



1st Discipleship Series - Session 1: Am I the Exception to God's Rule?

***{Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Overview: *(Please read to your group before the Opening Prayer)*

We will be starting a 4 week theme on the topic of discipleship. We will learn about our mission to live and share the Good News and our call to be good disciples of Jesus. As we walk through this journey of discipleship, let's make a point to look at ourselves through the eyes of our Lord. Let's now start with our Opening Prayer.

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence by shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Say: In today's reading from Luke, we will hear how people were asking John the Baptist what they should do to be saved. Pay close attention to John's response to the question of what they should do.

Read: ***Luke 3:7-15***

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for all the ways You call us. Open our hearts and our minds so that we may always hear Your call and listen to Your will. We ask this all in Your holy name. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. What are your thoughts regarding the specific guidance John the Baptist gives to those in verses Luke 3:8, 9, 11, 13 and 14?

YouTube Video: Fr. Mike Schmitz – Am I the Exception to God's Rule? (7:47 Min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwJJbSluxso>

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. Exceptionism (Trade Mark by Fr. Mike Schmitz) is the idea that "I understand most people are called to X, but in MY case I can't be expected to do this thing because I'm the exception." Do you wrestle with the attempt to justify your sin?
3. Fr. Mike Schmitz talks about being called to pray/tithe and how we give excuses of why we can't do these things (not enough time, etc.). Can you share some specific ways you can implement changes to make time to pray and/or tithe?
4. The second type of exception Fr. Schmitz explains is "to stop now is too difficult." Do you justify not doing anything about the sin? Are there things that hold you back from making changes?
5. Fr. Schmitz says "if now is not the right time (to change), then never is the final answer." What does that mean to you?
6. Can you share a time that you overcame this exceptionist attitude?
7. Do you feel you are a disciple called for a mission by God? How can you be a disciple at home or at school?

Session Challenge:

- Choose one way you are called to drop the exceptionist attitude and "just say yes" to God's call. After the week, think about the difference changing just that one thing made in your life.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord, we thank You for continually showering us with Your grace to help us live with fulfillment and purpose. Trusting in Your love for us, Lord, we humbly ask You to accept our petitions.

(Insert any personal needs that may have come to light this week.) Pause...We offer all these intentions and those we hold in the silence of our hearts to You. As we move into this week, we ask You for the grace to stop making excuses. We don't want to give into the temptation for exceptionism. Heighten our awareness to fully realize that we are called. Help us to just say yes to Your call. Amen.



1st Discipleship Series - Session 2: Padre Pio's Secret to Holiness

***(Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.)**

Begin with a brief moment of silence by shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us. Let us join in listening to God's living Word from Luke. Pay particular attention to how obedience is a virtue when connected with humility.

Read: [Luke 15:11-32](#)

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Dear Father, as we are called to be Your disciples, help us to be aware of the holiness already in our lives and how we can live more holy lives both now and in the future. Amen.

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

1. What characteristic(s) do you think of when talking about holiness or a holy person? What do you think of when you hear someone, or something is holy?
2. Do you believe holiness is attainable for you? Do you think it is easy or hard to be holy? Why?

YouTube Video: Fr. Mike Schmitz – Padre Pio's Secret to Holiness (4:01 Min) -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xq_y1D72-Sk&vl=en

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

3. Did listening to this video change your understanding of holiness? Do you think it's attainable for you?
4. In our reading from Luke, is the dutiful son practicing the virtues of obedience and humility? Why or why not? How about the prodigal son?
5. Can you share some ways you can grow in holiness or the virtues of humility and obedience?
6. Is there a difference between extraordinary spiritual gifts given to us from God (like those given to Padre Pio) and virtues like obedience and humility? Explain...
7. The saints that Fr. Schmitz mentioned are well known. They are great examples to us on how we can live our lives as Christians. Everyone in heaven is a saint. Do you think those in heaven that haven't been officially declared a saint by the Catholic Church are less holy than the saints we know? Does the fact that there are saints who aren't as well known as others change how you view whether or not holiness is something you can achieve?

