meant to be a solo sport. Catholicism thrives in community but dies in isolation. Accountability and community with others desiring to grow as disciples through a Bible study or prayer group can build holy friendships that support us in times of trial and rejoice with us in times of joy.
- Discipleship requires commitment. We each need to take a good look at our lives and pray about how we can grow as disciples. What practices do we need to add? What behaviors do we need to cut out? Without practical, daily effort and decisions, our hope of looking more like Jesus will only be an aspiration. However, when we commit to it day in and day out, it slowly grows into a reality.
- If you look honestly at your life, where might God be calling you to stretch and grow into the disciple he has called you to be? I challenge you to take that to prayer and ask the Holy Spirit for openness and courage to respond with generosity.

**For each aspect of discipleship, read the attribute and the accompanying example. Then, work through the questions.**

### **A disciple leaves everything behind.**

When Jesus calls, the disciple leaves behind whatever keeps them from following Jesus. Saints Peter and Andrew model this in the Gospel of Matthew. They encountered Jesus while they were fishing and working. He called them, and they immediately dropped their nets and followed him. (Matthew 4:18-22)

1. How does Jesus meet you in the midst of your everyday life and call you to follow him?

2. On a scale from one to ten, one being unwilling and ten being enthusiastically ready to do whatever Jesus asks, how willing are you to drop your own plans and intentions when Jesus offers a different call or opportunity?

3. What would it take for you to be fully ready to drop everything and follow Jesus? Is anything holding you back?

### **A disciple embraces repentance.**

Being a disciple means sometimes making mistakes and giving up my way of life to follow Jesus. Saint Augustine was engrossed in a life of worldly passions and addictions. After his conversion, he repented of his ways in order to follow Christ fully. He went on to become a Doctor of the Church and one of its most celebrated theologians.

1. What are you most likely to choose over faith?

2. How can you, like St. Augustine, more fully “repent and believe in the Gospel”?

### **A disciple forgives.**

A disciple knows the power of forgiveness and willingly forgives those who wrong them. During the French Revolution, the Church was severely persecuted. Saint Charlotte of the Resurrection, along with 15 other Carmelite sisters, was martyred for her faith for refusing to renounce her religious vows and Catholic identity. On the way to her execution, St. Charlotte, the eldest of all the sisters at seventy-eight years old, was roughly mistreated by a guard. She immediately forgave him, assured him of her prayers, and continued courageously walking towards her martyrdom.

1. Where in my life am I being called to radically forgive?

2. What makes it hard to forgive? How can thinking about Jesus’ life inspire you to forgive others?

### **A disciple sits at the feet of Jesus.**

Jesus is the Master. The disciple sits at his feet to learn from his way of life. When Jesus came to the home of Martha and Mary in Bethany, St. Mary exemplified the posture of a disciple and sat at Jesus’ feet — listening to him, basking in his presence, and absorbing his words. (Luke 10:38-42)

1. What does it practically look like to sit at Jesus’ feet? (Mass attendance, daily prayer, Adoration, etc.)

2. How important is prayer in your life?

### **A disciple is prudent with speech.**

Words have meaning and power. The disciple knows this and seeks to use words to build others up. Saint Therese of Lisieux modelled this aspect of discipleship when she found herself at odds with another religious sister in her community who often treated her unkindly. Instead of retaliating, St. Therese made it her mission to smile most sweetly and treat this sister with extraordinary kindness as if the offending sister were Jesus himself.

1. How much control do I have over my tongue? Is it hard to leave things unsaid?
2. How do you use your words? Do you encourage others or tear them down?
3. What situations lead you to be tempted to gossip? How can you avoid them?

### **A disciple loves others like Jesus does.**

Jesus commands his disciples to love in the same way he loves us. Saint Damian of Molokai acted in love by responding to the call to see Christ in the least and the forgotten. Serving a community of lepers on the island of Molokai, St. Damian shows us how to will the good of the other by recognizing the dignity of every human person.

1. How can St. Damian's example of discipleship impact the way you treat those around you?
2. Who in my life needs love the most? How can I show it to them?

### **A disciple seeks to grow in knowledge.**

The disciple loves Jesus and his Church. This love fosters a desire to know more about them. Saint Thomas Aquinas, perhaps the Church's most prolific and influential writer, dedicated his life to study and growth in knowledge. His contemplation and academic achievements shed light on many aspects of the faith and shaped the way we study theology to this day.

1. What are you curious about regarding faith or religion? How could you find out more about this topic?
2. What is an area of your Catholic faith that you need to grow in knowledge of? Who or what can assist you in that quest for knowledge?

### **A disciple is a good steward of time.**

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus often reminds his followers that he expects a return on the gifts they have been given. One of the greatest of these gifts is our time. Saint Carlo Acutis, the first millennial saint, had many of the same distractions available to him that are

available to us today. Though he passed away from leukemia at fifteen years old, St. Carlo lived a full life, cherishing friendships, serving others, and using technology for good. His devotion to the Eucharist put everything in his life in perspective. Saint Carlo knew that tomorrow was not always guaranteed and sought to make the most of the time he had been given.

1. On a scale from one to ten, one being poor and ten being excellent, how would you rate the way you utilize the time given to you each day? Why that rating?
2. How can you become a better steward of your time?

## **INTERCESSORY PRAYER**

Dim the lights and set a tone of quiet, reverent prayer.

*This week, we examined the call to discipleship and how Jesus invites us to pattern our lives after his. We looked to the example of several saints who show us that the lived experience of holiness is a rich and varied tapestry. No two saints are the same, and what a gift this is! Yet, despite the many differences, the saints share many key similarities, most notably that they all fully committed their lives to God. Their examples can inspire us as we pursue our own paths to holiness.*

*Take a moment to think about the aspects of discipleship you just reflected on. Which of the aspects of discipleship do you find most difficult to live out? How is God calling you to grow? Here is the list of aspects as a reminder:*

- A disciple leaves everything behind for the sake of the Kingdom and Jesus.
- A disciple embraces repentance of their own sins.
- A disciple forgives others.
- A disciple sits at the feet of Jesus in prayer.
- A disciple is prudent with their speech.
- A disciple loves others like Jesus does.
- A disciple seeks to grow in knowledge.
- A disciple is a good steward of their time.

This week let's close in prayer asking specifically for prayers for an increase in that aspect of discipleship through the intercession of the saint used this week. During your time of prayer, share with God the one aspect of discipleship you want to grow in, then conclude this time of prayer with an Our Father.