

Catholic Adult Faith Formation Resources

Bible Studies

- ***The Great Adventure*** by Jeff Cavins, Sarah Christmyer, and Tim Gray. Jeff Cavins developed *The Great Adventure* in 1984 when he realized that most people, despite their strong faith, did not grasp the “big picture” of the Bible. Though they knew selected stories, they were not able to connect them into a full narrative. His answer was to identify the books of the Bible that tell the story from beginning to end. By reading just these 14 “narrative” books, a chronological story emerges.

From this idea grew the immensely popular *Bible Timeline* program, which teaches the story in a way that is easy to remember and helps people to continue reading Scripture on their own. Hundreds of thousands of Catholics have learned to read the Bible through this system, which provides a solid foundation for all other reading and study.

Since the creation of *The Bible Timeline*, *The Great Adventure* has grown into a remarkable system designed to give the average Catholic a solid foundation for a lifetime of Bible reading. Parishes around the world are finding renewed faith and increased involvement among parishioners whose lives have been changed by this exciting study series.

The Great Adventure Catholic Bible study system provides related materials that include video DVDs, audio CDs, and workbooks. Besides the foundational Bible study (“The Bible Timeline”—a 24 part study), other Bible studies currently available include “A Quick Journey Through the Bible” (8 part study); “Adventures in Matthew” (24 part study); “Adventures in Acts” (20 part study); “Adventures in Revelation” (10 part study); “Adventures in Exodus” (10 part study); “Adventures in 1 Corinthians” (10 part study).

www.greatadventureonline.com

- ***Catholic Scripture Study International*** authored by Scott Hahn, Mark Shea, Steve Ray, Carl Olson, Louie Verrecchio, and Cindy Morales. Catholic

Scripture Study (CSS) is ideal for any parish or group looking for an inspiring Bible study that is completely faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The study commentaries are written by leading Scripture scholars and authors, and each study contains references to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, papal encyclicals, and writings of the early Church Fathers and the saints. Additional resources are available to study leaders and students on the CSS Program Website, including an Ask the Author forum, as well as maps, pictures, and articles.

Best of all, because the program and Study Leader Kit provides all the tools, one need not be an experienced catechist to implement and lead a CSS class. Any lay person can establish this truly life-changing program in their parish or community. Additionally, CSS Program is the only Scripture study program with a team of dedicated volunteer Regional Directors who provide support to each study leader throughout the program. Studies currently available: Genesis, Acts of the Apostles, Exodus, Gospel of Matthew, Gospel of John, Book of Revelation, Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, Jesus' Passion: The story of redemptive suffering; This Sacred Council: Exploring the documents of the Second Vatican Council, Will Catholics be "left behind."

www.cssprogram.net

- ***Little Rock Scripture Study***. Little Rock Scripture Study is a ministry of the Diocese of Little Rock in Arkansas, in partnership with Liturgical Press in Collegville, Minnesota. Little Rock Scripture Study develops Bible study materials which: 1. Help people to read, study and live the Word of God; 2. Encourage people to grow in personal knowledge of God; 3. Help people experience a greater sense of Christian community; 4. Promote and teach Roman Catholic biblical scholarship. Little Rock Scripture Study is committed to offer support to those involved in Bible study through quality printed and taped resources, enrichment opportunities and diocesan workshops.

Little Rock Scripture Study currently has a large number of Bible studies available (too many to list here) which they break up into the following

categories: Foundational Studies, Pauline Studies, Gospels, Old Testament Writings, Early Church Writings, Thematic Studies, and Video-based Courses.

www.littlerockscripture.org

Apologetics Programs/Texts

- ***Easy Bible Discussion*** by Stephen Mercurio. Mr. Mercurio is a parishioner in the Diocese of Scranton who created this program as a way of assisting Catholics in developing a greater understanding of their faith through the Scriptures and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. He has had great success in his own parish, which has been engaged in Easy Bible Discussion for the past 5 years. The program consists of 52 sessions (thus covering a whole year, though it is not necessary to do all 52 in a calendar year) which are program up into three sections.

The first 17 sessions are called the "Foundation" and are dedicated to topics that are a foundation to our faith in God, the Bible, and the Church (ex. "Who is Jesus?", "The Significance of Scripture," "Purgatory," etc.). The next 17 sessions are called the "Fundamentals" and are dedicated to building up participants love of God, the Bible, the Church, and their neighbor (ex. "The Catholic Family in Today's Society," "The Catholic Evangelist," etc.). The final 18 sessions are called "Formation" and are dedicated to helping participants to know Jesus more personally as Lord and Savior. It revolves around reading the entire New Testament. Mr. Mercurio is very accommodating in assisting and answering questions for anyone who is interested in bringing this program to their parish.

