



# LIFE

The Journey of Real Life Catholics

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE





## SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

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# UNDERSTANDING THIS STUDY GUIDE

Welcome to the series, *Life - The Journey of Real Life Catholics*. We're so glad you've joined us.

**Here are the nuts and bolts of this study guide:**



## CONNECTING TOGETHER

This reminds us to ask each other that simple question, "How're you doing?" It gives each person a chance to share life from the last time you were together, to share how you've grown each day. This is the key to building true friendship (Sirach 6:14 - 17).



## MAIN THEME & AND VERSE(S)

There is a main theme and key scripture verse (or more) for each session.



## SIMPLE SUMMARY

Each session includes a simple summary of the video lessons. If it works for your group, watch the last video lesson from a session together and follow along with the outline. Look back through the outline during your discussion when it helps. The outline is not meant to be read out loud during your group; rather, it is meant to jog your memory to help your group have meaningful conversations. Ideally, everyone in your group will have engaged the material each day before you get together.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Each session includes a few questions for group discussion. They are meant to be a guide to get the conversation started in your group—don't feel like you need to ask every question in this section! They are suggestions, not a formula. As long as you're having meaningful conversation, you're on the right track. Also, feel free to adjust the questions to fit the needs of *your* group, at *your* time.



## PUTTING IT TO PRACTICE

Since we become what we repeatedly do, we must choose our habits wisely. Each session will help you close the gap between what you know and what you do.



## PRAYER

At the end of each session are suggestions for your group prayer. Don't skip this: a Christian stands and falls with prayer...our minds were made for prayer, and it is a precondition for any level of holiness.

## EPISODE 1: KAUAI CATHOLIC

### Divine Life Found in Creation



### CONNECTING TOGETHER

Be sure everyone has a chance to introduce themselves and to share a bit about their hopes for this journey together. Check in on how people are really doing...and listen for how they've been growing (or not) in their faith.



### MAIN THEME & VERSE(S)

**Key Theme:** The power of beauty to evangelize, when we open ourselves up to it.

✝ *For all people who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognize the artisan while paying heed to his works; but they supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world. If through delight in the beauty of these things people assumed them to be gods, let them know how much better than these is their Lord, for the author of beauty created them. - Wisdom 13:1-3*

Jesus tells us that He came so that we may have LIFE and have it abundantly! (John 10:10) This session we begin by taking a look at the amazing evidence for God in the world around us. And we'll begin to dive into how we are a part of this amazing creation in the love story of God.

✝ *And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. - Genesis 1:31*

✝ *By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. - Hebrews 11:3*



## **SIMPLE SUMMARY**

### **CHRIS' INTRO**

In this episode, we got to take a remarkable look at how the beauty of God, our creator, is all around us. Every culture throughout history has believed in God or gods because they knew they came from something bigger than themselves.

As Christians, we don't believe that God is a mythological creature floating around in space. That would be like a character leaving a book wondering why they can't see the author. The fact of the matter is that we are IN God's love story.

Who made these beautiful, changeable things of this universe but one who is beautiful yet \_\_\_\_\_ . - St. Augustine

God writes a message to us in His word, but He's also written a message in all of creation. And it shouts to us that there is a God. But more than that, it also gives us insight to who He is.

**QUESTION THE BEAUTY OF THE EARTH.  
QUESTION THE BEAUTY OF THE SEA.  
QUESTION THE BEAUTY OF THE SKIES... THE  
STARS... THE SUN MAKING THE DAY GLORIOUS  
WITH IT'S BRIGHT BEAMS, THE MOON  
TEMPERING THE DARK OF NIGHT WITH IT'S  
SHINING RAYS. QUESTION THE ANIMALS THAT  
MOVE IN THE WATERS, THAT WALK ON DRY  
LAND, THAT FLY IN THE AIR. QUESTION ALL  
THESE THINGS. THEY ALL ANSWER YOU, 'HERE  
WE ARE, LOOK; WE'RE BEAUTIFUL.'**

**ST. AUGUSTINE, SERMONS, 241, EASTER**

LET US BE  
SILENT  
SO WE MIGHT  
HEAR THE  
WHISPER OF  
GOD.

RALPH WALDO  
EMERSON

GOD IS LOVE.  
WHOEVER  
LIVES IN LOVE  
LIVES IN GOD,  
AND GOD  
IN THEM.

1 JOHN 4:16

## BEAR INTERVIEW

The first lesson of the spiritual life is \_\_\_\_\_.

The Christian life is a lot like surfing... we have to paddle out into the deep, patiently wait for the promptings of God, and then we see a wave of the Holy Spirit on the horizon, we must paddle hard and ride.

We heard some deep, yet simple spiritual wisdom in this conversation... "Listen to the voice..." and "We have to paddle against the stream just to stay still..." Now there is some deep truth in those statements.

## DALLAS CARTER - FRIEND INTERVIEW

Dallas shared how a belief in something greater is etched into the history of the Hawaiian people.

Mankind is inherentl \_\_\_\_\_. It's like God planted it into our DNA to prepare us for the Gospel.

## NATALIE STEFANICK'S STORY

We all love love stories. All of life is a love story. Especially Natalie's story... God slowly and patiently revealed Himself to Natalie through both creation and people He placed in her life.

The light of reason shows us that there is a God. The light of faith shows us who God is. God is LOVE. God made all of this for us. And why did He do this? Because love is extravagant. The story of salvation is a story of love. And this love story culminates on the cross...for you.

When Natalie was questioning all things in life, natural beauty was the closest thing she could find to the divine.

Her journey back to God ended in the Catholic Church, but it began with God's gift of \_\_\_\_\_.

## OHANA

Family... the central theme to the Hawaiian culture. It's also the central theme to the Christian life. YOU are part of God's family.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. A mind-blowing fact is that God isn't contained in the universe, but rather that the universe is contained within God. What aspect of creation is most fascinating or beautiful to you? How does it point you to the heart of our divine Creator?
2. We heard in this episode that the greatest adventure is the spiritual one. Is this the case for you? If so, take a moment and share the greatest adventures of your spiritual journey so far. If not, why not?
3. People often say "I'm spiritual, not religious." Well, the devil is also spiritual and not religious... In your opinion, is religion under attack today? What's your personal view of religion?
4. All of creation is like a finger pointing to God...Or maybe it's more like God's arms reaching down and wrapping around us. We experience this most powerfully when we make time for Him. What can you do to make even a little more time for God this coming week?
5. We heard it said that God's heart is like a riptide. You pass by and you feel God pulling you in and calling you to act. Is there something that you have felt recently compelled by God to do? If so... share! And then act!



## PUTTING IT TO PRACTICE

Sometimes we sell God short. Sometimes the pace of our lives are so frantic we miss the beauty of His wonderful creation. Sometimes we forget that He made all of this for us! Sometimes we question the reality of God. Sometimes we forget that we are an important member of the family of God and that we need one another. So this coming week:

Take some moments to stop and simply be still in God's glorious creation.

If you have questions about God, ask Him honestly. Get to the heart of your Creator. And don't be afraid to share these questions with someone you trust as well.

Have the courage to reach out to a family member or friend that you think might be in some need of help. Or if you are in need, have the humility to seek out help. Never forget that family is at the heart of God's creation. And family always has each other's back.

