

CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM:

The Complete Manual

Christian Life Program (CLP) Manual

Philippine Copyright © 2014 by:

CFC – ABLAZE Communication Foundation, Inc.

No. 156 20th Ave., Cubao, 1109 Quezon City, Philippines

Telefax: (63 2) 709-6352

Email: publications@cfcablaze.com

Website: www.cfcablaze.com

Editorial Consultants: Jun Uriarte
Rouquel Ponte
Kirby Llaban

Managing Editor: Katrina Martin

Production Supervisor: Lori Mas

Design and Layout: Noehl Acosta

Production Assistants: Noel Reyes, Mary Lebria,
Dessie dela Rosa, Blair Jerezza

Editorial Assistant: Joy Reyes

All rights reserved. No part of this material may be reproduced by any means without written permission from the publisher.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Why the new Christian Life Program (CLP)?

Since 1981, when Couples For Christ was founded, much of the world has changed. The attacks against marriage and family have intensified and the number of nominal Catholics has greatly increased. Although thousands of families globally have been renewed in Christ, especially by way of the CLP, the work towards the CFC vision of "Families in the Holy Spirit Renewing the Face of the Earth" needs continuous pondering and developing according to the leading of the Holy Spirit; to reach more of God's children who are the least, the last, and the lost. The New Evangelization has been invigorated by the Church to challenge its members to be more creative and to venture into "new methods, new expressions, and new ardour", so we may bring more people back to the Father.

And so, with the New Evangelization comes the new version of the Christian Life Program. Incorporated in the talks are the elements that pertain to the development of our life in the CFC community: we have become truly global, explicitly Catholic, and devotedly Marian. The expanded outlines are better organized and contain more details to help the speaker deepen his insight and internalize the message. An important feature of the talk outlines in the new CLP is the Core Message. The speaker is allowed to be creative and strive for greater relevance in developing the talk, but must not digress from the Core Message. The CLP Handbook also contains the CLP Training, CLP Team manual, CLP Team Leaders Guide, and the CLP Participants hand-outs for better access to information that will result to a well-prepared service team who will greet new brethren in the spirit of love and faithfulness to CFC culture.

May you find joy and hope as you serve in the CLP! May the Holy Spirit give you the wisdom to lead others to know Jesus and share in the Father's great love. May our Mother Mary, Queen of Families, pray for us as we zealously proclaim the message of salvation in Christ.

Yours in Christ,
CFC Pastoral Formation Office

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Expanded Outlines

Orientation.....	11
Talk 1: God's Love.....	13
Talk 2: Who is Jesus Christ?.....	19
Talk 3: What It Means to Be a Christian.....	27
Talk 4: Repentance and Faith.....	33
Talk 5: The Christian Ideal (Loving God).....	41
Talk 6: Loving Your Neighbor.....	49
Talk 7: The Christian Family.....	57
Talk 8: Life in the Holy Spirit.....	63
Talk 9: Receiving the Power of the Holy Spirit.....	69
Talk 10: Growing in the Spirit.....	77
Talk 11: The Life and Mission of CFC.....	83
Talk 12: Transformation in Christ.....	91

CLP Training

Schedule and Preparations.....	99
Talk 1: Evangelization and Spiritual Warfare.....	101
Talk 2: What is the CLP.....	105
Talk 3: How to Handle a Discussion Group.....	109

Team Leader's Guide

General Information.....	114
Prior to CLP Sessions.....	119
During the CLP Sessions.....	125
Checklist for Each Session.....	133
After the CLP.....	143

Team Leader's Guide: Appendices

Information Sheet.....	145
List of Printed Pastoral Resources.....	146
Guidelines for Speakers.....	147
Individual Prayers of Thanksgiving and Petition.....	148
Welcome Letter for New Members.....	150
The Lord's Day Celebration.....	152

Team Manual

Overview of the CLP.....	156
Roles and Responsibilities.....	159
The Sessions: Goals, Main Points, Discussion Guides.....	161
Discussion Group Leader's Guide.....	173

Team Manual: Appendices

Commitment to Christ.....	183
Guidelines on Prayer for Pray-over Session.....	184
Praising the Lord.....	190
Titles of Jesus.....	194
Fasting.....	195
Covenant of the Couples for Christ.....	198

Talk Handouts.....	199
---------------------------	------------

EXPANDED OUTLINES

ORIENTATION SESSION: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM OF THE COUPLES FOR CHRIST

What is the Christian Life Program (CLP)?

The CLP is an integrated course intended to lead the program participants into a renewed understanding of God's call to them as Christian couples. It runs for a total of twelve (12) separate sessions, usually held once a week. Most sessions consist of three basic ingredients: a teaching, a group discussion, and a time for fellowship. Each session would normally last for about two and a half (2.5) hours.

What are the goals of the CLP?

1. For the individual, it brings a person into a stronger relationship with God by discovering and living more fully the power and gifts he or she received through the Holy Spirit.
2. For the family, it brings married couples to a renewed commitment to Christian family life and it starts to build up a community of committed Christian families.
3. For the Church, it brings people within a particular parish to a fuller experience of life in the Spirit. Consequently it strengthens and revitalizes community life in the parish.

What is the content of the CLP?

The CLP runs for a total of twelve (12) consecutive sessions, usually held weekly. It is divided into three (3) modules of four (4) sessions each. The topics of the sessions are as follows:

Module No. 1: THE BASIC TRUTHS ABOUT CHRISTIANITY

1. God's Love
2. Who is Jesus Christ?
3. What it means to be a Christian
4. Repentance and Faith

Module No. 2: THE AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN LIFE

5. The Christian Ideal: Loving God
6. Loving Your Neighbor
7. The Christian Family
8. Life in the Holy Spirit

Module No. 3: LIVING A SPIRIT FILLED CHRISTIAN LIFE

9. Receiving the Power of the Holy Spirit
10. Growing in the Spirit
11. The Life and Mission of the Couples for Christ
12. Transformation in Christ

The first four talks form the first module of the CLP and present the absolute basics of Christian life. It is basically Christian theology. The next module, consisting of another four sessions, presents the kind of life that God calls us to. It spells out the personal response involved in receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior, and helps couples re-orient their lives around Jesus. The third and final module helps the couples to commit their lives in a serious way to Jesus Christ.

We invite you take it one module at a time. Allow the Lord to work in you throughout each passing week. Be open to the changes that God will make in your life during the course of the program.

(OPEN FORUM follows)

GOD'S LOVE

TALK 1

GOAL:

To communicate the truth that God loves us and to provide a better understanding of that love.

CORE MESSAGE:

God is love. Thus he is compelled by his very nature to create, so that he can share that love. God demonstrates his love by creating man in his image. God's love creates. But man, in the exercise of his God-given gift of free will, has rejected his Creator by sinning. Yet, even when we sin and abandon him, God still loves us and patiently waits for us to come back to him. God's lavish and generous love is best described in the parable of the father and his two sons (Lk. 15:11-31). The parable tells us that God's love forgives. The greatest expression of God's love is the sending of his only Son to suffer and die, that we may have life eternal. Therefore, God's love is, most of all, a love that redeems.

EXPANDED OUTLINE

A. Introduction

In the beginning, God broke the deafening silence and stillness of the universe. He lit up its blinding darkness. He filled up its infinite void. He disturbed the sound of silence. He did all these to manifest and share his love. For love is not love if it is not shared!

B. God's Love Creates

1. The starting point for understanding God's love is found in the story of creation in Genesis. Since God is love, he is compelled by his very nature to create so that he can share this love (Gen. 1:1-31).
 - a) For five days, God created the heavens and the earth, the water and the land, the animals and the plants. And after each

description of what God has created, the verse is followed by the words, "God saw how good it was" (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25).

- b) Then on the sixth day, God created man and woman (Gen. 1:27).
 - c) After God had created man and woman, "*God looked at everything that he had made, and found it very good*" (Gen. 1:31).
 - d) After God had created the heavens and the earth, the land and the water, the animals and the plants, he found them "good." But after God had created man and woman, he found all creation not just "good", but "very good."
 - e) So God created man in his image. In the divine image, God created him. What better demonstration of God's love than being created in the image of the Creator!
2. But man, in the exercise of his God-given gift of free will, rejected his Creator by sinning. And since then, man has continued to offend God and go against his ways. But God's love never wanes despite the sinfulness of man.
- a) Despite their sin, God bestowed on Adam and Eve a gesture of grace by giving them clothing (Gen. 3:21).
 - b) When Cain murdered his brother Abel, God manifested his love and mercy by putting a mark on Cain to protect him from being killed on sight (Gen. 4:15).
 - c) When God decided to eradicate evil on earth by sending a great flood, he instructed Noah to build an ark to save the righteous from death (Gen. 9:1-28).
 - d) Even when mankind continued to disobey and offend God, still God promised Abraham that he would love him and his descendants forever (Gen. 12:1-3).
 - e) He made the same promise to Isaac and to Moses and to David.
 - f) As in Old Testament times, God's love for us today remains that same compassionate and forgiving love of the God who created us. Even when we abandon him, he patiently waits for us to come back to him.

C. God's Love Forgives

1. God's forgiving love is described in the Bible's most well-known parable that has come to be known by a wrong title, The Prodigal Son. But this parable is really about a father who has two sons. The central figure in the parable is neither the younger son nor the elder son. The central figure is the father. And the central message is the father's prodigal love, his lavish and generous love, not just for the younger son but for the elder son as well (Lk. 15:11-31).

a) Under Jewish law, the children inherit their share of the property only after the father's death. By asking for his share of the inheritance, the younger son is effectively saying that as far as he is concerned, his father is already dead. It is expected that he will never come back (Lk. 15:12).

b) But the younger son suffers misfortune in a distant land. He decides to come back. He prepares a three-part statement:

Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you (Lk. 15:18).
I no longer deserve to be called your son (Lk. 15:19a).
Treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers (Lk. 15:19b).

c) The parable includes a phrase that gives an insight into the nature and magnitude of the father's love: *While he was a long way off, his father caught sight of him* (Lk. 15:20b).

d) Perhaps it was by chance that the father was outside the house when the son was about to enter his property. But it was more likely that this father had been constantly looking beyond his property since his son had left. He missed his son so much that each morning, as the sun rose, he would stand on the threshold of his house gazing at a distance, asking himself, "Is it today that my son will come back?" After lunch, he would do the same and ask again, "Is it today that he will return?" Then before it got dark, he would again look beyond his property, hoping to catch a glimpse of a familiar figure and mumble softly, "Is it today that I will see my son again?"

e) This father loves his son so much that he has been waiting. He has been regularly watching the path leading to his house. And that is the reason why, while his son was still a long way off, he sees him right away. That is why he is outside his house on the day his younger son returns.

- f) He does not wait for him to come near. He runs to meet his son. Most fathers would wait and expect an apology. But not this father! He loves his son so prodigally that he hugs and kisses him—no matter how dirty he must have been (Lk. 15:20c).
- g) The son stammers out his prepared statement with 3 parts. He is able to say the first two but he does not get to say the third part. His father cuts him short. He will not allow his son to ask to be treated like a servant. All that he is interested in is letting his son know that he is loved as a son. Yes, not a servant, but a beloved son (Lk. 15:21)!
- h) He interrupts his son's apology and asks his servants to give his son the best robe—to show that he is regarded with highest esteem; to put a ring on his finger—to show that he has authority as a son; and to put sandals on his feet—to show that he is a son and not a slave (Lk. 15:22).
- i) The elder son returns from working in the field and refuses to come in. Again, the father, who loves his elder son as much as the younger son, comes out to meet and console him. The elder son refuses to call his younger brother as "brother" but refers to him as "this son of yours". So the father also assures the elder son of his love: "*My son, everything I have is yours.*" What an assurance (Lk. 15:25-31)!
2. The parable is a graphic story of God's love, a God who is passionately in love with all his children—those who "leave and return" and those who "stay and obey"; a God who will "run out to meet us" whenever we decide to come back to him; a God who will "come out" to comfort and assure us whenever we feel rejected, taken for granted, or hurt.
3. Finally, it is a parable that confirms God's willingness to give us all that he possesses (*everything I have is yours*). Even his only begotten Son.

D. God's Love Redeems

1. We learn that God's love is manifested in the story of creation—God's love is a love that creates. We discover that the parable describes the nature of this love—God's love is a love that forgives. Then Pope John Paul II tells us, "God's love is expressed in the offering of his only Son."

2. Indeed, the Bible tells us that the fullest revelation of God's love is the giving of his only begotten Son to suffer and die that we may have eternal life. God's love is, most of all, a love that redeems.

a) *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life* (Jn. 3:16).

b) *In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his Son into the world so that we might have life through him* (1 Jn. 4:9).

c) *But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us* (Rom. 5:8).

3. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, in One Heart Full of Love: "Let's believe in God's love, and let's be faithful to him. If you look at the cross, you will see his head lowered to kiss you. You will see his arms stretched out to embrace you. You will see his heart open to welcome you. He loves us in spite of how poor and sinful we are. His love is true, and we should believe in his love."

E. Conclusion

We are both the younger son and the elder son in the parable. Some of us have "taken our share of the inheritance" and abandoned God. Some of us have stayed on but have become self-righteous. Regardless of whom we are, God loves us dearly. Like the younger son, we should "come to our senses" and return to God who is patiently waiting for us. Unlike the elder son, we should not be jealous of our brothers or hesitate in accepting God's invitation to join in the celebration.

God's love is reflected in his creation. God's love is described in the parable of the father and his two sons. But the fullest revelation of God's love is the sending of the Son to suffer and die that we may have life eternal. Thus, we ought to know who this Son really is.

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

TALK 2

GOAL:

To provide a better understanding of Jesus Christ and thus attract people to him.

CORE MESSAGE:

Jesus of history is an absolutely unique figure. He was the only person in history ever pre-announced. He was born in Bethlehem of a virgin named Mary, but grew up in Nazareth. He became an itinerant preacher but his three-year ministry attracted only a modest number of disciples, mostly fishermen and their relatives. He was crucified in Jerusalem for stirring up the people. From a purely historical perspective, Jesus should have been forgotten by now. Yet we are confronted by the fact that he divided history into two: before his coming (B.C.) and after his death (A.D.), and after two thousand years, billions of people profess him as Lord.

Christ of faith did many signs, forgave sins, gave life to the dead, claimed to possess all power in heaven and on earth, claimed that he will sit at the right hand of the Father and come to judge all mankind, and claimed straightforwardly to be God. But it is his suffering and death on the cross that reveals his true identity. The cross is the central point of our knowing and understanding Jesus Christ. His cross is both language and parable. But Jesus' death on the cross would have been meaningless without the resurrection. The most conclusive proof that Jesus is Lord and God is his resurrection. Jesus Christ is true God and true man. Being God we can pray to him and he can answer our needs. Being human, he feels our feelings, suffers our pains, understands our loneliness, and we can have a very personal relationship with him.

EXPANDED OUTLINE

A. Introduction

1. As Christians, we derive our identity from a person, one whom we can be truly proud. He is truly impressive.
 - a) Millions today claim to be his followers, almost 2,000 years after his death.
 - b) Countless numbers have been martyred for their faith in him.
 - c) The book about him, the Bible, is easily the no. 1 best seller of all time.
2. It is this person who won for us our salvation, who restored us to our relationship with God. In him we can have a full and a new life.
3. Jesus himself asked his disciples, "*Who do people say that I am?*" (Mk. 8:27-30).
4. Fr. Raymond Brown in his book, An Introduction to New Testament Christology, reflected on the significance of Jesus' question: "'Who do people say that I am?' is a question associated with Jesus as early as the first Gospel to be written. In that Gospel it produced a variety of answers, including one volunteered but poorly understood by Peter, his best-known follower. The question has produced a variety of answers ever since."
5. After realizing the importance of this person to us, and to better understand who he really is, we also ask: "Who is Jesus Christ?"

B. Jesus of History

1. Three things that make Jesus an absolutely unique figure in human history:
 - a) History is full of men and women who have claimed that they came from God. Simple logic dictates that if God is sending someone into the world, God should announce his coming in advance. Otherwise, anyone could claim that he or she is the one sent by God. Jesus is the only person in history ever pre-announced. The prophecies of the Old Testament made centuries before Jesus was born converge towards the person of Jesus (Is. 7:14, Is. 9:5, Nm. 24:17).

- b) He was born in Bethlehem of a virgin named Mary (Lk. 2:1-20). Once he appeared on the scene, he struck history with such impact that he split it in two, dividing it into two periods: BC and AD.
- c) Every person who came into this world came into it to live. Jesus came into the world to suffer and die. His death was the goal and fulfilment of his life.
2. Some details about his life.
- a) Jesus grew up as a young carpenter in Nazareth. For three years he became an itinerant preacher. He was never more than 150 kilometers from his home. He had never been into cities with populations larger than 50,000.
 - b) He did not have an army like Alexander the Great. He did not have a school like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. His father was a mere carpenter. His short ministry attracted only a modest number of disciples, mainly uneducated fishermen and their relatives.
 - c) He experienced anger and grief (Mk. 3:5), love (Mk. 10:21), compassion (Mk. 1:41), and sadness (Mk. 14:34). He also showed tenderness and personal concern.
 - d) He was a magnetic leader. He summoned Simon and Andrew (Mk. 1:16-18), James and John (Mk. 1:20), and Levi (Mk. 2:14), who all followed him immediately.
 - e) But after a mere 3 years of preaching he was killed, nailed to a cross in Jerusalem for stirring up the people.
 - f) By right he should simply have faded into complete oblivion. Instead, he is surely the most famous, honoured, and best-loved person who ever walked on earth.

C. Christ of Faith

How did this happen? What did Jesus do or say about himself that, in spite of his humble and short human life, created such an impact on history?

1. Jesus did many signs or miracles. His first sign, the transformation of water into wine during a wedding in Cana, was occasioned by his

mother, Mary (Jn. 2:1-11).

2. Jesus forgave sins (Mk. 2:5-7).

C.S. Lewis, in his book "Mere Christianity", gives the most compelling commentary on these verses: "Jesus' claim to forgive sins, any sin, is really so preposterous or comic unless he is God himself. One can understand how a man can forgive offenses against himself. You step on my toe and I forgive you. You steal my money and I forgive you. But what do you make of a man, himself unrobbed and unhurt, who announces that he forgives you for stepping on somebody else's toes and stealing somebody else's money? Asinine fatuity is the kindest description we can make of such a man. He forgives sin without consulting the people adversely affected by the offenses. This makes sense only if he really is God whose very laws were violated by the offenses."

3. Jesus gave life. The Gospels report that he did this at least 3 times: the raising of the widow's son in Nain (Lk. 7:11-17), the raising of the daughter of Jairus (Lk. 8:52-55), and the raising of his friend Lazarus after being dead for 4 days (Jn. 11:38-44).
4. Jesus claimed to possess all power in heaven and on earth (Mt. 28:18-19). Unlike earthly kings or military generals, Jesus did not have any army to wage war. He did not have a vast wealth to purchase and own territories. And yet he proclaimed with great conviction that he had power not just on earth but also in heaven.
5. Jesus claimed that he will sit on the right hand of the Father and come to judge all mankind (Mk. 14:61-63, Mt. 25:31-33).
6. Jesus claimed straightforwardly to be God (Jn. 8:56-58, Jn. 10:30,37-38).
7. Jesus' contemporaries came to the realization that he was God.
 - a) Simon Peter (Mt. 16:13-16)
 - b) Martha (Jn. 11:27)
 - c) Nathanael (Jn. 1:49)
 - d) Thomas (Jn. 20:27-28)
 - e) The centurion (Mt. 27:54)
 - f) Even the evil spirits (Mt. 8:29, Mk 1:24, Mk 3:11, Lk 4:41)

D. Liar, Lunatic, or Lord

1. Jesus' claim to be God must be either true or false. If false, then we have two and only two alternatives. Either he knew it was false, in which case he would be a liar, or he did not know it was false, in which case he would be a lunatic.
2. Could Jesus have lied? If he lied, then he would have been deliberately deceiving his followers. But we need only look at his person, his words, and his work to conclude that he could not have been a liar. Look at his moral purity, dignity, sound intellect, and air of truth. Consider his character that is so original, consistent, perfect, and high above human greatness. He carried out a plan of unparalleled beneficence, moral magnitude and greatness, and sacrificed his own life for it. Would he die for a lie? The results of his life and teachings have been lives changed for the better, thieves made honest, and hateful individuals becoming channels of love.
3. Could Jesus have been a lunatic? In Jesus we do not see any abnormalities or imbalances that usually go along with being deranged. In fact, his poise and composure would be amazing if he were insane. He spoke some of the most profound sayings ever recorded. Such a man cannot be a lunatic.
4. If not a liar or a lunatic, the only alternative left to us is that Jesus did speak the truth. He was, and is, the Son of God as he claimed—He is Lord!

E. We Truly Know Jesus Through the Cross

Jesus Christ walked on earth, cured the sick, restored life to the dead, and proclaimed God's kingdom. But the miracles, the healings, and the teachings are not the most important aspects of Jesus' life and ministry. It is his suffering and death on the cross that makes Jesus our Savior and Redeemer. Jesus' entire life is salvific. It is through the cross that Jesus reveals his true identity. The cross is the means by which we can truly know Jesus. The cross is the central point of our knowing and understanding Jesus Christ because his cross is both language (knowing) and parable (understanding).

1. As language, the cross conveys an idea and reveals a message (1 Cor. 1:18)
 - a) As language, the cross communicates the weakness of our human nature.