- ***The 7-Step Reason to be Catholic*** by Jerome Gilmartin. The fruits of the labor of another parishioner in the Diocese of Scranton, this book could very easily be used in an RCIA or adult faith formation setting. It outlines a number of beliefs unique to Christians in general (ex. evidence for intelligent design in the universe, the uniqueness of Jesus in comparison to other religious founders, etc.) and Catholics specifically (ex. the nature of apostolic succession and the role of the Pope, the nature of the Church established by Christ, etc.). It also includes an examination of the beliefs of other religions.

Each chapter ends with discussion questions which relate back to the primary points of each section.

- ***United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*** by USCCB. Issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, this text is ideal for adult faith formation. It follows the structure of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in that it is broken up into four major sections: Creed (“The Faith Professed”), The Sacraments (“The Faith Celebrated”), Christian Morality (“The Faith Lived”), and Prayer (“The Faith Prayed”). The reason it was produced was to take the teachings of the universal Catechism and to apply them to the specific challenges and needs of the Church in the United States. Very user friendly, each chapter begins with the profile of a saint or other Catholic who applied their faith to the situations God placed them in. Each chapter ends with discussion questions, an outline of doctrinal statements relating to the topic addressed by the chapter, a meditation, and a prayer.
- ***The Handbook of Christian Apologetics*** and ***The Pocket Handbook of Christian Apologetics*** by Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli, S.J. These books are basically the same in their outline, though the “pocket” version is briefer. This book is not specifically geared towards explaining Catholicism (though it is written by two Catholic philosophers) as much as defending Christian belief in general. Covers topics such as “Does God exist?”, “Is the Bible myth?”, “How can God allow evil to exist?”, “Is Christianity the only true religion?”, and more.
- ***Nuts and Bolts*** by Tim Staples. A great little book that provides step by step defenses of Catholic belief that are often challenged by non-Catholics. The sections of this book are written in the form of a dialogue between two persons and are arguments the author himself is intimately familiar with (Staples is a convert to Catholicism from the Assembly of God churches). Topics addressed include Catholic belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the role of the Pope, whether or not Catholics are “saved”, and many more.

- ***Catholicism for Dummies*** by Fr. John Trigilio, Jr. and Fr. Kenneth Brighenti. A fabulously clear and well written book by the co-host's of EWTN's "Council of Faith" program. This book is non-threatening and contains many helpful tables and illustrations. The book consists of six parts: "Getting Familiar with the Basics," "Understanding All Those Beliefs," "Behaving Like a Saint," "Practicing Catholicism through Devotions," "The Part of Tens," and "Appendixes" (including "A Brief History of Catholicism" and "Fun Facts for the Faithful.")
- ***Did Adam and Eve Have Bellybuttons*** by Matthew Pinto and ***Did Jesus Have a Last Name?*** by Matthew Pinto and Jason Evert. These books are both subtitled "And 199 other questions from Catholic teenagers," but my experience is that adults have many of the same questions, which makes these entertaining and theologically insightful books so attractive to adults and teens.

Theology of the Body

- ***Theology of the Body for Beginners*** by Christopher West. A great introduction to Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body. Written for those with no background in theology, this book is ideal for group discussion. Chapter topics include, "What is the Theology of the Body?", "God's Original Plan for the Body and Sex?", "A Marriage Made in Heaven," and more.
- ***An Introduction to the Theology of the Body: Discovering the Master Plan for Your Life*** by Christopher West. This is a brand new adult faith formation resource put out by Ascension Press. It consists of 8 sessions with a leader and participant workbook. Over the course of 8 sessions participants would understand what the Theology of the Body is, the gift of our creation and redemption, the nature of marriage made in Heaven and marriage made for Earth.

www.AscensionPress.com

- ***The Gift: Your Call to Greatness*** by Christopher West. This is an even more basic introduction to the Theology of the Body, consisting of a workbook

and a one hour DVD presentation which makes it ideal for a one day faith formation event.

www.AscensionPress.com

Websites

- **www.dioceseofscranton.org**. The official website of the Diocese of Scranton, this site contains links to every office in the Diocese. Of special significance to those engaged in Adult Faith Formation are the links to Adult Faith Formation, The Year of St. Paul, Family Life, Pastoral Formation Institute, Pro-Life/Social Concerns, and the Catholic Light online. I would especially like to highlight two new monthly faith formation resources—“Disciple” which is updated every month on the Adult Faith Formation page, and “Familia Fidelis” which is updated every month on the Family Life page (sample October issues are attached).
- **www.vatican.va**. The official website of the Vatican, this site contains a papal archive (which is great for printing out recent encyclicals for reading and discussion), the Bible, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the documents of Vatican II, links to the documents of the Roman Curia, and many, many other great features (such as online tours of the Vatican, etc.).
- **www.usccb.org**. The official website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. This site has many great resources on faith, life, and social justice issues. It also has the entire Bible and *Catechism of the Catholic Church* available for online reading.
- **www.newadvent.org**. This site’s most remarkable aspect is that it has the entire *Catholic Encyclopedia* available online, which is a great source when you are trying to research a topic for faith formation purposes. It also has the Bible, writings of the Church Fathers, the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas, and Church documents available for easy online reading.
- **www.catholicanswers.com**. This is probably the best Catholic apologetics website. It has a vast library of information on Catholic beliefs that are

frequently challenged by non-Catholics. Their answers are thorough without being overwhelming. You can also read their monthly magazine *This Rock* online for free, which features a number of outstanding articles each issue.