Which of these Putting It To Practice challenges will be the hardest to do? Why?



## PRAYER

As you close in prayer, start by marveling at the glory of God revealed in creation.

Then ask God to reveal to you the gaps in your faith. Ask him to shed light on questions and doubts that have hidden in the darkness of your heart. Ask him to speak truth into your life.

Finally, ask God to move you to joyfully and courageously enter into the family of God. Ask Him how he wants you to use the unique gifts He has given you to make his creation a better place.

## BEFORE LEAVING

If someone was absent from the group, ask for a volunteer to call, text or email that person and let them know they were missed. We all want to know people care about us. "Let us be silent so we might hear the whisper of God."



## EPISODE 2: BETHLEHEM/THE HOLY LAND

### Life with Jesus



### CONNECTING TOGETHER

Be sure to welcome anyone who is new to your group this week. Check-in on how people are really doing...and listen for how they're growing (or maybe struggling) in their faith. Invite others to share a helpful hint with the group about how they have connected with God this week.

Engage this session with a heart of gratitude. You'll unlock the secret to true friendship. Encourage the group to share a blessing that they are thankful for.



### MAIN THEME & VERSE(S)

**Key Theme:** Jesus Christ: fully God and fully man, and the joy of pilgrimage to Him.

✝ *Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened.* - Luke 2:15

✝ *For God so loved the world, that He gave his one and only Son so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.* - John 3:16



### SIMPLE SUMMARY

This episode is set in the Holy Land. It's a place that turns the stories we hear in the Bible from a fairy tale to reality. The fact of the matter is that Jesus was a real person who walked the face of the earth just like me and you!

Jerusalem shouts religion! And religion is at the heart of what it means to be human.

The door that leads into the Bethlehem Basilica is called the Door of \_\_\_\_\_. It requires all who enter to bend down just like God bent low, humbled Himself, and became human like us.

The tomb of Jesus, our leader and Lord, is an \_\_\_\_\_ tomb.

**THE WAR IS  
FINISHED. THE  
WAR AGAINST  
DARKNESS IS  
FINISHED.**

**VENERABLE  
FULTON SHEEN**

Jesus was born behind enemy lines. And how far did he go? He went all the way into the tomb. The tomb is the cradle of new life.

Today, life is difficult in the Holy Land. Especially for Christians...

### **SHIBLY CONDO - BUSINESSMAN**

90% of income for Christians in the Holy Land comes from \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ carvings.

Christians now only account for \_\_\_\_\_ of the population in the Holy Land due to pressure and dangers of being the minority group.

### **BETHLEHEM**

Shepherds kept their sheep in \_\_\_\_\_ and this is exactly where Jesus was born.

The most insignificant people in society at the time when Jesus was born were shepherds. And angels appeared to them and pointed them in the direction of God! That just shows us that God came for everyone. Especially those who are the lowliest.

**BUT YOU, O BETHLEHEM  
EPHRATHAH, WHO ARE TOO  
LITTLE TO BE AMONG THE CLANS  
OF JUDAH, FROM YOU SHALL  
COME FORTH FOR ME ONE WHO  
IS TO BE RULER IN ISRAEL,  
WHOSE COMING FORTH IS FROM  
OF OLD, FROM ANCIENT DAYS.**

**MICAH 5:2**

## **WASSIM RAZZOUK - TATTOO ARTIST**

In the Holy Land, there is a major spiritual experience to a tattoo. Especially a tattoo to mark the end of a pilgrimage which represents the permanent spiritual transformation that has occurred for the person on their journey.

## **SHAFIK KHBEIS (TOUR GUIDE) AND CLOSING CONVERSATION**

We are all sharing the same meal... around the same altar... on the same journey to heaven.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus saw all the pain that he was going to have to endure... and he said yes to it all because he loves us so much! That's the heart of the Good News.

All of life is a pilgrimage... it's a journey to heaven. And God is with us the whole way.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**SO THE LAST WILL BE FIRST, AND THE FIRST WILL BE LAST**

**MATTHEW 20:16**



1. In this episode, we got a glimpse of what a pilgrimage to the Holy Land would be like. It's been said the Holy Land is the Fifth Gospel. How do you think a journey there could make your faith come alive?
2. Stop and consider the fact that Jesus was a REAL human being. He walked, talked, sang, laughed, cried, wept, and danced. From what you know about Jesus from Scripture... what do you think Jesus was like on a personal level? Engage in some deep conversation about his qualities and personality. Let your mind dive deep into a conversation about the humanity of Jesus Christ.
3. Christians in the Holy Land today face considerable persecution. While the level of persecution might not be as great for us...do you ever face challenges by being a Christian? Are these struggles more subtle or in-your-face? Do you even let these pressures get in the way of you living out the faith?
4. While a pilgrimage to the Holy Land might be a bit difficult to plan in the short term... is there a more local pilgrimage that you could make as a group? Brainstorm about how you could make a journey of faith together.

## **PUTTING IT TO PRACTICE**

**THE STONES ON WHICH OUR REDEEMER WALKED ARE STILL CHARGED WITH HIS MEMORY AND CONTINUE TO 'CRY OUT' THE GOOD NEWS. FOR THIS REASON, THE SYNOD FATHERS RECALLED THE HOLY LAND AS 'THE FIFTH GOSPEL.**

**POPE EMERITUS BENEDICT XVI**



Jesus came to this earth to be with you. He invites you to be with us too. Our lives are a journey to Him. Hopefully one day you can make it to see where he walked on this earth over 2,000 years ago! But until that day, strive to make daily journeys to Him. One of the great adventures we can make as Catholics is the journey to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in prayer. So for the next week, commit to making a daily pilgrimage of prayer. Fill out this chart SPECIFICALLY so that you know the roadmap of your journey...

### **PRAYER PILGRIMAGE**

- When will you pray? Set a specific time of the day. Put this in your calendar! If we aren't intentional about when we pray, it's so easy to push it to the side.
- Where will you pray? Find a spot that is set apart from the rest of your daily life. Maybe it's in a church or chapel? Or maybe it's as simple as a chair in a cozy part of your home. No matter what, set aside a sacred space that is reserved for you and Jesus.
- How will you pray? Will you read Scripture? A devotional? Daily readings? Pray the rosary? Journal? No matter what... make sure you employ the 50/50 principle of prayer... you do half the talking and then let God talk the rest... and make sure you listen!

We all need accountability with prayer. Before you go your separate ways, pick a prayer partner with who you will share your Prayer Pilgrimage with who will encourage you to commit to your plan you have made for this week.

Spoiler Alert... hopefully, this habit of your Prayer Pilgrimage will go BEYOND this week! So make sure it's realistic and manageable. Recall the wise words of Fr. John Chapman... "pray as you can, not as you can't!"



## **PRAYER**

As you close in prayer, start by thanking God for humbling Himself and becoming like us on this earth.

Then... ask Him to specifically guide you on this journey of the next week of your life. Call upon the Holy Spirit to guide and enlighten you on your way.

Finally, ask God to move your heart to be a vessel of his love to the world.

## **BEFORE LEAVING**

If someone was absent from the group, ask for a volunteer to call, text or email that person and let them know they were missed. We all want to know people care about us.

