



2018 Companion Slides To Alpha Training

A Spiritual Foundation for Fruitful Alpha Courses
And Discipleship Processes

The Foundation for Fruitful...



YOU BECOME THE PROGRAM!

- The Alpha course is a great resource for introducing people to Jesus Christ. It is also a great onramp- a pathway, if you will –into parish life. But it is only a secondary resource.
- The following slides address the need for the disciple-maker to become the primary resource- the main program! What does this mean?
- There is an order to the discipleship process. Methodology is important. But the most important instrument or resource that God uses to make disciples is the faith, hope and love of the disciple-maker.
- "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." -Pope Paul VI

THE BOTTOM LINE

Programs, resources and tools used in any of the four steps of the discipleship process are helpful in making disciples; but only to the extent that we are disciplined in **prayer, God's Word and a daily mindfulness of God's presence.**

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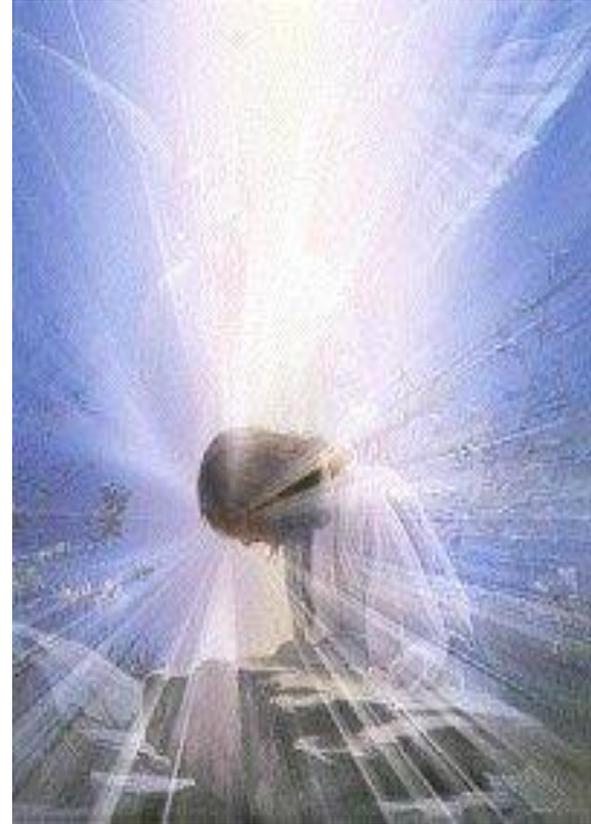
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Spirit in Christ

And in his Apostles

“Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region.” (Luke 4:14)

- **St. Paul: “My message and my proclamation were not with persuasive (words of) wisdom, but with a demonstration of spirit and power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.” (I Corinthians 2:4-5)**



Spirit in Us

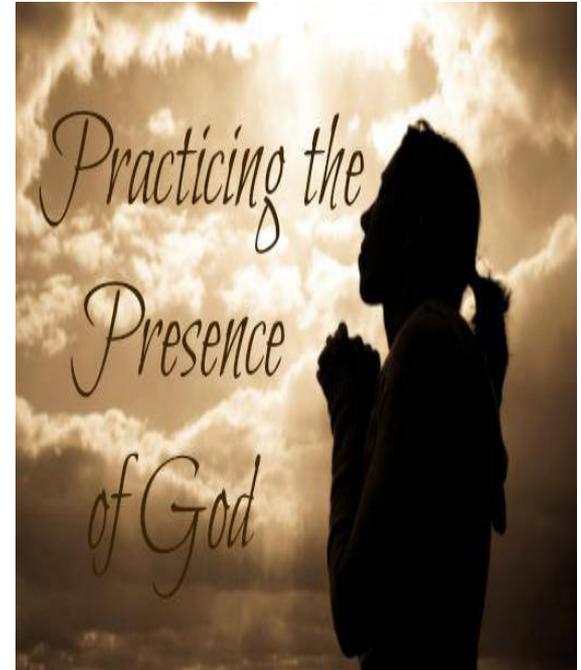
Relationship and Discipleship

- As the Spirit increases in the disciple through a relationship with Jesus Christ- a relationship nourished by daily prayer and scripture reading throughout the day-so too does his or her capacity increase to make disciples by the same Spirit.
- There is a direct and proportionate relationship between the former and the latter.



