



BOOK STUDY: *FORMING INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES - Session One of Six*

CHAPTER ONE: God Has No Grandchildren

1. God has an “unseen hook and an invisible line which is long enough to let [a person] wander to the ends of the world and still to bring him back with a twitch upon the thread.” What hooks you to the Church? Has this changed through the years or throughout your conversion/reversion?
2. What do you think of the concept of a “religious marketplace?”
3. On page 24, Weddell defines “practicing” as a Catholic who attends church once a month. Is this definition acceptable? How would you define “practicing”?
4. Consider the reasons listed on page 28 for why people leave the Church. Do these reasons surprise you?
5. On page 34-35 Weddell drops the bomb that 79% of Catholic who become unaffiliated do so by age 23. 66% of Catholics who become protestant do so by 23. What does Weddell have to say about the role of religious education in relation to this statistic? Do you think this statistic is realistic?
6. What is your immediate reaction when you hear “personal relationship” with God? Do you have one? When did you realize you had a personal relationship with God?

CHAPTER TWO: We Don't know What Normal Is

7. According to Sherry, what are the spiritual journeys in normative Catholicism?
8. Consider your conversion in light of Weddell's description of normative Catholicism.
9. On page 59, Weddell says, “It is essential for us to grasp that the cultural pressure, both inside and outside the average American parish, is often against the overt expression of discipleship.” How have you encountered this?
10. Let's talk theology . . . describe what happens in infant baptism? For a resource, see the Vatican's website:
http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a1.htm.
11. How does the Sacrament of Baptism relate to the “infant paradigm” of conversion? How is the adult paradigm different? Are both possible? Which paradigm prevails in your parish?



BOOK STUDY: *FORMING INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES - Session Two of Six*

CHAPTER THREE: The Fruit of Discipleship

1. Have you ever experienced a ministry group like Christ the King Parish? What made the difference?
2. “This parish is a cry room with a tabernacle attached.” How do we make all feel welcomed – whether infant, senior, seeker, or already a devout intentional disciple? Are there any practices that have been especially helpful?
3. On Page 79, Weddell describes a parish that communally discerned a charism of mercy manifested in both the spiritual and corporeal works of mercy. Does your ministry group practice discernment communally? How?
4. On page 94, Weddell writes that “Like personal vocations, charisms almost always manifest after the point in our life when our faith becomes personal and we begin the journey of discipleship.” Do you agree? How do decipher between a charism and a talent?

CHAPTER FOUR: Grace and the Great Quest

1. Leon Bloy says the one tragedy is not being a saint. Weddell disagrees and says the tragedy is the absence of the communal fruit. Do you agree with either person? Are the statements reconcilable? (page 97)
2. Objective redemption: By his life, death an resurrection, Jesus reconciled us to God. Subjective redemption: the application of the saving Gifts of Christ on the individual. Why must we have both? How does this understanding of God’s salvific work inform the Catholic understanding of our participation in prayer and in the Sacraments?
3. “Most leaders involved in RCIA have had to wrestle with conflicts between individuals and family expectations and whether or not someone is spiritually ready to receive both the sacrament and the sacramental grace in question.” (p 105)
4. Have you witnessed anything like page 105’s description of the person thanking RCIA for talking to him about football? How do your parishes/ministry groups lovingly respond with the quandary of family members expecting the Church to provide the Sacraments when the recipient is not receptive?
5. Let’s define prevenient grace and cooperative grace. How does God supply these graces in our participation in the Sacraments? How does God supply these graces outside of the Sacraments?



Military Council of Catholic Women – Worldwide, Inc.

SPIRITUALITY, LEADERSHIP, SERVICE

6. This chapter makes me want to throw down the book and run out and teach religious ed! Who's with me? Okay – real question from Sherry's own words, "How can we deliberately and effectively help ordinary Catholics in the pew make the journey to intentional discipleship?"



BOOK STUDY: *FORMING INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES - Session Three of Six*

CHAPTER FIVE: Thresholds of Conversion: Can I Trust You?