**PRAYER IS NOTHING ELSE THAN  
UNION WITH GOD. WHEN THE HEART  
IS PURE AND UNITED WITH GOD IT  
IS CONSOLED AND FILLED WITH  
SWEETNESS; IT IS DAZZLED BY A  
MARVELOUS LIGHT.**

**ST. JEAN MARIE BAPTISTE VIANNEY**

## EPISODE 3: PILGRIMS IN POLAND

### Life with the Saints



#### CONNECTING TOGETHER

Be sure to welcome anyone who is new to your group this week. Check-in on how people feel they are growing or struggling with their relationship with God since you last met.

Before you begin... share a rose and a thorn. Rose: a blessing you have received. Thorn: a burden that you have had to carry but an opportunity to share in a splinter of the cross of Christ.



#### MAIN THEME & VERSE(S)

**Key Theme:** The pilgrimage of life, the sanctity of suffering, and the saints to help us along the journey.

✝ *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast. - 1 Peter 5:10*

✝ *Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character' and charter hope. - Romans 5:3-4*

**THEREFORE ENCOURAGE ONE  
ANOTHER AND BUILD ONE ANOTHER  
UP, JUST AS YOU ARE DOING**

**1 THESSALONIANS 5:11.**



## SIMPLE SUMMARY

In this episode, we get to see how heroic souls of saints have been formed and how we have the same opportunity to enter into the journey to heaven ourselves.

If you want to understand the great saints of modern times, you have to understand where they came from.

\_\_\_\_\_ is the epicenter of some of the greatest sufferings in the recent centuries. The people of this nation continually rose up despite the great trials they have faced.

Here's an unmistakable spiritual law for you: Heroic souls are only chiseled out from the rest of us from \_\_\_\_\_. The Polish saints of our era are epic spiritual heroes who fought for the future of humanity.

## CANNONIZED SAINTS AND SAINTS IN THE MAKING

World Youth Days account for the biggest gathering in multiple host nation's history! Millions come from around the world to come together in the name of Jesus Christ and His Catholic Church. We had the opportunity to meet a few of these Real Life Catholics from all around the world while we also heard about a few of the most heroic souls who have paved the way for us.

### *Christina Shabo - Iraqi-American Pilgrim*

Christina came to realize from a still, small voice inside that she needed to turn back to the faith.

It was in adoration that she took everything to Jesus and He took the anger of her past sufferings and softened her heart to be more open to His love and mercy.

### *St. Faustina - Divine Mercy*

God said that His mercy is like an \_\_\_\_\_. There's no limit to his mercy for us and there's no sin he can't forgive.

Our trust is like a bucket. The more trust we have the more mercy we can get!

John Paul II canonized St. Faustina and established the Sunday after Easter "Divine Mercy Sunday."

Jesus, I \_\_\_\_\_ in you.



**SUFFERING IS A GREAT GRACE; THROUGH  
SUFFERING THE SOUL BECOMES LIKE  
THE SAVIOR; IN SUFFERING LOVE  
BECOMES CRYSTALLIZED; THE GREATER  
THE SUFFERING, THE PURER THE LOVE.**

**ST. FAUSTINA**

*Tom Landgrell - Australian Catholic*

Tom's faith was first really tested when he unexpectedly lost his sister when she was 23 years old.

His sister had a deep devotion to St. Faustina and Divine Mercy. Through the passing of his sister, Tom and his entire family discovered and leaned up the beauty of Divine Mercy.

Through this tragedy, Tom's faith was solidified.

*St. Stanislaus*

St. Stanislaus was an 11th-century bishop who stood up to his king and encouraged him to turn from his sinful ways. Tragically, he was brutally murdered by the king himself for standing up for the values of a holy life.

*St. John Paul II*

John Paul II lost everything and everyone by the time he was 21. He experienced how fragile life could be and also witnessed firsthand the capacity that humans had for evil. But instead of becoming cynical and bitter, John Paul II stood up and became the light of Christ to so many in the world.

Sometimes we're so afraid we forget to live. The power of God always has our back. Be not afraid... open wide the doors for Christ!

**BECOME  
WHO YOU  
ARE.**

**ST. JOHN PAUL II**

**FOR JESUS  
CHRIST I AM  
PREPARED  
TO SUFFER  
STILL MORE.**

**ST. MAXIMILLIAN KOLBE**

*David Helsner - Polish Catholic*

David's life has been beautifully inspired by the life of St. Pope John Paul II. David lost his family for all practical purposes when he was a child and became an orphan.

He dove deeply into the faith. John Paul II gave him hope and was a spiritual father for him.

"Hope in spite of everything... be not tempted to give up... live courageously... be faithful... be not afraid." - St. John Paul II

*St. Maximilian Kolbe*

St. Maximilian Kolbe had a profound encounter with the Blessed Virgin when he was a troubled child. Mary appeared to him and showed him two crowns... one for chastity and one for martyrdom. When she told him to pick one... he heroically picked both.

St. Maximilian Kolbe literally laid down his life in Auschwitz so that a man could live to take care of his wife and kids. That's the definition of faith in action.

His last act was to \_\_\_\_\_ the men who executed him. That's the definition of heroically loving thy enemies.

**CHRIS' WORLD YOUTH DAY TALK**

Pope Francis has commissioned us all to be "Apostles of Mercy" for Jesus Christ.

It's up to us to hand it onto the next generation. We are called to be a "spark" that will set the world on fire!

Our journey of life is all the more beautiful when we remember we are not on the road alone. We're with the saints who have gone before us. And we're with each other... the saints in the making!



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We heard powerful stories of Real Life Catholics. Which story of a canonized saint spoke most to you? Which story of a saint-in-the-making hit you the most? Why do you think these particular stories resonated with your heart?
2. You are called to be a saint! That's what you were created for. That's your destiny. But you truly believe that? Be honest with yourself and with your group and share why you may or may not truly believe that. If you have some doubt... trust in the people in your group to speak truth into your life!
3. The fact of the matter is that this life is a "saint-making machine." And we learned that the souls of the most heroic saints are chiseled out of suffering. What have been the biggest sufferings in your life? How have you (or haven't you) used these moments to be drawn to the loving heart of God?
4. Do you have a particular devotion to a saint? If so, share with the group why that is! We're all a family of believers and we can help encourage each other to strive to the eternal glory we were made for.



## PUTTING IT TO PRACTICE

- Pretend for a moment that your life was going to end in 24 hours... what changes would you need to make? Take some time to analyze where you are at in life and where you would like to go?
- What's one thing you would like to change about your relationship with God?
- What's one human relationship that you would like to heal?
- Do you need to ask for forgiveness from someone? Should you accept forgiveness from somebody?
- When is the last time you have been to Reconciliation? If it's been more than a year, what's been holding you back from receiving the grace of this sacrament?



## **PRAYER**

Before you close in prayer, take a few moments and jot down one affirmation of each person in your group. Go around and share these! While it might be a little uncomfortable, it's important for us to see the goodness in ourselves.

After this, go around and share one (or more) particular intentions that you would like for your group to live up in prayer. Prayer is at the heart of our relationship. We're called to be saints and are an important member of the communion of saints! Don't be afraid to rely on one another.