- b) It discloses our sins and reveals our errors.
 - c) It conveys our desperate need of redemption.
2. As parable, the cross tells a story and provides a lesson. As parable, the cross teaches us that our evil deeds are the very nails piercing Christ's hands and feet on the cross. If the cross, as parable, is the means by which we can truly know Jesus, we ought to ask ourselves, "What happened on the cross? What happened on Calvary?"
- a) Because crucifixion is excruciatingly painful, the condemned was usually offered a strong drink of wine mixed with myrrh to reduce his feeling of pain. But as the Gospel of Mark reports (Mk. 15:23), Jesus refused to take it. Although his body was dehydrated, Jesus refused to take a drink that would lessen the pain of his role as Savior. Although his lips were craving for water, he declined a drink that would reduce the pain of our redemption. At his birth in Bethlehem, Jesus accepted the gift of myrrh. But at his death in Calvary, he refused the sedative of myrrh. Jesus did not want to deaden the very reason for his coming. He did not want to reduce the price of our redemption.
 - b) It was expected that all those being crucified would cry loudly from the unbearable pain. The historian Seneca wrote that they all indeed shouted loudly, cursing everyone and everything, if only to find some outlet to ease the pain they endure. Everyone expected Jesus to do the same. And indeed Jesus cried and shouted. But from the depths of his loving and merciful heart, Jesus cried out not a curse, he shouted not a blasphemy. Instead Jesus cried out a prayer, a prayer of forgiveness: *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do* (Lk. 23:34).

F. Conclusion

1. We cannot know Jesus by just his miracles and teachings. It is only through his suffering and death on the cross that we can truly know Jesus. Only when we start to fully realize the magnitude of this sacrifice that we can begin to truly know Jesus.
2. But Jesus' death on the cross would have been meaningless without the resurrection. The most conclusive proof that Jesus is Lord and God is his resurrection. Even the doubting Thomas finally believed when he saw the glorified body of the risen Christ (Jn. 20:26-29).

3. Jesus Christ is true God and true man. Being God we can pray to him and ask him for all our needs. But being human, we can have a very personal relationship with him. Being human, he feels our feelings, he suffers our pains and he understands our loneliness. Being human, he can be passionately involved in our lives.
4. Jesus Christ, true God and true man, invites us to love, to repent, to forgive, and to celebrate, confident that he is involved in our daily struggles. When we truly know Jesus, when we take him as our Lord and God, when we develop a personal relationship with him, then we become truly Christian.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN

TALK 3

GOAL:

To make clear what Christianity is, and to enjoin the participants to appreciate the blessings of being a Christian.

CORE MESSAGE:

To be a Christian means having a loving personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, there have been misconceptions or incomplete notions about Christianity. For some people, Christianity is a mere religious system, a mere moral system, a mere social or humanitarian system, or an escape from the realities of life. But the truth is that Christianity is a relationship initiated by God out of his mercy and love for us.

As Christians, we become a new creation and we participate in the very life of Christ. As Christians, we become children of God and take on his nature. Accordingly, to be a Christian means to become a disciple of Christ, to live the Christian theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. To be a Christian is to know the Father through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. To be a Christian is to have faith in God, to live in hopeful expectation of the fulfilment of the plan of God, and to love God above everything else. For this, we have the Blessed Virgin Mary as our model, for she is Christ's most perfect disciple.

EXPANDED OUTLINE

A. Introduction

1. Last week we asked the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" And we should have come away with the conviction that he is God, and that he is our Lord and Savior. As such, we are his followers.
2. In fact, as Christians, we carry his name. And so now we want to learn about what it really means to be a Christian.

3. It was in Antioch that the followers of Jesus were first called Christians (Acts 11:26).

During New Testament times, the ancient city of Antioch was the capital of Syria. Syria then was a Roman province and Antioch was the third largest Roman city. Located about 480 kilometers north of Jerusalem, Antioch was renowned for its culture and the arts. It had a large Jewish, as well as Greek, community. Unfortunately, in AD 526 a strong earthquake leveled this ancient city. On the same location is now the modern city of Antakya, now a territory of Turkey, near the border of Syria.

After Stephen was stoned to death (Acts 7:54-60), many of the persecuted followers of Jesus fled to Antioch from Jerusalem. As a result, there developed in Antioch one of the largest and most active communities of the followers of Jesus. The new communities converted many local people, including a large number of Greeks.

B. Misconceptions or incomplete notions about Christianity

1. Christianity is a mere religious system.

- a) A set of doctrines to believe in, like the Apostles Creed. Faith remains on an intellectual level.
- b) A set of religious practices, such as going to Mass, novenas, etc.
- c) Knowing or reading a lot about God.
- d) Doing a lot for God.

All the above are misconceptions or incomplete notions about Christianity unless what we believe in is translated into our lives, i.e., we base our values and lives on the doctrines we believe in. Our religious practices ought to be experiences of faith and not mere rituals we do as a matter of habit.

2. Christianity is a mere moral system.

- a) A set of dos and don'ts, a set of rules regarding right and wrong.
- b) Avoiding those things that can make you go to hell.

These are incomplete notions because they make religion legalistic and sterile. There is no life and joy. Rather, our religion is our life. We do or don't do certain things not because the rulebook says

so, but as an expression of our relationship with God and with our brethren.

3. Christianity is a social, humanitarian system.

- a) Equating Christianity with humanitarianism.
- b) A Christian is someone who does good and is kind. He is a nice man or woman who always smiles, never gets angry, and tries to please everyone.

This is an incomplete notion because it leaves out the deity of Christ, and limits Christianity to merely being a Good Samaritan. In fact, a Christian can get angry (righteous anger), as Jesus did. In fact, non-Christians can also do good.

4. Christianity is an escape from the realities of life.

- a) An opium of the poor and the oppressed. It is for the weak, for those who cannot cope with life.
- b) Equating Christianity with convent life, an escape from the ordeals of a secular life.

This is a wrong notion because Christians are not taught to escape problems but to face them.

C. Truths About Christianity

The essence of Christianity is union with God that is made possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. What makes us Christians is our loving, personal relationship with Christ. There are three important truths about Christianity.

- 1. Christianity is a relationship initiated by God out of his mercy and love for us.
 - a) Our Christian faith is a gift from God. It is a free gift (Eph. 2:8).
 - b) God initiated our relationship with Christ. We did not initiate it (1 Jn. 4:10).
- 2. As Christians, we become a new creation and participate in the very life of Christ.
 - a) When we are baptized as Christians, we become a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

- b) Christianity is a life of constant renewal (Gal. 2:20).
3. As Christians, we become children of God and take on his nature, which is holiness.
- If we are his children, then God is our Father (Gal. 3:26).
 - As children of the heavenly Father, we have access to him.
 - If we all have but one Father in heaven, then we are all sons and daughters of God.
 - As children of God, we take the nature of God, which is holiness (1 Pt. 1:15-16).
 - As children of God, this earth is not really our home; our real home is with our Father in heaven.

D. Implications of Being a Christian

To be a Christian means having a personal relationship with Christ. Being a Christian means becoming a disciple of Christ. Being Christ's disciple means living in faith, hope and charity, of which are "infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1813).

- A Christian is a person of faith (Heb. 11:1).
 - Faith means acceptance and commitment.
 - A true Christian is one who freely and boldly expresses his faith to other people so that they may also be brought further into faith.
- A Christian is a person of hope (Rom. 8:24-25).
 - Hope is an attitude of confident expectation.
 - A true Christian is one who lives full of hope, confident that the will of God will happen and his plan will be consummated.
- A Christian is a person of love (Jn. 13:35).
 - Love for one another is what distinguishes the disciples of Jesus.
 - A true Christian is one who loves as Christ loves.

What does it mean to be a Christian? To be a Christian is to have a loving, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. To be a Christian is to know the Father through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. To be a Christian is to have faith in God, to live in hopeful expectation of the fulfillment of the plan of God, and to love God above everything else. In short, to be a Christian is to let Christ take over our life, to obey his voice and do his bidding, to let go and let God.

E. Conclusion

1. The Blessed Virgin Mary is the model Christian, the perfect disciple of Christ. She has the closest and most personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. Mary was the first to believe. From the moment of the Annunciation and conception, from the moment of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, Mary followed Jesus step by step. She was a singular witness to the years of Jesus' infancy and hidden life in Nazareth. She followed him when he began to teach, preach and heal. But most of all, she followed him to his death on the cross. Mary witnessed the dawn of the Church since she was with the apostles in the upper room in Jerusalem.
3. Like Mary, being a Christian means living in faith, hope, and love. Being a Christian means believing that God is our Father and we his children, hoping that at the end of our earthly pilgrimage we will join the Father in our true home, loving God and our brothers and sisters.
4. As Christians, we become Christ's disciples. And as Christ's disciples, we ought to put our lives completely in his hands, and experience the tremendous peace of Christ flowing into our lives and into our families. As such, we are called to repentance and faith.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH

TALK 4

GOAL:

To lead people to repent for their sins and turn to renewed faith in Jesus Christ.

CORE MESSAGE:

The only proper response to all that God has done for us is repentance and faith. *"Repent, and believe in the gospel"* is precisely what Jesus calls for from the beginning of his ministry. Repentance and faith go together. It is a double-action response. But repentance is not just being sorry for sin because of adverse consequences. It is also not dependent on feelings. True repentance is ***metanoia***, a change of mind, a change in direction. Repentance is turning away from sin and evil and surrendering to Jesus as Lord of our life. And if Jesus is Lord, there is no room for being lukewarm. Authentic repentance requires honesty, to admit that a sin is a sin, and humility, to admit that we are weak and we need help. But true repentance requires faith in God.

Faith is not a feeling or wishful thinking or a blind leap. *Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.* It is man's response to God. It is belief in the gospel, a personal act and decision. Most of all, faith is a pure gift from God. The consequence of repentance and faith is a promise of salvation from sin and death, and at a personal level, freedom from fear of death. Jesus sounded the call to repentance and faith two thousand years ago. It is the same call to us today. Like the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us have complete faith in God and say, *"Let it be done to me according to your word."*

EXPANDED OUTLINE

A. Introduction

1. So far we have heard the basic truths about Christianity, and the most basic truth is that God loves us. And the love of God is most clearly revealed in the sending of the Son to suffer and die that we may have life eternal. This Son is our Lord, Jesus Christ, who has done so much for us. Now it is time for us to respond.
2. Our proper response is repentance and faith. This is precisely what Jesus calls for from the beginning of his ministry: After John has been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "*This is the time of fulfilment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel*" (Mk. 1:14-15).
 - a) We need to repent, i.e., to reform our lives. And we need to believe in the gospel, i.e., have faith in Jesus and the message he brings.
 - b) Repentance and faith go together. It is a double-action response. We cannot just have one without the other.
 - To just reform our lives in an inadequate response to God. We need to believe in him and in his plans and promises.
 - To simply believe without doing anything to reform our lives to become pleasing to God is also inadequate. Faith necessarily needs to be connected to morality. In other words, faith without works is dead (Js. 2:14-17).
3. St. Paul was keenly aware of the importance of Jesus' call to repentance and faith. In his farewell speech at Miletus, he said: *You know how I lived among you the whole time from the day I first came to the province of Asia. I earnestly bore witness for both Jews and Greeks to repentance before God and to faith in our Lord Jesus* (Acts 20:18,21).

B. What is Repentance?

1. To better understand what is meant by Christian repentance, let us examine what repentance is not.
 - a) First, repentance is not dependent on feelings. While we might go through a deep emotional experience when we truly repent

for our sins, the emotion is not the essential element. Peter's salutary repentance led him back to life. Judas' worldly sorrow led him to death (2 Cor. 7:9-10).

- b) Second, repentance is not being sorry for sin because of fear of the adverse consequences of sin. We should not confuse sorrow for sin with sorrow for the consequences of sin. Fear of the possible punishment may serve as our first step towards true repentance; but to be truly repentant, we must hate sin itself because it offends God.
2. What then is true Christian repentance? In Greek the word for repentance is ***metanoia***, which is literally translated as a change of mind.
- a) Repentance refers to a change in direction and not just a simple confession of wrongdoing.
- It is a significant change in the way you live your life: dropping an old set of ideals and values by which you live your life and adopting new ones.
 - Repentance affects the way you think and act, your attitudes, motives, thought and behaviour.
- b) Repentance means turning away from sin, evil, and wrongdoing. It means asking God for forgiveness and availing of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, i.e., going to a priest for confession.
- There are specific sins we need to renounce, serious sins that are totally incompatible with a relationship with God.
 - Among these serious sins are: involvement in cults such as Freemasonry and New Age; practicing the occult such as witchcraft, fortune telling, and séances; sexual wrongdoing such as sexual intercourse outside marriage, adultery, active homosexuality; serious crimes such as murder, rape, kidnapping, robbery, corruption; and drunkenness (not just drinking but drunkenness) and getting stoned on drugs.
- c) Repentance is breaking away from running our own lives. It means surrendering to Jesus as the Lord of our life. And if we accept Jesus as Lord, then there is no room for lukewarmness (Rev. 3:15-16).

- The lukewarm do not embrace the cross; they merely drag it along (St. Teresa of Avila).
 - "My enthusiasm is gone," you wrote me. Yours has to be a work not of enthusiasm, but of love conscious of duty, which means self-denial (Blessed Josemaria Escriva).
 - Lukewarmness is completely incompatible with true repentance. We cannot be half-hearted when approaching God for forgiveness. Repentance becomes complete only under the lordship of Jesus.
3. There are two essential characteristics of authentic repentance: honesty and humility.
- a) When we ask God for forgiveness, we must be honest enough to admit that we have made a mistake. If it is a sin, we must be honest enough to admit that it is a sin.
 - If we are practicing artificial birth control, which we know is not allowed by the Church, we must be honest enough to admit that it is a sin and resolve to correct the situation.
 - If we are not properly married in Church, we must be honest enough to admit that it is against the teaching of the Church and we should not rationalize the situation.
 - If we are carrying on an affair, we must admit that it is seriously wrong and cut it off immediately.

- b) When we come to God to say how sorry we are for our mistakes, we also should be humble enough to ask him for help so that we can change.
 - We must admit our weakness and not expect that we are capable of changing only through our own efforts.
 - We must be humble enough to seek the help of others, our parish priest or our elders in Couples for Christ.

C. What is Faith?

1. To better understand what faith is, let us examine what faith is not.
 - a) Faith is not just a feeling. In faith, we accept God's word as truth, no matter what we feel.
 - b) Faith is not wishful thinking. It is not based on illusions or personal desires, but on God's word.
 - c) Faith is not a blind leap. When Peter stepped on the water he did not do this blindly. He came out into the water because Jesus invited him to. As long as he relied on Jesus he was able to walk on water. Only when he lost his focus on Jesus—when the strong wind and giant waves distracted him—that he began to sink (Mt. 14:26-30).
2. What then is faith? Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1).
 - a) Faith is man's response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man, at the same time bringing man a superabundant light as he searches for the ultimate meaning in life (Catechism of the Catholic Church).
 - b) Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace (St. Thomas Aquinas).
3. Faith is a grace from God. It is not something that we can earn or acquire by ourselves. It is a pure gift from God.

Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior help of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth (***Dei Verbum***).

4. Faith is belief in the gospel, which is the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.
 - a) Faith is belief in both the messenger, Jesus, and in the message that he brings.
 - b) Faith means not just believing with our minds (an intellectual belief) that Jesus is the Savior, but believing in our hearts that he came to be our personal Savior.

5. Faith is a personal act and decision. It has several aspects (Rev. 3:20).

- a) It is a definite act. We must open the door if Jesus is to come into our lives.
- b) It is an individual act. We need to decide on our own to open the door. No one can decide for us to do so.
- c) It is a deliberate act. We do not have to wait for a supernatural light to flash upon us from heaven (like Paul's experience) or an emotional experience to overtake us. We already know that Jesus came into this world and died for our sins. He is now standing outside the door of our hearts and is knocking. The next move is ours.
- d) It is an urgent act. The future is uncertain and time is passing away.
- e) It is an indispensable act. It is part of our double-action response. It is the step needed to receive all God has promised. Faith is relying on all God has said.

D. Consequences of Repentance and Faith

- 1. The consequence of repentance and faith is a promise of salvation from sin, Satan, and death. This is the promise of forgiveness and eternal life with God (Acts 16:31).
- 2. At a personal level, one consequence of true repentance and profound faith is freedom from fear of death. If indeed we believe that death is nothing but a passage from a life of fleeting joy on earth to a life of eternal happiness in heaven, then we should not fear it. We are unable to overcome our fear because we have not fully repented and our faith is weak.

E. Conclusion

1. Jesus sounded the call to repentance and faith two thousand years ago. It is the same call to us today. We are called to turn away from sin and to accept Jesus as Lord.
2. Like the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us have complete faith in God and say, *"Let it be done to me according to your word."*
3. As we respond positively, God promises us salvation from sin, forgiveness and reconciliation, eternal life, and the power of the Holy Spirit for our lives.
4. Accept the challenge to repent and believe in Jesus. Then take God up on his promises, and expect to experience the peace and joy and power of the Lord in our lives.

THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL: LOVING GOD

TALK 5

GOAL:

To explain the meaning of loving God and to teach how to live out this Christian ideal.

CORE MESSAGE:

Loving God is our highest ideal. This is God's first and greatest commandment. We are asked to love God with all our heart, with all our mind and soul, and with all our strength.

To love God with all our heart is to be totally committed to him. It means putting God first in our life and doing things to make this happen. It means spending a lot of time with God, talking with him, listening to him. It requires a decision to obey God. To love God with all our mind and soul means to keep our minds preoccupied with things of God, using it according to God's truths and not according to the ways of the world. It means to fill our mind and soul with thoughts of God and to use our mind to know God more closely and learn his ways and teachings more deeply. To love God with all our strength means giving God our resources: time, talent, and treasure. We need to be generous with the time we devote to serving God and others. We need to use our God-given talent for the kingdom of God. We need to have the right attitude towards our treasure by believing that everything belongs to God and thus use these resources in accordance with God's plan.

Our perfect models for loving God are Jesus and Mary. This love is made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit.

EXPANDED OUTLINE

A. Introduction

1. Goals and ideals are important to move us on. Goals can direct our behaviour and plans for life. Our goals can become our ideal of life, influencing and directing our lives. Is our goal to amass a lot of money? To attain a high position? To achieve considerable fame?
2. We can give our lives to pursuing good goals and lofty ideals such as reducing criminality or eradicating poverty. These are laudable ideals but they are not sufficient.
3. As Christians, loving God is our highest ideal. This is God's first and greatest commandment. Mk 12:28-30: *One of the scribes, when he came forward and heard them disputing and saw how well he had answered them, asked him, "Which is the first of all commandments?" Jesus replied, "The first is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'*

B. Loving God with All Our Heart

1. We need first to understand what Jesus meant by "heart."
 - a) The modern understanding of "heart" is related to feeling or emotion.
 - b) The Biblical understanding of "heart" is the seat of intelligence and decision. In modern English, it will be equivalent to "mind" or "will". The heart is the symbol of the core of who the man is. It includes intelligent thought and will, along with feeling or emotion. The heart determines who the person is: As one face differs from another, so does one human heart from another (Prov. 27: 19).
 - c) The Biblical understanding makes more sense because the kind of love God requires cannot depend on feelings, which are changeable, but rather based on a commitment, a decision to love.
 - d) Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical **Deus Caritas Est** states: "Love is not merely a sentiment. Sentiments come and go. A sentiment can be a marvelous first spark, but it is not the fullness

of love. It is characteristic of mature love that it calls into play all man's potentialities; it engages the whole man. But this process is always open-ended; love is never 'finished' and complete; throughout life, it changes and matures, and thus remains faithful to itself."

2. To love God with all our heart means to be totally committed to him.
 - a) It is a commitment to seek the Lord first and foremost. It is a decision to put God first, to be loyal to him, to place his will and interest above our own.
 - b) It is similar to the commitment we make in marriage, but more, higher and deeper.
3. How do we put the Lord first and foremost in our life?
 - a) It requires a decision to obey him. Jn. 14:15: *If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*
 - b) We need to develop a personal relationship with him, a relationship that is dynamic and alive, not legalistic, a personal experience arising from our relationship as God's sons and daughters.
 - c) We should be with God all the time, to talk with him, to hear his voice. No trip should be too long, no task too tedious, no obstacle too difficult, to be with our beloved. We should spend regular time with God, in prayer, and in Scripture reading.

C. Loving God with All Our Mind and Soul

1. We love God with all our mind and soul by keeping our mind clean and holy.
 - a) Our mind should be free of evil and impure thoughts. Mt. 5:28: *But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*
 - b) Our mind should be free of uncharitable thoughts (Mt. 7:1-5).
 - c) We should keep our mind away from suspicion that can lead to estranged relationships.

2. We love God with all our mind and soul when we use our mind according to God's truths and not according to the ways of the world.
 - a) The way we think and act must reflect the fact that we are not just living for this temporal world but for God's eternal kingdom.
 - b) Our decisions and choices must be guided by God's words in the Bible.
 - c) We should keep our minds free of worries knowing that God will provide and care for us.
3. We love God with all our mind and soul when our mind is preoccupied with things of God.
 - a) Our mind and soul should be preoccupied with how we can be holy and not by how we can amass wealth or attain high status in society.
 - b) Our mind and soul should be preoccupied with how we can please God and not how we can glory in the praises of men or gain wide popularity.
 - c) A model for loving God with all our mind and soul is St. Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church. His greatest work was the Summa Theologica. At the time of his death, he was writing his reflections on the subject of penance. He devoted his life reflecting about God, studying about God, and writing about God. His mind was preoccupied with things of God—loving God with all his mind and soul.
4. We can love God with all our mind and soul by protecting and preserving our mind from unholy influences so that God can use us for his purposes.
 - a) We should be very discerning in the use of television, Internet and other media, which can expose our minds to inputs not consistent with Christian living.
 - b) We should fill our mind with thoughts of God by reading the Bible and other Christian literature which can help form our Christian mind.

5. We can love God with all our mind and soul by using our mind for God's purpose.

a) We should always think of ways to serve God's purpose in our business, family, peer group, etc.

b) We should use our mind and intellect for Christian service such as by giving pastoral advice, teaching catechism, etc.