But how does the Spirit increase in us?

- In short and in general:
Through a consciousness of **God's presence** and an interior conversation with Jesus throughout the day.
- This is what Brother Lawrence called "**Practicing the Presence of God.**"
- Practical tips- next slide



Suggested talking points with God

- Some of us are not **good with “small talk”** in social situations.
 - For instance, we may struggle what to say when we first meet someone or even with acquaintances.
 - Indeed, we may find ourselves in a similar position with God.
- Here are some suggested talking points during prayer:
 - I ask
 - I thank
 - I’m listening
 - I’m sorry
 - I’ll change
 - I’ll love



I ASK

- Even though the Lord knows what you need and want before you ask him, take time everyday tell him about your needs, wants and troubles. *And ask him to help you; but ask him with confidence.*

- Verbalize your needs, worries and desires to our Lord
- What often distracts us in prayer is often that which we should talk to him about
- Talk to him as you **would a friend...**

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you.
Matthew 7:7



I THANK

- Recount the times the Lord has answered a recent prayer of yours and thank him for it as you would a friend. Furthermore, thank for the other things we take for granted: our loved ones, food, shelter, etc.

- Gratitude is essential for happiness
- We are alive to our disadvantages & often take our blessings for **granted...until we lose** them
- Daily thanking God leads to an appreciation for loved ones

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.
Psalm 118:1



I'M LISTENING

- In Matthew Kelly's prayer process, he gives the following tip on how to listen to God: "**Identify** something you experience in the last 24 hours and explore what God might be trying to say to you through that event or person."
- God speaks through His Word i.e. Scripture
- Speaks to our hearts
 - Impressions
 - Inspirations
 - Conscience
- God speaks through events, daily circumstances and people

Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.
1 Samuel 3:10



More on Spiritual Listening:

Habits with the Heart

- Spiritual Listening Involves:
 - Reading of Scripture
 - It could be daily readings
 - Psalms
 - Gospels
 - **What “jumps out” at you?**
 - Reflect
 - Connect it with everyday life
- Talk to God about it
- Inspire and admire (to love Jesus more)
- Read again
- Reflect again
- Resolution
 - What will I do about this inspiration from my spiritual reading?

Lectio Divina



I'M SORRY

- In your conversation with Jesus, visit the times throughout the day when you could have done better or been more charitable with your thoughts, words and deeds. As Fulton Sheen said, sin is not the worst thing in the world; it is rather the denial of sins that hurts us.
- **The Mass: “You heal the contrite of heart, Lord have mercy.”**
- Two expressions needed for every relationship:
 - I love you
 - I’m sorry
- A heartfelt apology to God for sins and wrongs is an essential step towards healing and wholeness.

Have mercy on me, God, in accord with your merciful love;
In your abundant compassion blot out my transgressions.

Psalms 51:1



I'LL CHANGE

- After reflecting how we could be a better version of ourselves, think about those areas in your life that need to be better **conformed to Jesus' life**. What specifically can I do today to apply my resolutions to the concrete circumstances of my life?
- Spiritual Resolutions
 - Begin today
 - Pruned and it grows again
- What should we
 - Start doing
 - Continue doing
 - Stop doing
- Spiritual Gardening: Planting seed and pulling up weeds, building and tearing down

So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.
II Corinthians 5:17



I'LL LOVE

- This prayer process moves us from asking God to fulfill our needs to loving God for who he is.
- Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
- It is natural to begin prayer from our weakness
- But as we grow into spiritual maturity, the strength and greatness of God moves to front and center
- And although we should always be mindful of our sins, weaknesses and wants, the identity of a disciple is rooted in who Jesus Christ is and what he has done for us.