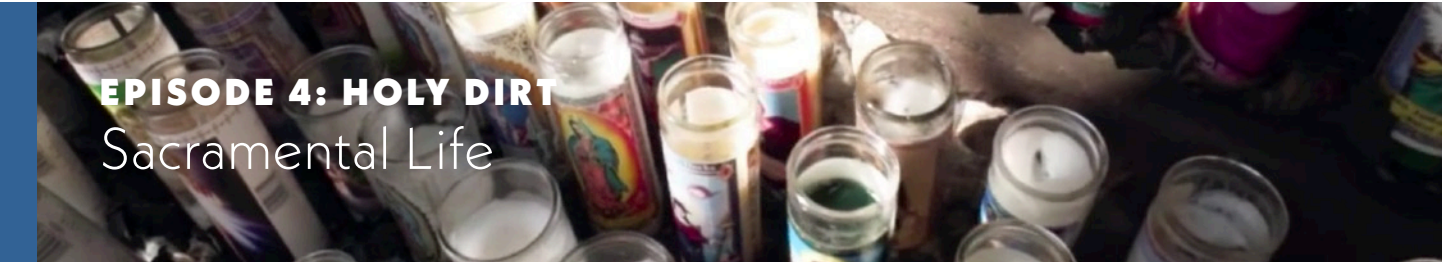
Closing Prayer: Jesus, open up our hearts that rivers of living water can flow from me and give hope and mercy to the world. Amen.

## **BEFORE LEAVING**

If someone was absent from the group, ask for a volunteer to call, text or email that person and let them know they were missed. We all want to know people care about us.

**TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY AS  
IF YOU WERE GOING TO LIVE  
FOREVER; AND TAKE CARE OF  
YOUR SOUL AS IF YOU WERE  
GOING TO DIE TOMORROW.**

**ST. AUGUSTINE**



## EPISODE 4: HOLY DIRT

### Sacramental Life



### CONNECTING TOGETHER

Take some time to talk about how life has been treating everyone. Has there been any unexpected joys or struggles that have come your way since your group was last together?

Have a brief conversation about if you feel God is leading you to invite anyone new to join your group? If so, extend a warm invitation to them.



### MAIN THEME & VERSE(S)

**Key Theme:** Sacraments and Sacramentals... saint-making machines.

✝ *As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. (He said), "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. - John 9:1,5-7 (NIV)*

✝ *He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes. - Deuteronomy 10:21*



## SIMPLE SUMMARY

In this episode, we dive into the reality that we're a composite of body and soul, and God wants to meet us where we're at. That's why we have sacraments which Jesus left us as tangible signs of grace where we encounter him. He's also given us sacramentals which open us up to the grace of God in our everyday lives. We got to hear some real-life examples about how these have impacted lives in awesome ways!

## JIM GARCIA CONVERSATION

Jim showed us a miraculous staircase and told us the story of it that is truly remarkable!

We are drawn to amazing things because of what they do for our souls.

## HOLY STAIRS - RICHARD LINDSLEY

### *3 Mysteries to the Miraculous Staircase*

1. Who Built It... The Sisters of Loretto believe that \_\_\_\_\_ came from heaven, worked for 3 months, miraculously got materials, and built this masterpiece.
2. Engineering Masterpiece... architects believe that the spiral staircase structure is impossible! They have no idea how it remains standing.
3. What it's made of... a U.S. naval scientist determined that the wood used in these stairs cannot be found anywhere else on this earth!

Sometimes we think the day-to-day of our lives is too small for God. But... He doesn't!

Jesus' first miracle was surprisingly ordinary. It was at the \_\_\_\_\_ and he made more wine so a party could keep going. This story shows us that the God of the universe cares about our daily lives... even that a wedding party can keep going on!

## IS THIS NOT THE CARPENTER'S SON?

### MATTHEW 13:55

# THEY WILL SOAR ON WINGS LIKE EAGLES

ISAIAH 40:31

## CHIMAYO - VIVIAN SCHAEGL

God takes our dirt and makes it holy.

A \_\_\_\_\_ is a sacred journey to a holy place. It's also a sacrificial offering we can make to God for loved ones or specific intentions as we go.

The story of Chimayo begins in the 1800s when a friar saw a light coming from a hill and he went to check it out. Once he realized it was coming from the ground, he dug and found a\_\_\_\_\_.

The crazy thing about this story is that no matter how many times it was removed, it miraculously ended up back in it's original location. And today, that location is known as the Lourdes, France of the United States and has multiple miracles attributed to it.

Since the crucifix was found in the dirt, people started associating them together and believe the dirt is holy. The dirt is now used in blessings!

As a Catholic Church, we have physical, tangible expressions of our faith because we are body AND soul. God became flesh and met us where we're at. Jesus left us a visible Church with sacraments. He wants us to have tangible encounters with him. And he does all of this because he loves us.

## FR. JOSEPH DEANE

Fr. Joseph was raised Catholic, fell away, and then came back. And not only came back... but he answered the call to be a Franciscan friar!

\_\_\_\_\_ is what attracted Fr. Joseph for his religious vocation.

## HOT AIR BALLOON AND NEIL FREEDMAN AND CONCLUSION

Being in a hot air balloon, you don't feel the wind because we are IN the wind. That's what it's like in life when we cooperate with the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.

Salvation History in One Sentence: "The God who loves us comes \_\_\_\_\_ to meet us right where we're at, and to \_\_\_\_\_ us up to where he is."



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. God takes our dirt and makes it holy. What “dirt” of your life has God transformed into something amazing? Is there currently some dirt in your life that you need to let God redeem?
2. How have sacramentals (like rosaries, holy images, and holy water) helped YOU live the life you were made for?
3. Sacraments are gifts that Jesus left us as tangible signs of grace where we encounter him. What role do Reconciliation and the Eucharist play in your life? Could they play a bigger role? If so... make a plan to do so.
4. What do you think about miracles? Do you think God is able to work miracles in your life? Why does God not answer every one of our prayers with a miracle?



## PUTTING IT TO PRACTICE

With the partner you began your Prayer Pilgrimage with, make a plan to give sacraments and sacrament a greater role in your daily life.

- What sacrament do you want to be more intentional about receiving? Maybe this is going to a daily Mass each week? Going to Reconciliation once a month? Volunteering with Confirmation classes at your parish? What is a tangible step you can take to put a greater emphasis on whatever sacrament you choose?
  
- Is there an awesome sacramental you could start to make a bigger part of your life? Maybe hang a crucifix in a prominent place? Get a bottle of holy water to carry with you? Have a rosary with you at all times? The possibilities are endless!





## **PRAYER**

As you close in prayer, start by thanking God for what you are most grateful for today. It's so easy to forget to express gratitude for all the blessings He has given us.

Next, share with the group special prayer intentions that are on your heart. Remember Jesus tells us "where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in their midst."

Finally, spend one minute in silence and let the whisper of God soak into your soul.

## **BEFORE LEAVING**

If someone was absent from the group... get in touch with them and let them know they were missed. And let them know you look forward to connecting.

**PRAY, HOPE, AND DON'T WORRY.**

**ST. PADRE PIO**

## EPISODE 5: MAINE

# Life as Continuous Conversion



### CONNECTING TOGETHER

Be sure to welcome anyone who is new to your group this week. Check-in on how people are really doing... be vulnerable and share what's been going on in your life since you last met.