1. Where do we need to start when seeking to make disciples of unevangelized Catholics? Do you agree that catechesis is not the first step? Do we need to expand what we mean by catechesis?
2. In describing Schaupp's ministry, Weddell says that "conversion didn't 'just happen' for these young adults. It required their ever-increasing commitment to more and more profound choices." Is this observation consistent with conversion stories in the Bible? Give examples. Is this observation consistent with our conversion stories?
3. Do you agree with the five thresholds of conversion? Is the progression linear? Do fledgling disciples start at step one?
4. How do we reconcile Jesus' teaching about the mustard seeds in Mark 4:1419, Jesus' teaching about forgiving seven times seven times, and Jesus' teaching in Matthew Chapter 10 to shake the dust off your sandals when evangelizing the Gospel?
5. How do we foster initial trust in an "I trust God but I don't trust the church" culture?
6. Is it easier to be a pastor than a fisherman? (Page 136) Regarding Catholic millennials, a millennial said, "My generation of Catholics isn't prepared to evangelize my generation, are we?" Do you agree? Who most needs to be evangelized? How are you preparing to evangelize to them?

CHAPTER SIX: The Second Threshold: Curiosity

"There is not true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, and promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not." - Pope Paul, VI

7. Have you ever felt that it is difficult to talk about Jesus? Why?
8. Sherry describes curiosity as a three part pedagogy: Awareness, Engagement, and Exchange. She goes on to state that one of the best ways of rousing curiosity is to ask questions and not to answer them. What questions did you asking during your "curious" stage of conversion? What questions were you asked?
9. In addition to asking questions to rouse curiosity, it is important to create an environment that allows questions and respects questioning. One ministry group that I belong to has a Q&A session with the priests at least once a year. Ladies submit their questions ahead of time if



Military Council of Catholic Women – Worldwide, Inc.

SPIRITUALITY, LEADERSHIP, SERVICE

they choose, or they ask their questions in-person the priest. We usually host this program over a potluck dinner. It generates a lot of discussion, and has brought people to seek pastoral care about issues raised during the Q&A. How does your ministry group foster questions?

10. How can your ministry group better foster curiosity? Be specific!

11. Consider pages 151-152. How do you live curiously?



BOOK STUDY: *FORMING INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES - Session Four of Six*

CHAPTER SEVEN: *The Third Threshold: Openness*

1. According to Sherry, what is openness? Why is it so difficult to be open?
2. On page 157, Sherry writes about internal and external pressures that must be overcome to be open. Would anyone like to share how they moved through this threshold of conversion? Who or what was most helpful in the process? What was the biggest challenge?
3. Consider the example of retreat participants on pages 159-60, why is intentionality so important?
4. What do you think of this sentence on page 161: “We need to recognize the presence of a hidden hemorrhage fueled by spiritual growth in our parishes.” Fostering Openness. Who helped to foster your openness? How? Are there other ways to foster openness in addition to the ones listed on pages 162-63?
5. Do you participate in Eucharistic Adoration? (This may be a good time to back away from the book and spend some time in the presence of Jesus, either as a group, or as a community.)

CHAPTER EIGHT: *Thresholds of Conversion: Seeking and Intentional Discipleship*

6. I was at a church on 96th Street in Manhattan in June of 2014, and the priest remarked that, “to Catholics, when we hear the word ‘Bible,’ we act like we’re Superman and the Bible is Kryptonite.” Why is this? How does this tie into RCIA experiences described in the first part of chapter 8?
7. What do you think of “Me and Jesus” as related to RCIA. How does the Church propose Jesus in RCIA?
8. Sherry describes “the Zone” as the thresholds of seeking and intentional discipleship as active, and that the “spiritual atmosphere in the parish heats up dramatically” in the Zone. Have you experienced this in your parish? If so, how?
9. Why is seeking scary? (Pages 173-74) How can we, as lay leaders, help to allay the fears of seekers in our parish? (Pages 173-76)
10. Consider parish leaders who are not yet intentional disciples. How does the parish help leaders negotiate their journey when it may be difficult for them to find “safe places” to participate in the spiritual formation of the parish?



BOOK STUDY: *FORMING INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES - Session Five of Six*

CHAPTER NINE: *Break the Silence*

1. What percent of your parish would you estimate are intentional disciples? What would happen if that number rose by just 2%? What are the possibilities? What if the number rose by 20%?
2. Consider the Queen of the Rosary Parish discussed on page 186. Are their goals relevant to your parish? Make a list of goals for your parish. (If you are doing this study in a group, make individual goals, and then create a group list. Work with your parish priest and staff to reach the goals!)
3. Discuss the beginning steps on page 188 for growing intentional disciples. Are there steps you would add? What should be step one?
4. If you are doing this study with a group, write the strategy for your steps to reach the parish's goals. This process should be prayerful and in conversation with the parish priest and church staff. Consider how many volunteers need to be involved. Consider how often your evangelization committee needs to check in with each other. By writing a plan, your parish volunteers will understand their roles, and their mission in the ministry. A written plan can be revised, and the parish leaders can evaluate progress.
5. How can we break the silence mentioned on Pages 191-92? Who are great Catholics, either historically, or who you know, whose conversions were possible only because someone broke the silence?
6. Page 194 through the end of the chapter deals with threshold conversations. Have you ever engaged in one of these conversations? Share your experiences and best practices.

