

WALKING TOWARD
Eternity

Making Choices for Today



SPECIAL EDITION

JEFF & EMILY CAVINS


ASCENSION

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Journal


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FROM THE AUTHORS

Welcome to *Walking Toward Eternity—Special Edition*. The times we are living in are like none other in recent history. Due to COVID-19, life has been radically altered. All of our relationships within the family, the Church, and work will all have changed. It's fair to say that most of us were, to varying degrees, not prepared for this sudden change. While everything seems to be changing, the one thing that doesn't change is God's love, provision, and faithfulness.

We at Ascension believe that we can do more than simply endure the storm; we believe we can be victorious and can walk in a new level of maturity. We can experience new insights and grow through the hardships we face.

This study is designed to face the issues that arise when people are quarantined, separated from loved ones, and forced to work from home. In some cases, people are dealing with complicated health issues and others the fear of unemployment.

In a *Special Edition* study like this, we are interested in becoming more like Christ internally, but we are interested in action steps as well. These action steps are geared toward facing the challenges that this pandemic has left us with.

Given the fact that your attention is given to the immediate needs in your life, we have tailored this study to be of assistance to you in the questions and decisions that you will face, as well as your response to loved ones and colleagues. For most of us, lasting change is not easy. Experiencing change, even modest change, is what this study is all about.

This *Special Edition* study is different from a typical Bible study. We have designed each lesson to use Scripture as a way to encounter Christ in meditation and prayer. As St. Augustine said, "When we pray, we speak

to God; when we read the Scriptures, God speaks to us.” We hope that as you study God’s Word, your relationship with the Lord will deepen as you continue this intimate conversation with him.

Using the Scriptures and this journal, you will experience daily meditative prayer, which will allow God’s Word to work in you to instill the mind of Christ and to obtain the grace necessary to walk as a disciple of Christ.

This journal is designed to help you hear the voice of God

We are glad you can join us as together we dare to “walk the walk” in the most trying of modern times. Our hope is that God will equip you to be a “spiritual first responder” in a world filled with fear! God bless you!

– Jeff and Emily Cavins



one

HEARING THE VOICE OF GOD



“If you would attain to what you are not yet, you must always be displeased by what you are. For where you are pleased with yourself, there you have remained. Keep adding. Keep walking. Keep advancing.”

– St. Augustine



“Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We only have today. Let us begin.”

– St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa)

“If a person meditates consistently on God, a complete revolution takes place in that person’s behavior.”

– Archbishop Fulton Sheen

“In the spiritual life you must take one step forward each day in a vertical line, from the bottom up.”

– St. Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio)

Session One Outline

Video Presentation: “Hearing the Voice of God”

This video session will introduce the Walking Toward Eternity program, explain the various parts of the program, and share what you can expect to get out of it. Add your notes to the talk outline below or in your personal journal. Videos are available at [Facebook.com/AscensionPress](https://www.facebook.com/AscensionPress) beginning on Friday, March 27, 2020.

I. Goal of This Study

- A. Modest change – small steps
- B. Romans 12:2 – “Be transformed,” developing the mind of Christ

II. What Makes This Study Different?

- A. An encounter with Christ in prayer
- B. Applying God’s Word to your life

III. Action Is Required for Change

- A. Engaging the will
- B. Hosea 10:12 – “Breaking up unplowed ground”
 - 1. 2 Kings 4 and 5
 - 2. Joel 2

IV. Tools for the Study

- A. Journal
- B. Bible – “One you can live in”
(We recommend *The Great Adventure Catholic Bible*.)

V. The Process

- A. Each week

1. Engage with the topic
2. Meditate on the selected Scriptures
3. Practice *lectio divina*
4. Homework

B. Video Presentation

1. Questions for personal reflection
2. Share and grow
3. Live presentation (30 min.)
4. Point of decision: three questions
 - a. What is God putting his hand on in your life?
 - b. What, specifically, is he asking you to do?
 - c. When will you take the step?

VI. Background of *Lectio Divina*

- A. Pope Benedict XVI: *Lectio divina* is “key to new springtime of evangelization” (2008 Synod on Sacred Scripture)
- B. St. Augustine and St. Cyprian observed: In prayer, we speak to God; as we read the Bible, we can experience God speaking to us
- C. An excellent prayer resource: *Praying Scripture for a Change* by Dr. Tim Gray

VII. *Lectio Divina*: Example, Psalm 23

A. **Read** (*Lectio*)

1. Look for details, gather facts, notice key words
2. What does the passage say?

B. **Meditate** (*Meditatio*)

1. Wonder about what it says
2. Engage your mind, don't empty it
 - a. Isaiah 31:4 – a lion “meditates” (*hagah*) over its prey

C. **Pray** (*Oratio*)

1. What does this mean to you?
2. Respond to God in your words

D. **Contemplate** (*Contemplatio*)

1. The result, the fruit – rest in God's presence

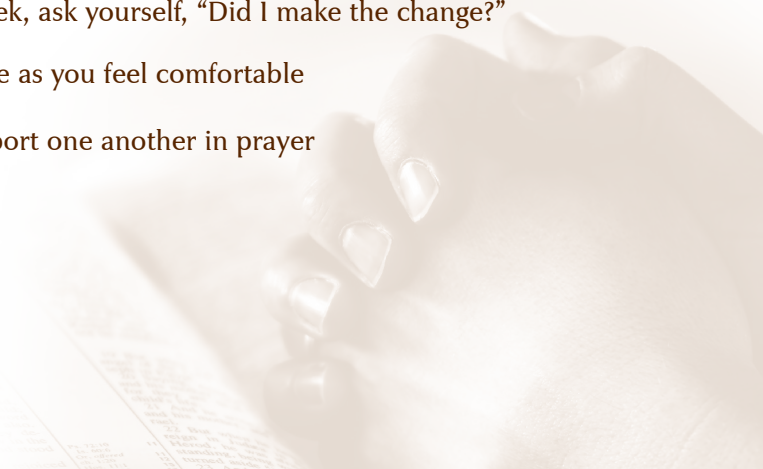
E. Put it into practice (*Operatio*)

VIII. Hearing God's Voice Today

- A. CCC 142, 143 – Submit intellect and will to God; the obedience of faith
- B. Believe that God speaks today
- C. Believe you are capable of hearing him speak to you
- D. Be involved in the Scriptures
- E. Insight from Father Toups
- F. Example: Philip (Acts 8)

IX. Conclusion

- A. Each week, ask yourself, “Did I make the change?”
 1. Share as you feel comfortable
 2. Support one another in prayer



Join us for this live study experience at
[Facebook.com/AscensionPress](https://www.facebook.com/AscensionPress).

Walking Together

This study is designed to assist you in moving toward real change in your life through prayerful daily meditation on Scripture. Others around the world are on the same journey. After you have studied each topic, Jeff Cavins will encourage you to take one concrete step to put into practice what you have learned and create change. Starting next week, ask yourself a simple question: “Did I take the step?”

We all know how difficult change can be. Please remember to pray for the others on this journey.

How to Use This Journal

** Please note: There are several references to writing in this journal. If you are unable to print it out, please feel free to write your notes and reflections in a personal journal or other location.*

1. Home Preparation

This journal will guide you on your daily “walk” as you prepare for the live video presentations. The study you do at home is less about learning than it is about hearing from God in his Word, letting that Word come into contact with your life and responding to God in prayer. It is important to spend a small amount of time each day – fifteen to twenty minutes should be sufficient – rather than doing it all at once or at the last minute.

Two or more days of prayerful reading are outlined for each session. On these days you will be prompted to think in a different way about the topic under discussion that week.