### MAIN THEME & VERSE(S)

**Key Theme:** The gift of conscience, lifelong conversion, and peace from living in God's will.

✝ *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness - 1 John 1:9*

✝ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. -2 Corinthians 5:17*

**DO NOT BE AFRAID TO GO TO THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION, WHERE YOU WILL MEET JESUS WHO FORGIVES YOU.**

**POPE FRANCIS**



## SIMPLE SUMMARY

### JEFF WRIGLEY - DETECTIVE

We all have fallen flesh... and we all need a \_\_\_\_\_.  
We need someone to have faith in us and have compassion for us.

Jeff and Chris really let us in on the key to confession in the criminal justice system and related it to the power of Confession in our lives. Here are some of the highlights:

- We must start with the fact that deep down, we are all intrinsically good because we are made in the image and likeness of God.
- Our conscience is a gift! We can't be happy with a compromised conscience.
- A guilty conscience owns us. It gets in the way of our joy. And the only way out is to face it.
- The Sacrament of Confession gives us real-life graces! It lets us be free of our sin and pursue the joy and holiness we were created for.
- God didn't create Confession because He needs it... it's because we need it!
- Jesus didn't come to condemn the world... he came to save the world.

PUT OUT INTO  
DEEP WATER,  
AND LET  
DOWN THE  
NETS FOR A  
CATCH.

LUKE 5:4

### JEFF MILLS - FISHERMAN

Jeff says that when he's out on the water, he loves to be still and examine his conscience. Examining our conscience is essential to spiritual growth.

Fishing helps Jeff and his family rely on God and His providence, because ultimately all of their success comes from Him. That's a lesson we all can take to heart.

### MIKE GAZDUS - FRIEND'S HIGH SCHOOL FRIEND

Mike fell away from the faith and became deeply bound in mortal sin.

The gift of the \_\_\_\_\_ forever changed Mike's life. It's a great love story that can transform your life too.

## HE WHO PRAYS RECEIVES MOST.

### ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

### WALTER RUSSELL JR. - HARBOR PILOT

Walter puts faith in the Lord and especially his \_\_\_\_\_  
to get through stressful situations in the port.

When the "stuff" hits the fan... Walter turns to prayer!

Walter says the most beautiful part of being Catholic is the perspective  
that this life is simply a journey to heaven.

### BROTHER REX - CATHOLIC HERMIT

Brother Rex serves God and humanity by living in solitude to pray for  
the world and for the glory of God.

He gave us some incredible insight on how to hear the Lord's voice:

- Often it's an intuition or nudge
- Maybe we will run into someone and have a powerful encounter  
with them
- Ideally, when we spend enough time in silence and solitude the  
lenses of our spiritual glasses are wiped clean and we can see God's  
will clearly.

Brother Rex's personal mission in life is to become who God created him  
to be. What a beautiful thing for each of us to strive for!

The vocation of the hermit is to become \_\_\_\_\_.  
- Thomas Merton

### CHRIS' CLOSING

The common spiritual thread that emerged from Maine: taking off the  
filters and having an honest look at ourselves.

When we examine ourselves and listen to our conscience... it's like  
paying attention to a lighthouse so we don't crash into the rocks.

The voice of conscience and the light of grace are gifts from God who  
isn't out to get us... but rather to save us and light our way.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you approach the sacrament of Reconciliation? Would you say you approach the sacrament with guilt and shame or joy and thanksgiving? It's okay and understandable if you struggle with it at times... be honest and work to overcome this and receive the gift of grace and forgiveness with a full heart.
2. What are your feelings toward the rosary? Is it a prayer that you find beauty and depth in or monotony and repetition? The rosary is a gift for all! If you struggle with the rosary, get to the root of the struggle and strive to see the beauty of this spiritual gift.
3. How much do you turn to your guardian angel? They have been assigned to you specifically to light your way, guard you, and guide you through the storms of life. Do you really believe this? If not, how can you start to be more open to the guidance of your guardian angel?
4. When life gets stressful how do you respond? Prayer? Worry? Despair? How can you practically turn to God in times of trial?



## PUTTING IT TO PRACTICE

Before you leave, determine when you can go to the sacrament of Reconciliation in the next two weeks. Put it on your calendar. Tell someone in the group your plan and have them hold you accountable.

Be sure to examine your conscience very intentionally before you receive the sacrament. Be not afraid. Your soul is restored to its original holiness through the grace of the sacrament. Run to the merciful arms of God with great joy!




## PRAYER

As you close in prayer, thank God for the gift of conscience. Take 60 seconds to examine your conscience and meditate on who you can amend your life to be the person that God created you to be.

Say 3 heartfelt Hail Mary's before you leave. Pray them slowly and reverently. Trust in the intercession of our Blessed Mother.

## BEFORE LEAVING

If someone was absent...call, text, or email that person to let them know they were missed. Let them know they are an important part of your group and that you're praying for them.



## EPISODE 6: HAITI

### Life as Service



### CONNECTING TOGETHER

Be sure to welcome anyone who is new to your group this week. Check-in on how people are really doing...and listen for how they're growing in their faith. Don't be afraid to share what's really been working for you or some ways that you have been struggling.



### MAIN THEME & VERSE(S)

**Key Theme:** Giving your life in service, joy that surpasses all circumstances.

✝ *Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh." - Luke 6:20-21*

✝ *Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? -James 2:5*

## THE TIMES OF CONVERSION ARE THE TIMES OF GOD.

ST. AUGUSTINE



## SIMPLE SUMMARY

No poverty compares to the poverty we saw in Haiti. In this episode, we got a glimpse of what extreme physical poverty looks like. But despite the great material needs that the people of Haiti experience, we can learn so much from their resilient faith in the midst of so many trials.

The only thing more overwhelming than the poverty in Haiti is the indomitable spirit of the Haitian people. Nothing can stop these amazing people.

## SEAN FORREST AND THE ORPHANAGE

“God, what do you really want me to do?” That was the question that led Sean away from the life of a bar musician and to the life of a missionary.

When Sean felt that God was calling him to something more in life, a trip to Haiti changed his life forever. In particular, an encounter with holding a child at an orphanage inspired him to take action in helping those most in need.

Sean helped found Haiti 180 which strives to serve the poorest of the poor from the head to the heart to, most importantly, the soul.

## CHRIS MONOLOGUE

The best word to describe the spirit of Haiti is “anfom” which means \_\_\_\_\_ . There is strong... and then there is Haiti strong!

There’s something unconquerable in the Haitian spirit... HOPE. And that hope comes from the Resurrection of Christ Jesus.

## DAY 2

Among a people so materially poor... they are wealthy in what matters most: faith.

Christian service was on full display throughout this episode. In terms of service, it’s so important we don’t view the people as objects of our service, but rather that we see them as our \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ. We’re equals. We’re family. And we’re just doing what a family does.



**THE RIGHTEOUS WILL FLOURISH LIKE  
A PALM TREE, THEY WILL GROW LIKE A  
CEDAR OF LEBANON; PLANTED IN THE  
HOUSE OF THE LORD, THEY WILL FLOURISH  
IN THE COURTS OF OUR GOD. THEY WILL  
STILL BEAR FRUIT IN OLD AGE.**

**PSALM 92:12-14**

What we saw at the retirement home was truly remarkable. The missionaries at first took in neglected elderly in what they believed would be a hospice care facility. But quickly they found that these elderly had so much more joyful life to share once they were loved again.