CHAPTER TEN: *Do Tell: The Great Story of Jesus*

If we don't evangelize our own, someone else will.

1. Have you ever had an experiences like Mark Shea's?
2. Sherry gives some parameters for telling the story of Jesus on page 203. What do you think of the last sentence, "We must respect their right to head the Story."
3. Which part of the Nine Acts do you teach most naturally?
4. Consider one person in your faith community to whom you are (or should) be evangelizing. Which Act should you present to that person? Share with a person in your group how you are going to engage?



BOOK STUDY: *FORMING INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES - Session Six of Six*

CHAPTER ELEVEN: *Personally Encountering Jesus in His Church*

1. Are the current ministries in your parish evangelizing to the people in the pews? Make a list of the ministries and outline how they are engaged in evangelism.
2. How can the ministries in your parish more effectively evangelize? It would be useful for each ministry leader to answer these questions for each ministry group.
3. What are the overlapping opportunities for people in your parish to encounter Jesus?
4. Have you ever attended an evangelizing retreat? Where were you in your conversion to intentional discipleship? How did the retreat impact you?
5. As a leader, what do you consider to be your charisms? How do you know? What charisms does your parish value? Which charisms does your parish need in lay leaders?
6. Consider the Queen of the Rosary Parish discussed on page 186. Are their goals relevant to your parish? Make a list of goals for your parish. (If you are doing this study in a group, make individual goals, and then create a group list. Work with your parish priest and staff to reach the goals!)
7. Discuss the beginning steps on page 188 for growing intentional disciples. Are there steps you would add? What should be step one?
8. If you are doing this study with a group, write the strategy for your steps to reach the parish's goals. This process should be prayerful and in conversation with the parish priest and church staff. Consider how many volunteers need to be involved. Consider how often your evangelization committee needs to check in with each other. By writing a plan, your parish volunteers will understand their roles, and their mission in the ministry. A written plan can be revised, and the parish leaders can evaluate progress.
9. How can we break the silence mentioned on Pages 191-92? Who are great Catholics, either historically, or who you know, whose conversions were possible only because someone broke the silence?
10. Page 194 through the end of the chapter deals with threshold conversations. Have you ever engaged in one of these conversations? Share your experiences and best practices.



CHAPTER TWELVE: *Expect Conversion*

It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbor. The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbor's glory should be laid on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken.
- C.S. Lewis

11. Intercessory prayer. How is your parish actively and intentionally fostering the discipleship of the community through prayer?
12. Sherry notes on page 237 that “Catholics often don’t expect to witness God at work.” How do you recognize God’s work in your life and in the life of the parish? If you are comfortable, share in the group, or with a partner, a time where you unequivocally recognized God’s work in your life.
13. Do you have an Ananias? Are you Ananias to anyone? How can your parish walk with an mentor new disciples.
14. What would happen if your parish were an Ecclesial Leadville? What is one thing that your ministry group can do to move in the direction of being a Leadville?

Concluding Notes:

Thank you for taking the time to read Sherry Weddell’s book and to undertake this study! All credit for this study goes squarely to Sherry Weddell. This study is just a compilation of my notes from presenting this book in a few book clubs and during talks to CWOC and MCCW groups.

Your MCCW-Worldwide community prays for conversion in all of our military chapels, and indeed, throughout all the world. Now that you have finished this study, do not put the book aside and think, “Hmm, that was interesting.” This is the time for your faith community to apply the knowledge and research that Sherry presented to the life of your parish. Pray, mentor, coach, go to Mass, sit in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, walk alongside, seek, and love your brothers and sisters wherever they are on their walk toward intentional discipleship. Chances are if you completed this study, you are a leader in your faith community. Make sure to seek counsel and support as you grow in discipleship as well!

As you see the fruits of God working in your faith community, give a shout of praise out to us so that your MCCW-Worldwide community can join you in thanksgiving!