D. Loving God with All Our Strength

1. Since we are God's creation, he owns us. What we call "ours" is not really ours but his. We must not set any limit on our giving. Loving God with all our strength means giving God all our resources: time, talent, and treasure.

2. Loving God with all our strength means giving God our time.

a) We must have the proper attitude with respect to our time. We do not own our time, we merely manage it. Thus we need to be generous with our time. We need to use it not just for ourselves but for God and for others.

b) We must seek God's directions on how we are to spend our time through prayer and Scripture reading.

c) We must examine what to do with our free time: watch a movie, read a novel, sleep. These are not erroneous use of free time but we may be able to find other ways: volunteer for Christian service, visit the sick, etc.

3. Loving God with all our strength means using our talent to glorify God.

a) If you are a talented singer, you must ask yourself, do I use my voice to praise and glorify God? If you are a talented painter, you must ask yourself, does my work portray the goodness and greatness of God? If you are a talented physician, you must ask yourself, do I have the same compassion and love of Christ for the sick, the suffering and the dying?

b) In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus teaches us that if we do not use our God-given talent for the kingdom of God, then whatever talent we have will be taken away and given to those who use them rightfully (Mt. 25:28-30).

4. Loving God with all our strength means having the right attitude toward our treasure, our wealth and material possessions.
 - a) The right attitude includes believing that everything belongs to God. He created everything. There is nothing in heaven and on earth that does not belong to God. What this means is that we are mere stewards of what belong to God. Therefore, we must use these resources wisely, unselfishly and in accordance with the plan of God, who is the rightful owner (Ps. 24:1, Hg. 2:8).
 - b) We must also be convinced that it is God who enables us to acquire wealth and possessions (Prov. 10:22, Eccl. 5:18, Sir. 11:21).
 - c) God asks for our treasure, wealth and possessions not because he needs them, but in order to test the disposition of our heart. And so God asks us to return to him what is his so that he might pour out even more blessings upon us. God asks us to give our tithes and alms (Mt. 6:21, Mal. 3:10).
5. A model for loving God with all our strength is St. John, the Patriarch of Alexandria. He was born of a rich and noble family in Cyprus. He was married but soon became a widower and shortly thereafter all his children also died. Left alone he devoted himself to spiritual pursuits and used all his resources to help the poor. His reputation for personal holiness and generosity became known and when he was just over 50 years of age, he was appointed to the patriarchal chair of Alexandria in 608. He died in 619 and was canonized a saint of the Church and became known as St. John the Almsgiver.

E. Conclusion

1. Loving God is a very high ideal. But it is not vague or impractical as one may think. Rather, it involves specific, practical decisions, commitments, and actions.
2. Our perfect models for loving God are Jesus and Mary.
 - a) Jesus loves the Father and thus was dedicated to accomplishing his mission (Jn. 4:34), obedient unto death (Lk. 22:42), and constantly sought the Father's will (Mk. 1:35).
 - b) Mary loves God with all her heart, mind and strength that she gave her fiat: *May it be done to me according to your word* (Lk. 1:38), travelled in haste to share the Good News (Lk. 1:39), and proclaimed God's greatness: *My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my savior* (Lk. 1:46).
3. We cannot love God with all our heart, mind, and strength by merely deciding to do so. What will make it possible is the power of the Holy Spirit.

LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR

TALK 6

GOAL:

To explain the meaning of the Christian love for neighbor, and to inspire the participants to practice it.

CORE MESSAGE:

Loving God and loving neighbor form the inseparable core of the Christian life. These two go together. We cannot love God without loving our neighbor. The characteristics of Christian love are described by St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. But Jesus elevated loving one's neighbor to a higher plane. We are to love our neighbors not only as we love ourselves, but as God loves us.

Our model for loving our neighbor is our Lord, Jesus Christ. He washed the feet of his disciples. He died for us. The full depth of the meaning of Jesus' teaching on loving our neighbor is revealed in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. In the parable, Jesus took pains to describe in great detail the various actions done by the Samaritan in helping the victim—"approached the victim," "poured oil and wine," "bandaged him," "lifted him up," "took him to an inn," "cared for him"—in order to convey the message that "being a neighbor" entails "doing things" and not merely wishing others well. Loving our neighbor is not a passive attitude but an active involvement. It involves a lot of "going" and "doing," and "approaching" and "caring for others." In the parable, Jesus does not directly answer the question, "Who is my neighbor?" since this opens up the possibility that some will be "neighbor" and others are not. Jesus does not want to make any distinction. The relevant question is, "Am I a neighbor to others?" And Jesus commands us to be so.

EXPANDED OUTLINE

A. Introduction

1. The first of all commandments is to love God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength. This is found in the Book of Deuteronomy: *Therefore you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength* (Dt. 6:5).
2. The second of all commandments is to love our neighbor as ourselves. This is found in the Book of Leviticus: *Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your fellow countrymen. You shall love your neighbor as yourself* (Lv. 19:18).
3. Jesus summed up the whole law in these two greatest commandments: *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. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments* (Mt. 22:37-40).
4. These two go together. We cannot love God without loving our neighbor: *If anyone says, "I love God", but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen* (1 Jn. 4:20).
5. Loving God and loving neighbor form the inseparable core of the Christian life. Because God created man in his image, one cannot claim to love God while hating the very likeness of God that is present in man.

B. Characteristics of Christian Love

1. In his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul describes the characteristics of Christian love and how to love others (1 Cor. 13:4-8).
 - a) To love others is to be patient. We should be slow to anger. We should give ample allowance for the shortcoming of others.
 - b) To love others is to be kind. We should avoid an attitude of criticism. We should have a posture and speech that is uplifting and encouraging.

- c) To love others is to not be jealous of others. We should not covet what others have or begrudge another for possessing something we do not have.
- d) To love others is to not be pompous or inflated. We should be humble and think not of our own importance. We should be conscious of our own unworthiness rather than our merit.
- e) To love others is to not be rude. We should accord honor and respect to one another, praise them if they do well and console them if they do badly.
- f) To love others is to not be self-seeking. We should not focus on having our rights met but focus rather on our duties to others.
- g) To love others is to not be quick-tempered. We should master our emotions and feelings, we should be slow to frown but quick to smile.
- h) To love others is to not brood over injury. We should not hold grudges or resentments but rather be forgiving and understanding of the weakness of others.
- i) To love others is to not rejoice over wrongdoing. We should always seek the good in others, even with people that we find difficult to deal with.
- j) To love others is to rejoice in truth. We should always be sincere and honest and tell the truth to one another.
- k) To love others is to have forbearance. We should patiently and humbly bear insults, injuries and disappointments without taking counter action.
- l) To love others is to have trust and to believe in the best about other people. We should have a positive attitude towards others, always seeking their good side.
- m) To love others is to have hope. We should have a positive attitude towards life and other people and remain joyful and peaceful under any circumstance.
- n) To love others is to have endurance. We should develop an ability to bear things, not with passive resignation but with triumphant attitude.

2. We are able to assume the characteristics of Christian love if we can honestly substitute the word "I" for the word "love" in Paul's letter to the Corinthians (ask the participants to read together loudly the cited verses but substitute "I" for "love").

C. Loving Others as Jesus Loves

1. Loving our neighbor is not an option. It is God's commandment. And Jesus commanded us to love others not only as we love ourselves but as he loves us: *I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another* (Jn. 13:34).
 - a) Jesus emphasized this command. He stated this several times: *This is my commandment: love one another as I love you* (Jn. 15:12). *This I command you, love one another* (Jn. 15:17).
 - b) Jesus elevated loving one's neighbor to a higher plane. We are to love our neighbors not only as we love ourselves, but as God loves us. Since God loves us with a self-sacrificing, forgiving and prodigal love, then we must also love our neighbor with self-sacrificing, forgiving and prodigal love.
2. Jesus showed the example of Christian love when he washed the feet of his disciples. When he finished, he told his disciples to do likewise (Jn. 13:12-15).
 - a) The feet that Jesus washed were the feet of men who had spent most of the day walking long crowded, dusty roads. In all likelihood, they were very dirty feet. In the Jewish culture of Jesus' time, the servant washes the feet of the guests. But Jesus took a towel and a basin of water and washed them.
 - b) What Jesus is teaching is that we should be servant to one another. Loving others as Jesus loves means serving others.
3. Jesus clearly commanded us to love our neighbor as he loves us. But how much does Jesus love us? What is the extent of his love?
 - a) Jesus himself answered this question. *No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends* (Jn. 15:13)
 - b) Jesus died for us because he loves us so much. Loving our neighbor demands not merely giving our time, imparting our

wisdom, or praying for them. If necessary, we should be prepared to give up our lives for them, as Jesus did for us.

4. Our model for loving our neighbor is our Lord, Jesus Christ. In his letter to the Philippians, St. Paul describes the love that Jesus has for us (Phil. 2:5-8).
 - a) When Jesus said that we should love our neighbor as he loves us, this is exactly what he meant.
 - b) Like him, we should be prepared to offer our life for the sake of others, as Jesus offered his.

D. Who is our Neighbor?

1. If we are to die for our neighbor, we need to know exactly and clearly who our neighbor is. We are thus compelled to ask the question, "*Who is my neighbor?*"
2. The answer to this question and the full depth of the meaning of Jesus' teaching on loving our neighbor are revealed in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25-37).
 - a) We have heard this parable many times. To some the story has become boring and the message dry and lifeless. To bring life back into the story, we need to examine its historical context more deeply (read historical note below).
 - b) The story begins with a lawyer among the crowd wanting to test Jesus by asking a question: "*Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*" Knowing his intention, Jesus did not answer the question directly. Instead he asked another question: "*What is written in the Law?*" The lawyer answered by quoting Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18. Jesus responded: "*You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.*"
 - c) Somewhat embarrassed that Jesus was able to take the initiative, the lawyer asked a rhetorical question: "*And who is my neighbor?*" Again Jesus did not answer the question directly, but instead responded with a parable.
 - d) The Jewish audience knew that the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was close to 30 kilometers and descended 1000 meters. They were familiar with the winding road that was bordered by

desert and huge rocks from which bandits could easily hide in and then attack travelers. As Jesus related the story, they began to see themselves as the victim in the story.

- e) They heard that both the priest and the Levite did not offer any help. But there was a third man in the story. They began to think that this third man must be a Jewish layman who will help the victim. But wait! What is he saying? A Samaritan helping a Jew! But this is impossible! Why not a Jew helping a fellow Jew? Or why not make a Samaritan the victim and a Jew to help him?
 - f) At the end of the story, Jesus asked the lawyer: "Which of these three was neighbor to the victim?" The lawyer was left with no option. He has to say the Samaritan. But being a Jew who bitterly hated the Samaritans, he could not utter the word "Samaritan". So he answered, "The one who treated him with mercy." And to this Jesus replied, "Go and do likewise."
 - g) In relating the parable, Jesus took pains to describe in great detail the various actions done by the Samaritan in helping the victim: "approached the victim," "poured oil and wine," "bandaged him," "lifted him up," "took him to an inn," "cared for him."
3. Jesus tells us that loving our neighbor is not a passive attitude but an active involvement. He wants to convey that "being a neighbor" entails "doing things" and not merely wishing others well. It involves a lot of "going" and "doing" and "approaching" and "caring for" others.
 4. The Parable of the Good Samaritan embodies Jesus' teaching on loving our neighbor. He does not directly answer the question, "Who is my neighbor?", since this question opens up the possibility that some will be "neighbor" and others are not. Jesus does not want to make any distinction. He tells us that it is irrelevant to ask the question, "Who is my neighbor?" since the responsibility of being a neighbor is placed upon us. The perspective is not to ask others but to ask ourselves, "Am I being a neighbor to others?"

E. Conclusion

1. Loving God and loving neighbor have been likened to the vertical and the horizontal parts of the cross. One directs us upward to God, while the other directs us horizontally towards our fellow men.
2. Loving our neighbor as Jesus loves us is not an easy task. In fact, it is impossible without God's grace. But God will give it freely and generously, if we sincerely ask for it.
3. Jesus said that we should love one another as he loves us. Jesus loves us regardless of who we are. He does not care if we are rich or poor, educated or illiterate, Samaritan or Jew. He died for all of us. He is "neighbor" to us all.

Historical Note:

The Jews and the Samaritans had hated and despised each other for many generations. It all started after the death of Solomon in 922 BC. Israel was divided into two, the kingdom of Israel in the north and the kingdom of Judea in the south. In 721 BC the Assyrians occupied the northern kingdom. Then in 857 BC, the Babylonians conquered the southern kingdom of Judea. But in 529 BC, the Persian emperor Cyrus defeated the Babylonians and allowed the exiled Jews to return to Judea.

In the meantime, the northern kingdom remained under Assyrian occupation. The Assyrians, who were pagans, intermarried with the native population, including the Samaritans. And these intermarriages went on for many generations. Thus in the eyes of the Jews who had returned from exile in Babylon and who considered themselves as the only faithful interpreters of Israel's religious traditions, the Samaritans were half-breeds and half-pagans. As a result, the Samaritans were prevented from worshiping in the Temple of Jerusalem. The Samaritans, therefore, built their own temple on Mt. Gerisim. Then around 6-9 AD, a group of Samaritans defiled the Temple court in Jerusalem by strewing it with human bones. This action led to further division and even more bitter hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans.

This hostility and hatred between Jews and Samaritans was so intense that we read in the book of Sirach 50:25-26: *My whole being loathes two nations, the third is not even a people. Those who live in Seir and Philistia, and the degenerate folk who dwell in Shechem.* Mt Seir is in the territory of the Edomites. The Edomites and the Philistines were enemies of the Jews. Shechem is a city in Samaria. As stated in the book of Sirach, the Jews did not even want to call the Samaritans "people" (*the third is not even a people...the degenerate folk who dwell in Shechem*). The Jews hated the Samaritans more intensely than the Edomites and the Philistines, whom they had fought with regularly in their long history.

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

TALK 7

GOAL:

To stress the importance of the Christian family, and to give practical advice for building up a strong Christian family.

CORE MESSAGE:

The family is under attack at many fronts. We want to face up to this attack and to come out with our families intact and even stronger. For this, we need to put on God's mind and to follow his plan for the family. God has intended the family for the transmission of life. It is a place for teaching children and training leaders.

The family is a domestic church. But in this modern society, God has lost central place in the family. The family itself is losing its importance. The pace of modern life has become very fast making it difficult for lasting relationships to develop. We thus find the family to be under attack by evil forces. To make God's plan happen, we must make a decision to make it happen in our family. This requires praying together and making time for the task of building a strong family. We must learn more about God's plan for our family and seek other couples who share our concern about family life and be in regular fellowship with them. Fathers, in particular, should take steps to assume full responsibility for the spiritual and material needs of the family. The Holy Family of Nazareth is our model. We should seek the protection and guidance of the Holy Family of Nazareth to make God's plan happen. With all the challenges that families face, we need God's power, the power of the Holy Spirit.

EXPANDED OUTLINE

A. Introduction

1. The family as an institution is under attack from many fronts. Marriages are being broken and the traditional definition of family is being challenged.
 - a) In many countries divorce is already legal and abortion is already legal in some.
 - b) In some countries, same-sex marriages are already legal and recognized.
2. We want to face up to this attack and to come out with our families intact and even stronger. We need to prevent the breaking up of families, to make our marriages more resilient.
3. For this we need to put on God's mind and to follow his plan for the family. To make our marriage work, it is essential, first and foremost, that we fully understand what our marriage is all about. We need to know God's purpose in marriage.

B. God's Plan for the Family

1. God has intended the family for the transmission of life.
 - a) "The fundamental task of the family is to serve life, to actualize in history the original blessing of the Creator—that of transmitting by procreation the divine image from person to person" (**Familiaris Consortio** 28). It was meant to be so from the very beginning (Gen. 1:27-28, Gen. 2:18-24).
 - b) God created man, male and female, with their physiology so formed as to enable man to increase and multiply and fill the earth.
 - c) God intended man and woman to be one, not independent individuals producing babies, but husband and wife raising a family.

2. The family is a place for teaching children and training leaders.

- a) "Since parents have conferred life on their children, they have a most solemn obligation to educate their offspring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children. Their role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it" (Second Vatican Council).
- b) "Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2223).
- c) The family is a place to transmit wisdom and values of life. Teaching is not formal, but rather comes in the everyday activities in the home.
- d) A leader, especially a church leader, receives his basic training in his own home (1 Tim. 3:4-5).

3. The family is a domestic church.

- a) Parents, especially the fathers, are to be the priests in their families. They present God to their families—by their example of a living Christianity, by diligently teaching Scripture (Deut. 6:7), by the use of symbols (Deut. 6:8-9). They present their families to God—by family prayer, by blessing the children.
- b) "The family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates. In a family which is conscious of this mission, all the members evangelize and are evangelized. The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but from their children they can themselves receive the same Gospel as deeply lived by them. As such a family becomes the evangelizer of many other families, and of the neighborhood of which it forms part" (***Evangelii Nuntiandi*** 71).

C. Why God's Plan for Families is Not Happening

1. God has lost his central place in the family.
 - a) Parents no longer bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). They look more and more to psychology as a source of wisdom for raising their children.
 - b) Husbands and wives do not follow God's order for them. There is confusion of roles (Eph. 5:22-25). Their commitment is shaky. They cannot be depended on and the partners become insecure.
 - c) There is too much importance given to acquiring material possessions and having an easy and comfortable life.
2. The family itself is losing its importance.
 - a) Many of its responsibilities have been taken over by other groups in society—education in schools, livelihood in offices and factories, recreation in malls.
 - b) Easy availability of modern recreation and communication facilities result in diminished interaction among family members, e.g. TV, Internet and social media, video games, smart phones.
 - c) The traditional family has become dispensable—separations and divorces becoming easy to obtain, living-in becoming acceptable.
3. The pace of modern life has become very fast making it difficult for lasting relationships to develop.
 - a) Members of the family are constantly on the go and are too busy to engage in meaningful interaction with others.
 - b) Earning a living is taking a big chunk of the time of fathers, and oftentimes of mothers as well, leaving little time for family.
4. The family is under attack by evil forces (1 Pt. 5:8).
 - a) The devil wants to break up the family and promotes many things to undermine the family, such as secularism (taking God out of educational systems and government), materialism, relativism, communism.

- b) Anti-life forces have become very aggressive. The culture of death has crept into many societies through the promotion of abortion and contraception.

D. What can we do?

1. Make a decision that in your family, you want God's plan to happen.
2. Make time for the task of building a strong family. Examine your daily life to ensure that your family has enough quality time together. Be ready to reduce your other activities, if necessary. Plan regular family recreation, vacation, and other activities.
3. Pray together as a family. Attend Holy Mass together. Pray the rosary as a family. Pray over your children. Pray for healing of family members. Intercede for each other's needs.
4. Fathers should take steps to assume full responsibility for the spiritual and material needs of the family.
 - a) Fathers should assume the roles of priest, provider, and protector.
 - b) Wives should support their husbands and not take over their roles.
5. Learn more about God's plan for your family.
 - a) Attend teachings on Christian marriage and family life. (Couples for Christ offer teachings and retreats such as Marriage Enrichment Retreat and Family Enrichment Retreat).
 - b) Read Christian books and magazines. ***Familiaris Consortio*** is the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II on the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World.
6. Seek other couples who share your concern about family life and be in regular fellowship with them.
 - a) This is what you can look forward to in the CFC community. CFC provides support and formation for families.
 - b) In CFC, you can look forward to developing real friendships and life-giving relationships, especially if you do not limit yourself to attending meetings but look for opportunities to be together and share experiences.

E. Conclusion

1. The Holy Family of Nazareth is our model.

"Through God's mysterious design, it was in that family that the Son of God spent long years of a hidden life. It is therefore the prototype and example for all Christian families...It underwent trials of poverty, persecution and exile. It glorified God in an incomparably exalted and pure way. And it will not fail to help Christian families—indeed, all families in the world—to be faithful to their day-to-day duties, to bear the cares and tribulations of life, to be open and generous to the needs of others, and to fulfill with joy the plan of God in this regard" (*Familiaris Consortio* 86).

"The home of Nazareth is the school where we begin to understand the life of Jesus...a lesson on family life. May Nazareth teach us what family life is, its communion of love, its austere and simple beauty, and its sacred and inviolable character..." (Catechism of the Catholic Church 533).

2. God has a plan for our families. But the evil one wants to prevent this plan from happening. We should not allow this to happen. We should seek the protection and guidance of the Holy Family of Nazareth to make God's plan happen.
3. With all the challenges that our families have to face and with the role expected of us to play to build strong Christian families, we need God's power—the power of the Holy Spirit—to help us in all these. Next week, we will discover how to live a life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

LIFE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

TALK 8

GOAL:

To stir up expectant faith and an eager desire for a greater working of God in people's lives through the Holy Spirit.

CORE MESSAGE:

The starting point for understanding life in the Holy Spirit is to realize that it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to experience God and have a living relationship with him. The early disciples received and experienced the power of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, a Jewish holiday celebrated fifty days after Passover.

We too can receive and experience this life in the Holy Spirit since God has promised us the Holy Spirit. Thus we simply take God up on his promise and we will experience the same relationship with Jesus, the same transforming power, and the same courage for proclaiming the gospel. We will also receive the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit. B

ut we need to avoid the obstacles to these gifts through: unrepentant attitude, feeling unworthy, fear, doubt, pride, and being selective as to what gifts we want. This new life in the Spirit is the authentic Christian life. And God desires it for all. We should thus look forward to this new life and to experiencing your own "Pentecost", remembering that "there is no Pentecost without the Virgin Mary." Thus with the Virgin Mary, we can live a life in the Holy Spirit.