Meaning

The first questions help you discover the meaning of prayerfulness, fear, sacrifice, or another topic. Sometimes you will be asked to contrast the dictionary definition or the world’s definition with what the Bible says. You may be asked to reflect on how you have experienced this in your life. You will be provided with several Scripture verses to read and think about. Linger over this exercise, allowing the verses to penetrate your mind before recording what stands out to you.

Importance

Next, turn your focus to God’s perspective on the issue. You will be prompted to read Scripture to learn God’s view on the matter. Once again, take time to savor God’s Word; don’t simply taste it and move on.

Practice

The next series of questions builds on what you have already read and asks you to consider what this looks like in practice. Along with the brief list of verses you are given to read carefully, you will be presented with a longer passage from the Bible that practically illustrates the topic in action. You then will be asked to begin thinking of how your own life measures up and to note whether something is standing in the way of change.

Praying Scripture for a Change

Enter into a deeper, more personal encounter with the passage that has meant the most to you. Using *lectio divina*, you will be asked to prayerfully meditate on your chosen Scripture passage, listening to hear the voice of God speak to you and responding to him in prayer. After the video presentation, you will once again pray – this time deciding on and committing to the step you will take toward change. (The instructions for *lectio divina* are on the following page.)

Optional Further Reading

There are additional verses for optional reading, if you have time and want to explore the topic more. Feel free to use a Bible concordance to find even more verses, if you desire.

Questions for Reflection

Space has been set aside for personal reflection and journaling. At the top is a question that summarizes the theme for that day (for example, “What does it mean to be a person of prayer?” at the far right of page 15.)

2. Video Presentation

Each week a video presentation will help prepare you to take the first step toward applying God’s Word to your life. The “Video Presentation” pages of your journal are designed to help with this process.

An outline of the presentation is included in this journal. Feel free to take additional notes there as desired.

Quiet Time with the Lord

At the close of the video presentation, you will be asked to spend time in quiet prayer asking the Lord three questions:

- What are you putting your hand on in my life?
- What specifically do you want me to do?
- When?

My Next Step

The last journal page for each session contains a “contract” of sorts on which you may record the specifics regarding the step you have determined to take. Write it down and ask God for help as you dare to “walk the walk.”

Instructions for *Lectio Divina* (“Divine Reading”)

Choose a brief portion of Scripture to meditate on. Spend a few moments in a quiet place preparing your heart and asking God to meet you in his Word. Follow these steps to praying with the Scripture passage you have chosen:

1. **Read** (*Lectio*): Slowly read the verse(s), looking for details. Notice key words; verbs and nouns; anything repeated, compared or contrasted. What does the passage say? Write down words or phrases that stand out to you.
2. **Meditate** (*Meditatio*): Mentally “chew” on key words or images to extract their meaning. Let the words sink in and take hold. What do those words mean? Write down what you discover.
3. **Pray** (*Oratio*): Pay attention to the way your meditation connects with your life and respond to what you find. Talk to God (not “at” him) about this.
4. **Contemplate** (*Contemplatio*): Savor being in God’s presence.
5. **Resolve to Act** (*Operatio*): Make a practical resolution by which you hope to walk in the topic you have been reading about as Christ does.



two

WALKING IN PRAYERFULNESS



“For me, prayer is an upward leap of the heart, an untroubled glance toward heaven, a cry of gratitude and love which I utter from the depths of sorrow as well as from the heights of joy.”

– St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Date _____

The Meaning of Prayer

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to show you what prayer truly means.

1. If someone asked you to define prayer, how would you answer that person?

2. Discover what the Bible has to say about prayer. Read the following verses aloud. Read each one again slowly. Repeat it in your mind and think about what it says. After each one, write down the words, phrases, or concepts about prayer that most stand out to you.
 - a. Psalm 62:8

 - b. James 4:8

 - c. Matthew 7:7-8

 - d. Hebrews 13:15

3. Circle the word or phrase you wrote down in question 2 that speaks most to you. Why did you choose it?

“What does it mean to be a person of prayer?”

4. Who in your life has taken the time to pray with you? What was it about their example that you found appealing or meaningful?



“Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.”

– *Catechism* 2559



Optional Further Reading

- a. Psalm 46:10
- b. Psalm 143:8
- c. Matthew 18:19-20

“Why is prayer
important?”

3. How do you respond when it seems that one of your prayers is not answered?



“Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God’s desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him.”

– *Catechism* 2560



Optional Further Reading

- a. Psalm 63:5-6, 8
- b. Hebrews 4:16
- c. James 5:16
- d. John 4:14



Date _____

Walking in Prayer

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to show you what it means to follow him by walking in prayer.

1. According to the Bible, what does it mean to walk in prayer?
Prayerfully read these verses several times each and meditate on them. Record what stands out to you about how we are to pray.
 - a. Philippians 4:6
 - b. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
 - c. Mark 1:35
 - d. Romans 8:26
2. Read Jonah's prayer in Jonah 2:1-10. Which elements in this prayer can you identify with? What can you learn from Jonah's experience?



“We cannot achieve our human fulfillment without communing with God – and the deeper our prayer, the deeper our fulfillment.”

– Fr. Thomas Dubay, S.M.

3. As you reflect on this story and the verses in question 1, can you think of an area in your life where you have been seeking answers from a source other than God? Are there situations where you became overwhelmed and tried to solve the problem as though God did not exist?

4. What obstacles or feelings of resistance come up for you when you think about establishing a life of prayer?

Optional Further Reading

- a. Proverbs 15:9
- b. Isaiah 58:9
- c. 1 John 5:14-15
- d. Ephesians 6:18

“What are practical ways to pray, especially when you don’t feel like it?”

Date _____

Praying Scripture for a Change

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to show you what areas of your prayer life need to become more like that of Jesus.

1. Look back through your journal and select the Scripture that meant the most to you. Look it up in your Bible and decide whether to read it alone or in the context of the surrounding passage.

Write the verse and its reference here:

2. Using the steps of *lectio divina*, meditate on the Scripture you chose until it turns into prayer and then simply rest in the Lord, trusting that he will help you to take action and make a change in your life.

Read (*Lectio*)

Meditate (*Meditatio*)

“What did you
glean from your
lectio divina?”

Continued on next page...

Pray (*Oratio*)

Contemplate (*Contemplatio*)

Resolve to Act (*Operatio*)

Date _____

Personal Reflection

1. Meditate prayerfully on **Matthew 7:7-8**.
2. Answer these reflection questions. (Turn back in your journal to recall what you discovered each day, and use the space provided to add new insights.)
 - What does it mean to be a person of prayer?
 - Why is prayer important?
 - What are some practical ways to pray, especially when you don't feel like it?
 - What did you glean from your *lectio divina*?
3. If you have time, continue by reflecting on any of these questions:
 - List some of the ways you began to develop the habit of prayer. Did you create a special place for prayer or set aside definite times? If so, describe.
 - What are some of the benefits of spending time in prayer? How does this compare with times when you neglect to pray?

Session Two Outline

Video Presentation: “Walking in Prayerfulness”

This video session will prepare you to take the first step in walking more consciously in prayer. Add your notes to the talk outline below.