Love covers a multitude of sins
1 Peter 4:8



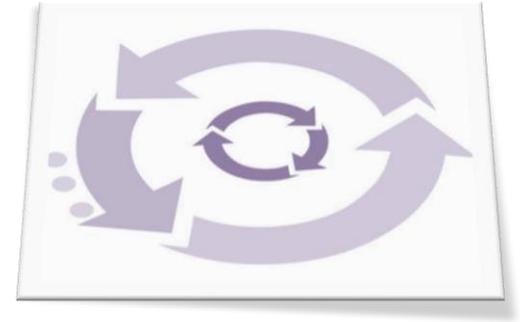
Habits of Prayer During the Day

The Importance of Rhythm and Routine



Conversion is a Series of Beginnings

- Liturgical Calendar- **Christ's life** throughout the year
- Mass Readings Cycle
- **Rosary: Christ's life meditated upon**
- Divine Office: Praying Scripture
- Daily Prayer also should have a cycle and **involve "some "form of rhythm**
 - *Not just formal but the informal prayer from the heart*
 - *Asking –Thanking –Listening –Apologizing- Changing - Loving*



The above forms of prayer are repeated daily, weekly and annually
This cycle repeated allows for spiritual progress

Spiritual Rhythm and Routine

Routine without Redundancy

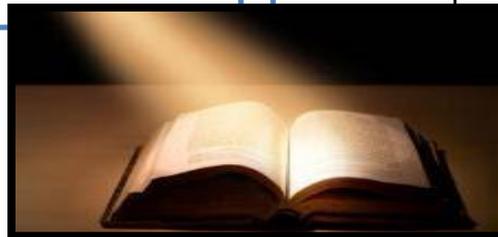


- Time and life is measured by remembrance and ritual
 - Birthdays
 - Anniversaries
 - Memorials
 - Seasons | Sun and the moon, etc.
- Without daily spiritual routine and ritual, we drift
- Married couples who do not set aside time for each other can miss the whole point of being married in the first place.
- **“There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens. A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant. “**
 - Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

Daily Life: Questions to Consider

- How do you daily encounter **Jesus Christ in the...**
 - Morning
 - Noon
 - Evening
 - Night
- Does your daily habits of talking and listening to God include the reading of Scripture?

- Are we in a monologue with God or a dialogue?
- Do we pray just once during the day or do we pray throughout the day?
- **Do you have “check-in points”** throughout the day in which your heart is lifted up to God; even for a moment.
- Do you intercede on behalf of the people you are ministering to? And do you pray for your parish?



A Sample Intercessory Prayer For Your Parish

- “**Lord, I pray** that the parish I work for (or the parish I belong to) may be your chosen instrument of conversions, a faithful witness of your love, a refuge of your peace and an demonstration of your **power.**”
 - Matthew 9: **Jesus said, “The** harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to **send out laborers for his harvest.**”

Times for Work: Time for Prayer

- Brother Lawrence, *Practicing the Presence of God*:
 - “It is grave error that fixed prayer times are different than any other time, for we are strictly obliged to be united to God through our duties [i.e. work , meetings, etc.] in their appropriate time as by **prayer in its time.**”
 - Find a time in the morning, afternoon, evening and night to **“check-in with God.”**
 - You determine the length of time for each prayer or check-in



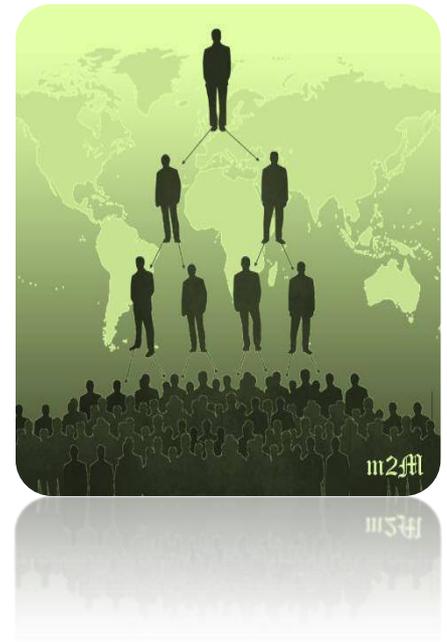
Commend projects or tasks to the Lord before you do it