The joyful heart of the Haitian people, especially the elderly, is anchored in something greater than what the world can give. And what the world can't give the world can't \_\_\_\_\_.

**I SEE GOD IN EVERY HUMAN  
BEING. WHEN I WAS THE LEPER'S  
WOUNDS I FEEL I AM NURSING  
THE LORD HIMSELF. IS IT NOT A  
BEAUTIFUL EXPERIENCE?**

**ST. TERESA OF CALCUTTA**

### DAY 3

We saw an impressive medical clinic that was beginning to take shape. Sean explained how God revealed the medical clinic in WAVES.

God is faithful. If God wants to get something done he'll get it done.

### JOHN SIMONE

The missionaries had cared for John for a year and a half since his tragic accident and have done so with great love the entire journey.

Despite his difficult circumstances, it was so easy to see the face of Jesus in the face of John Simone. And why is this? John said that in his time of suffering, he has simply reflected on Jesus and that brings happiness to his heart.

"There's only one thing for us to do... \_\_\_\_\_." - John Simone

Chris felt like he was walking into a \_\_\_\_\_ when he walked into John's home. He encountered Jesus and never is going to forget that face.

### DAY 4

God owns \_\_\_\_\_. The one who has everything chose to humble Himself and be with us. Why? Because he loves us.

As Christians, it's precisely our belief in heaven that should drive us to do good on this earth.

### CLOSING

Mother Teresa said of all the poverty she had encountered in the world, the worst poverty was found in wealthy nations... It's the poverty of loneliness. It's the poverty feeling your life makes no difference. It's the poverty of despair and hopelessness. We all have the power to push back on this poverty. We simply must commit to doing little things with great love.

Let's step out of our comfort zone and put the values of the Gospel into action! That is the mark of a Real Life Catholic.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Conversion is a beautiful thing. Sometimes conversion is gradual and other times it's almost immediate. Would you say that you've had a conversion experience? If so, please share. If not, reflect on the fact that we are called to conversion of heart every single day.
2. Seeing the poverty that we saw in Haiti... what does that do to your heart?
3. Reflect on James 1:2-4... "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." How does this verse apply to the people we saw in Haiti? How does this apply to YOUR life?
4. Service... it's something that bonds us together as humans. How would you describe the heart of those who we saw in the video who were serving? Who was being more blessed... the ones who served or the ones who were served?



## PUTTING IT TO PRACTICE

Getting outside of yourself is the key to happiness. We are all members of the mystical Body of Christ and we depend on each other. Service is at the heart of what it means to be a Real Life Catholic. When we serve, our faith has gone from our head... to our heart... to our sleeves.

So... what is something you can do in the next week that is an intentional act of service? It's doesn't have to be groundbreaking. It just needs to be genuine. Commit to at least one loving act of service. Share it with the group... and make sure you follow through!



## PRAYER

As you close in prayer, take 60 seconds to silently reflect on all the areas of your life that you are "poor"...

Now take 60 seconds to silently ask the Lord, the one who owns everything, to transform your poverty into a great treasure.

## BEFORE LEAVING

If someone was absent from the group...call, text, or email that person to let them know they were missed. Also, don't be afraid to reach out to your group members throughout the week and see how they are doing. We need each other.

**IF YOU CAN'T FEED A  
HUNDRED PEOPLE, THEN  
FEED JUST ONE.**

**ST. TERESA OF CALCUTTA**

## EPISODE 7: DEATH WITH DIGNITY

### Life in the Midst of Death



#### CONNECTING TOGETHER

This is the last week in your journey of through this program as a group. Congratulations! What a joy it is to share in the Good News of LIFE with one another. Take a moment and reflect on your time together.

How have you grown? Do you want your journey as a group to continue?



#### MAIN THEME & VERSE(S)

**Key Theme:** Death, dying, the hope of heaven, and how it makes every day better.

✝ *I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. - John 11:25*

✝ *So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. - John 16:22*

✝ *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. -Hebrews 6:19*



## SIMPLE SUMMARY

### LIZZ LOVETT - POWERFUL MONOLOGUE

- "What a lonely, uncharitable, and fake world we live in if we somehow think it's undignified that people see us suffer."
- "Cancer might take my life, but I'm going to live until I die. And I'm going to fight until I die. That's dignity."
- "God has the final word on my life and death. That's a fact."
- "My life isn't a story written by cancer, it's written by love. And whenever it ends, it'll end in eternal love. And a story's end changes the meaning of every page."
- "My life was never given to me to control it. My life isn't mine to take... it's mine to give. My life was given to me to love... to the end. Love is dignity. I'm facing death with dignity."

**EYE HAS NOT SEE, EAR HAS NOT  
HEARD, WHAT GOD HAS READY  
FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.**

**1 CORINTHIANS 2:9**

## **RYAN LOVETT - LIZZ'S HUSBAND**

We got to hear a beautiful reflection from Ryan about life in the midst of the death of his beloved wife. He said that faith brings new meaning to every facet of the human experience... even death. We believe in a God who showed us how to walk the path of life and death.

Few places are filled with more meaning than a \_\_\_\_\_.  
It's a place where we feel the grief of loss but also the faith that our loved ones haven't ceased to be and that all goodbyes are temporary.

Lizz showed us that it's the most simple aspects of life are the most special. It's truly the little things in life.

The last gift Lizz gave to Ryan was that she was going to rest in the Sacred Heart of Christ. Now that's true love.

**IT IS NOT DEATH THAT WILL COME TO  
FETCH ME, IT IS THE GOOD GOD. DEATH  
IS NO PHANTOM, NO HORRIBLE SPECTER,  
AS PRESENTED IN PICTURES. IN THE  
CATECHISM IT IS STATED THAT DEATH IS  
THE SEPARATION OF SOUL AND BODY,  
THAT IS ALL! WELL, I AM NOT AFRAID OF  
A SEPARATION WHICH WILL UNITE ME TO  
THE GOOD GOD FOREVER.**

**ST. THERESE OF LISIEUX**

# EARTH HAS NO SORROW THAT HEAVEN CANNOT HEAL.

THOMAS MOORE

# WE HAVE THIS AS A SURE AND STEADFAST ANCHOR OF THE SOUL, A HOPE THAT ENTERS INTO THE INNER SHRINE BEHIND THE CURTAIN...

HEBREWS 6:19

## REFLECTION BY CHRIS

Death... the final enemy of mankind. And the fact is that even though it feels so unnatural and shocking, everyone has to experience it.

How do you deal with this uncomfortable fact of death? Well, Christianity is the ultimate defiance to death. We believe in a God who was born behind enemy lines and walked through the valley of the shadow of death with us. We believe in the Easter victory. We believe in life everlasting. We Christians make peace with death because we can look it in the eye and say "we win." We were made for life. And death's days are numbered.

\_\_\_\_\_ has forever changed death.

Death is a \_\_\_\_\_, not a period.

We have an army of loved ones who have gone before us who are cheering us on right on the other side of that finish line.

## RYAN'S CONVERSION AND TESTIMONY ABOUT LIZZ

Ryan had a deep and profound conversion to Catholicism that was rooted in the belief that there had to be something more.