Session Challenge: {Choose one or both}

- Holiness is made up of little holy moments. Examine where in your life you need to become more obedient, humble, or holy. Take one active step to become more holy this week and build on it over the next month.
- Read the following sections of the Catechism of the Catholic Church that refer to obedience and holiness: [144](#), [2013](#), [2015](#).

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord, We thank You for giving us the time to learn about Padre Pio and how to draw more closely to You in Holiness. Trusting in Your power and love for us, Lord, we humbly ask You to accept our petitions.

(Insert any personal needs that may have come to light this week.) Pause...*We offer all these intentions and those we hold in the silence of our heart to You. As we live our daily lives, help us to take Your call to Holiness seriously. Shower us with Your grace to open our hearts and lovingly submit to Your will. May our thoughts and actions be transformed to reflect You always. Help us, especially, to focus on pleasing and loving You and to become the Holy Saints You know we can be. Amen.*

1st Discipleship Series - Session 2: Continued...

Additional Helpful Information:

Simple Definition of **Holiness**: Holiness is the habit of seeking to conform all our thoughts and actions to God's ways.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church:

Obedience: "The duty of obedience requires all to give due honor to authority and to treat those who are charged to exercise it with respect, and, insofar as it is deserved, with gratitude and good-will." (1900)

Glossary of The Catechism of the Catholic Church:

Humility: The virtue by which a Christian acknowledges that God is the author of all good. Humility avoids inordinate ambition or pride and provides the foundation for turning to God in prayer (2559). Voluntary humility can be described as "poverty of spirit" (2546).

More detail on 4 ways to grow in Holiness can be found in this article:

<https://focusoncampus.org/content/4-ways-to-grow-in-holiness-from-st-therese>

4 Ways to become more Holy from St. Therese of Lisieux

1. Continue to focus on being better each day – continually trying to be a saint.
2. Practice Loving those that are disagreeable.
3. Keep Praying
4. Focus on Loving God, not your failures. Trust that God will make you a saint if you take one small step forward every day.



1st Discipleship Series - Session 3: How to be a Good Disciple of Christ

***{Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence by shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us. *Let us join in listening to God's living Word from Luke.*

Read: **Luke 6:40** {Leader: Please read this verse 3 times to allow it to rest on participants minds.}

After the reading conclude with this prayer: *Dear Lord, Thank You for all of the ways You inspire us to become more holy. We wish to submit more fully to You and become the faithful disciples You need us to be. We offer ourselves to You fully and completely. Amen.*

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think/feel that Luke 6:40 is trying to teach us?

YouTube Video: Fr. Mike Schmitz – How to be a Good Disciple of Christ (8:02 Min) -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fis29rZ2n_4

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. The goal of discipleship is to think like, look like, and act like Jesus in the world. Can you share ONE thing that you already do to think like, look like, or act like Jesus?
3. The 1st basic habit of discipleship that Fr. Schmitz talks about is relationship. What does **growing** your relationship with God and others mean to you? How do you feel you are doing in this area?
4. Why do we need to take active steps in growing in relationship with God and others? Have Emmaus Small Groups helped you to grow? Share one way.
5. The 2nd basic habit of discipleship discussed was showing up with your entire self, both interiorly and exteriorly. Do you feel it's more difficult to show up interiorly or exteriorly? Why? Why not?
6. The 3rd basic habit discussed was consistency and how this equals faithfulness. In the video, Fr. Mike says, "If I'm inconsistent with prayer, that means that I'm unfaithful. If I'm inconsistent with telling the truth, that means that I'm unfaithful when it comes to telling the truth." Is he setting the bar too high? Why or why not? Do you feel consistency is important to discipleship?
7. The 4th basic habit of discipleship talked about was keeping commitments to God and others. Why do you think this is or is not a good habit of discipleship? (*hint – trust*)
8. Do you find that at times you do better in one of these but not so well in another? Why do you think that is? How might you be able to improve in one of the habits you find challenging?