EXPANDED OUTLINE

A. Introduction

1. Much of Christianity today looks weak and lifeless, lacking in power and effectiveness. But this was not so in the beginning of Christianity.
 - a) The early Christian movement was dynamic, strong and attractive. For example, from a small sect, it subsequently conquered the Roman Empire.
 - b) The source of this power was the Holy Spirit. This life in the Holy Spirit was normal for the early Christians. They truly experienced the Holy Spirit at work. In the Book of Acts, we see the Holy Spirit acting among them, guiding them, speaking to them, and giving them gifts.
2. God wants everyone to have this new life. This new life in the Holy Spirit is available to all who turn away from a life of sin and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior.
3. The starting point for understanding life in the Holy Spirit is to realize that true Christian living is not just a matter of human will power, but a new heart, a new life from God.
 - a) We cannot do it with our own effort. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to experience God, a living relationship with him, and his actions in our lives.
 - b) We need to know and understand the Holy Spirit as a Person who can truly affect and change our lives. Unfortunately, many of us know the Father and the Son, but not the Holy Spirit. But Jesus stressed the importance of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:7).

B. Receiving the Holy Spirit

1. Life in the Holy Spirit is very important because it is the kind of life that God wants for us. When we receive the Holy Spirit, we gain:
 - a) Union with God, a new relationship with God as Father that is deep and personal (Eph. 2:18).
 - b) A new nature, we receive spiritual power for living the Christian life (2 Cor. 5:17).

- c) Power to serve as Jesus' witnesses (Acts 1:8).
2. The early disciples received and experienced the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus promises the Holy Spirit and the disciples do as they are told, staying and waiting in Jerusalem (Lk. 24:49, Acts 1:8).
 - On the day of Pentecost, a Jewish holiday, 50 days after Passover, the following happened (Acts 2):
 - V.1-4: An exciting event. Noise like a strong wind, fire, speaking in tongues.
 - V.5-13: It created a big stir.
 - V.14-21: Peter explained they were not drunk but that the Old Testament prophecies (Book of Joel) were coming true.
 - V.22-36: Peter proclaims the gospel.
 - V.37-39: Peter tells them the response needed.
 - V.40-41: The disciples were transformed from frightened men into bold, powerful apostles, and 3,000 were converted.
 - V.42-47: The Holy Spirit created bonds of love and unity among the new Christians. The Church was born.
3. Others received the Holy Spirit as well.

- In Samaria (Acts 8:14-17), Cornelius (Acts 10:44-46), in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-6).
- Those who received the Holy Spirit knew the Lord more personally and more experientially.

C. What Receiving the Holy Spirit Means Today

- How can we receive the Holy Spirit?
 - God has promised us the Holy Spirit (Lk. 11:9-13). So we simply take God up on his promise. We ask our Father to give us the Holy Spirit, and we can be sure that we will receive the Spirit because God said so. We just need to ask in faith.
 - But for us Christians, this will not be the first time we will receive the Holy Spirit. We already received the Holy Spirit during our Baptism and Confirmation. Rather, what we will experience is a fuller release of the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

2. Next week, we can receive and experience the same power and gifts of the Spirit that the early Christians did.
 - a) We will experience the same relationship with Jesus, the same transforming power, the same deep worship, and the same power and courage for proclaiming the gospel.
 - b) We can receive the same spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:1,4-11). These gifts may be divided into 3 groups: two teaching gifts: wisdom and knowledge; three sign gifts: faith, healing and miracles; and four revelational gifts: prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. Your discussion group leader will explain these in greater detail when you meet during the week, and these will be reviewed during the talk next week.
 - c) We need to properly understand the gift of tongues.
 - The gift of tongues is a common experience when we receive the Holy Spirit, just like the experience of the disciples described in Acts.
 - It is a gift from God, thus it is important.
 - But unlike the other spiritual gifts, tongues is a gift that may not immediately manifest.
 - Once we receive it, it can have great consequences in our spiritual life, especially in our prayer and worship.
 - It is an important first step and is often the gateway to a fuller life in the Spirit.
3. We need to avoid the obstacles to receiving God's gifts through:
 - a) An unrepentant attitude, refusing to admit sin as sin.
 - b) Feeling unworthy of the gift.
 - c) Fear, for example, of what others will think, or of looking foolish, or of being overtaken
 - d) Doubt.
 - e) Pride, or an attitude of not wanting or needing God's gifts.
 - f) Being selective as to what gifts we want.

4. Give a brief personal testimony or relate your own experience during and after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, which may cover any or all of the following:
 - a) Knowing God more personally.
 - b) Praying in a new way (more God-centered, more thanksgiving and praise rather than petition, more listening).
 - c) The Bible comes to life.
 - d) Better relationships with spouse, children, others.
 - e) A new joy despite problems.
 - f) Much more peace, answered prayers, guidance, etc.

D. What We Will Do in the Prayer Session Next Week

1. Mainly, we will pray and you will be prayed over. We will have corporate prayer, and then the discussion group leaders will pray over each person individually.
2. We will start the praying over with the "Commitment to Christ." Thus be prepared to pray this next week. Take time to read it through and get yourself behind the words so you can pray it sincerely.
3. Each of you should meet individually with your discussion group leader before next week's prayer session. This will be an opportunity to clear up any questions and to receive greater clarity, particularly, on the 9 gifts of the Holy Spirit.

E. Conclusion

1. One important warning: Since you have been doing so well responding to God (you have finished 2/3 of this CLP), you are making Satan very unhappy. He is losing his grip, but he will not give up.
 - a) So beware of temptations this week, or irrational doubt, or of strange circumstances that Satan may pose in order to keep you from attending the session next week.

- b) But do not be afraid. Simply call on the name of Jesus and seek the intercession of the Blessed Mother and you will resist Satan and his works.
2. Take time also to review your intentions and expectations in this CLP. What are you seeking? Is God's offer clear to you? How do you intend to respond?
3. God offers each of you a new life.
- a) This new life in the Spirit is the normal Christian life. It is the authentic Christian life. And God desires it for all.
 - b) Thus, be open to it. Better yet, desire it with all your heart. And have faith that you will receive it, because God has so promised.
 - c) Look forward to this new life and to experiencing your own "Pentecost". And remember that "there is no Pentecost without the Virgin Mary" (Benedict XI, *Regina Caeli*). And with the Virgin Mary, you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit during our session next week.

RECEIVING THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

TALK 9

GOAL:

To lead people to understand and receive the power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

CORE MESSAGE:

God promised to give his people the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit that God promised through Ezekiel, Jesus gave to his disciples and is giving to us. With the Holy Spirit, we gain a new nature, a new spiritual power, a power to serve. We also receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There are two teaching gifts: wisdom and healing; three sign gifts: faith, healing, and miracles; and four revelational gifts: prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. During the pray over session, we will claim God's promise. We should desire the gifts of the Holy Spirit and, in particular, the gift of tongues. We should ask for these spiritual gifts in faith, and then cooperate with God's Spirit in order to receive them. God makes the offer. We accept and receive the power of the Holy Spirit.

EXPANDED OUTLINE

A. Introduction: The Promise of the Holy Spirit

1. Like many Christians today, many people during the time of the prophet Ezekiel were enmeshed in sin and spiritual lifelessness (Ez. 36:24-28). This is what God said to them:
 - a) V.24: *I will take you away from among the nations, gather you from all the foreign lands, and bring you back to your own land.*

The people were in exile in foreign lands, particularly in Babylon, and they longed to return to their own land. God soon fulfilled his promise to bring them back from exile. In the same way, God has gathered you from different places and circumstances and

brought you together in this CLP to lead you to the "promised land," God's kingdom on earth.

b) V.25: *I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you from all your impurities, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.*

As God has forgiven the people during Ezekiel's time, you received the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to this session.

c) V.26-27: *I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes careful to observe my decrees.*

This promise was fulfilled during the time of Ezekiel. But God's word is alive. This is God's promise of the Holy Spirit. It will be fulfilled in you during the pray over session. God will give you a new heart and a new spirit, the Holy Spirit as he has promised.

d) V.28: *You shall live in the land I gave your fathers; you shall be my people and I shall be your God.*

After the CLP, you will be invited to join the community of Couples for Christ. If you accept the invitation, the prophecy "you shall be my people and I shall be your God" will be fulfilled in you.

2. The Holy Spirit that God promised through Ezekiel, Jesus gave to his disciples and to us. With the Holy Spirit, we gain:

a) A new nature, spiritual power (Gal. 5:16-23). The inward dimension.

b) A power to serve (Acts 1:8). The outward dimension.

B. Review Gifts of the Holy Spirit and Elaborate Gift of Tongues

1. We are here to claim God's promise of the Holy Spirit (Lk. 11:9-13).

2. God is offering you nine gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4-11). These were mentioned in the previous talk and were explained to you in detail when you met your discussion group leader. You were also asked to identify the specific gifts that you want to receive.

a) You know what gifts you need. Ask for these gifts. But be open to whatever God wants to give you.

- b) Just to review: there are 2 teaching gifts: wisdom and knowledge; 3 sign gifts: faith, healing, and miracles; and 4 revelational gifts: prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.
3. We should all desire and ask for the gift of tongues. It is a gift from God. We should ask it in faith. And then we should cooperate with God's Spirit in order to receive it.
- a) Tongues is a gift of praise. It is a means to enrich our prayer life.
 - b) You should cooperate with God's Spirit and yield to the leading and prompting of the Spirit by opening your mouth and speaking out.
 - Begin by just praising God in your own words. Then start speaking out in tongues. If necessary, begin by uttering meaningless sounds (e.g., la-la-la-la). The Holy Spirit will form these sounds into tongues. (Analogy: it is easier to manipulate the steering wheel of a car when it is in motion rather than stationary).
 - Do not be analyzing the sounds or focusing on the experience. Just focus on the Lord and offer to him your utterances as prayers of praise.
 - Resist the temptation to think that it is just you and not the Holy Spirit forming the sounds.

C. Explanation of Pray Over Session

1. Explain the procedure, what will happen during the pray over session (refer to manual).
- a) We will pray the Commitment to Christ.
 - b) We will lay hand on you and pray with you. But it is basically between you and God. We are just instruments. You have to ask God to give you what he promised. And in faith expect it to happen!

2. Some important points to have in mind:

- a) This is not a baptism, not even a second baptism. We should refrain from using the term "baptism" to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. This is a prayer session for the release of the power of the Holy Spirit.
- b) Different things will happen to different people. Do not seek a particular kind of experience. Just turn to the Lord and receive the new life of the Holy Spirit from him.

3. Right attitudes during the pray over session:

- a) Relax. The more relaxed you are, the easier it is to receive God's gifts. Open your palms and place them on your lap. It is harder to receive something in a clenched fist than in a relaxed and open hand.
- b) Do not be afraid. The Lord is here with us, and he loves you very much. He wants you to experience his love in a new way.
- c) Do not be concerned about how you might act as you respond to the promptings of the Spirit.
 - Do not entertain thoughts that you might look or sound foolish if you begin to praise God in a new way, by raising your hands or speaking in tongues.
 - Nobody will laugh at you. Instead, we will rejoice and be glad with you. We love and care for you.

4. After you are finished being prayed over, please return quietly to your seat and avoid talking with anybody on your way back. We will have some closing remarks and then we will all end together.

- a) While waiting, you can continue to pray in your heart, read the Psalms, or pray the rosary silently. Pray for your brothers and sisters here as well.
- b) Maintain an atmosphere of prayer and reverence and refrain from doing anything that will disturb those being prayed over.

5. Final words:

- a) God wants you to have his gifts because he loves you and wants to live in you by his Holy Spirit. Desire God's gifts!

b) God offers and gives his gifts. Our part is to accept. Let us all give the Holy Spirit a welcome into our lives.

D. Review Sequence of Pray Over Session

1. Start with a song (Let the Fire Fall).
2. Review the procedure briefly.
3. Sing another song (Create in Me).
4. Do the prayer of "Commitment to Christ" (see below).
5. Pray over session (refer to manual for details).
6. Give the closing exhortation.
7. Give the mini-talk on vocal prayer.
8. End with full worship, with singing in tongues.

COMMITMENT TO CHRIST

Do you renounce Satan and all wrongdoing? (*Yes, I do*)

Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that he died to free us from our sins, and that he rose to bring us new life? (*Yes, I do*)

Will you follow Jesus as your Lord? (*Yes, I will*)

Lord Jesus Christ, I want to belong to you from now on. I want to be free from the dominion of darkness and the rule of Satan, and I want to enter into your Kingdom and be a part of your people. I will turn away from all wrongdoing, and I will avoid everything that leads me to wrongdoing. I ask you to forgive all the sins that I have committed. I offer my life to you, and I promise to obey you as my Lord. AMEN.

(PROCEED TO PRAY OVER SESSION)

(The speaker rests or joins the service team. He returns to give the closing exhortation after everyone has been prayed over with).

E. Conclusion: Closing Exhortation

(After all have been prayed over)

1. Different people have different experiences.
 - a) Feeling is not the important thing. Rather, look for the new way that God is at work in you and respond to it (e.g. a new desire for prayer, for Scripture, etc.).
 - b) If you did not speak in tongues, do not worry about it. Do not equate receiving the Holy Spirit only with receiving the gift of tongues.
 - c) In your prayer time this week, give plenty of time to praise and thanksgiving. Do this aloud, if you can without disturbing others. And continue to be open to the Lord forming your praise into tongues.
2. Be aware that Satan can tempt you to doubt.
 - a) Satan is seeking to rob everyone of God's gift. For him the next best thing to keeping you from getting it is to keep you from using it.
 - b) Do not let feelings of doubt bother you. Just remember the fact that God promised it and that you asked for it.
3. Do not expect all your problems to go away all at once, though many will. The Holy Spirit will make a big change in you, and you will see it. But not everything will change. Some things will take a while to get worked out. But now you have a new power to use in working them out.
4. Be faithful to a regular time of daily prayer. Spend a good portion of your prayer time in praise and thanksgiving in your own words. Pray in tongues every day.
5. What just happened is only a beginning.
6. Let us now learn about Vocal Prayer.
- .

EXHORTATION ON VOCAL PRAYER

A. Today I want to teach you all another way of praying from what we are used to. Typically, most Christians today are only used to quieter ways of praying, e.g. silence or just one person praying out. Singing is one exception to the quieter approach most people take.

B. The Bible shows other ways that are more varied, expressive and demonstrative for prayer and worship.

1. We can learn from how the Israelites, God's chosen people, praised God.
 - a) Psalm95:1-2. Singing and crying out.
 - b) Psalm81:2-4. Singing, shouting, and playing instruments.
 - c) Psalm150:3-6. Playing instruments and making a loud noise.
2. In these passages, the Lord is being acclaimed like a king with shouts, songs, playing of instruments, and dancing. When a king entered his throne room or appeared before an assembly of his people, all would stand and acclaim him with shouts and songs to express their love and loyalty, like "Long live the king."
3. This is a good way to worship the Lord.
4. The angels and saints in heaven worship God in the same way (Rev. 19:1, 4-6).

C. A key element of this type of prayer is simultaneous praising. This is when people praise God in a loud voice and all at the same time.

1. We praise God by acclimating who He is (samples in Annex D of CLP Team Manual) and what He has done for us (our many blessings).
2. This type of prayer can help us enter into the throne room of God, where we can truly feel His presence in our midst.
3. This type of prayer also allows us to worship actively as a community, in a way that is enjoyable, inspiring and faith-building.

D. We are going to do some vocal prayer in a short while.

1. At first it may seem strange or chaotic. But it is neither. Or to others, it might be a turn off. Please just be open to it. It's new and will take some getting used to. After a few times doing it, it will feel much more natural and you will be able to see its benefits.
2. First we will sing a song of praise. Then we will go right into worshipping the Lord in this way. Then we can have sentence prayers of thanksgiving or petition, like we have been doing up to this point.
3. Remember: we are coming before the Great King of the universe, our King who loves us and who sent His son to die for us and rise from the dead. Let us acclaim our King and worship Him!

(FULL WORSHIP)

GROWING IN THE SPIRIT

TALK 10

GOAL:

To teach the basic tools needed for our growth and maturity as Christians.

CORE MESSAGE:

The Christian life can be pictured as a wheel that has three components: the outer rim, the hub, and the spokes. The outer rim represents the daily Christian life; the hub, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the spokes, the tools through which the Holy Spirit is transmitted from the hub (Jesus Christ) to the outer rim (our daily life). There are five spokes corresponding to the five tools that we can make use of to grow in the Holy Spirit: prayer and study, service and fellowship, and the sacraments. Our prayer must be faithful, led by the Holy Spirit, and centered on Jesus. We study to know more about God by reading the Scriptures and Christian publications and attending teachings. We serve by making ourselves and our resources—time, talent, and treasure—available for God's work. Fellowship is the expression of the spiritual reality that we are brothers and sisters belonging to one family and doing things together. The sacraments, particularly the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of Holy Communion, are the most important means to grow in the Spirit. If we are faithful in using these tools, we will grow in the Holy Spirit and be more blessed in our family life.

EXPANDED OUTLINE

A. Introduction

1. The prayer session last week for the release of the power of the Holy Spirit is only a beginning. Now we need to grow in this new life in the Spirit.
2. In order to grow, we need to make use of the basic means of growth which the Lord provides us. These are prayer and study, service and fellowship, and the sacraments.

3. The Christian life can be pictured as a wheel that has three components: the outer rim, the hub, and the spokes.
 - a) The outer rim: This is the part of the wheel that meets and touches the road. This represents daily Christian life, where we encounter the realities of daily living.
 - b) The hub: This is the part of the wheel from which the power emanates to the rim. It holds the wheel together. The hub represents our Lord Jesus Christ, who is or should be at the center of our lives. The power is that of the Holy Spirit.
 - c) The spokes: These transmit the power and direction from the hub to the rim. The spokes are the means of putting our whole life in contact with Christ, so that our life can be transformed by his power and direction. The five spokes represent the five tools or means for us to grow in the Holy Spirit, namely, prayer and study, service and fellowship, and the sacraments.

B. Prayer and Study

1. The first tool is prayer. It is the primary means for establishing and maintaining a deep and loving personal relationship between ourselves and God. A successful prayer life involves 3 important principles:
 - a) Our prayer must be faithful.
 - Decide to spend time with the Lord every day.
 - Adopt a prayer format to begin.
 - Use ACTS:
Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, Supplication
 - Use daily prayer guides (e.g. In His Steps).
 - Decide on the practical details.
 - When? Decide on a specific time of the day, which you can protect.
 - Where? (Mt. 6.6.) Find a place where you will not be disturbed or distracted.
 - How long? Begin with 5 to 10 minutes, and gradually increase.

b) Our prayer must be led by the Holy Spirit.

- Scheduled and structured prayer is helpful, but could make our prayer dry and mechanical.
- Be open to changing the format of your prayer as the Spirit leads.

c) Our prayer must be centered on a relationship with Jesus.

- Prayer is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Our goal is not "to pray" or even "to pray well," but to grow in our relationship with the Lord.
- People can get wrapped up in techniques. While these can help, prayer is really very simple. It is a matter of loving God and being loved by him.
- Concentrate not on the prayer but on the Lord. In prayer we talk with God and God talks to us.

2. The second tool is study. It is a deliberate, focused exercise of the intellect, not referring primarily to scholarly or academic endeavour but to the wider process of understanding more about God so we can love and better serve him. There are three ways we can learn more about God:

a) Reading and reflecting on the Bible.

- This is the most important means to know more about God and his plan for us since the Bible is the very word of God. It teaches us who God is, what he has done, and what he wants us to do.
- We should read the Bible daily. Start with about 10 to 15 minutes and gradually increase. Pursue a more deliberate study of selected portions of the Bible, particularly the Gospels. Make it a goal to read the whole Bible.

b) Reading Church's publications and other spiritual books.

- After reading what God has said of himself in the Bible, we can read what men have said or written about God.
- This includes studying the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and reading encyclicals (e.g. **Lumen Fidei**), apostolic exhortations (e.g. **Evangelii Gaudium**), spiritual books,

magazines, articles, etc. In particular, the Catechism will enable us to know better our Catholic faith.

c) Attending teachings and listening to preaching.

- CFC has a teaching and formation program, including marriage enrichment retreats.
- The word of God is spoken during Sunday Mass homilies, parish conferences, etc.
- Begin the habit of taking notes.

d) In the Catholic tradition, the intercession of Mary and the saints is a powerful tool of prayer. "The prayers of the Virgin Mary, in her Fiat and Magnificat, are characterized by the generous offering of her whole being in faith." (CCC 2622). A devotion to Mary and the saints is part and parcel of a Catholic tradition. Reading books on the lives of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints is also a good way to understand how the Holy Spirit acts in our lives.

C. Service and Fellowship

1. The third tool is service. Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, is at work in us, not just for our personal development but also to equip us for effective service for him and his people. We need to take on a mentality of service so that we see our whole life given over to God's work. We need to take on the heart of a servant (Mt. 20:26-28).

a) As we put the Lord first in our lives, he calls us to reach out also to others.

b) Service helps us grow because it touches the most basic attitudes we have of ourselves and our independence. To serve others is to be humble.

2. There are many ways we can serve:

a) We can serve God by the way we live: through daily prayer and Scripture reading; through the pursuit of righteousness and practice of holiness.

b) We also serve by performing the basic responsibilities God

has given us in our daily lives, e.g. doing our duties as parents, spouse, employee, etc.

c) We can serve others by recognizing and making use of the many opportunities for service in day-to-day life, e.g., offering a ride, visiting the sick, helping to care for the children of others, offering hospitality, etc.

d) We serve by making ourselves and our resources—our time, talent, and treasure—available for God's work.

- Doing good work (James 2:14-17).

- Supporting through prayer and financial contribution authentic Christian ministries that further the spread of the gospel.

- Looking for opportunities to give our time and energy to serve in a Christian group, such as Couples for Christ, on a regular basis.