One of the most powerful moments of his faith journey was the experience he and Lizz shared while simultaneously praying for what their next step in her faith journey should be.

While Lizz died from cancer, that's not her story. Her story is about how she lived and how she made sense of her suffering. She lived with real joy and she lived free. Lizz's faith was filled with hope and she knew her life wouldn't end in emptiness.

"What \_\_\_\_\_ are not gifts? All things are gifts." - Lizz

Even as the end drew near for Lizz, she was free. And because she was free, her husband is free. Ryan knows that Lizz is known and loved more than he can imagine by our infinite God.

If you turn everything over to God, he takes it, transforms it, and gives it back to us in a beautiful way.

"I look forward to the \_\_\_\_\_ of the dead, and the life of the world to come." -Nicene Creed





## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. At the beginning of this episode, we got to hear a powerful testimony from Lizz about how perspective on life in the midst of death. What stood out to you the most from what she said, how she lived, and how she died?
2. Does the reality of death scare you? Why?
3. Why do you think our good God lets bad things happen to good people?
4. How does the promise of heaven change our outlook on our earthly lives? Do you need to make any changes in the way you are living based on this awesome reality?



## PUTTING IT TO PRACTICE

Although it's not necessarily fun... write down 3 qualities or characteristics that you would like to be known for once God calls you back home. Consider what kind of mark you would like to leave on this earth. And most importantly, consider what qualities you would like to grow in to prepare your soul for heaven. Write these 3 qualities or characteristics down. Once you have done this, write down one way that you can enhance each of these qualities or characteristics.

## PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

Quality or Characteristic	How You Can Grow With This?



## **PRAYER**

As you close in prayer, thank God for the gift of your life. Call to mind all the good things he has blessed you with.

Thank him for the gift of this journey with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

And lastly, help him to hope and live to be the best you can be for both this life and the next.

## **BEFORE LEAVING**

Decide if your group is going to continue to grow together spiritually. If so (which would be amazing!) make a realistic and tangible plan for how you are going to make this happen. If someone was missing, be sure to reach out to them and let them know about the future plans for your group.

# HOST A SMALL GROUP ON YOUR OWN

Yes you can! Yes, you. You can. **Here's how.**

## INVITE AND INCLUDE OTHERS

Just invite someone (or, some several ones), and include them. Seems simple right? Well, it is. Life isn't meant to be lived alone. That's why the following is meant to help you invite and include others in your journey to Unshakeable Joy: after all, shouldn't others live that kind of joy too?!

So why not be a host of a small group yourself? To be a host in this sense is simple: just invite some others to go on this journey with you. You don't have to be any kind of expert. You just have to be willing. And have the courage to put yourself out there for your God.

## THE CHEETOS PRINCIPLE TO INVITATION

**STEP 1:** Go to the grocery store and buy some Spicy Cheetos.

**STEP 2:** Call a friend/neighbor/co-worker and say: "Hey. I've got some Spicy Cheetos. You should come over and have some with me."...don't worry, they'll come, because...Spicy Cheetos!

**STEP 3:** Eat some Spicy Cheetos (be sure to share some with your friend/neighbor/co-worker), and then - at some point - say, "Hey brother/sister, not only are these Spicy Cheetos really good; but, how ARE you? As in, really...how're you doing?"

**STEP 4:** Listen - really listen - and love on your friend.

**STEP 5:** Then DO this small group program! We've written it for you!

The point is...inviting someone to spend time with you is simple. Don't overcomplicate it!

If you have two friends, you can start a group (Matthew 18:20). You don't need training. There are no formal requirements. You just need to lean into a certain generosity of spirit, and to have a heart for others.

## SOME WAYS TO INVITE OTHERS

- Shoot them a text
- Send an email.
- Leave a brief message on the Facebook account.
- Send an e-card.
- Call them!
- Or, actually invite them face-to-face!

## FEAR NOT

Fear keeps a lot of people from starting faith communities, and from sharing their faith in general. Don't let your fear mug your aspirations! Cast your fear on Christ and let Him transform it (1 Peter 5:7). This is your ONE life: live it well. Live it boldly!

There are three main worldly fears that keep people from saying YES to Christ's call in their lives and they are in direct opposition to the three evangelical counsels.

1. Fear of not getting their needs met...what do you need to give up for the Kingdom? (poverty)
2. Fear of not belonging..who do we really want to belong to anyway? (chastity)
3. Fear of losing control...do we trust God's will for our lives? (obedience)

All other fears can be drawn back to these three. The Devil even tried to tempt Christ with these in the desert (Matthew 4: 1-11). Don't let the devil keep you down! If you are feeling that tug to be in a small group, ask the Holy Spirit to flood your heart with courage and invite a friend.

## FEARS AROUND STARTING, HOSTING OR JOINING A SMALL GROUP

***My house isn't clean enough...*** neither are the homes of your friends, believe me.

***I don't have the right gifts...*** share the responsibilities, talk to a few friends and work together to share the load.

***What if no one says yes?...*** Keep asking, they might be overwhelmed with life. Ask if there is something you can do to make life easier.

***I don't know how to manage conversations...*** You don't need to! Who wants a "managed" conversation anyway? God desires us to be real with one another: He'll equip you...if you let Him.

***I don't know enough...*** Who does? It's OK not to know. Your role isn't to provide answers, to educate, or even to furnish information...answers to questions can always be looked up. While no question is off-limits, your role is better understood as someone who wants to help facilitate faith-filled conversations. Trust God enough to let Him guide the conversation.

***I don't live like others in my parish...*** People didn't all live the same in the early Church. When we love each other, we don't judge each other by the size or style of our homes. St. Paul tells us that he learned the secret of being hungry and well-fed. We too can learn to live according to our circumstances with humility (Phil 4:12)!

## CREATING THE EXPERIENCE

### ROOM SETUP

Everything in your room communicates a tone and feeling. Try to arrange things so people feel comfortable, and are able to look at one another face-to-face when talking. Food and something to drink is always welcome. We suggest re-discovering the joys of a potluck! The more you can make a room feel like home for someone else, the more comfortable your group will be and the more likely others will feel happy there.

## HOW TO BE...AND BEHAVE

One of the primary reasons a person wants to engage in a small group discussion is to be heard...and that means meaningful conversation. So try to be mindful of that. Here are some ways to help:

1. When you get started, open each session with getting a sense from others about how they're really doing. Check in with them. Greet people at the door with a smile to set the tone right away. Be friendly and be yourself...you have permission!
2. Don't do all the talking...help facilitate the conversation rather than dominate it. Cast a vision for a conversation, don't kill it. Your role isn't to educate or furnish information. That is talking to people. Strive to talk with them instead. Give them the space to be heard. Consider writing down things you want to share on your own paper and holding the thought. Give conversation...time.
3. Be comfortable with silence and uncertainty. Meaningful conversations require some level of silence: it's where thought often occurs (not everyone is an exterior processor of their thoughts), and it's the space in which the thunder of God's still, small voice of hope is very often heard (1 Kings 19 1-18).
4. Be a good listener. A good listener is quick to listen (James 1:19). A good listener is an active listener. A good listener listens with his or her eyes as well ears. "If you love to listen, you will receive; and if you pay attention, you will be wise" (Sirach 6:33).
5. Encourage everyone to be involved in the conversation by listening well and involving others (but don't insist everyone must speak!). If your group is too big for everyone to be involved in the conversation, break it up into multiple groups. And let people wander between groups as their interests dictate.
6. Don't rush! The point is not to get through any certain volume of material. The point is to take the time together to let God reveal the purpose of a conversation (which very often results in people finding their life's purpose in His plan).
7. Pray. Pray before anyone arrives so you can welcome them well. Pray before anyone leaves so you leave in His presence. And pray between meetings for one another's intentions. Prayer is not the place to hold back.