I. Introduction

- A. CCC 2560 – Prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst with ours
- B. Christian prayer is unique because it reflects a filial relationship

II. Definition of Prayer

- A. CCC 2559
- B. Prayer as a drama of the heart
- C. Prayer as a willed habit
 - 1. St. Teresa of Avila: “Anyone who does not pray does not need the devil to tempt them.”
- D. CCC 2567 – Prayer is our response to God’s call
- E. Prayer is fully revealed in Jesus Christ

III. The Drama of Prayer Revealed in Christ

- A. Jesus learned to pray
- B. Jesus’ prayer was filial: Matthew 6:9
- C. Jesus prayed before decisive moments
- D. Jesus took time to be alone with his Father
 - 1. Luke 5:16; 11:1
 - 2. CCC 2602
 - 3. Content of prayer revealed in words and works

IV. Three Principle Parables on Prayer

- A. Luke 11:5-13 – The Persistent Friend
- B. Luke 18:1-8 – The Persistent Widow
- C. Luke 18:9-14 – The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

V. The Lord's Prayer

- A. Two fundamental dispositions (CCC 2800)
 - 1. Desire to be like Jesus
 - 2. Have a humble, trusting, childlike heart
- B. We are not just individuals; we are a family
- C. Seven petitions
 - 1. CCC 2804 – First three focus on God
 - 2. CCC 2805 – Last four focus on our needs

VI. Types of Prayer

- A. Example of making prayer a priority: Joe
- B. Blessings (CCC 2626) and adoration (CCC 2628)
- C. Prayer of Petition
- D. Prayer of Intercession

VII. Expressions of Prayer

- A. Vocal prayer
- B. Mental prayer
 - 1. St. Augustine: “A certain quietude is a requirement of the mind.”
- C. Contemplative Prayer

1. St. Teresa of Avila: Contemplation is “a close sharing between friends” (*The Book of Her Life*, 8, 5)
2. St. John Vianney: “I look at our Lord in the tabernacle, and he looks at me.”

VIII. Suggestions

- A. Start by praying a little bit each day
- B. Choose a time and place to pray
- C. Learn to pray the Scriptures (*lectio divina*)
 1. Psalms
 2. The Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6)
 3. St. Teresa of Avila: Take a book with you to prayer
- D. Learn to pray the Rosary
- E. Keep a prayer journal
 1. Write down your thoughts
 2. Write down others’ intentions
 3. Write down your own intentions, requests, prayers
 - a.) How you want to change
 - b.) Your needs

Quiet Time with the Lord

*This is an opportunity for you to sit and pray silently in Christ's presence, allowing him to speak to your heart about how you can grow in prayer. Respond by committing to a specific step you will take to bring about a needed change in your life. **Follow the guidelines on the next page.***

Remember, mental acknowledgement that change is needed is not change. Action – responding in word and deed – is essential for lasting change.

“Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

– Ephesians 4:23-24

Walking Together

Remember to pray for the other members of our group during the coming week, knowing that they will be praying for you, too.

1. I believe the Lord is asking me to walk more prayerfully in this area of my life:

2. Specifically, I am going to do the following this week:

3. I will take the necessary first step on

(day and time)



three

ENGAGING YOUR FEAR




*“Let nothing disturb thee;
Nothing affright thee;
All things are passing;
God never changeth;
Patient endurance
Attaineth to all things;
Who God possesseth
In nothing is wanting;
Alone God suffices.”*

– St. Teresa of Avila

3. Circle the word or phrase you wrote down in question 2 that speaks most to you. Why did you choose it?

4. In your life, what causes you to fear?

“What is the connection between fear and our relationship with God and the devil?”



“The apprehension of evil causes hatred, aversion, and fear of the impending evil ...”

– *Catechism* 1765



Optional Further Reading

a. Mark 4:40

b. Romans 8:15

c. Joshua 14:8

“How does God
free us from fear?”

3. If you applied one of the above verses, how would your life be different?



“Prudent education teaches
virtue; it prevents or cures
fear ... The education of the
conscience guarantees freedom
and engenders peace of heart.”

– *Catechism 1784*



Optional Further Reading

- a. Luke 12:32-34
- b. Hebrews 13:6
- c. Isaiah 54:14
- d. Psalm 91:10-11



Date _____

*Engaging Your Fear**Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to help you stand up to your fear.*

1. According to the Bible, what can help us to overcome fear?
Prayerfully read these verses and meditate on them. Record what stands out to you about living without fear.
 - a. Psalm 56:3-4 (Psalm 56:4-5, NAB)
 - b. Ephesians 6:10-13
 - c. James 4:7
 - d. Philippians 4:6-7
2. Read the story of Jesus walking on the water in Matthew 14:22-32. How does Jesus respond to the disciples' fear? Now describe the difference between Peter looking at Jesus vs. looking at the wind.



“The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. ‘The Lord is my strength and my song.’ ‘In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.’”

– *Catechism* 1808



**“What practical steps
can be taken to
overcome fear?”**

3. What encouragement do you see in this story for facing your own fears?

4. What aspect of God’s character could you focus on to help you turn away from your fear?

Optional Further Reading

a. Joshua 1:9

b. Matthew 10:31

c. Luke 12:25-28

Date _____

Praying Scripture for a Change

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to help you to face your fear and take a step toward healing.

1. Look back through your journal and select the Scripture passage that meant the most to you. Look it up in your Bible and decide whether to read it alone or in the context of the surrounding passage.

Write the verse and its reference here:

2. Using the steps of *lectio divina*, meditate on the Scripture you chose until it turns into prayer, and then simply rest in the Lord, trusting that he will help you to take action and make a change in your life.

Read (*Lectio*)

Meditate (*Meditatio*)

“What did you
glean from your
lectio divina?”

Continued on next page ...

Pray (*Oratio*)

Contemplate (*Contemplatio*)

Resolve to Act (*Operatio*)

Date _____

Personal Reflection

1. Meditate prayerfully on **Psalm 23**.
2. Answer the following reflection questions. (Turn back in your journal to recall what you discovered each day, and use the space provided in the margin to add new insights.)
 - What is the connection between fear and our relationship with God and the devil?
 - How does God free us from fear?
 - What practical steps can be taken to overcome fear?
 - What did you glean from your *lectio divina*?
3. If you have time, continue by reflecting on any of these questions:
 - What is the difference between healthy fear and unhealthy fear?
 - Can you share a real-life example of someone who overcame a particular fear?
 - What insights did you gain about how fear may impact your life or about how it may affect others around you?

Session Three Outline

Video Presentation: “Engaging Your Fear”

This video session will prepare you to take the first step in controlling your fear. Add your notes to the talk outline below:

I. Introduction

- A. St. John Paul II—“Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors to Christ.”¹
- B. Fear: False Evidence Appearing Real

II. The Problem of Fear

- A. The many words for fear
- B. Wasted hours of fear
- C. Jeff’s story—debilitating fear
- D. Fear of abandonment (Matthew 8:23-26)
 - 1. Fear paralyzes us
 - 2. Fear whittles away at our confidence in God
 - 3. “Spiritual amnesia”
 - 4. Fear tells us we are alone
- E. Fear subtracts God from the future
 - 1. Difficulty – God = Fear
 - 2. Difficulty + God = Confidence and victory
- F. Spiritual battle: your fear is the devil’s hope

III. Sin Contributes to the “Fear Factor”

- A. Fear will drive you away from Christ or toward him
- B. Sin is at the heart of fear (Genesis 3:8-9, Adam and Eve)
 - 1. Sin separates us from God
 - 2. Sin opens the door to fear
 - 3. Solution—walk again with God

IV. Jesus, The Answer to Fear—You Can Trust the Father

- A. Jesus tells us, “Be not afraid!”
 - 1. Luke 1:30—angel to Mary
 - 2. Matthew 28:5—angel to the women at the tomb
 - 3. John 6:20—Jesus to the apostles
 - 4. Matthew 28:10—Jesus’ first words after the Resurrection
- B. Jesus did not walk in fear, but in trust
- C. Sarah’s story