3. The fourth tool is fellowship. It refers to almost everything that Christians do together as a body. It is the concretization of a spiritual reality that we are brothers and sisters belonging to one family.

a) We do not become Christians by ourselves. We must be joined to others in order to experience the fullness of Christian life. Fellowship is not an optional extra. We need the support of others. We need their wisdom and strength. We need to do things together.

b) We can experience Christian fellowship in a number of ways: worship in liturgies, prayer meetings, conferences; coming together for teaching and formation; serving together (like the service team in this CLP); and social gatherings.

c) We can experience this Christian fellowship in Couples for Christ. Next week we will explain what CFC is, its vision and mission, and what it does.

D. Sacraments

1. The fifth and most important tool for Catholics to grow in the Holy Spirit is the regular reception of the sacraments, particularly the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

2. There are 7 sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Penance (or Reconciliation), Eucharist (or Holy Communion), Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick. The seven sacraments are instituted by Christ and given to the Church to administer. They are necessary for our salvation.
3. The purpose of the sacraments is to make people holy, to build up the body of Christ, and to give worship to God. The sacraments impart sanctifying grace.
4. For couples, they must have received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Matrimony.
5. Although the sacraments of Confession and Communion are required to be received by Catholics only once a year, we should exert every effort to avail of these sacraments as often as possible.

E. Conclusion

1. This CLP, your commitment to Christ, the pray over for the power of the Holy Spirit—all these are just the beginning of an exciting, new life. We are still “babies in Christ” and we need to grow. This will happen if we make use of the 5 tools provided by God.
2. If you are faithful, you will grow in the Holy Spirit and be more blessed in your family life.

THE LIFE AND MISSION OF COUPLES FOR CHRIST

TALK 11

GOAL:

To explain the life and mission of Couples for Christ and to inspire people with the desire to be part of this community.

CORE MESSAGE:

Couples for Christ (CFC) is a Christian community for the renewal and strengthening of family life and making the love of God felt among the poor. It started in June 1981 in Manila, Philippines, with 16 couples. It is a highly evangelistic community and is officially recognized by the Vatican's Pontifical Council of the Laity as a private international association of pontifical right. As such, it has a God-given vision and mission, a statement of philosophy, and a 5-point commitment—The Covenant of Couples for Christ—which is embodied in a small white card that we carry with us all the time.

In CFC, we support one another primarily through households, which are small groups composed of from 4 to 7 couples and headed by a leader-couple. The households meet once a week in the home of members. We also have teaching and formation programs as well as regular activities such as leaders' conferences, theme weekend retreats, anniversaries, and others. We invite everyone who completes the CLP to be a part of God's work in Couples for Christ and to be ready to make the covenant.

EXPANDED OUTLINE

A. Introduction

1. Last week we talked about the basic tools for growth in our Christian life. One tool is the need to be in regular fellowship and supportive relationships with other Christians, which is best attained within a community.

2. This time we will present in some detail how we learned to appropriate God's wisdom and power for our family life as we entered into a committed relationship with one another as Christian couples in the community of Couples for Christ.
3. We will explain the life and mission of Couples for Christ, briefly trace its history, and describe some of its major programs and activities.

B. What is Couples for Christ?

1. Couples for Christ (CFC) is a Christian community for the renewal and strengthening of family life and making the love of God felt among the poor.
 - a) It started in June 1981 in Manila, Philippines, with 16 couples.
 - b) It is a highly evangelistic community that continues to grow. In 2014, there are about 700,000 active adult members and 300,000 kids and young adults in 105 countries throughout the world.
 - c) CFC is one with the Catholic Church. It is officially recognized by the Vatican's Pontifical Council of the Laity as a private international association of pontifical right.
 - d) Through its formation programs, CFC aims for its members to grow in holiness.

2. What are we called to do?

- a) Read the "CFC Statement of Vision and Mission".
 - Through *Building the Church of the Home*, CFC has established the Family Ministries (since 1993): Kids for Christ (KFC), Youth for Christ (YFC), Singles for Christ (SFC), Handmaids of the Lord (HOLD), and Servants of the Lord (SOLD). CFC has what is termed "womb-to-tomb" ministry.
- CFC has a Gift of Life program that seeks to address threats to family and life, and a strong advocacy in defending and promoting life from conception to natural death.
- Through *Building the Church of the Poor* (BCOP) CFC lives out the social teachings of the Church through CFC

ANCOP (Answering the Cry of the Poor) and the CFC Social Development Programs. ANCOP programs include Shelter, Health, and Education through the Child Sponsorship Program and Cornerstone (tutorial and values formation in public schools). The Social Development Programs are CFC's ministry work with the Migrants, Men and Women in Uniform, Prison, Good Governance, Environment, and Cooperatives.

3. b) Read the "CFC Statement of Philosophy".

From these we can see the importance of the mission of CFC.

a) The family as the basic unit of society is God's plan. "The future of humanity passes by way of the family" (Pope John Paul II, ***Familiaris Consortio***). However, there are many forces in the world that seek to destroy the family.

b) CFC has been raised by God to defend his work. Our task is to strengthen family life. This is our reason for being. We accomplish this by working for the renewal of individuals, families and the Church on a global basis and by providing a strong support environment for our members.

C. The Covenant of Couples for Christ

1. In CFC, we make a commitment to grow together in holiness as Christian couples, and to encourage and support one another in living a Spirit-filled Christian life.
2. We have a 5-point commitment—The Covenant of Couples for Christ—which is embodied in a small white card that we carry with us all the time. Read "The Covenant of Couples for Christ" and explain briefly.

D. How do We Support One Another in CFC?

1. Through households. All members of CFC belong to small groups which we call "households." At the end of this CLP, if you make your commitment to CFC, you will be assigned to a household.
 - a) The purpose of a household group is to have a smaller and more intimate environment for personal support in the Christian life, and to provide a means for encouraging and hastening growth as a Christian.

- Here you can share life experiences of God's love.
 - You can be helped to overcome obstacles in the Christian life.
 - You will develop real friendships and true brotherhood/sisterhood, without which our Christian life would lack joyful expression.
- b) A household is composed of from 4 to 7 couples and is headed by a leader-couple, and is set up immediately after the CLP.
- c) The household meets once a week, on the same day of the week as mutually agreed by its members.
- Less than a week would not provide enough contact to have adequate support and encouragement in the Christian life.
 - More than once a week may become a burden and may take time that is more properly allocated to work, family, personal needs, or Christian service.
- d) The household meetings are held in the homes of the group members, on rotation basis from week to week. Holding the household meetings in our homes has the following values:
- Worshipping the Lord in our home makes the truth that the home is a domestic church a concrete reality. And God's blessings will surely descend upon the home where God's people can be found, worshipping him together and growing in faith together.
 - The people living with us—our children, perhaps our parents, household help, the people who are closest to us—will be aware of what we are involved in and what we do every week. To them we will become people who are living their Christian faith openly and powerfully.
 - What we do in our home may be used by the Lord as an effective tool for evangelization, especially to our relatives, neighbours and friends.
- e) There are basically three ingredients in a typical household meeting: an extended period of prayer and worship, a time for sharing or discussion, and some time for fellowship.

2. By our ongoing teaching and formation.
 - a) There is a formal first-year teaching program.
 - Covenant Orientation (3 months after CLP)
 - Marriage Enrichment Retreat I (6 months after CLP)
 - Financial Stewardship (1 month after MER I)
 - Evangelization Training (12 months after CLP)
 - b) Beyond the first year, there are many other courses (e.g. Living as a People of God, Christian Personal Relationships, etc.) and various training modules for those who will undertake services in CFC.
 - c) Various teachings will also be given through prayer assemblies, conferences, other occasions, and through the CFC website (www.couplesforchristglobal.org). We also have books and other materials on evangelization, marriage, working with the poor, etc.
3. By the other regular activities of our community.
 - a) Annual leaders' conference and annual theme weekend retreat.
 - b) Monthly prayer assemblies (in lieu of the household meeting).
 - c) Lord's Day celebrations, anniversaries, family days, evangelization rallies, leaders' conferences, social activities, etc.
 - d) Participation in Church-led activities and advocacies.

E. Conclusion

1. We are living in exciting times. As we see the deterioration of Christian values and family life all around us in all parts of the world, we are also seeing God's loving and protective hand in trying to restore the Christian family back to his original plan.
 - a) We need to see this spiritual drama with the eyes of faith.
 - b) We are called to be part of God's work and we should gladly respond to his divine efforts of restoring families back to his kingdom.
 - c) We are inviting you to be a part of God's work by being a part of us in CFC.

2. Think and pray about "The Covenant of CFC."
 - a) Look at the covenant as an ideal, not yet fully in place, but as what God calls us to.
 - b) What is important for you to be able to make the covenant is that:
 - You understand it.
 - You accept it as helpful and even necessary for Christian family living.
 - You will try to live it out.
 - c) We precisely need one another in CFC in order to support each other in living out the covenant.
3. If you decide that CFC is for you, come back next week, ready to make the covenant.

CFC VISION

FAMILIES IN THE HOLY SPIRIT RENEWING THE FACE OF THE EARTH

Moved by the Holy Spirit, one with the Catholic Church, blessed to witness to Christ's love and service, Couples for Christ is a united global community of family evangelizers that sets the world on fire with the fullness of God's transforming love.

CFC MISSION

BUILDING THE CHURCH OF THE HOME, BUILDING THE CHURCH OF THE POOR

We are Couples for Christ. We are committed to live in God's righteousness and holiness, evangelizing people through a life of love and service; we shall work for the renewal of families that will serve God and build generations of Christian leaders; and, we shall pursue Total Christian Liberation through social justice, respect for life, and work with the poor.

COUPLES FOR CHRIST

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Couples for Christ adheres to a set of beliefs and ideals, from which flow its Christian values, attitudes and behavior, as well as its teachings, programs and approaches to Christian renewal within the context of family relationships.

WE BELIEVE in marriage as an indissoluble institution as taught by our Lord Jesus Christ (Mt. 19:6); and that God created marriage primarily for love between man and woman, and for the procreation and proper rearing of children.

WE BELIEVE that God created man and wife with equal personal worth and dignity; and that God ordained order in the family by giving the man the role as head of the family and the woman as his helpmate and support, which roles best express their complementarity.

WE BELIEVE in the inalienable and irreplaceable right and responsibility of parents to educate their children; and that children need to be educated in essential human and Christian values for them to become responsible and mature members of society.

WE BELIEVE that the family, in practicing the gospel message, shares in the life and mission of the Church—through prayers, evangelization and service to others, especially to the poor.

WE BELIEVE that Christian family renewal can best be achieved by inviting Jesus to be the Lord of our homes, by allowing the power of the Holy Spirit to lead our family lives, and through the full use of all spiritual gifts at our disposal.

WE BELIEVE in the maternal mediation and intercession of Our Blessed Mother Mary in bringing us all closer to her Son Jesus. Devotion to Mary leads us to devotion to Jesus that will lead to our sanctification.

TRANSFORMATION IN CHRIST

TALK 12

GOAL:

To encourage people to live out actively the new life in the power of the Holy Spirit, and to excite them about becoming a part of the CFC community.

CORE MESSAGE:

This talk marks the end of the Christian Life Program. However, it is not really the end, but just the beginning. The Lord has laid the foundation for our transformation throughout the Christian Life Program. Our transformation, and what we have gone through, may be likened to the story of the man born blind in the Gospel of John 9:1-38. To continue our transformation, we need to grow in holiness and discipleship and have a greater commitment to service. This we can attain in Couples for Christ.

Christ could have restored the sight of the man born blind by merely saying the words "be healed". But Jesus has chosen to go through a "process" of making mud paste with spittle, rubbing it on the eyes of the blind man, and sending him to the Pool of Siloam. In the same way, Jesus could have transformed us and opened our eyes to his plan by some other means. But he has chosen to open our eyes and transform us through the "process" of the Christian Life Program. Let us thus praise and thank the Lord for calling us, for opening our eyes, and for starting the process of our transformation in Christ.

EXPANDED OUTLINE

A. Introduction

1. Today marks the end of our Christian Life Program. But it is not really the end, but just the beginning. We have before us a whole new life with God and with one another. It is exciting!
2. The Lord has laid the foundation for our transformation throughout this Christian Life Program.

- a) In the first module, we learned the basic truths about Christianity, and the most basic truth is that God loves us. He revealed his love by sending his only Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us. We learned who Jesus Christ is. He is the Son of God who suffered on the cross and died so that we may have eternal life. Thus we follow him as our Lord, we become his disciples, we become Christians. To be a Christian is to have a personal relationship with Jesus. And we respond to everything that he has done for us by our repentance and faith.
- b) In the second module, we learned how to live an authentic Christian life; that the Christian ideal is to love God with all our strength, with all our heart, and with all our mind, and that we should love our neighbour as God loves us. We learned how to live as a Christian family, which can only happen if we live a life in the Holy Spirit.
- c) In the third module, we received the power to serve when we were prayed over in the Holy Spirit. We learned how to grow in the Holy Spirit. We learned the vision and mission of Couples for Christ.
3. We need to allow the Lord to continue the process of our transformation in Christ. The Holy Spirit is at work so that we can grow to know, love and serve God more.

B. Our Transformation: Story of the Blind Man

1. Our transformation, and what we have gone through during the past weeks, may be likened to the story of the man born blind in the Gospel of John 9:1-38. This story gives a lesson on the blind man's transformation in Christ.
 - a) Here Jesus opened the eyes of a man born blind, and he did it through some sort of a process or ceremony. Instead of just saying "be healed" as he had done in his other miracles, in this particular incident, Jesus made mud paste, placed it on the blind man's eyes and asked him to wash it.
 - b) The first time the blind man was asked on who cured his blindness, he responded by saying that he was cured by "the man called Jesus". His answer revealed an element of unfamiliarity and remoteness. It was obvious that he did not know who Jesus was—that man, whom I do not know but people call him Jesus, yes, he was the one who cured me.

- c) The second time he was asked on who cured him, he responded that the man was a prophet. This is a significant transformation. From "a man called Jesus", a statement that reveals unfamiliarity, the blind man now professes "he is a prophet". The blind man has now started to recognize him, and has progressed to the level of admitting that Jesus is a prophet.
- d) Towards the end of the story, the transformation has come to its fullest. From the unfamiliarity of a statement like "the man called Jesus", to a recognition of what is good in "he is a prophet", the blind man has been transformed into a believer in his final statement, "Lord, I believe." The blind man's eyes and mind were opened and he progressed in his knowledge of Jesus from "that man" to "prophet" to "my Lord".
2. As we come to the end of the Christian Life Program, we should ask ourselves, have we achieved this transformation? From one who only remotely knows "the man called Jesus", are we now ready to proclaim him as "my Lord"?

C. Continuing our Transformation

1. To continue our transformation in Christ, we need to grow in holiness and discipleship and have a greater commitment to service.
 - a) Growth in holiness (1 Pt. 1:15-16). It is not an accident that you joined the CLP. God called you. And as God who called you is holy, you are also enjoined to live in holiness.
 - b) Growth in discipleship (Mt. 16:24). To be disciples of Jesus, we have to carry our own crosses. We have to be like Christ who embraced the cross for others. We must listen to the language of the cross and live out its parabolic meaning.
 - c) Greater commitment to service (1 Pt. 4:10). Our transformation through a greater commitment to service is achieved by serving God, neighbour, society, Church and country.
2. As we grow and are transformed, God wants us to raise up families in the Holy Spirit that will renew the face of the earth.
 - a) For the fulfilment of God's plan (Eph. 1:10).
 - b) For the fulfilment of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20).

D. Transformation Through Couples for Christ

1. It is a great privilege to be where we are now—to have a personal relationship with Jesus and have the support of a vibrant community like Couples for Christ. This happened through no worth of our own but through God's mercy and grace. We ought to respond with gratitude and humility.
2. In Couples for Christ, we can continue our transformation in Christ.
 - a) We will continue to grow in personal holiness through our regular prayer time and Scripture reading, reflection and study; through our faithfulness to the covenant of Couples for Christ; and through the CFC Formation Program.
 - b) As a member of Couples for Christ, there will be numerous opportunities to render service.
 - c) In Couples for Christ, we will develop a greater commitment to evangelization. Evangelization is the global mission of Couples for Christ. Every CFC member is an evangelist. We must endeavour to bring others to CFC to meet Christ.

E. Conclusion

1. If Christ so wished, he could have restored the sight of the man born blind by merely saying the words "be healed" or "open your eyes." But Jesus has chosen to go through a "process" or a "ceremony" of making mud paste with spittle, rubbing it on the eyes of the blind man, and sending him to the Pool of Siloam.
2. We are that blind man whom Jesus has chosen to be transformed. Jesus could have transformed all of us and opened our eyes to his plan by some other means. But he has chosen to open our eyes and transform us through the "process" of the Christian Life Program.
3. Yes, the Lord has chosen you. He has chosen to open your eyes so that you will begin to see God's plan for you. His plan is to bring you to his heavenly kingdom.
4. Let us all rejoice and be glad. Let us praise and thank the Lord for calling us, for opening our eyes, and for starting the process of our transformation in Christ.

DEDICATION CEREMONY

1. The leader explains the commitment ceremony.
2. The leader invites everyone to stand. A song of offering oneself is sung (e.g., Here I am Lord, Amen Our Hearts Cry).
3. The leader invites everyone to read out the covenant of the Couples for Christ. They all read out loud together.
4. The leader prays over the newly committed brothers and sisters, inviting the old members to pray in their heart with him. During this time of prayer, it is appropriate to insert one solemn song (e.g., Spirit of the Living God).
5. The leader welcomes the new brothers and sisters to CFC and invites the old members to express acceptance by means of one big applause. This is followed by spontaneous greeting and welcoming of the new members by the old members. The music ministry plays "Welcome to the Family" and other lively songs.
6. Fellowship follows.

CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM

TRAINING

PROGRAM SCHEDULE AND PREPARATIONS

SCHEDULE

1:00 - 1:30 pm	Arrival and Fellowship
1:30 - 2:00 pm	Worship
2:00 - 2:45 pm	Talk No. 1: EVANGELISM AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE
2:45 - 3:00 pm	Break
3:00 - 3:45 pm	Talk No. 2: WHAT IS A CLP?
3:45 - 4:15 pm	Snack Break
4:15 - 5:00 pm	Talk No. 3: HOW TO HANDLE A DISCUSSION GROUP
5:00 - 5:30 pm	Open Forum and Closing Prayer

RESOURCE PERSONS

1. Worship leader
2. Speakers
3. Elder (at least a unit head) for open forum
4. Guitarist
5. Service Team

RESOURCE MATERIALS

1. Attendance sheets
2. Sound system
3. Tape recorder and blank tapes
4. Hand outs
 - a. Evangelism and Spiritual Warfare
 - b. The CLP of the CFC
 - c. CLP team manual
5. Merienda

EVANGELISM AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

CLP TRAINING TALK 1

EXPANDED OUTLINE

A. THE SITUATION IN THE WORLD TODAY

1. There are two kingdoms opposed to each other the kingdom of darkness under Satan and the kingdom of light under Jesus Christ. The world is in Satan's grip (1 John 5:19b). And his kingdom includes not only those who are evil, but also those who are uncommitted. By being such, they serve Satan's purpose.
2. Jesus has mounted a rescue operation, an attack against Satan's kingdom. It involves bringing people from darkness to light. It is taking territory from Satan. Satan does not stand still. His dominion and his power over people is threatened. He undertakes defensive action. This spiritual battle is continuing.
3. All people are born into this battle for the hearts, minds, and souls of men. More specifically, we in CFC, having joined God's kingdom, are in the thick of the fight. Because God uses us as instruments for other men's redemption, we become a direct threat to Satan's dominion. As we evangelize and reach out to other couples, especially through a CLP, we actively enter into battle. Evangelism is spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:12).
4. Being combatants, we need weapons and protection. We need means for offense and defense.

B. OUR SPIRITUAL WEAPONS

We are waging God's battle (2 Cor. 10:3-5). God gives us the following offensive weapons:

1. Commitment (to Christ's cause).
 - a. Leading us to lives of righteousness, purity, holiness (2 Cor. 6:7).

- b. We don't need to be saints as yet, but just have a passion for God's righteousness and a hatred of evil.
 - c. Have purity of motives and desires.
 - serve for the glory of God, not our own.
 - guard against the danger of pride.
 - have humility, know that without Jesus' victory on the cross, we can't succeed.
 - d. We will be ineffective if we are not righteous (Mt. 7:3 5).
2. Zeal. Single-mindedness of purpose. Perseverance.
- a. Live totally for the Lord (2 Cor. 5:15).
 - b. Phil. 3:7 8.
3. The Word of God.
- a. A sword (Eph. 6:17b. Heb. 4:12)!
 - b. In the CLP, we speak God's word (in the talk and follow up in the discussion group). God's word has power (1 Thes. 1:5).
4. Spiritual gifts.
- a. 1 Cor. 12 and other passages.
 - b. Some applications:
 - Wisdom to answer questions, to lead discussion
 - Discernment to know where a person is at
 - c. Tongues and praise.

C. OUR PROTECTION

Eph. 6:13 18. The armor of God.

It is God's provision alone which will give us adequate protection. Let us consider the points of attack by the devil, and how the armor of God can protect us.

1. Truth – Protection against lies and errors.
- a. Satan is the father of lies.
 - b. He will try to make us doubt God's word (e.g. You're too sinful to serve), or falsely accuse us, or malign God's character (e.g.

God is not a loving God; He does not love you).