- As one FOCUS missionary said, “Talk to Jesus about others before you talk to **others about Jesus.**”
- Fatima seer, Sr. Lucia, once said that **those in spiritual authority they need** “to keep close to God and to tell Him about all their affairs and all their problems before they discuss them with human **beings.**”
- With a God-reliance approach to ministry, what was said of Samuel can be **said of us: “The LORD was with him, not permitting any word of his to be without effect.”** (1 Samuel 3:19)



The Great Effect of our Work

- In the end, it is not what we do or say that is the most important thing in our ministry or mission; rather, it is what God does with what we do or say that is the most important thing.
- With this, the Lord can- if we give him permission through daily prayer -to use **our own “failures” to great effect.**
- After all, nothing succeeds like failure in the hands of God. Even the ordinary things in life can be used for extraordinary purposes.



Freedom from Undue *Pressure and Presumption*



- This is frees us up from the burden of putting all responsibility of ministry on our own shoulders.
- With this comes more interior peace. Agnes Dei: **“Lamb of God, grant us peace.”**
- It also delivers us from the illusion of pride or self-sufficiency; that any success in parish ministry is the result of our own skill and ingenuity.

From Self-Reliance to God-Reliance

- Jesus said, **“Without me you can do nothing.”** John 15:5
- St. Vincent de Paul, Founder of Catholic Charities:
 - **“Believe me, we will never be any use in doing God’s work until we become thoroughly convinced that, of ourselves, we are better fitted to ruin everything than to make success of it.”**
- This quote challenges our conscious or subconscious **“self-reliance approach”** to ministry.
- The solution to this problem is a transition from a self-reliance model to a God-reliance model.
- In fact, the present day decline in the Church is a result from years of a self-reliance model of ministry. This is the primary cause of our decline.

Before the Decline

- The decline in numbers is that which alarms us most.
- But it was the ineffectual, fragmented and compartmentalized discipleship process that caused this downward trend.
- And yet, even more importantly, that which caused an ineffectual discipleship process was the widely used self-reliance model of ministry. **With our actions, we've been saying to God: "I've got this."**



God-Reliance Model

Pray-Work-Pray-Work-Pray

- In short a self-reliance model looks like this: Work! Work! Work! Work! Work! With this, work becomes an end in itself; which then leads to dissipation and fatigue.
- But a God-reliance model does not diminish the value of work but instead sees prayer as a means to better carry out our work so that, in turn, our work can be transformed into a prayer.
- In short, a God-reliance model looks like this: Pray! Work! Pray! Work! Pray...throughout the day!
- With this, **God's** presence- the presence of his kingdom -is made more manifest and accessible



A Psalm for a God-Reliance Model

Psalm 127

If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do its builders labor; if the Lord does not watch over the city, in vain does the watchman keep vigil.

In vain is your earlier rising, your going later to rest, you who toil for the bread you eat: when he pours gifts on his beloved while they slumber.

Divine Office Prayer: PS 127

- Ant. May the Lord build our house and guard our city
 - You command the seed to rise, Lord God, though the farmer is unaware. Grant that those who labor for you may trust **not** in their own work but in your help.
 - Remembering that the land is brought to flower not with human tears but with those of your Son, may the Church rely **only** upon your gifts. Amen.

Summarizing the Benefits of a God-Reliance Model

- You become the mission!
- You will enjoy interior peace amid the mounting pressures and demands of work.
- God will work on your **behalf....even when you** are resting.
- God will bring about more opportunities that are above and beyond your own doing.
- The fruits of your labor will multiply.
- God will enable you to leave the results of your work to him.
 - Thus relieving you of too much worry.
- The greatest benefit of all: you will love the God of works more than the works of God.
 - This is and always has been the greatest source of power for ministry.