V. Keys to Conquering Fear

- A. Realize who you are as a child of God
 - 1. Slaves are fearful; sons and daughters trust
 - a. CCC 322—Jesus calls us to filial trust as he showed in the desert
 - b. As with Christ: Satan attempts to come between us and God
 - c. Our recourse, like Christ’s—knowledge of God’s words and deeds
 - 2. God is not arbitrary
 - 3. CCC 1828—spiritual freedom of children of God
 - 4. 1 John 4:18—“perfect love casts out fear”
 - 5. Romans 8:15—spirit of sonship; we cry “Abba” (“Papa”)
 - 6. 1 Peter 5:7—cast your anxieties on him
- B. You are not alone
 - 1. John 14:18—“I will not leave you desolate” (NAB: “orphans”)
 - 2. Matthew 28:20—“I am with you always”
 - 3. Joshua 1:9—the Lord is with you wherever you go
 - 4. We walk with Emmanuel, “God with us”
 - 5. Psalm 23:4—I fear no evil, God is with me

6. Hebrews 13:5—God will never fail or forsake you
7. 1 Samuel 17—David recalls God’s past deeds and does not fear

C. You are loved

1. John 3:16—God so loved the world ...
2. 2 Timothy 1:7—God did not give us a spirit of fear
3. Psalm 23—The Lord, your shepherd

D. Be trusting in prayer

1. CCC 2610—pray with “filial boldness”
 - a. Mark 11:24
 - b. Mark 9:23
2. CCC 2734—filial trust is tested in tribulation
3. Philippians 4:6-7—have no anxiety, but pray
4. Jesus faced fear with prayer
5. Psalm 34:4—seek the Lord; he will deliver you from fears

E. Confronting fear of death

1. Hebrews 2:14-15—Jesus delivers us
2. Revelation 1:18—Jesus holds the keys of death and Hades
3. Archbishop Fulton Sheen quote “death can be robbed of its greatest fearfulness if we practice for it”²
 - a. Mortification and detachment as preparation
 - b. Death conquered by an affirmation of the eternal³
 - c. Embrace the reality (“I die daily”) and live in Christ
4. CCC 1167—blessed is Sunday! (the importance of the Mass)

VI. Conclusion⁴

Quiet Time with the Lord

*This is an opportunity for you to sit and pray silently in Christ's presence, allowing him to speak to your heart about how you can engage your fear in new ways. Respond by committing to a specific step you will take to bring about a needed change in your life. **Follow the guidelines on the next page.***

Remember, mental acknowledgment that change is needed is not change. Action—responding in word and deed—is essential for lasting change.

*Dear Merciful and Heavenly Father,
I recognize that there are situations in my life
that I cannot resolve on my own, and for this
reason, I put everything into your caring hands.
I surrender to you all the adverse and negative
circumstances that paralyze me. Help me to
walk freely and courageously. Help me to face my
fears and take the necessary steps to overcome
them with your grace.*

Amen.

Walking Together

Remember to pray for the other members of our group during the coming week, knowing that they will be praying for you, too.



My Next Step ...

1. I believe the Lord is asking me to walk away from fear in this situation in my life:
2. Specifically, I am going to do the following this week:
3. I will take the necessary first step on

(day and time)



four

WALKING IN SACRIFICE



“Jesus says: ‘My daughter... You will save more souls through prayer and suffering than will a missionary through his teachings and sermons alone. I want to see you as a sacrifice of living love, which only then carries weight before me... Outwardly, your sacrifice must look like this: silent, hidden, permeated with love, imbued with prayer... I will not spare my grace, that you may be able to fulfill what I demand of you.’”

– St. Maria Faustina Kowalska

Date _____

The Meaning of Sacrifice

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to show you what sacrifice truly means.

1. Look up the word “sacrifice” in the dictionary. How is sacrifice defined?

2. Discover what the Bible has to say about sacrifice. Read the following verses aloud. Read each one again slowly. Repeat it in your mind and think about what it says. After each verse, write down the words, phrases, or concepts that most stands out to you.
 - a. Psalm 51:17

 - b. Romans 12:1

 - c. Ephesians 5:2

 - d. Luke 22:42

3. Circle the word or phrase you wrote down in question 2 that speaks most to you. Why did you choose it?

4. Think of a favorite saint or martyr. How did that person demonstrate the meaning of sacrifice portrayed in one of these verses?

“Outward sacrifice, to be genuine, must be the expression of spiritual sacrifice... The only perfect sacrifice is the one that Christ offered on the cross as a total offering to the Father’s love and for our salvation. By uniting ourselves with his sacrifice we can make our lives a sacrifice to God.”

– *Catechism 2100*

Optional Further Reading:

- a. 2 Corinthians 5:15
- b. Psalm 141:2
- c. Proverbs 21:3



3. Discover what the Bible has to say about the importance of sacrifice. First, read the following verses aloud. Then read each one again slowly. Repeat it in your mind and think about what it says. After each verse, write down the words, phrases, or concepts that most stand out to you.
 - a. Matthew 19:27-30
 - b. Hebrews 5:8
 - c. John 12:24-26

Optional Further Reading

- a. Colossians 1:24
- b. Ruth 2:11-12
- c. Luke 9:23
- d. Hebrews 10:34

Date _____

Walking in Sacrifice

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to show you what it means to follow him by walking in sacrifice.

1. According to the Bible, what does it mean to walk in sacrifice? Prayerfully read the following verses several times and meditate on them. Record what stands out to you about sacrifice.
 - a. Hebrews 13:15-16
 - b. Mark 8:34
 - c. 2 Corinthians 4:8-10
2. Read the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22:1-14. How did Abraham respond when God asked him to sacrifice his son? How did God respond to Abraham's obedience?
3. As you reflect on this story and the verses in question 1, why do you think God would require sacrifice from us? What is your response when circumstances don't turn out the way you envisioned them?

“What are some practical ways to walk in sacrifice?”

4. What obstacles or feelings of resistance come up for you when you think about things you are being called to offer up or places you are being called to walk in sacrifice?

Optional Further Reading

- a. Jonah 2:9
- b. 1 Peter 2:4-5
- c. Ephesians 3:13
- d. 2 Timothy 1:8



Date _____

Praying Scripture for a Change

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to show you in what areas he can help you to offer something up in a sacrificial way.

1. Look back through your journal and select the Scripture verse that meant the most to you. Look it up in your Bible and decide whether to read it alone or in the context of the surrounding passage.

Write the verse and its reference here:

2. Using the steps of *lectio divina*, meditate on the Scripture you chose until it turns into prayer and then simply rest in the Lord, trusting that he will help you to take action and make a change in your life.

Read (*Lectio*)

Meditate (*Meditatio*)

“What did you
glean from your
lectio divina?”

Pray (*Oratio*)

Contemplate (*Contemplatio*)

Resolve to Act (*Operatio*)

Date _____

Personal Reflection

1. Meditate prayerfully on **John 12:24-26**.
2. Answer these reflection questions. (Turn back in your journal to recall what you discovered each day, and use the space provided to add new insights.)
 - What is sacrifice?
 - Why is sacrifice important?
 - What are some practical ways to walk in sacrifice?
 - What did you glean from your *lectio divina*?
3. If you have time, continue by reflecting on these questions:
 - How did your definition of sacrifice and its importance change or expand?
 - Did you observe any real-life examples of someone walking in sacrifice?
 - What insights did you gain about areas in your life where sacrifice is asked of you?

Session Four Outline

Video Presentation: “Walking in Sacrifice”

This video session will prepare you to take the first step in walking more consciously in sacrifice. Add your notes to the talk outline below.