Remember—you don't need to have all the answers to host this study. Hosting is about helping others have helpful conversations about faith. If that happens, it's a win!

## HAVE A COMMUNICATION PLAN

Help people continue the experience by checking in with the people in your group throughout the time between when you get together.

1. Send a text message to everyone in your group. Let them know you're praying for them. Just because.
2. Send a text message to anyone who couldn't make it. Let them know you missed them! And let them know you look forward to seeing them next time.
3. Send a text to at least one person in your group and ask them what you can pray about for them.
4. Post a message on your social media page. Post a message on their social media page. Let folks know how much you enjoy their company! And how much you look forward to spending more time with them.
5. Email your group every week (if you meet weekly), with a reminder of when your small group is next meeting, and where, and any other information they may need (e.g., "You all bring something else to eat, I've got the Spicy Cheetos!").

## A NOTE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SMALL GROUP RELATIONSHIPS

We don't think we can say it better than Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas did in their book *Activate*:

Most of the people...are looking for social relationships. They want to meet casual friends. They are looking for some people to hang out with, because they know instinctively that within that group of people they're likely to meet someone they want to get personal with and invite into their inner circle. Then, from that inner circle, they can decide who they want to be in intimate relationship with. Instead of being forced into contrived familiarity, they just want to be given an opportunity to connect with new people so that deeper relationships can develop naturally.

Allow casual friendships to develop without feeling a need to force intimacy.

Most (parish) leaders have made two critical mistakes in trying to help people connect. First, we have undersold the importance of basic friendships and social relationships to overall spiritual health. Second, we have oversold the importance of personal and intimate relationships—and we have tried to force our small group members into such relationships, even though groups are naturally structured to accommodate social, not personal or intimate connections. People simply do not get personal or intimate in groups of eight to fifteen people. They socialize in groups of eight to fifteen people. When we try to force more intimate relationships in our groups, we scare and alienate many potential group members, especially men. No man is going to sign up for a group if he thinks he is going to have to let people he doesn't know that well into his personal business. But men (and women) will sign up for groups where they can meet new friends, connect with God, and hang out socially.



# ANSWER KEY

## EPISODE ONE: KAUAI CATHOLIC

### Divine Life Found in Creation

- Who made these beautiful, changeable things of this universe but one who is beautiful yet **unchangeable**. - St. Augustine
- The first lesson of the spiritual life is **detachment**.
- Mankind is inherently **religious**. It's like God planted it into our DNA to prepare us for the Gospel.
- Her journey back to God ended in the Catholic Church, but it began with God's gift of **beauty**.

## EPISODE TWO: THE HOLY LAND

### Life with Jesus

- The door that leads into the Bethlehem Basilica is called the Door of **Humility**. It requires all who enter to bend down just like God bent low, humbled Himself, and became human like us.
- The tomb of Jesus, our leader and Lord, is an **empty** tomb.
- 90% of income for Christians in the Holy Land comes from **olive wood** carvings.
- Christians now only account for **2%** of the population in the Holy Land due to pressure and dangers of being the minority group.
- Shepherds kept their sheep in **caves** and this is exactly where Jesus was born.

## EPISODE THREE: PILGRIMS IN POLAND

### Life with the Saints

- **Poland** is the epicenter of some of the greatest sufferings in the recent centuries. The people of this nation continually rose up despite the great trials they have faced.
- Here's an unmistakable spiritual law for you: Heroic souls are only chiseled out from the rest of us from **suffering**. The Polish saints of our era are epic spiritual heroes who fought for the future of humanity.
- God said that His mercy is like an **ocean**. There's no limit to his mercy for us and there's no sin he can't forgive.
- Jesus, I **trust** in you.
- His last act was to **bless** the men who executed him. That's the definition of heroically loving thy enemies.

## EPISODE FOUR: HOLY DIRT

### Sacramental Life

- Who Built It... The Sisters of Loretto believe that **St. Joseph** came from heaven, worked for 3 months, miraculously got materials, and built this masterpiece.
- Jesus' first miracle was surprisingly ordinary. It was at the **Wedding Feast at Cana** and he made more wine so a party could keep going. This story shows us that the God of the universe cares about our daily lives... even that a wedding party can keep going on!
- A **pilgrimage** is a sacred journey to a holy place. It's also a sacrificial offering we can make to God for loved ones or specific intentions as we go.
- The story of Chimayo begins in the 1800's when a friar saw a light coming from a hill and he went to check it out. Once he realized it was coming from the ground, he dug and found a **crucifix**. The crazy thing about this story is that no matter how many times it was removed, it miraculously ended up back in its original location. And today, that location is known as the Lourdes, France of the United States and has multiple miracles attributed to it.
- **Joy** is what attracted Fr. Joseph for his religious vocation.
- Being in a hot air balloon, you don't feel the wind because we are IN the wind. That's what it's like in life when we cooperate with the **grace** of God.
- Salvation History in One Sentence: "The God who loves us comes down to meet us right where we're at, and to **raise** us up to where he is."

## EPISODE FIVE: MAINE

### Life as Continuous Conversion

- We all have fallen flesh... and we all need a **redeemer**. We need someone to have faith in us and have compassion on us.
- The gift of the **rosary** forever changed Mike's life. It's a great love story that can transform your life too.
- Walter puts faith in the Lord and especially his **guardian angel** to get through stressful situations in the port.
- The vocation of the hermit is to become **ordinary**. - Thomas Merton
- The best word to describe the spirit of Haiti is "anfom" which means **strong**. There is strong... and then there is Haiti strong!

## EPISODE SIX: HAITI

### Life as Service

- Christian service was on full display throughout this episode. In terms of service, it's so important we don't view the people as objects of our service, but rather that we see them as our **brothers and sisters** in Christ. We're equals. We're family. And we're just doing what a family does.
- The joyful heart of the Haitian people, especially the elderly, is anchored in something greater than what the world can give. And what the world can't give the world can't **take away**.
- "There's only one thing for us to do... **pray**." - John Simone
- Chris felt like he was walking into a **chapel** when he walked into John's home. He encountered Jesus and never is going to forget that face.
- God owns **everything**. The one who has everything chose to humble Himself and be with us. Why? Because he loves us.

## EPISODE SEVEN: DEATH WITH DIGNITY

### Life in the Midst of Death

- Few places are filled with more meaning than a **cemetery**. It's a place where we feel the grief of loss but also the faith that our loved ones haven't ceased to be and that all goodbyes are temporary.
- **Easter Sunday** has forever changed death.
- Death is a **comma**, not a period.
- "What **sufferings** are not gifts? All things are gifts." - Lizz
- "I look forward to the **resurrection** of the dead, and the life of the world to come." - Nicene Creed