Session Challenge:

Choose one person from your group you wish to be accountable to. Decide one way you can improve in one of these 4 discipleship habits. Text it to your accountability partner. Check in with your partner at the end of the week to share how you did. When you next meet with the entire group, if you feel comfortable, share how this experience helped you or didn't help you.

4 Discipleship Habits:

1. Growing in Relationship
2. Showing Up interiorly and exteriorly
3. Consistency
4. Keeping Commitments

Closing Prayer: *Dear Jesus, we thank You for showing us the perfect example of servant discipleship and pray that we have the courage to cheerfully follow your example. As You wish only the best for us, we humbly ask You to accept our petitions.*

(Insert any personal needs that may have come to light this week.) Pause...*We offer all these intentions and those we hold in the silence of our hearts to You. As we live our daily lives, help us to be vulnerable with our accountability partner and share how we can grow in discipleship to become more like You. Give us the fortitude and grace to do what is needed to grow closer to You both exteriorly and interiorly in our relationships, consistency, and commitment. Amen.*



1st Discipleship Series - Session 4: Influencing the World

***{Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.}**

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence by shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us. *Let us join in listening to your living Word from Philippians.*

Read: *Philippians 4:8-9*

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer: *Jesus you are the greatest model we have for discipleship. Thank you for your living Word and guidance from the Holy Spirit to help us follow your example. Help us to see how our actions can draw others closer to you. Amen*

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever experienced the peace of God when you did His will? What was it like?

YouTube Video: Fr. Mike Schmitz – Influencing the World (5:35 Min) -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtGNcgCP1zU>

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

2. Do you have anyone in your life that you feel you influence or lead (coworkers/friends/classmates/ family)?
3. How does Leadership in the non-religious world differ from the example of Leadership Jesus gave us? (think of bosses, CEO's, teachers, administrators, presidents of clubs, etc.)
4. Is there a difference in your mind between Leadership and modeling? If so, is one more important than the other or are they uniquely linked?
5. Now that we've talked a bit about how you are Leading or Modeling well. Fr. Schmitz challenges us with the question, "As an influencer or model, would others you have influence with become great saints or would they become just OK Christians? Why or Why not?"
6. When considering all the Discipleship sessions together (*briefly review previous topics covered – 1. There are no Exceptions - I am called, 2. What is Holiness, 3. How to be a good Disciple, and 4. Influencing the World*) what are the next steps you can personally take to embrace discipleship? What can your Emmaus Small Group do to further embrace discipleship?

Session Challenge:

- Reflect on some of the active steps you have taken this year to become a better Disciple of Christ and celebrate how you have improved. Maybe you are praying more often, maybe you have built more authentic relationships with others, maybe you attend the sacraments more, maybe you've gotten more involved with some sort of charity or service. Whatever steps you have taken, let God know in prayer how thankful you are for his loving gentle guidance and pray for continued fortitude in growing into a deeper relationship with Him in the following year. Please pray for discernment on continuing with Emmaus Small Groups and if you would like to step into a leadership role. After time in prayer, be sure to talk with your ESG leader about your thoughts.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for showing us the importance of leadership and how to live as a servant disciple. Our lives are so intertwined with one another. Because of this and for those that have had a positive influence on us we ask You to accept these petitions.

(Insert any personal needs that may have come to light this week.) *Pause...We offer all these intentions and those we hold in the silence of our heart to You. We thank You for all the ways our Emmaus Small Group has helped and challenged us to become more like You. In return, place before us opportunities to share and witness our love for You to others. Give us an open-heart willing to model You to others in support of the mission You have given us. We pray for the needs of our parish and continued guidance for us to become Your Holy Disciples eager to fill those needs. Amen*