- c. Rest on the truths of God's love. God's power, etc.
2. Justice, or righteousness – Protection against evil and sinful desires.
- a. If Satan does not succeed by lies, he will try bombarding our minds with evil thoughts.
 - b. Resist these temptations.
Note: Temptations are not sins unless entertained.
3. Gospel of peace – Protection against an easy and lazy life.
- a. If Satan cannot disturb us, then he will try to make us as comfortable and cozy as possible, so that we won't disturb him.
 - b. Beware of living a "carpet slipper Christianity", wherein one journeys to heaven in first class comfort. Such persons have laid down their arms and are no longer concerned to attack and invade enemy held territory.
 - c. We need to get our footgear on, leave the comforts of home, and go out after Satan's captives. Have zeal to propagate the gospel.
4. Faith – Protection against unbelief.
- a. Doubt assails us. Fear of failure can cripple our actions. The nagging question: Can I do it?
 - b. We need to have faith in God's promises and have faith that this is God's work (Heb. 13:5b 6).
 - c. We need to realize that we are acting not by our own power but by God's.
5. Salvation
- a. The word used for salvation means both physical as well as spiritual well being.
 - b. Satan will try to make you sick, make spouses fight, may even try to get you killed.
 - c. But we have God's protection.

- d. Before leaving your home, pray. Put on the "crash helmet" of salvation.
6. Word of God.
 - a. Both a weapon and protection.
 - b. For CLP participants, stress daily Scripture readings and recommended books.
7. Prayers.
 - a. Pray at every opportunity.
 - b. Different kinds:
 - Personal Prayer
 - Group prayer (at various times during the CLP)
 - Intercessory prayer
 - Fasting

D. CONCLUSION

Evangelism is spiritual warfare. There are four points to stress:

1. Guard against two extremes: (1) the view that there is no devil; and (2) the view that all negative things or happenings are attributable to the devil.
2. Remember that Jesus has already won the victory in this fight against Satan. And the God who enlists us in his army also trains, equips, and leads us.
3. James 4:7. We have power to rout the devil, but such is premised on our submission to God.
Importance of righteousness, faith, dependence on God.
4. 2 Tim. 2:3. As good soldiers, we can expect hardships and difficulties.
We are to bear them and overcome them.

When you accepted Jesus as Lord, you signed up for God's army. In this war, there are no non combatants. Since the time you joined CFC, you have been in boot camp, being trained for the fight against Satan.

Now we are having a CLP. A major battle is on!

Note: Reference material is "Spiritual Warfare" by Michael Harper

WHAT IS THE CLP?

CLP TRAINING TALK 2

EXPANDED OUTLINE

1. INTRODUCTION

- a. You're all familiar with the CLP, having gone through one. But now you're on the giving rather than receiving end.
- b. The CLP is the initiations course leading into a life in the Holy Spirit. More specifically, it is the entry point into CFC.

2. GOALS OF THE CLP

- a. The CLP is evangelism. It is proclamation of the gospel.
- b. Its goal is to draw couples into a renewed commitment to the Lord. Through it they experience the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.
- c. Renewal is on three levels: the individual, the family and the church.

3. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

- a. The CLP is for a total of 12 weeks. It is divided into 3 months of 4 talks each.
- b. Go over each of the modules, 12 talks and 2 one to one meetings describing the content and showing the flow from one to the next.
- c. Lord's Day celebration at the end of CLP:
 - opportunity to experience the Lord's Day
 - a time of fellowship and sharing
 - announcement of groupings.

4. DYNAMICS

a. Format:

Arrival and fellowship
Songs and prayer
(describe different prayer styles per module)
Talks
Discussion
Fellowship

b. The last three are the vital ingredients of a CLP. They are the proven formula for drawing couples to Christ.

5. ATTENDANCE

a. The CLP is open to all Christian couples. They should have previously been exposed to personal evangelism.

b. Being an integrated course, with one talk building on another, participants should attend all sessions.

c. If unavoidable, absences are allowed. Not more than one in the first module. Not more than 3 overall. Make up sessions for absences.

6. THE TEAM

a. The team leader, his wife, the assistant leader. Brief description of their roles.

b. Discussion leaders and assistants. They are the ones basically responsible for drawing in the participants. Will be described more in the next talk.

c. Servant and music ministry.

d. A whole household might serve the CLP.

Note: See reaction IV -Id in the household head's manual.

7. CONCLUSION

- a. We need both faith and faithfulness.
 - faith, that we are doing God's work
 - faithfulness, to our own part in God's work
 - study and prepare
 - be punctual
 - be a person who can be counted on
 - be dedicated to your service
 - have the heart of a servant
- b. We need to be living witnesses to our new life in the Holy Spirit. The participants are looking at us. It's a big effect on them to see selfless caring, wholehearted service, unrestricted love, and brotherly interaction.
- c. You too will grow and receive blessings. Expect the Lord to work powerfully in your life.

Note: Reference material for the speaker is the CLP Team Manual.

HOW TO HANDLE A DISCUSSION GROUP

CLP TRAINING TALK 3

SPEAKER'S OUTLINE

Note: The resource material for this talk is taken from the CLP Team Manual. The purpose of the talk is to familiarize the new discussion group leaders with their role and what to expect in the CLP. The speaker has the flexibility to arrange the material in a way he's comfortable with.

The following are found in the CLP Team Manual:

- A. Role of discussion group leaders
- B. Discussion groups
 - 1. Purpose
 - 2. Guidelines
 - 3. Dynamics
 - 4. Team meetings
 - 5. Make up sessions
- C. Personal dialogues
- D. Closing exhortation
"The Team"

NOTE: The handout for the participants is the CLP Team Manual itself.

TEAM LEADER'S GUIDE

Dear brother in Christ,

The peace and joy of the Lord be with you!

Congratulations! You have just received an assignment that will provide you great joy and satisfaction. You are now at the forefront of the spiritual battle being waged for the hearts and minds of people. And you are on the winning side! Expect the glory of God to unfold in the coming weeks.

For you to function most effectively, please do the following:

1. Study this Team Leader's Guide carefully and thoroughly. It contains all the instructions you need to handle the CLP.
2. Be constantly in touch with your Chapter Head, or whomever he would designate to oversee your CLP. Your present service is directly under the authority of your Chapter Head. Keep him informed of the CLP's progress and eagerly seek his input.
3. Exercise your authority over the team confidently. Discipline and reliability are musts for each member of the team. Only in this way can they serve effectively and grow in their own commitment to the Lord.
4. Rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. This CLP is God's work, and so He will provide. Come before the Lord often in prayer, and get your team to do the same.

Thank you for responding to the Lord's call. You are making a major contribution to moving forward the mission of Couples for Christ.

God bless you.

Faithfully in Christ,

CFC INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL

GENERAL INFORMATION

A. TEAM LEADER'S PROFILE

The CLP team leader is a person who:

1. Loves the Lord. He has committed his life to Jesus Christ and desires to serve Him with his whole heart and strength.
2. Is a faithful member of CFC. He is faithful to his covenant in CFC. He has taken on the vision of CFC for Christian family life renewal. He is supportive of the overall leadership and good order in the body.
3. Is growing in Christian maturity. He is not negligent of personal prayer and reading of the Bible. He has put fairly good order in his own family life.
4. Is a tested leader of CFC. He is at least a Household Head, with the qualities that can make him a Unit Head. He is able to command the respect of his peers and subordinates.

B. TEAM LEADER'S ROLE

The CLP team leader runs and oversees the whole CLP. More specifically, he does the following:

1. Puts the team together, in consultation with and subject to the approval of his Chapter Head (or whomever the latter designates).
2. Arranges the practical aspects of the CLP, such as venue, schedules, speakers, snacks, etc.
3. Recommends to his Chapter Head the various speakers, and upon approval, makes the necessary connection with the designated speaker.
4. Watches over the whole CLP and ensures that all aspects are being handled in the proper way.

5. Acts as emcee for all the sessions.
6. Cares for the team members and helps to form them into a group of brothers and sisters with unity of spirit and an ability to work together well.
7. Sees to it that each participant in the CLP is cared for well and is growing in his/her own response to God's call.

C. SPIRITUAL APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

Leading a CLP is real evangelism. As such, it is spiritual warfare waged with spiritual weapons and spiritual gifts. The team leader needs to have:

1. FAITH.
 - a) That this is God's work, and therefore it is He who will empower and strengthen those who serve (2 Cor. 3:4 6).
 - b) That Jesus is with you, working through you and speaking his words through you to change people, to convert their hearts (Mt. 28:20; Acts 1:8). Focus on his presence. Call upon him always.
 - c) That the words of the Bible carry extraordinary power (Heb. 4:12). Have this conviction: Christ can convert any person and he uses the Word of God for this purpose.
2. ZEAL FOR THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.
 - a) The CLP team leader must have a deep conviction for his work in the CLP. He must be convinced of its supreme importance in making a difference in the lives of people (2 Cor. 5:14).
 - b) The extent of the team's desire, spiritual hunger and eagerness to evangelize will be the extent by which God can unleash the power of the Holy Spirit through them (1 Thes. 1:5).
 - c) The team should be composed of men and women of great love, sincerity, conviction, patience, and affection (1 Thes. 2:1 12).

D. PASTORAL APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

1. Understand the participant's situation.

a) Their coming from a secular environment.

- You need to set the tone. You need to get them into a different frame of mind. You need to plant faith.
- Testimonies and genuine friendships do a lot. So can songs and short times of prayer.

b) Their state of personal transition. They may be dissatisfied, restless, anxious, hopeful, despairing, ambitious, etc.

- Be in touch with it. Speak to it. Channel that energy to Christ.

c) The existence of personal problems. They may be lonely, have few meaningful personal relationships, be not quite weaned from parents, trying to hold on or maybe get free, etc.

- Be sensitive to these and get the team to take any available opportunity to address these.

d) Inadequate notions of Christianity.

- Identify them and speak about them.

2. Get to know people individually as much as possible through talking to each one individually, and through touching base briefly but frequently with the discussion group leaders.

a) Don't be too removed, busy, or anxious.

b) You may not realize it, but people will consider it a privilege to speak with you.

3. Keep an eye on the goals of each session and where the participants are and could be. Lead them to where they should be. The dynamics of the sessions are in your hands to shape as will best serve them. Make adjustments if necessary in order to help move people forward.

4. Keep a pulse on people changing, getting stubborn, on spiritual warfare, spiritual breakthroughs, conversions, etc. Speak to it. Draw good things to everyone's attention whenever possible.
5. Keep getting feedback from the discussion group leaders, the assistant team leader and other persons actively involved in the program.

E. IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

1. The team leader needs to communicate with the team members about each specific situation that confronts them: the incident that happened last week, the problem that a person in the program is having now, the things they need to do in the next session, etc. Talk about each situation in a very concrete way. Come to a real oneness of mind about each specific situation. Of course, talk in a responsible way, with the appropriate confidentiality.

This kind of communication and discussion will develop in the team leader the pastoral discernment and judgment needed to be of real service to the people in the program.

2. The team leader, as well as the discussion group leaders, have to be constantly observing what the true situation is. Besides staying in communication with one another, they have to stay in open communication with the program participants. They have to ask directly what is happening to them in relation to the Lord and to the program. The team has to know what has happened to the participants in order to know what they need from the team.
3. The team has to communicate effectively about what is happening in the discussion groups, and this is done in the team meetings. These meetings should help teach us how to work better in the program, to train us to be master builders for Christ. Don't be afraid of the truth. Don't keep difficulties and problems to yourself. Discuss the work and its effect so that the team can keep on doing what has been done well, and change what has not been done well.

F. IMPORTANT INGREDIENTS IN A CLP

1. Most of the CLP sessions have 3 essential ingredients: a talk (teaching), group discussion, and fellowship. All 3 are important for the success of the program and should be handled accordingly.

2. Furthermore, the other elements and dynamics of a CLP all contribute to attracting a participant. Some are attracted by the talk, others by the discussion, still others by the songs, friendly atmosphere, care from the team, the new ways of praying, etc. Pursue everything with enthusiasm and faith that God uses all these elements to accomplish His purpose in the CLP.

G. OVERSIGHT OF THE TEAM LEADER'S WORK

1. Immediate oversight of the CLP as a whole and of the team leader's work in particular is done by the designated supervising Unit Head, who is appointed and is himself overseen by the Chapter Head, in whose jurisdiction the CLP is conducted.
2. The Chapter Head should be kept informed of developments in the CLP on a weekly basis, either by the team leader or the supervising Unit Head.
3. All questions and problems that cannot be handled adequately by the team leader should be referred to the supervising Unit Head for immediate action and resolution.
4. The team leader should eagerly seek the pastoral input of those overseeing his service. He should recognize the tremendous opportunity for personal growth that this service affords him.

PRIOR TO CLP SESSIONS

A. CANDIDATES / PARTICIPANTS

1. The CLP is open to all Christian couples who are validly married. There are however exceptions to this general rule, to wit:

a) Unmarried couples who have no impediment to becoming validly married may attend. However, after Module One, they must signify their intention to get married in church at the soonest possible time.

b) Couples who have previous valid marriages (for either one or both), have been divorced or separated, and now are living together, are not to be invited to the CLP. However, if such a couple unwittingly is invited, they may continue only on the following conditions:

- That they have valid grounds to secure from the Church a declaration of nullity for their previous marriage(s), and
- That they will vigorously pursue securing such.

c) The CLP is for Christians and thus non Christians are not to be invited. However, in case of a mixed marriage between a Christian and a non Christian, where the non Christian is willing to try the program, such a couple may be invited. After Module One, they may continue only if the non Christian signifies his openness to become a Christian. And they may join CFC only if the non Christian actually begins the process of becoming a Christian.

2. Each participant couple should fill up and submit an Information Sheet (sample per Annex A).

a) The information sheet may be amended to suit a particular local situation. For example, in an area where there is divorce and there are many second marriages, the information sheet might contain a question on whether one has a previous marriage.

- b) All information sheets should be submitted to the team leader not later than a week before the orientation session.
- However, participants may still be accepted at the start of the CLP. In fact, at the option of the team leader as directed by his Chapter Head, participants may be accepted up to Session 2 of the CLP.
- c) Ask the person recommending a certain participant couple to give some personal information about the couple, information for the use of the team leader and the couple's discussion leaders, which can help them in caring for the couple, or have a firmer feel for where they are at. Most often such information would involve personal problems, doubts, fears, anxieties, insecurities, etc.
3. An ideal number for a CLP would be about 25 couples. This number is not too small so as not to make optimum use of our resource inputs, and not too large as to become hard to manage, or where individuals cannot really get to know everyone else personally. However, we will accept whatever number the Lord gives us. Thus through the years, we have experienced CLPs for one couple as well as for 100 couples.

B. SETTING UP DISCUSSION GROUPS

1. One key to successful discussion groups is setting them up well from the very beginning. There are two main principles to be followed here:
 - a) Put persons together who we think can be comfortable with each other and thus can interact well as a whole.
 - b) Appoint a discussion leader who can best relate to the group, one who can thus help each member the most.
2. The discussion groups are set up after the first session of the CLP. Use the list of couples who attended this session, plus any others who missed the session but who are supposed to attend the program proper (feedback from those who invited them). The groupings must be ready before the start of the first talk.
3. Each discussion group would ideally have 4 to 5 people, excluding the leader. Men are grouped separately from women.

4. Grouping people together.

a) People are to be grouped together according to some common denominators, such as:

- AGE. e.g., Much older people can be grouped together, so too with very young people. As a general guide, the age difference between the oldest and youngest member of the group should not exceed 10 years.
- EDUCATION. e.g. Those with post graduate degrees may be comfortable with other more educated persons.
- GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF RESIDENCES. Maybe a group composed of people all living in and around a particular area. This is also preparatory to household groupings, which are almost always based geographically.
- POSITION IN BUSINESS e.g., top level executives may relate better with peers.
- SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND. You may have a group of people who are already in the renewal. They can move forward faster during the CLP.
- OTHERS.

b) Obviously, groupings will not necessarily be quite so clear cut. The above are just guides. But the basic idea is to group together those who can relate well with each other, and to avoid extremes (e.g., very rich with very poor). Use your judgment in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

c) Group the participants together first, then choose the leader couple who you think can best relate to the particular group.

d) Depending on the actual turnout for the first talk, there may be a need to regroup, so also after the second talk. From here on, attendance should stabilize.

5. Grouping people together takes time, study, prayer and discernment. Apply yourself adequately to the task. This initial effort will prove its value throughout the program.

6. Provide the discussion leaders with a copy of the information sheets of those assigned to them. Relate to them whatever additional information has been provided by those who recommended the participants.

C. VENUE

1. The CLP may be held in a variety of places, to wit:
 - a) In the home of a CFC member.
 - This is desirable due to the informal, comfortable, and non threatening atmosphere of a home.
 - Further, it emphasizes the reality of the Christian home and family as a domestic Church.
 - b) In a Church or parish facility.
 - c) In any other venue such as a school classroom, a restaurant, an office conference room, etc.
2. The main considerations for choosing a venue are:
 - a) Size.
 - Is the area big enough to hold the participants and team comfortably?
 - Is there enough space when the participants break up into discussion groups?
 - b) Location.
 - Is it central and accessible?
 - c) Conduciveness to program activity.
 - Is it comfortable?
 - Is the neighborhood quiet enough?

D. LOGISTICS

1. The following are needed for each CLP session:
 - Lectern for speaker
 - Sound system
 - Recording system (video or audio)
 - Song sheets
 - Talk handouts for participants
 - Book table (especially for books listed as suggested reading)
 - Attendance sheet
 - Nametags
 - Blank information sheets (for those who haven't submitted)
 - Snacks
 - Emergency lights and/or candles (in case of power failure)
2. The snacks should be a simple one. It should be within the budget set by the overall leadership. Possible exceptions could be for the 9th and 12th sessions.

E. TALKS

1. Most of the actual teaching in the CLP is done in the talks.
2. Speakers are chosen by consensus between the team leader and the supervising Unit Head, subject to approval by the Chapter Head.
 - a) Speakers are taken from the ranks of CFC members only.
 - b) Talks are to be given by an individual or by a husband wife team. Both men and women can give talks. However, the following talks are reserved for men only: Orientation, talk 4, talk 9, talk 11, and talk 12. Furthermore, the majority of talks in the CLP must be given by men.
 - c) More experienced speakers are normally fielded for the first module.
 - d) The dedication talk, since it includes official acceptance of new members into the body, should be handled by an elder.
3. Ideally, all talks, except those to be given by experienced speakers, should be previewed and screened. This is done by having

the speaker give the talk before a selected audience, such as the Chapter Head or the CLP team leader or the household group of the speaker. This will be a time for constructive and brotherly criticism, with the goal of coming up with a talk that is clear, powerful, upbuilding and inspirational, free of anything that might be taken negatively by the participants.

4. Speakers must be faithful to talk outlines.

- a) The expanded talk outline is the talk itself. The speaker merely needs to flesh it out.
- b) Speakers should avoid the temptation of putting a lot of other material into the talk, no matter how interesting or seemingly helpful. This might just obscure the basic message of the talk, or overlap with the other talks.
- c) There is a Core Message provided in the expanded talk outline. This means that these are the points that are most essential and the speaker should not digress from it.

5. The guidelines for talks are given in Annex B.

THE CLP SESSIONS

A. PRAYER

1. In the CLP we are doing God's work, and good fruit can be achieved only under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. We connect with the Holy Spirit through prayer.

a) Thus we have to come before the Lord and put our work in His hands often and throughout the program. Thus we pray:

- before we go to the session
- at the pre session team meeting
- at the start of the session immediately prior to the talk
- before and after the group discussion (by the group leaders)
- before the snack (to bless the food)
- at the close of the session immediately after the fellowship
- at the post session team meeting

b) The team leader leads in prayer. At times he may designate this to the assistant team leader.

2. It is recommended that the chapter put together "prayer warriors" for the duration of the CLP. While the whole chapter should be praying for all its CLPs, a specific group of men and women should be praying specifically for each session of a specific CLP, especially during the actual hours that the sessions are ongoing.

3. During the CLP itself, we utilize different forms of prayer. Thus our communal prayer at the start of each session is as follows:

a) During Module 1 – The team leader makes a short prayer for all. No charismatic prayer.

- No clapping during singing. No raising of hands.

b) During Module 2 – Involvement by the rest of the team and also the participants through short prayers of thanksgiving and petition (introduced by the team leader at the start of Module 2).

- Clapping during singing may be introduced. Still no raising of hands.
- c) During Module 3 – Introduction of vocal prayer. Full charismatic prayer.
4. The speaker is always prayed over by the team prior to the session.
- a) The praying over is done by a few members of the team, not by all, since the rest need to be available to greet the participants as they come in.
 - b) The prayer itself is done by the team leader, and is just a short prayer for protection and empowerment. A few minutes should be sufficient.

B. PUNCTUALITY

1. The team members must be at the CLP venue at the time designated by the team leader.
 - a) They must all be present for the pre session team meeting.
 - b) They must be there ahead of the participants, ready to welcome and take care of those in their discussion groups.
 - c) They must arrange their schedule on the day of the CLP such that they are not pressed for time nor unnecessarily hassled by the day's activities. They should in fact provide enough time to come before the Lord individually and thus prepare themselves spiritually for the task at hand.
2. It is important to start the CLP sessions on time.
 - a) After the orientation session, make clear to the participants at what time the succeeding sessions will start. Impress upon them the need to be punctual.
 - b) Do not delay the start of the session by more than 10 minutes.
 - c) A good way to allow more time for latecomers to arrive is to practice songs. In this way, you start on time, but delay the talk until more arrive.

C. ATTENDANCE

1. Since the CLP is an integrated course for renewal, all the sessions are important. Thus the CLP participants should be present for all the sessions.
2. However, we do recognize that there could be very good reasons for absences. Thus we make provisions for absences.
 - a) We allow not more than one absence for the first module, and not more than three absences for the whole CLP.
 - b) Beyond these absences, the participant couple would normally be asked to discontinue the CLP.
 - c) There can be exceptions to the above, but only in extreme cases and only with the approval of the Chapter Head. To grant an exception, you should see that the couple is very eager for the CLP / CFC and also that the reasons for the absences are very valid.
 - d) Should either husband or wife be unable to attend a particular session, the spouse should be encouraged to attend by himself/herself.
3. In case of absences:
 - a) The discussion group leaders should call or visit any absent members of their group as soon as possible after the CLP session in order to find out why they were absent.
 - The intention is primarily to show concern (They may be sick or worse).
 - It is an opportunity to encourage them to go on with the program (They may be tempted not to continue).
 - This allows you to know if any couple is no longer willing to go on, and thus act accordingly.
 - b) All absences need to be made up for by listening to the recorded talks, normally before the next session. You should also arrange for some form of discussion to occur.