I. Introduction

- A. We are to be “living sacrifices” out of love for Christ (Romans 12:1)
- B. Suffering can be part of sacrifice

II. A Definition of Sacrifice

- A. Elements brought to God to express devotion, thanksgiving, repentance
- B. Old Testament sacrifices

III. Christ: The Ultimate and Definitive Sacrifice

- A. Jesus’ death is described in sacrificial terms
 - 1. The sinless high priest (Hebrews 4:14-5:10)
 - 2. The paschal lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7)
- B. Need for sacrifices ceases, except for thank offerings (*today*)
 - 1. Jesus prophesies destruction of Temple (Matthew 24:1-8)
 - 2. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; the Eucharist

IV. Christ’s Death Is the Appeal for a Christian’s Sacrifice

- A. Our sacrifices are an expression of his
 - 1. Filling up Christ’s sacrifice (Colossians 1:24)

2. Jesus makes room for us to participate in his loving sacrifice for the world (St. John Paul II)
 3. Offer ourselves as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1)
 4. We are “crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20)
 5. Radical identification with Christ (2 Corinthians 5:15)
- B. Choice: live for selves or live for Christ
1. “I die daily” (1 Corinthians 15:31)
- C. Acts 1:8 – “You shall be witnesses” (*martyrs*)
- D. Example of loving sacrifice: Jon

V. Ideal Life Meets Real Life

- A. The difference between “ideal” and “real”
- B. When real meets ideal:
1. Others pay the price
 2. No peace or joy
 3. Don’t provide our children with a good example
 4. We retreat from reality
 5. We blame others
 6. We self-medicate
 7. We objectify others
 8. We live a partial life
- C. Live in joy and peace: offer your life to God as living sacrifice

VI. Accepting Divine Providence

- A. “If the Lord wills” (James 4:14-15)
- B. John 21:18
- C. All of life has value

VII. Finding Meaning in Suffering

- A. St. John Paul II on suffering (*Salvifici Doloris*)
 - 1. Two kinds, physical and moral
 - 2. Two types, temporal and definitive
- B. Christ used suffering to deal with suffering
- C. Offer it up – your “real life” has redemptive power
- D. Christ’s life manifest in mortal flesh (2 Corinthians 4:8-11, 14)

VIII. Suggestions for Walking in Sacrifice

- A. Don’t live for self only
- B. Live a life of service
- C. See weakness as an opportunity to be perfected (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- D. Make each sacrifice into an expression of your love

IX. Conclusion

Quiet Time with the Lord

*This is an opportunity for you to sit and pray silently in Christ's presence, allowing him to speak to your heart about how you can walk in sacrifice in new ways. Respond by committing to a specific step you will take to bring about a needed change in your life. **Follow the guidelines on the next page.***

Remember, mental acknowledgement that change is needed is not change. Action – responding in word and deed – is essential for lasting change.

“Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness”

– Ephesians 4:23-24

Walking Together

Remember to pray for the other members of our group during the coming week, knowing that they will be praying for you, too.



My Next Step ...

1. I believe the Lord is asking me to walk in sacrifice toward this person (or in this situation) in my life:
2. Specifically, I am going to do the following this week:
3. I will take the necessary first step on

(day and time)



five

ENGAGING YOUR ANGER



“It is better not to allow anger, however just and reasonable, to enter at all, than to admit it in ever so slight a degree; once admitted, it will not be easily expelled, for, though at first but a small plant, it will immediately grow into a large tree.”

– St. Augustine

“What did you learn about anger and its root?”

3. Look at the following verses. How is God’s anger different than ours?

a. Psalm 30:5

b. Mark 3:5

c. Psalm 86:15



“By recalling the commandment, ‘You shall not kill,’ our Lord asked for peace of heart and denounced murderous anger and hatred as immoral. *Anger* is a desire for revenge.”

– *Catechism* 2302



Optional Further Reading

a. Proverbs 14:17

b. Ecclesiastes 7:9

c. Proverbs 30:33

d. Galatians 5:19-21

“What are some reasons to control anger?”

3. Read Luke 22:43 and Luke 23:34.
 - a. Why do you think Christ didn’t respond with anger to his persecutors?
 - b. If you were in a similar situation, how would you react?



“The principal passions are love and hatred, desire and fear, joy, sadness, and anger. In the passions, as movements of the sensitive appetite, there is neither moral good nor evil. But insofar as they engage reason and will, there is moral good or evil in them.”

– *Catechism* 1772-1773



Optional Further Reading

- a. Ephesians 6:4
- b. Proverbs 15:18

Date _____

Engaging Your Anger

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to help you confront your anger.

1. According to the Bible, what can help us overcome anger?
Prayerfully read these verses several times each and meditate on them. Record what stands out to you about living without anger.
 - a. James 1:19-21
 - b. Ephesians 4:26-27
 - c. Ephesians 4:31-32
2. Read Genesis 50:15-21. What enabled Joseph to forgive his brothers when he might have been angry with them for selling him into slavery?
3. Look again at the verses in question 1. Which of these might be particularly helpful in controlling anger in your life and why?

“What are some basic principles for controlling anger?”

4. When you are tempted to react with anger, what could you choose to express instead?

Optional Further Reading

- a. Psalm 4:4 (Psalm 4:5, NAB)
- b. Colossians 3:8
- c. 1 Timothy 2:8
- d. Psalm 37:8
- e. Ephesians 4:31-32

Date _____

Praying Scripture for a Change

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to help you face your anger and take a step toward responding with forgiveness and humility.

1. Look back through your journal and select the Scripture passage that meant the most to you. Look it up in your Bible and decide whether to read it alone or in the context of the surrounding passage.

Write the verse and its reference here:

2. Using the steps of *lectio divina*, meditate on the Scripture you chose until it turns into prayer and then simply rest in the Lord, trusting that he will help you to take action and make a change in your life.

Read (*Lectio*)

Meditate (*Meditatio*)

“What did you
glean from your
lectio divina?”

Continued on next page ...

Pray (*Oratio*)

Contemplate (*Contemplatio*)

Resolve to Act (*Operatio*)

Date _____

Personal Reflection

1. Meditate prayerfully on **Ephesians 4:26-32**.
2. Answer the following reflection questions. (Turn back in your journal to recall what you discovered each day, and use the space provided in the margin to add new insights.)
 - What did you learn about anger and its root?
 - What are some reasons to control anger?
 - What are some basic principles for controlling anger?
 - What did you glean from your *lectio divina*?
3. If you have time, continue by reflecting on any of these questions:
 - When you were a child, how did the role models in your life handle their anger?
 - What can happen if you suppress your anger instead of dealing with it?
 - If you find yourself angry with someone, how do you handle it? Do you go directly to that person, or do you find yourself telling someone else about it?
 - What types of things *should* you be angry about?

Session Five Outline

Video Presentation: “Engaging Your Anger”

This video session will prepare you to take the first step in engaging your anger. Add your notes to the talk outline below:

I. Introduction

- A. Goal: differentiate between good and bad anger
- B. Anger does not accomplish God’s righteousness (James 1:20)
- C. Repressed anger can lead to physical problems
- D. Anger leads to transgression (Proverbs 29:22)
- E. Unresolved anger can ruin your life

II. What Is Anger?

- A. An emotion that rises quickly, causes a physiological reaction
- B. CCC 1772–1774
 - 1. Anger is one of the principal passions
 - 2. The passions are morally neutral
 - 3. The passions can be taken up in virtues or perverted in vices

III. God’s Anger

- A. Jeremiah 3:12-14—at sin and injustice
- B. Ezekiel 16:26—at spiritual infidelity
- C. Jeremiah 32:30—at wrongs done
- D. John 2:14-17—Jesus and the money-changers in the Temple

IV. “Good Anger” vs. “Bad Anger”

- A. Good anger: a response to injustice or sin
 - 1. Ephesians 4:26—“be angry but do not sin”

2. Example: Candy Lightner, founder of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)
- B. Bad anger: a response to frustration, inconvenience, etc.
- C. A wrong perpetrated (“good”) vs. a wrong perceived (“bad”)
- D. Our job—distinguish between the two, and pause before responding