- **www.sqpn.com.** SQPN (Star Quest Production Network) is a multimedia organization specializing in the production of audio and video programs faithful to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Its mission is to respond to the Church's call to use the media for religious information, for evangelization and catechesis and for formation and education. These audio and video productions are made in different languages and are aimed at an international audience. They focus on building bridges between the dominant popular culture of the Western world and the religious culture and tradition of the Catholic Church in order to reach an audience that has little or no relationship with that Church. Just as the star of Bethlehem emerged within the foreign culture of the three magi, and invited them to start an adventurous journey to the newborn Savior, the programs of SQPN tap into popular culture to invite people on a journey of discovery towards an encounter with Christ. SQPN produces on-demand audio and video programs, also known as podcasts, and offers a portal for a select number of affiliated Catholic podcasters that share the vision and media strategy of SQPN.

Men and Women's Studies/Groups

- **ENDOW.** ENDOW (Educating on the Nature and Dignity of Women) brings women together to discover their God-given dignity and to understand their role in humanizing and transforming society. ENDOW provides women with a forum through which to explore and understand what it means to be a feminine person created in God's image. As a basis for discovery, ENDOW promotes the New Feminism, which is defined by Pope John Paul II. The New Feminism recognizes and affirms the "true genius of women" and responds to our culture's desperate need for an authentic feminine presence in every aspect of life and society.

ENDOW educates and inspires women through small study groups and engages the intellect of the "woman in the pew." By providing knowledge and

fellowship in an intimate group setting, ENDOW also fosters a sense of belonging and gives women an opportunity to deeply understand and personalize the faith that draws us together and the fellowship that keeps us together. Both faith and fellowship are integral to our formation as women. ENDOW attracts women from all walks of life and helps women realize that, no matter what they "do" in life, they all share a common desire for love and respect. Although society places a high priority on a person's skill, appearance and usefulness, ENDOW teaches women that their dignity originates from their personhood.

www.endowonline.com

- **Women of Grace** created by Johnnette Benkovic. Women of Grace™ is an outreach of Living His Life Abundantly® International, Inc. Its purpose is to encourage and affirm women in their dignity as daughters of God and in their gift of authentic femininity. Through its conferences, programs, and curricula, Women of Grace™ seeks to authenticate the genius of women (defined by Pope John Paul II as connoting the essential nature and spirit of woman) so profoundly portrayed in the Blessed Virgin Mary. Their website has materials you can order for group study, online access to *Canticle* magazine, and a link to listen to Johnnette's radio program. In addition, there are a number of Women of Grace conferences around the country each year.

www.womenofgrace.com

- **National Fellowship of Catholic Men.** The NFCM's website has a lot of great resources for Catholic men's faith sharing groups to strengthen their members in being Disciples of Christ in the Church, the home, and the workplace. Locally efforts are already underway to establish Fellowship of Catholic Men's groups in the Diocese of Scranton. Glenn Yanik is heading the effort locally, including the planning of a retreat at the Fatima Renewal Center in Dalton for all interested men the first weekend of December. If you or anyone you know are interested in helping form a Catholic men's faith sharing group in your parish or deanery please contact Glenn at (570) 362-0417 or gmyanik@epix.net.

<http://catholicmensresources.org>

Miscellaneous

- **Pamphlets.** A number of pamphlets on Catholic issues are available for free from the Office for Parish Life and Evangelization. Topics include the rosary, how to make a good confession, stem cell research and cloning, marriage, abortion, the death penalty, immigration, the morality of human acts, the Eucharist, the precepts of the Church, Benedict XVI's encyclicals, and ways to celebrate Christmas as a Catholic.
- **Lighthouse Catholic Media.** Lighthouse specializes in making CDs on topics significant to every Catholic available as cheaply as possible in an effort to evangelize. One of the primary ways they do this is providing parishes with a CD stand stocked with CDs the parish selects. The CDs are of a high quality and feature such leading Catholic figures as Scott Hahn, Jeff Cavins, Matthew Kelly, Christopher West, Fr. John Corapi, and many more. Check out what they have to offer at their website: www.lighthousecatholicmedia.com. Their local representative is Carol Margetts who can be reached at carolsezzo@yahoo.com
- **JMJ Catholic Radio (750 AM).** A locally owned and operated Catholic radio station which features great evangelizing programs put out by EWTN, as well as some local talent.