4. You should be strict in implementing the above guidelines on absences. This is for the good of CFC as a whole. There will always be another CLP for a couple to join, should there be genuine interest.

D. CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Team members are to dress appropriately and modestly.
2. Team members should try to avoid smoking at any time during the CLP. Smoking for team members is absolutely prohibited during prayers, during the talk if inside the session hall, and during the discussion group meeting.
3. In a multi racial CLP, team members should converse, even just among themselves, only in the "official" language(s) for that CLP. We can turn off participants by conversing in languages or dialects alien to them.
4. Team members must avoid any behavior (such as talking among themselves) that would disrupt in any way the session or the participants' concentration.
5. Team members should mingle as much as possible with the participants, and not keep to themselves.
6. Name tags are to be worn by CFC members at all times.

E. CULTURAL ASPECTS

1. The CLP, aside from being the entry point for membership in CFC, is a microcosm of the life and world of CFC. Being in a CLP prepares one for entering more fully into the way of life in CFC. As such, the atmosphere in the CLP and the conduct of the team members are to conform to the culture of CFC in every way.
2. The team leader ensures cultural conformity in setting up the CLP and in guiding the team. Examples of cultural elements in the CLP are:
 - a) A spirit of joy and friendliness.
 - Remind the team to smile often and be outgoing.

b) Simplicity.

- There is no need for extravagant decorations for the venue.
- Snacks are simple, even for those CLPs of chapters that can well afford to spend much more.
- Look to the many other elements of the CLP as well.

3. By the same token, we are to avoid injecting elements that are not in accordance with our normal way of doing things.

Some examples:

- a) Singing songs not in our official songbook.
- b) Requiring certain practices for the pray-over session such as:
 - Having every team member dress in white.
 - Turning the lights off or having a candle and crucifix before everyone being prayed with.
 - Anointing participants with oil or holy water.
- c) Scheduling confession and/or Mass at the venue immediately prior to the CLP session (usually for session 9), thereby unnecessarily prolonging the entire session.

There could be many others. The team leader must not inject any element that comes simply from his own preferences. He needs to realize that the CLP introduces the participants to life in CFC, and any such element may give them an inaccurate impression of the CFC culture.

F. THE ORIENTATION SESSION and TALK 1

1. Chronology is as follows:

- a) Teach participants some songs while waiting to start formally.
- b) The team leader introduces himself, welcomes the participants, and invites everyone to stand.
- c) A song is sung, after which the team leader says a short opening prayer.

- d) The participants are asked to be seated. The team leader may say a little bit more about CFC, the team, the facilities, what to expect this evening, etc. However, keep it short.
 - In a parish setting, you may invite the parish priest to welcome the CLP participants.
- e) The team leader gives the Orientation Session, which is basically an overview of the 3 modules of the CLP. He may then open the floor for an open forum. If there are no more questions, he then introduces the speaker of Talk 1.
- f) After the talk 1, the participants are put into groups and they answer the discussion questions.
- g) Closing Remarks.
- h) Bless the food and have the fellowship.
- i) Closing prayers by the team leader.
- j) Team meeting.

2. Guidelines for the open forum.

- a) It is suggested that blank sheets of paper be given to the participants for them to write their questions on. We find that participants are shy in having to stand up to ask their questions.
- b) If there is no initial response to our offer to answer questions, do not close the Open Forum portion immediately. It might be premature. The participants may just need to warm up. The team leader or speaker at this point could bring up questions on their own and answer them.
- c) Avoid getting into any theological or intellectual discussions. You could offer to take up such a question during the fellowship, but stress the nature of the CLP which precludes such directions.

3. Guidelines for the closing remarks.

- a) Thank the participants for being there and exhort them to return for the next session.

b) Say that we are only asking them to commit to the first module, that is, the next 3 sessions. However, it is also all right if they cannot make such a commitment, and just go on a session to session basis. It is entirely their choice whether to go on or to stop.

c) Exhort them to bring their Bibles to the sessions. If they have none, suggest Bibles such as the New American Bible, the New Jerusalem Bible, or the Good News Bible.

d) Give details for the next meeting – venue, time, etc. Encourage them to come on time.

e) You may decide to have the closing prayers and blessing over the food together at this time, so the participants can just have an open ended fellowship and leave when they want to.

4. Team meeting after the session.

a) Evaluate the whole session – the mood of participants, the atmosphere, the various elements involved. Address what needs to be addressed.

b) Inform the team that there will be a team meeting prior to the start of session 2 and they should be there at least 30 minutes earlier.

c) End with a prayer of thanksgiving for the potential harvest and a prayer of petition for the “success” of the CLP.

G. HANDLING TEAM MEETINGS

1. Team meetings are held after every session in order to assess the conduct of the session, to receive feedback on the situation of the participants, and to give input to the discussion group leaders as needed.

2. The men and women meet together. The team leader presides over the meeting.

3. Each discussion group leader gives a brief report on what transpired. Each leader's report should not go beyond just a few minutes generally. Details are given only if asked by the team leader.

4. Names of participants are not mentioned. During these team meetings we only want to assess the overall situation. Individual problems are left to one to one meetings between the team leader and the discussion group leaders.

CHECKLIST FOR EACH SESSION

ORIENTATION and SESSION No. 1

1. Team meeting prior to session (at least 30 minutes prior to session).
 - a) Start with a short prayer.
 - b) Give out the group assignments and the data sheets of group members, if not previously done.
 - c) Resolve any questions or problems with regard to the Team Manual.
 - d) Remind the team not to engage yet in charismatic prayer. No raising of hands or clapping.
 - e) Close with an extended period of group prayer and intercession for the program, the team and the participants.
2. During the talk: Regroup participants based on attendance. Inform the group heads accordingly.
3. After the talk: Announce discussion groupings.
4. After the snacks:
 - a) Announce presence of book table, if any.
 - b) Exhort participants to have their own Bible, preferably a modern version like the NAB.
 - c) Briefly go over the handout. Explain the meaning of Biblical references, i.e. book, chapter, verse. Encourage daily Scripture reading.
 - d) Exhort participants to be punctual for the next session.
 - e) Closing song and prayer.
5. Team meeting after the session:
 - a) Go over the list of absentees and instruct the group leaders to follow up with them, preferably in coordination with those who invited them.
 - b) Hear the report of each group.
 - c) Remind the team of the need for punctuality.
(Note: No more extended pre session meeting for most of the succeeding weeks).
 - d) Remind the team of the need for them to be faithful to their own daily prayer time and Bible reading. They should fast for their people. Also impress on them the importance of studying the team manual prior to each session.
 - e) Instruct the team to follow up each of their members during the week, to exhort them to attend the next session.
 - f) End with a short prayer.

SESSION No. 2

1. Team meeting prior to session:
 - a) Resolve any questions or problems with regard to the Team Manual in relation to the talk and the session's goals.
 - b) Close with a short prayer.
2. Team meeting after the session:
 - a) Go over the list of absentees and instruct the group leaders to follow up with them, if necessary, if they are still in coordination with those who recommended them.
 - b) Drop from the list all those who now have been absent from both sessions 1 and 2.
 - c) Check if make up sessions for the first talk were held.
 - d) Hear the report of each group.
 - e) Instruct the team to follow up on each of their members during the week. They should remind all those with one absence not to be absent again during Module One or else they will be asked to repeat the whole CLP.
 - f) End with a short prayer.

SESSION No. 3

1. Team meeting prior to session:
 - a) Resolve any questions or problems with regard to the Team Manual in relation to the talk and the session's goals.
 - b) Close with a short prayer.
2. Team meeting after the session:
 - a) Hear the report of each group.
 - b) Check if make up sessions for the first and second talks were held. Tell the group leaders that all make up sessions have to be finished within the coming week, because the week after the 4th session will be devoted to the individual meetings (one to one).
 - c) Instruct the group leaders to encourage every participant to have their own Bibles, if they don't yet.
 - d) End with a short prayer.

SESSION No. 4

1. Team meeting prior to session:
 - a) Resolve any questions or problems with regard to the Team Manual in relation to the talk and the session's goals.
 - b) Remind them of the individual meetings for the coming week. They should make definite schedules during the discussion period.
 - c) Close with a short prayer.
2. Team meeting after the session:
 - a) Hear the report of each group.
 - b) Check absentees and make up sessions.
 - c) Reiterate importance of individual meetings. Any problem that surfaces should be taken up within the week with the team leader.
 - d) Go over the list of serious wrongdoings and make sure that the team understands it well. Be ready to discuss why people need to turn away especially from Freemasonry, New age, Transcendental Meditation, yoga, the occult, etc.
 - e) Remind them that the team meeting prior to the session next week will be held 30 minutes earlier, to discuss results of the individual meetings.
 - f) Remind the team to continue to pray for, fast, and intercede for their people.
 - g) End with a short prayer.

SESSION No. 5

1. Team meeting prior to session (at least 30 minutes prior to the session).
 - a) Start with a short prayer.
 - b) Hear the report of each group leader about the individual meetings. Note any problems, for resolution at a later time privately with the leaders.
 - c) Resolve any questions or problems with regard to the Team Manual in relation to the talk and the session's goals.
 - d) Tell them of the start of group involvement in the opening prayer. The team members especially should support the team leader by participating actively in making short prayers of thanksgiving and/or petition.

- e) Make group adjustments, if any.
- f) Close with an extended period of group prayer and intercession for Module Two of the program.

2. Prior to the talk:

- a) Welcome participants to Module Two of the program. Encourage them.
- b) Briefly recap what transpired in Module One, going over the progression of the talks. Give a brief preview of Module Two.
- c) Stress the importance of prayer and Scripture.
- d) Introduce individual prayers of thanksgiving and petition. Give a very brief exhortation on this (See Annex C).
- e) Opening song(s) and individual prayers of thanksgiving and petition.

Note: Items A to D should take no more than 10 minutes. The individual prayers of thanksgiving and petition should not take longer than 5 to 10 minutes.

3. Team meeting after the session:

- a) Hear the report of each group.
- b) End with a short prayer.

SESSION No. 6

1. Team meeting prior to session:

- a) Resolve any questions or problems with regard to the Team Manual in relation to the talk and the session's goals.
- b) Remind them to continue to support and actively participate in the opening prayer.
- c) Close with a short prayer.

2. Team meeting after the session:

- a) Hear the report of each group.
- b) End with a short prayer.

SESSION No. 7

1. Team meeting prior to session:
 - a) Resolve any questions or problems with regard to the Team Manual in relation to the talk and the session's goals.
 - b) Remind the team to continue to support and actively participate in the opening prayer.
 - c) Close with a short prayer.
2. Team meeting after the session:
 - a) Hear the report of each group.
 - b) End with a short prayer.
3. During the week:
 - a) Make arrangements with a priest to hear the confessions of those participants who may want this. This should be scheduled anytime during the week after Session 8. However, it should not be scheduled immediately prior to Session 9, because it may unduly delay the session.
 - b) Have the team members gone through a Tongues Workshop? If not, and if there is a need, arrange for one.

SESSION No. 8

1. Team meeting prior to session:
 - a) Resolve any questions or problems with regard to the Team Manual in relation to the talk and the session's goals.
 - b) Remind the team of the individual meetings for the coming week. They should make definite schedules during the discussion period. They should meet as early as possible within the coming week.
 - c) Close with a short prayer.
2. Before the close of the session:
 - a) Inform the participants about the arrangements that have been made for confession. Encourage them to avail of this.
 - b) Congratulate them for having finished Module Two of the CLP. Encourage them to go on, and to look forward to still better things to come.

3. Team meeting after the session:

- a) Hear the report of each group.
- b) Reiterate the importance of the individual meetings.
- c) Go over the guide for the one to one in the Team Manual.
- d) Remind them to refer any problems immediately to the team leader. Don't wait for the next session's team meeting.
- e) Encourage them to themselves avail of the confession that has been arranged.
- f) Give the details of the Tongues Workshop, if any.
- g) Check if they all have prayer partners for next week's session. They should meet with them prior to next week's session in order to go over, discuss, and coordinate the prayer session. One prayer partner should be enough.
- h) Remind the team of the greater potential for Satan's attacks on themselves and on the participants, as we near the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Stress the need for continued spiritual warfare. Pray, fast, read God's word, study, go to Mass and Communion.
- i) Remind the team that the team meeting prior to the session next week will be held 30 minutes (at least) earlier, in order to discuss the dynamics of the prayer session.
- j) End with prayer.

SESSION No. 9

1. Team meeting prior to session (at least 30 minutes prior to the session):

- a) Resolve any questions or problems with regard to the Team Manual in relation to the talk and the session's goals.
- b) Quickly check how the one to ones went, and if there are any other concerns or problems that have not yet been referred to you.
- c) Resolve any questions or problems with regard to the prayer session.
 - Go over the chronology of the prayer session, including location and arrangement of persons to be prayed over.
 - Remind the team that praying over each individual should not take too long. Perhaps only about 10-15 minutes.
 - Let the team be aware of the overall length of time available for the prayer session. A good rule of thumb for the overall length of time for praying over is: number of participants in biggest group x 10 or 15 minutes. However, try to keep the overall praying over time to not more than

one hour. No one group should take so long that they keep everyone else waiting.

- Remind the team that when they finish praying over their participants to continue private prayer or to join in the singing until everyone has been prayed with. Refrain from talking, gossiping, etc. All other couples present should maintain a solemn and prayerful atmosphere throughout the prayer session.

- d) Tell the team we will start vocal prayer (simultaneous praising, etc.). The team members should support the team leader by participating actively. Praise joyfully and with vigor!
- e) Make certain the music ministry is all set up and agree on the songs to be sung.
- f) Have a period of group intercession for the team and the participants.

2. Prior to the main talk:

- a) Welcome participants to Module Three of the CLP. Encourage them.
- b) Briefly recap what transpired in Modules One and Two. Give a brief preview of Module Three.

Note: Items A and B should take no more than 10 minutes.

3. Prayer session after the main talk:

- a) Explain procedure.
- b) Prayer of commitment to Christ.
 - The participants should answer "YES" to the first 3 questions.
 - They should then read the prayer together (or repeat after the leader if they have no copies on hand).
- c) Start of continuous singing.
- d) Discussion leaders call their people one by one and pray over them.
- e) When everyone has been prayed over, give exhortation talk on vocal prayer, including singing in tongues. This may be given by the speaker. If so, make sure he is informed beforehand.
- f) After the exhortation on vocal prayer proceed to a full charismatic praise and worship:
 - Sing a song of praise (a lively one)
 - Simultaneous praising
 - Sing another song of praise
 - Simultaneous praising

- Sing a song of worship (slow song)
 - Sing in tongues
 - Prayer of the leader
- f) Turn over to speaker for "Closing Exhortation."
4. Team meeting after the session:
- a) Go over the results of the prayer session. Let everyone share on what happened.
 - b) Tell the team to follow up on those who were not "touched" by the prayer session or who had negative impressions. They should explain, reassure, and exhort.
 - c) End with prayer.

SESSION No. 10

1. Team meeting prior to session:
- a) Resolve any questions or problems with regard to the Team Manual in relation to the talk and the session's goals.
 - b) Remind the team to actively participate in the opening charismatic prayer.
 - c) Close with a short prayer.
2. After the talk:
- a) Encourage the participants to avail of the various publications of CFC as their tools to growth.
 - Daily prayer guide, magazines, books, etc.
 - Have subscription forms ready.
3. Team meeting after the session:
- a) Hear the report of each group.
 - b) End with a short prayer.

SESSION No. 11

1. Team meeting prior to session:
 - a) Resolve any questions or problems with regard to the Team Manual in relation to the talk and the session's goals.
 - b) Remind the team to actively participate in the opening charismatic prayer.
 - c) Tell the discussion leaders to encourage their members to buy and subscribe to our published pastoral materials.
 - d) Close with a short prayer.
2. After the Talk:
 - a) Hand out a copy of our Statement of Vision and Mission, our Statement of Philosophy, and the CFC covenant, together with the regular handout.
 - b) Exhort the participants to seriously think and pray about the commitment they will undertake next week.
3. Team meeting after the session:
 - a) Hear the report of each group.
 - b) Inform the team they may invite CFC members to the dedication session next week for the acceptance of the new members.
 - c) End with a short prayer.
4. Within the week:
 - a) Prepare the official CFC I.D. cards.
 - b) Prepare the "graduation kit" to be given to the new members, consisting of the following:
 - Welcome letter from CFC International Council (See Annex E)
 - Commitment cards
 - I.D. cards
 - Lord's Day booklet (one per couple)
 - CFC sticker (one per couple)
 - Bible reading guide (one per person)
 - Guidelines for business dealings
 - c) Work out the household groupings in consultation with the supervising Unit Head and/or the Chapter Head.

SESSION No. 12

1. Team meeting prior to session:
 - a) Resolve any questions or problems with regard to the Team Manual in relation to the talk and the session's goals.
 - b) Go over the chronology of the dedication ceremony.
 - c) Arrange the music ministry's role and the songs to be sung.
 - d) Close with prayer.
2. After the dedication ceremony:
 - a) It is possible to solicit sharings at this time from the participants.
 - b) Set the Lord's Day celebration and entertainment night on the next Saturday from today. Give details of venue, time, etc.
 - * Inform them to prepare group presentations.
 - c) Tell the participants that they will be formed into household groups and will be informed accordingly.
 - d) Encourage the new members to subscribe to our various publications as helps in their Christian life.
 - e) Fellowship.
3. Team meeting after the session:
 - a) Check if everyone made the commitment.
 - b) Go over the results of the whole CLP.
 - c) Solicit comments, suggestions, criticism, feedback.
 - d) Thank the team for their work.
 - e) End with prayer.

LORD'S DAY CELEBRATION and ENTERTAINMENT NIGHT

1. CFC elders and other members may be invited to this evening.
2. A short explanation of the Lord's Day celebration, and its part in the life of a CFC family, should be made (see Annex F).
3. After the blessing of the bread (as it is being passed around and eaten) and before the main meal, sharings from the new members may be solicited.
4. After the Lord's Day closing prayers, have the entertainment and group presentations.
5. Before closing the evening, announce the household groupings. The heads of the new households should immediately meet with their members in order to decide on their regular meeting schedules, venue and other details. Household meetings start immediately on the coming week.

AFTER THE CLP

1. Settle all cash advances made by or to the various individuals involved.
2. Make sure the servant has made arrangements for the proper disposition of all CFC property, like chairs, sound systems, papers, songbooks, etc.
3. Pass on all relevant comments, suggestions and feedback to the CFC Director.
4. Submit a financial report in writing to the CFC office, including the info sheets and final household groupings.
5. Make sure that the new members are all properly placed in their household groups and are active in the household meetings.

TEAM LEADER'S GUIDE

APPENDICES

**COUPLES FOR CHRIST
CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM
INFORMATION SHEET**

H U S B A N D

Date: _____

(FAMILY NAME)	(FIRST NAME)	(MIDDLE NAME)	(NICKNAME)
Address:			
Res. Tel. No.	Cellphone No. _____		
Date of Birth	Place		
Educational Attainment			
Occupation/Position			
Employer:			
Office Address:			
Line of Business:	Office Tel. No.		
Hobbies & Interests			
Languages/dialects spoken:			

W I F E

(MAIDEN FAMILY NAME)	(FIRST NAME)	(MOTHER'S SURNAME)	(NICKNAME)
Date of Birth:	Place of Birth:		
Cellphone No.	Educ. Attainment:		
Occupation/Position			
Employer & Address:	Off. Tel. No.		
Line of Business	Off. Tel. No.		
Hobbies &			
Interests			
Languages/dialects spoken			
Wedding Anniversary			

Names of Children

Age

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Denomination if not Catholic

I/We have attended or are members of:

	H	W
Life in Spirit Seminar	_____	_____
Marriage Encounter	_____	_____
Cursillo	_____	_____
Christian Family Movt.	_____	_____
Opus Dei	_____	_____
Parish FLA	_____	_____
Others (Pls. specify)	_____	_____

How did you come to know

CLP PRINTED PASTORAL RESOURCE MATERIALS

The CLP is a great opportunity to introduce the participants to making use of printed resource materials as a major tool to growing in the Christian life. As such, the Team Leader and the facilitators should strongly encourage the participants to avail of these.

These printed pastoral resource materials consist of the following:

1. Books
2. Magazines
3. Prayer and Scripture guides: In His Steps

For our magazines and prayer/Scripture guides, the participants should be encouraged to take up subscriptions. Make sure that subscription forms are on hand. If the chapter or CLP team is looking for giveaways for the participants at the end of the CLP, it is recommended that the chapter/CLP team give them a free one-year subscription.

GUIDELINES FOR SPEAKERS

1. Be faithful to the talk outline!
 - The expanded outline is the talk itself. You just need to flesh it out.
 - Avoid the temptation of putting a lot of other material into the talk, no matter how interesting or seemingly helpful. This might just obscure the basic message of the talk, or overlap with the other talks.
 - There is a Core Message provided in the expanded talk outline. This means that these are the points that are most essential and you should not digress from it.
2. Before putting your talk together, read the outline at least twice, understand what is being said, be comfortable with the flow of ideas in the talk, and try to internalize the message. Then pray and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and enlightenment. Only after this should you try to put the talk together.
 - If there is anything unclear to you, or something with which you are uncomfortable, or you are unable to go with the flow of the talk, refer the same to an elder for guidance.
3. Some tips for giving a good talk:
 - Be conversational in tone.
 - Use normal language, avoiding pious phrases, King James English (thee's and thou's), and churchy jargon (ministry, edified, saved, etc.).
 - Make simple, not complex, points. Make them clearly stated, not hinted. Say what you are saying.
 - Don't moralize or preach. Don't talk down to your listeners.
 - Avoid arguments, controversies, criticism of others.
 - Base the talk on the Bible. Quote the Scriptures, paraphrasing them if necessary to make the point.
 - Use examples and stories from your own experience.
4. Keep the talk disciplined to the goals of the session.
5. Your talk's duration should be around 45 minutes. In any case, it should not be less than 30 minutes nor more than one hour.