V. Anger Can Be Controlled

- A. James 1:19—be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger
- B. Exodus 34:5-6—the LORD is slow to anger
- C. Ecclesiastes 7:9—do not be quickly provoked
- D. Proverbs 16:32—be slow to anger; rule your spirit
- E. Proverbs 29:11—a wise man controls anger
- F. Chad’s story

VI. Practical Steps to Controlling Anger

- A. Pause; take custody of your emotions
- B. Consciously acknowledge your anger
- C. Count to ten
- D. Locate the focus of your anger
- E. Is it good or bad anger?
- F. Analyze your options—take constructive action or turn it over to God (Proverbs 19:11)
- G. Get to know your triggers

VII. Confronting an Angry Person

- A. Proverbs 15:1—“a soft answer turns away wrath”
- B. Listen to the whole story; ask clarifying questions
- C. Put yourself in the other person’s shoes
- D. Share additional information

- E. If you are in the wrong, confess and make restitution

VIII. Virtues to Temper Anger

- A. Patience
- B. Gentleness
- C. Self-control
- D. Forgiveness
- E. Understanding
- F. Winston Churchill: “A man is about as big as the things that make him angry”
- G. Anne Marie’s story

IX. Conclusion: Resolve to Love

Take Sirach 28:1-12 with you as you meditate and pray:

“He that takes vengeance will suffer vengeance from the Lord, and he will firmly establish his sins. Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray. Does a man harbor anger against another, and yet seek for healing from the Lord? Does he have no mercy toward a man like himself, and yet pray for his own sins? If he himself, being flesh, maintains wrath, who will make expiation for his sins? Remember the end of your life, and cease from enmity, remember destruction and death, and be true to the commandments. Remember the commandments, and do not be angry with your neighbor; remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook ignorance.

“Refrain from strife, and you will lessen sins; for a man given to anger will kindle strife, and a sinful man will disturb friends and inject enmity among those who are at peace. In proportion to the fuel for the fire, so will be the burning, and in proportion to the obstinacy of strife will be the burning; in proportion to the strength of the man will be his anger, and in proportion to his wealth he will heighten his wrath. A hasty quarrel kindles fire, and urgent strife sheds blood. If you blow on a spark, it will glow; if you spit on it, it will be put out; and both come out of your mouth.”

Quiet Time with the Lord

*This is an opportunity for you to sit and pray silently in Christ's presence, allowing him to speak to your heart about how you can engage your anger in new ways. Respond by committing to a specific step you will take to bring about a needed change in your life. **Follow the guidelines on the next page.***

Remember, mental acknowledgment that change is needed is not change. Action—responding in word and deed—is essential for lasting change.

*Dear Lord,
Help me to express my thoughts and feelings in a way that is pleasing to you and never hurtful to others. When the emotion of anger rises in me, may your Holy Spirit temper me with forgiveness, humility, and patience, so that my words and actions will not be ones I regret. I surrender my will to yours and pray that I grow in charity toward others.*

Amen.

Walking Together

Remember to pray for the other members of our group during the coming week, knowing that they will be praying for you, too.

My Next Step ...

1. I believe the Lord is asking me to walk away from anger in this situation in my life:
2. Specifically, I am going to do the following this week:
3. I will take the necessary first step on

(day and time)



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ENGAGING YOUR HOPELESSNESS



*“[A] person whose head is bowed and whose eyes are heavy
cannot look at the light.”*

– Christine de Pizan, *Ditié de Jehanne d’Arc*

“What is at the root of feeling hopeless?”

3. Think of a time in your life when you felt hopeless. What caused you to feel this way?

4. How can feelings of hopelessness turn into despair?



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

– *Catechism* 2091



Optional Further Reading

a. Psalm 69:20

b. Ezekiel 7:27

c. Psalm 33:17

“What does God offer us in place of hopelessness and despair?”

3. Circle the word or phrase you wrote down in question 2 that speaks most to you. Why did you choose it?

4. How can our actions of love bring hope to others?



“The virtue of hope ... keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude.”

– *Catechism* 1818



Optional Further Reading

- a. Hosea 2:15

- b. 2 Corinthians 4:8-10

- c. Romans 8:24

- d. Psalm 9:18

Date _____

Engaging Your Hopelessness

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to help you find hope in him.

1. According to the Bible, how can we overcome hopelessness? Prayerfully read these verses several times each and meditate on them. Record what stands out to you about living without hopelessness.
 - a. Psalm 33:18-23
 - b. Psalm 42:5-6
 - c. Ecclesiastes 9:4
 - d. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18
2. Read the story of the two disciples walking to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35. What might have tempted them to lose hope? How did Jesus help them to overcome this?



*“A man devoid of hope and conscious of being
so has ceased to belong to the future.”*

– Albert Camus



“What positive steps can you take to overcome hopelessness?”

3. As you reflect on this story and the verses in question 1, what positive steps can you take to overcome the feeling of hopelessness?

Optional Further Reading

- a. Psalm 25:15
- b. Romans 4:18
- c. Proverbs 24:14
- d. Acts 27:20-25
- e. 2 Corinthians 4:1



Date _____

Praying Scripture for a Change

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to help you turn away from hopelessness and despair and take a step toward healing.

1. Look back through your journal and select the Scripture passage that meant the most to you. Look it up in your Bible and decide whether to read it alone or in the context of the surrounding passage.

Write the verse and its reference here:

2. Using the steps of *lectio divina*, meditate on the Scripture you chose until it turns into prayer and then simply rest in the Lord, trusting that he will help you to take action and make a change in your life.

Read (*Lectio*)

Meditate (*Meditatio*)

“What did you
glean from your
lectio divina?”

Continued on next page ...

Pray (*Oratio*)

Contemplate (*Contemplatio*)

Resolve to Act (*Operatio*)

Date _____

Personal Reflection

1. Meditate prayerfully on **Romans 8:31-35**.
2. Answer the following reflection questions. (Turn back in your journal to recall what you discovered each day, and use the space provided in the margin to add new insights.)
 - What is at the root of feeling hopeless?
 - What does God offer us in place of hopelessness and despair?
 - What positive steps can you take to overcome hopelessness?
 - What did you glean from your *lectio divina*?
3. If you have time, continue by reflecting on any of these questions:
 - How can we prevent our lack of hope from turning into despair?
 - What are some ways you can help someone who feels all is hopeless, especially those who have lost loved ones?
 - How can you stay hopeful in the face of failure?
 - Is your hope solidly in God, or is it in something else?

Session Six Outline

Video Presentation: “Engaging Your Hopelessness”

This video session will prepare you to take the first step in overcoming hopelessness. Add your notes to the talk outline below:

I. Introduction

II. Examples of Hopelessness

- A. Job 7:5-7
- B. Jonah 4:3
- C. Psalm 69:20

III. Causes of Hopelessness

IV. Hope: A Theological Virtue

- A. Infused at baptism
- B. Hope can grow (See CCC 1266)
- C. CCC 2090—“the confident expectation of divine blessing and the beatific vision of God”
- D. CCC 2091—the first commandment is concerned with sins against hope: despair and presumption

V. The Biblical View of Hope

- A. Based on God’s power and knowledge (contrast Plato: hope limited to subjective perspective)
- B. Hope is certain
- C. *Tikva*, “hope”

D. Ecclesiastes 9:4—as long as there is life, there is hope

E. Hopelessness is when God is lost as point of reference

VI. The World's View of Hope

A. Nietzsche—hope is the worst of evils

B. Contrary to biblical view: hope deferred makes the heart sick

VII. Hope: A Guiding Principle

A. Examples of hope in spite of failure (Abraham Lincoln)

B. Hope is a crossroad in life—can guide or lead astray

C. The course the heart sets when given a vision

D. Jeff's fishing story (hope based on the Father's Word)

VIII. Misplaced Hopes

A. In riches (1 Timothy 6:17)

B. In other people (Psalm 118:8)

C. In idols (Jeremiah 14:22)

D. In things (Psalm 33:17)

IX. God Wants Us to Have Hope

A. Hosea 2:14-15—the Valley of Achor (“trouble”) is made a door of hope

X. What to Do in Times of Hopelessness

A. Cry out to God (Psalm 119:147)

1. Jeannie's story

2. 1 Timothy 5:5—put your hope in God
 3. Hebrews 6:19—“behind the curtain,” an anchor for the soul
 4. Isaiah 40:28-31—hope in the LORD = renewed strength
- B. Take stock of where you are putting your hope
- C. Put your hope in God
- D. Put your hope in his Word
1. Psalm 130:5
 2. Romans 15:4
 3. Psalm 33:18
- E. Take Christ’s yoke upon yourself
1. Matthew 11:29
 2. Hosea 4:12
- F. Don’t rely on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6)
- G. Take responsibility for your moods (Ex: 1 Samuel 30:1-6)
- H. Three lessons from Israel’s return from exile:
1. They rebuilt the Temple: engage in the sacraments, Mass
 2. They read from the Law: read God’s Word
 3. They rebuilt the walls: become a part of the community

XI. God Has Plans to Give You Hope

- A. Jeremiah 29:11
- B. Cindy’s story

Quiet Time with the Lord

*This is an opportunity for you to sit and pray silently in Christ's presence, allowing him to speak to your heart about how you can overcome hopelessness in new ways. Respond by committing to a specific step you will take to bring about a needed change in your life. **Follow the guidelines on the next page.***

Remember, mental acknowledgment that change is needed is not change. Action—responding in word and deed—is essential for lasting change.

*Dear Lord,
Let me see through your eyes the goodness in this world and in others. Fill me with your hope and consolation, so that I may face tomorrow with the desire to persevere and be a light where darkness hides the truth of your goodness. Open my eyes to the light of hope, giving me a fresh look at what is real and true. You are the Way, the Truth, and the Life. I commit to following you.
Amen.*

Walking Together

Remember to pray for the other members of our group during the coming week, knowing that they will be praying for you, too.



My Next Step ...

1. I believe the Lord is asking me to walk away from hopelessness in this situation in my life:
2. Specifically, I am going to do the following this week:
3. I will take the necessary first step on

_____.

(day and time)



seven

ENGAGING YOUR LONELINESS



“We have all known the long loneliness, and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.”

– Dorothy Day

3. What is the difference between being alone and feeling lonely?



“The human person needs to live in society. ... Through the exchange with others, mutual service and dialogue with his brethren, man develops his potential; he thus responds to his vocation.”

– *Catechism* 1879



Optional Further Reading

- a. Psalm 102:7-10
- b. Psalm 38:11
- c. 2 Timothy 4:16
- d. Psalm 25:16

“What are some of the ways God frees us from loneliness?”

3. Circle the word or phrase you wrote down in question 2 that speaks most to you. Why did you choose it?
4. What are some tangible ways that God is with you?



“In his Eucharistic presence [Christ] remains mysteriously in our midst as the one who loved us and gave himself up for us, and he remains under signs that express and communicate this love. ...”

– *Catechism* 1380



Optional Further Reading

- a. Genesis 28:15
- b. Deuteronomy 31:8
- c. Isaiah 43:2
- d. Hebrews 13:5
- e. Isaiah 41:10

Date _____

Engaging Your Loneliness

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to help you confront your loneliness.

1. According to the Bible, what practical steps can we take to overcome loneliness? Prayerfully read these verses several times each and meditate on them. Record what stands out to you about living without loneliness.
 - a. James 4:8
 - b. Romans 12:9
 - c. Hebrews 10:24-25
 - d. 1 Timothy 5:5
 - e. Psalm 25:16
2. Read about Job's situation in Job 19:13-27. What caused Job to feel abandoned and lonely? How was he able to overcome this?

“What positive steps
can help overcome
loneliness?”

3. As you reflect on this story and the verses in question 2, what positive steps can you take to walk away from loneliness?

4. How could reaching out to someone else help one to overcome loneliness?

Optional Further Reading

- a. Mark 15:33-34
- b. Psalm 73:25-26
- c. 1 Corinthians 12:24-27
- d. Proverbs 18:24

Date _____

Praying Scripture for a Change

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to help you turn away from your loneliness and take a step toward reaching out to someone else.

1. Look back through your journal and select the Scripture passage that meant the most to you. Look it up in your Bible and decide whether to read it alone or in the context of the surrounding passage.

Write the verse and its reference here:

2. Using the steps of *lectio divina*, meditate on the Scripture you chose until it turns into prayer and then simply rest in the Lord, trusting that he will help you to take action and make a change in your life.

Read (*Lectio*)

Meditate (*Meditatio*)

“What did you
glean from your
lectio divina?”

Continued on next page ...



Pray (*Oratio*)

Contemplate (*Contemplatio*)

Resolve to Act (*Operatio*)

Date _____

Personal Reflection

1. Meditate prayerfully on **Psalm 139:1-18**.
2. Answer the following reflection questions. (Turn back in your journal to recall what you discovered each day, and use the space provided in the margin to add new insights.)
 - What is loneliness?
 - What are some of the ways God frees us from loneliness?
 - What positive steps can help overcome loneliness?
 - What did you glean from your *lectio divina*?
3. If you have time, continue by reflecting on any of these questions:
 - How would you describe the difference between solitude and loneliness?
 - Can you think of a time when you reached out to someone else even though you felt lonely? What was the result?
 - What are some ways to find new friends if your old friends have changed or you have moved to a new location?
 - Do you think social media helps alleviate loneliness or increases it?

Session Seven Outline

Video Presentation: “Engaging Your Loneliness”

This video session will prepare you to take the first step in overcoming loneliness. Add your notes to the talk outline below:

I. Introduction

- A. Illustration (*Cipher in the Snow* by Jean Mizer)
- B. Being disconnected from others; lack of interaction
- C. Mother Teresa on loneliness, the “leprosy of the West”
- D. AARP survey—35 percent of adults over 40 are chronically lonely⁵

II. Causes of Loneliness

- A. Rootlessness
- B. Restlessness
- C. Fantasy
- D. Alienation (Beatrice’s story)
- E. Depression

III. Reasons for Loneliness

A. Examples

B. Sin, the “prime alienator”

1. Destroys love and trust
2. Weakens or destroys relationship with God
3. Breaks harmony with others
4. Stems from the Fall (Genesis 3:7-9, 24)
5. As it relates to sin: a precursor of hell (absence of God’s presence)

C. The ever-changing character of things

1. Ecclesiastes 1:2-11—vanity of vanities
2. Hebrews 13:14—“here we have no lasting city”
3. Rabbinic story (Hofetz Chaim)—we are passing through

D. Technology

E. The nature of the human person (see Ecclesiastes 6:7)

IV. God's Answer to Loneliness

- A. Old Testament—God dwelt with his people
- B. New Testament—Emmanuel, “God with us”
- C. God takes on our loneliness (Garden of Gethsemane; on the cross)
- D. Matthew 28:20—“I will be with you always”
- E. God gives us the Church (see Psalm 68:5-6; Psalm 68:6-7, NAB)

V. Dealing with Loneliness

- A. Move away from sin and toward the kingdom
 - 1. Repent
 - 2. Move toward the kingdom (meditate on Matthew 5–7)
- B. Run to Jesus
- C. Be a friend
- D. Cultivate a few strong relationships (Proverbs 18:24)

VI. Not Struggling with Loneliness? Look Out for Lonely People

Quiet Time with the Lord

*This is an opportunity for you to sit and pray silently in Christ's presence, allowing him to speak to your heart about how you can engage loneliness in new ways. Respond by committing to a specific step you will take to bring about a needed change in your life. **Follow the guidelines on the next page.***

Remember, mental acknowledgment that change is needed is not change. Action—responding in word and deed—is essential for lasting change.

*Dear Lord,
Through your mercy, I cling to your promise that you will not leave me or forsake me. Let me feel your presence when I am alone and when I am among others. When I see those who are isolated, abandoned, or alone, let me be your hands to reach out to them. You are my spouse and my comfort in all situations, and your Holy Spirit can ultimately fill any hole in my heart.*

Amen.

Walking Together

Remember to pray for the other members of our group during the coming week, knowing that they will be praying for you, too.



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WALKING IN LOVE



“Our vocation is to belong to Jesus so completely that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. What you and I must do is nothing less than putting our love for Christ into practice. The important thing is not how much we accomplish, but how much love we put into our deeds every day. That is the measure of our love for God.”

– St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa)

Date _____

The Meaning of Love

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to show you what love truly is.

1. Look up the word “love” in the dictionary. How is love defined?

2. Discover what the Bible has to say about love. Read the following verses aloud. Read each one again slowly. Repeat it in your mind and think about what it says. After each verse, write down the words, phrases, or concepts that stand out most to you.
 - a. 1 John 3:16

 - b. 2 John 1:6

 - c. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

3. Circle the word or phrase you wrote down in question 2 that speaks most to you. Why did you choose it?

4. Who in your life has been a role model of this kind of love? How and why?



“To love is to will the
good of another.”

– *Catechism* 1766
(quoting St. Thomas Aquinas)



Optional Further Reading

- a. Romans 13:10
- b. 1 John 4:18
- c. John 15:13

“Why is love important?”

3. Discover what the Bible has to say about love’s importance. Read the following verses aloud. Read each one again slowly. Repeat it in your mind and think about what it says. After each verse, write down the words, phrases, or concepts that most stand out to you.
 - a. Matthew 22:37-39
 - b. Colossians 3:14
 - c. John 3:16
 - d. 1 Corinthians 13:2

Optional Further Reading

- a. Mark 12:33
- b. 1 John 4:20
- c. 1 John 4:8



Date _____

Walking in Love

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to show you what it means to follow him by walking in love.

1. According to the Bible, what does it mean to walk in love?
Prayerfully read these verses several times each and meditate on them. Record what stands out to you about love in action.
 - a. Romans 12:9-13
 - b. Ephesians 5:2
 - c. Matthew 5:43-44
 - d. 1 John 3:18
2. Read the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. How did the Samaritan walk in love compared to the priest and the Levite? What kinds of things did he do to demonstrate love?

Date _____

Praying Scripture for a Change

Pray before you begin. Ask the Lord to show you in what areas he can help you to love as he does.

1. Look back through your journal and select the Scripture that meant the most to you. Look it up in your Bible and decide whether to read it alone or in the context of the surrounding passage.

Write the verse and its reference here:

2. Using the steps of *lectio divina*, meditate on the Scripture you chose until it turns into prayer and then simply rest in the Lord, trusting that he will help you to take action and make a change in your life.

Read (*Lectio*)

Meditate (*Meditatio*)

“What did you
glean from your
lectio divina?”

Continued on next page...



Pray (*Oratio*)

Contemplate (*Contemplatio*)

Resolve to Act (*Operatio*)

Date _____

Personal Reflection

1. Meditate prayerfully on **1 Corinthians 13:1-13**.
2. Answer these reflection questions. (Turn back in your journal to recall what you discovered each day, and use the space provided to add new insights.)
 - What is love?
 - Why is love important?
 - What are some practical ways to walk in love?
 - What did you glean from your *lectio divina*?
3. If you have time, continue by reflecting on any of these questions:
 - How did your definition of love and its importance change or expand?
 - Did you observe any real-life examples of someone walking in love?
 - What insights did you gain about how God's love touches your life or about how you show love to others?

Session Eight Outline

Video Presentation: “Walking in Love”

This video session will prepare you to take the first step in walking more consciously in love. Add your notes to the talk outline below.

I. Introduction

- A. Story of Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin
- B. Universal desire to love and be loved perfectly

II. God’s Love: Agape

- A. The essence of complete self-giving
- B. 1 John 4:8 – God is love
- C. CCC 221 – God’s in himself is an eternal exchange of love
- D. St. John Paul II: God is not a solitude but a family
- E. *Gaudium et Spes*: Jesus is loved and he loves
- F. John 3:16 – God gave his only Son

III. How Agape Is Different

- A. *Agape* chooses the best for another
- B. Goodwill in action
- C. Romans 5:8 – Christ died for us while we were yet sinners

IV. The World Was Made for God’s Glory

- A. Psalm 19:1

B. CCC 293

C. CCC 1

V. The Cross

A. God's love most clearly seen in the Cross

B. Example of love: Sister Teresa

VI. God Loves You Personally

A. You are loved by God just the way you are

B. Because he loves you, he wants to take you to the next step

C. You will never be satisfied without God's love

1. CCC 27

2. St. John of the Cross

3. Archbishop Fulton Sheen – “Don't search for the ocean of infinite love in the teacup of finite satisfactions.”

VII. Love Is a Theological Virtue

A. Faith, hope, charity

B. Given at baptism

C. Nurtured by the sacraments, prayer, knowledge

D. CCC 1813 – Infused by God's love in our souls

E. Read CCC 1822 – 1826

VIII. You Are Capable of Loving

A. John 13:35 – Love is the distinguishing mark of a Christian

B. 1 John 4:16-21 – “Perfect love casts out fear” (vs. 18)

IX. Loving Like God

A. Love is a choice

B. Love is a habit – “Love is not a perennial, but an annual”
(Fr. Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R.)

C. Love can be commanded

1. John 13:34 – A new commandment

2. Matthew 5:44 – Love your enemies

X. Your Plan for Loving

A. Accept God’s love for you

B. Love those who come across your path (Luke 10)

C. See everyone as a child of God (St. Augustine quote,
Commentary on 1 John, 7, 9)

XI. Make It a Point to Know God Better

A. Knowledge leads to love (St. Catherine of Siena quote from
Dialogues, 85)

XII. Use 1 Corinthians 13 as a Measure in Your Life

Quiet Time with the Lord

*This is an opportunity for you to sit and pray silently in Christ's presence, allowing him to speak to your heart about how you can walk in love in new ways. Respond by committing to a specific step you will take to bring about a needed change in your life. **Follow the guidelines on the next page.***

Remember, mental acknowledgement that change is needed is not change. Action – responding in word and deed – is essential for lasting change.

“Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

– Ephesians 4:23-24

Walking Together

Remember to pray for the other members of our group during the coming week, knowing that they will be praying for you, too.

My Next Step ...

1. I believe the Lord is asking me to walk in love toward this person (or in this situation) in my life:
2. Specifically, I am going to do the following in the coming week:
3. I will take the necessary first step on

(day and time)

NOTES

1. From the opening Mass of St. Pope John Paul II's pontificate, October 22, 1978.
2. Fulton Sheen, *Peace of Soul* (Liguori, MD: Liguori, 1996), 227.
3. Ibid, 228.
4. Illustration from C.S. Lewis, *Prince Caspian: The Return to Narnia, The Chronicles of Narnia* (1951), 141.
5. As reported in *Atlantic Magazine*, May 2012, "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?"

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