INDIVIDUAL PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND PETITION

1. Here in Couples for Christ we are learning a new way of praying. We pray not just the usual memorized prayers (Our Father, Hail Mary, etc.) but start to pray spontaneously. In a communal setting, we pray individual prayers of thanksgiving and petition, but on behalf of the whole body.
2. How do we do these prayers?
 - a) These are short one or two sentence prayers (or sometimes a little longer) said by an individual in an audible voice, so that others can hear.
 - We thank God for blessings (e.g., thank you for the gift of life; thank you for providing for the needs of our family; etc.)
 - We present to him our petitions (e.g., please bless our marriage and family life; please continue to provide for our needs; etc.).
 - b) Immediately after every individual's prayer, the rest of the body signify their assent to the prayer by all together spontaneously saying words or phrases like "Amen," "Yes, Lord," "We thank you, Lord," "Hear us, Lord," etc. By saying these, we make the prayer our own, and the individual prayer becomes a communal one.
3. How do we proceed?
 - a) After we sing our first song, we will first do some individual prayers of thanksgiving. I invite you to participate.
 - b) Then we will sing another song, after which we will do our individual prayers of petition. Again, please feel free to lift up your own petitions.

Note to the Team Leader:

1. This is meant to introduce the CLP participants to spontaneous prayer.
 - Since many may not be familiar with this type of praying, then it is OK if they do not participate as yet. It is enough that they hear the team members praying in this way, thus beginning to learn how to do it.
 - Remind the team to say simple rather than long or lofty prayers. The latter would just intimidate the uninitiated and make it more difficult for them to participate.
 - Avoid periods of silence. This makes the uninitiated uncomfortable. If no one is saying a prayer, you say a prayer and move on.
2. The individual prayers of thanksgiving and petition, excluding the songs, should not take very long, not longer than 5 to 10 minutes.
 - If many are already participating, do not wait until everyone has said his/her prayer before moving on. After about 5 to 10 individual prayers of thanksgiving, and the same for petitions, move on.
3. It is preferable that the assent to prayers should be in spontaneous phrases as stated above, rather than in structured chorus such as "Yes Lord, we praise and thank you," or "Yes Lord, hear our prayer." This enhances the spontaneity rather than promoting a variation of structured prayer.
4. Continue to exhort the participants in the succeeding sessions. Encourage them to say individual prayers and also to audibly signify their assent to the prayers of others.

NOTE: More resource material in Annex C of the CLP Team Manual.

WELCOME LETTER FOR NEW MEMBERS

Dear brother and sister in Christ,

Welcome to the Couples for Christ!

When you made your commitment to the Covenant of the Couples for Christ (CFC), you became full fledged members of our community. As such, we are assuring you of our commitment to you and to your growth in the life of the Holy Spirit.

What can you expect from CFC?

You have been placed in a household, together with other couples. This household will be your basic support environment for your Christian life. Here you can learn to worship God, receive practical wisdom on aspects of the Christian life, receive support for overcoming obstacles to growth, develop intimate friendships with other Christians, and generally be cared for by the body.

A household head has been appointed for your group. He and his wife are there to serve you. He is responsible for all the activities of the household and for the good order of meetings. He acts as an older brother to the group. He is there to help each member be fully integrated in the life and culture of CFC.

Further, CFC will conduct prayer assemblies, recollections, retreats, teachings, forums and other activities to give more input on the Christian life and to round out your total life in the Lord.

What does CFC expect from you?

First of all, you need to be faithful to your household meetings and all other meetings and activities of CFC. Our whole life in CFC is based on being built up as God's people, with unity of vision and mission in the world. This cannot happen if we do not come together regularly to pray, study and fellowship with one another.

Second is a spirit of openness—openness to God's action in your lives; openness to your brothers and sisters who are there to support and encourage you; openness to your household leaders and other elders in CFC, who have been tasked with the responsibility of caring for you; openness to a new way of Christian living in CFC.

Third is an attitude of humility, a recognition of our sinfulness in the light of God's holiness. An admission that we need God's help, and the help of other

committed Christians, if we are to grow in this new life in Christ.

Finally, you need to be growing in commitment—to commit your lives to Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior. Commit your time and concern to your brothers and sisters, especially those in your household. Commit your resources to God's work, especially in reaching out to other couples.

How about difficulties?

If you have any concerns or difficulties, in regard to your commitment to CFC and/or your new life in Christ, please be open and bring these up to your household leaders. He and his wife will try to address your concern. But if they are unable to, the matter can be referred to other leaders in CFC.

When problems and difficulties come, these are precisely the times when you would need the support of your brothers and sisters in the Lord. Do not hold back. Do not put up a facade. Do not absent yourselves from your meetings.

If, for any reason, you cannot live up to the covenant of CFC, then a decision on whether to continue with your membership will have to be made. Again, because of the nature of our life together in the Lord, only committed couples can remain as members in good standing in CFC.

Again, welcome!

You can look forward to fulfillment in your quest for God and in your desire to build up a strong Christian family. As you are faithful to God, then God will be faithful to you. As you are generous with your time and resources, God will be generous to you.

Make the most out of your relationships with your new brothers and sisters in Christ. You are after the same things. You are there to encourage and support each other. And you can expect to experience joy in these relationships. With the psalmist, you will be able to say: "*Behold, how good it is, and how pleasant, where brethren dwell as one!*" (Psalm 133:1)

Finally, know that the Lord has indeed called you to a new life, one of holiness and walking in His ways. There is still much that the Lord needs to work on in your lives, but as you open yourselves to Him and humbly submit your lives to His lordship, then you can be assured "that he who has begun the good work in you will carry it through to completion, right up to the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

May God be praised forever!

In the service of Christ,
CFC INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL

THE LORD'S DAY CELEBRATION

1. Part of the culture of CFC is what we call the "Lord's Day celebration."
 - a) This is a para liturgical ceremony patterned after the Sabbath meal of the Jews, our ancestors in faith.
 - b) It is held on Saturday evening, with a closing ceremony on Sunday evening.
 - c) We usually hold this Lord's Day celebration with our respective families in our own homes. Occasionally, the celebration is a communal event in CFC (as a household or larger group).
2. The Lord's Day celebration is not a "layman's mass."
 - a) Though we have the blessing of bread and wine, there is certainly no consecration into the body and blood of Jesus.
 - b) The celebration however can help in the family's appreciation of God's love and goodness, which we celebrate in the Eucharist.
 - During the time of thanksgiving before the dinner is served, the father can take this opportunity to read the gospel for the next day (Sunday) and have a short family discussion on it.
 - c) It can help our families learn how to keep holy the Lord's Day.
3. The Lord's Day celebration is a good opportunity for the family to come together in prayer, in a relaxed setting of a meal at home.
 - a) It is an opportunity to expose our children more to the Christian faith and to our life in a Christian community.
 - b) It can contribute to family unity and a deeper fostering of religious conviction.

4. It should be noted that this Lord's Day celebration is not the activity mentioned in our covenant card, i.e., "Pray with my family daily and celebrate the Lord's Day together."
 - a) This covenant commitment refers to our duty to keep the Lord's Day holy, including going to Church to worship (Sunday Mass for Catholics).
 - b) Thus our "Lord's Day celebration" in CFC is an optional activity, though highly encouraged as part of our life and culture.

TEAM MANUAL

The Christian Life Program (CLP) is the initiations course leading to membership in Couples for Christ (CFC). This Team Manual is intended for the use of CLP discussion group leaders (facilitators).

OVERVIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM (CLP)

A. GOALS OF THE CLP

1. Evangelization.

To take the basic message of Christianity and to proclaim it anew so that those who hear it can make a renewed commitment to the Lord in a way which will allow them to receive a fuller experience of the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

2. Renewal

- a) Individual: to bring individuals to a stronger relationship with God by discovering and living more fully the power and gifts they received through the Holy Spirit.
- b) Family: to bring married couples to a renewed commitment to Christian family life. To build up a community of committed Christian families.
- c) Church: to strengthen and revitalize Christian community life in the parishes.

B. STRUCTURE OF THE CLP

1. Content.

The CLP is normally held over a period of three months, with 12 separate weekly sessions. It consists of an orientation session and 12 sessions. The CLP proper is divided into three modules of four sessions each. They are as follows:

Module One: The Basic Truths About Christianity

1. God's Love
2. Who is Jesus Christ?
3. What it means to be a Christian
4. Repentance and Faith

Module Two: The Authentic Christian Life

- 5. The Christian Ideal: Loving God
- 6. Loving your Neighbor
- 7. The Christian Family
- 8. Life in the Holy Spirit

Module Three: Living a Spirit filled Christian Life

- 9. Receiving the Power of the Holy Spirit
- 10. Growing in the Spirit
- 11. The Life and Mission of CFC
- 12. Transformation in Christ

Module One of the CLP focuses on the basics of Christian belief and life. It makes clear the need to turn to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith in order to attain salvation.

Module Two spells out the ideal of life that a Christian ought to aspire to. The Christian life is a life of love and service that revolves around Jesus Christ and is lived in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Module Three helps people to commit their lives in a serious way to Jesus Christ, by appropriating for their lives the power of the Holy Spirit and by entering into a supportive environment for continued personal growth and formation.

2. Dynamics.

The program should have an atmosphere that cultivates good relationships, wins respect, attracts people to the Lord, and gives people faith. The leader and the team set the tone.

Each session, except for the ninth and twelfth talks, follows the following format:

- 30 minutes - arrival, fellowship, practice of songs
- 5-15 minutes - opening song, prayer, remarks
- 45 minutes - talk
- 45 minutes - discussion groups
- 20-40 minutes - fellowship
- 5 minutes - announcements and closing prayer

Thus the sessions would normally last about 2 1/2 to 3 hours.

Handouts are given out to participants at the end of each talk. They include a brief talk outline, a discussion starter, daily Scripture readings for the week, and recommended additional readings.

3. Attendance.

The CLP is open to all Christian couples who are validly married, or to unmarried couples who have no impediment to becoming validly married. The CLP is open to Catholics and non Catholic Christians, and occasionally to non Christians (the latter subject to the approval of the Chapter Head). Participants need not have any current religious or spiritual involvement.

Every participant is expected to attend all sessions, since the CLP is offered as an integrated package for spiritual renewal. However, some absences can be expected. In such cases, the participant should be given a make up session by his/her discussion leader. If either husband or wife expects to be absent for any reason, the spouse should still be encouraged to attend.

Participants will be allowed no more than one (1) absence in Module One of the CLP, and not more than an over all total of three (3) absences for the whole program. Beyond this, a participant will be required to take the whole program again at another time. Any exceptions will be granted only upon the recommendation of the team leader and the approval of the Chapter Head.

Participants who finished Module One or Modules One and Two in a particular CLP but who did not continue for any reason (other than not being allowed by us to continue) may be allowed to resume where they left off in any other CLP, subject to the recommendation of the Chapter Head over the first CLP and the approval of the Chapter Head over the second CLP.

4. Personal Dialogue (one to one).

There are two (2) occasions when the discussion group leader meets individually and privately with each of the members of his group. The first time is at the end of Module One and the second is at the end of Module Two.

These meetings are often referred to as "one to one" meetings. Please see the appropriate section in this manual.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. THE TEAM

The Lord reaches out to men and women through the members of His body. The new life He wants to give He offers through men and women in whom His spirit lives. More than anything else, the CLP is the forum whereby the body of Christians who have been given a fuller life in the Spirit come together to share that gift with others.

The team members are above all witnesses. They are men and women who are living the life of the Holy Spirit and who can witness to its reality and effectiveness for themselves. In order for them to be witnesses, they have to be able to speak the truth in a simple way. People should not only see the life in them but also learn about it from them.

It is essential for the team members to be faithful and reliable. They have to be persons who can be counted on. They need to do their best to care for the persons who are entrusted to them. And in order to be faithful, one has to have certain characteristics:

1. He has to be growing in commitment to the Lord and to the life and mission of CFC.
2. He has to be committed to the renewal of individuals in the power of the Holy Spirit. He has to believe in the message of the talks and to see the importance of helping a person become firmly established in Christ.
3. He has to be committed to his part in the CLP.

B. THE TEAM LEADER

He oversees the entire program. He focuses his attention on the participants and the dynamics of the CLP. He cares for the team members and helps them to better serve the Lord. He should get to know everyone in the program by name and be available to them to some degree. All administrative tasks should be entrusted to his wife, to the assistant team leader, and to the servant.

C. THE TEAM LEADER'S WIFE

She listens with a special ear to the sensitivities and peculiarities being reported at the women's discussion groups.

She supports and advises her husband (team leader) in addressing and meeting the needs of the women in the CLP.

In some cases, she coordinates with the servant couple in administrative and practical work.

D. THE ASSISTANT TEAM LEADER

He assists the team leader in running the program, and is in training for leading a future CLP. He takes over in case the team leader is absent. His wife serves with him.

E. THE SERVANT

He carries the main administrative burden and should assume that he needs to cover every need that may arise. He should not be a part of a discussion group. His job includes the following (which may be delegated to others):

1. Man the reception table, have a checklist of those attending, give out nametags.
2. Make available song sheets and handouts.
3. Arrange for a book table.
4. Make available a guitarist and lead singer.
5. Set up the sound system.
6. Set up the physical facilities like chairs, lights, lectern, etc.
7. Record the talk (audio or video).
8. Arrange for refreshments.
9. Clean up after the sessions.

F. THE DISCUSSION GROUP LEADERS

They take responsibility for the over all care of individuals in their groups. They will personally oversee and bring to issue each person's relationship with Christ during the CLP.

THE SESSIONS: GOALS, MAIN POINTS AND DISCUSSION GUIDES

A. SESSION No. 1 GOD'S LOVE

1. Goal:

To communicate the truth that God loves us and provide a better understanding of that love.

2. Core Message:

God is love. Thus he is compelled by his very nature to create so that he can share that love. God demonstrates his love by creating man in his image. God's love creates. But man, in the exercise of his God-given gift of free will, has rejected his Creator by sinning. But even when we sin and abandon him, God still loves us and patiently waits for us to come back to him. God's lavish and generous love is best described in the parable of the father and his two sons (Lk. 15:11-31). The parable tells us that God's love forgives. But the greatest expression of God's love is the sending of his only Son to suffer and die that we may have life eternal. Therefore, God's love is, most of all, a love that redeems.

3. Discussion guides (see note below).

- a) Share with one another how you came to the Christian Life Program and what you expect or seek to experience. Start with a brief introduction about your life.
- b) Share about how you have personally experienced God's love.

B. SESSION No. 2 WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

1. Goal.

To provide a better understanding of Jesus Christ and thus attract people to him.

2. Core Message:

Jesus of history is an absolutely unique figure. He was the only person in history ever pre-announced. He was born in Bethlehem of a virgin named Mary, but grew up in Nazareth. He became an itinerant preacher but his three-year ministry attracted only a modest number of disciples, mostly fishermen and their relatives. He was crucified in Jerusalem for stirring up the people.

From a purely historical perspective, Jesus should have been forgotten by now. Yet we are confronted by the fact that he divided history into two, before his coming (B.C.) and after his death (A.D.), and after two thousand years, billions of people profess him as Lord. Christ of faith did many signs, forgave sins, gave life to the dead, claimed to possess all power in heaven and on earth, claimed that he will sit on the right hand of the Father and come to judge all mankind, and claimed straightforwardly to be God. But it is his suffering and death on the cross that reveals his true identity.

The cross is the central point of our knowing and understanding Jesus Christ. His cross is both language and parable. But Jesus' death on the cross would have been meaningless without the resurrection. The most conclusive proof that Jesus is Lord and God is his resurrection. Jesus Christ is true God and true man. Being God we can pray to him and he can answer our needs. Being human, he feels our feelings, suffers our pains, understands our loneliness, and we can have a very personal relationship with him.

3. Discussion guides.

- a) Share about your Christian background.
- b) Discuss how you saw or thought of Jesus before, and what new insights you have gotten through the talk.

C. SESSION No. 3 WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN

1. Goal:

To make clear what Christianity is and to get people to appreciate the blessings of being a Christian.

2. Core Message:

To be a Christian means having a loving, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, there have been misconceptions or incomplete notions about Christianity. For some people, Christianity is a mere religious system, a mere moral system, a mere social or humanitarian system, or an escape from the realities of life. But the truth is that Christianity is a relationship initiated by God out of his mercy and love for us. As Christians, we become a new creation and participate in the very life of Christ. As Christians, we become children of God and take on his nature. Accordingly, to be a Christian means to become a disciple of Christ, to live the Christian theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. To be a Christian is to know the Father through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. To be a Christian is to have faith in God, to live in hopeful expectation of the fulfilment of the plan of God, and to love God above everything else. For this, we have the Blessed Virgin Mary as our model, for she is Christ's most perfect disciple.

3. Discussion guides.

- a) What misconceptions about Christianity do you identify with?
- b) Are you experiencing the practical implications of Christianity in your life?

D. SESSION No. 4 REPENTANCE AND FAITH

1. Goal:

To lead people to repent their sins and turn to renewed faith in Jesus Christ.

2. Core Message:

The only proper response to all that God has done for us is repentance and faith. "Repent, and believe in the gospel" is precisely what Jesus calls for from the beginning of his ministry. Repentance and faith go together. It is a double-action response. But repentance is not just being sorry for sin because of adverse consequences. It is also not dependent on feelings. True repentance is metanoia, a change of mind, a change in direction. Repentance is turning away from sin and evil and surrendering to Jesus as Lord of our life. And if Jesus is Lord, there is no room for being lukewarm. Authentic repentance requires honesty, to admit that a sin is a sin, and humility, to admit that we are weak and need help. But true repentance requires faith in God. Faith is not a feeling or wishful thinking or a blind leap. Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen. It is man's response to God. It is belief in the gospel, a personal act and decision. Most of all, faith is a pure gift from God. The consequence of repentance and faith is a promise of salvation from sin and death, and at a personal level, freedom from fear of death. Jesus sounded the call to repentance and faith two thousand years ago. It is the same call to us today. Like the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us have complete faith in God and say, "Let it be done to me according to your word."

3. Discussion guides.

- a) Share with one another areas where you need to turn more fully to God.
- b) Share areas where you need to grow in faith.

E. SESSION No. 5 THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL: LOVING GOD

1. Goal:

To explain the meaning of loving God and to teach how to live out this Christian ideal.

2. Core Message:

Loving God is our highest ideal. This is God's first and greatest commandment. We are asked to love God with all our heart, with all our mind and soul, and with all our strength. To love God with all our heart is to be totally committed to him. It means putting God first in our life and doing things to make this happen. It means spending a lot of time with God, talking with him, listening to him. It requires a decision to obey God.

To love God with all our mind and soul means to keep our minds preoccupied with things of God, using it according to God's truths and not according to the ways of the world. It means to fill our mind and soul with thoughts of God and to use our mind to know God more closely and learn his ways and teachings more deeply.

To love God with all our strength means giving God our resources: time, talent, and treasure. We need to be generous with the time we devote to serving God and others. We need to use our God-given talent for the kingdom of God. We need to have the right attitude towards our treasure by believing that everything belongs to God and thus use these resources in accordance with God's plan. Our perfect models for loving God are Jesus and Mary. This love is made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. Discussion guide.

a) How have I loved God in a concrete way?

F. SESSION No. 6 LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR

1. Goal:

To explain the meaning of Christian love for neighbor and inspire people to practice it.

2. Core Message:

Loving God and loving neighbor form the inseparable core of the Christian life. These two go together. We cannot love God without loving our neighbor. The characteristics of Christian love are described by St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. But Jesus elevated loving one's neighbor to a higher plane. We are to love our neighbors not only as we love ourselves, but as God loves us. Our model for loving our neighbor is our Lord, Jesus Christ. He washed the feet of his disciples. He died for us.

The full depth of the meaning of Jesus' teaching on loving our neighbor is revealed in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. In the parable, Jesus took pains to describe in great detail the various actions done by the Samaritan in helping the victim – "approached the victim," "poured oil and wine," "bandaged him," "lifted him up," "took him to an inn," "cared for him" – in order to convey the message that "being a neighbor" entails "doing things" and not merely wishing others well.

Loving our neighbor is not a passive attitude but an active involvement. It involves a lot of "going" and "doing", and "approaching" and "caring for others". In the parable, Jesus does not directly answer the question, "Who is my neighbor?", since this opens up the possibility that some will be "neighbor" and others are not. Jesus does not want to make any distinction. The relevant question is, "Am I neighbor to others?" And Jesus commands us to be so.

3. Discussion guides.

- a) Do you understand the Biblical meaning of love as contrasted with that of the world?
- b) How have you failed to love in everyday life?

G. SESSION No. 7 THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

1. Goal:

To stress the importance of the Christian family and give practical advice for building up a strong Christian family.

2. Core Message:

The family is under attack from many fronts. We want to face up to this attack and to come out with our families intact and even stronger. For this we need to put on God's mind and to follow his plan for the family. God has intended the family for the transmission of life. It is a place for teaching children and training leaders. The family is a domestic church. But in this modern society, God has lost central place in the family. The family itself is losing its importance. The pace of modern life has become very fast making it difficult for lasting relationships to develop. We thus find the family to be under attack by evil forces.

To make God's plan happen, we must make a decision to make it happen in our family. This requires praying together and making time for the task of building a strong family. We must learn more about God's plan for our family and seek other couples who share our concern about family life and be in regular fellowship with them. Fathers, in particular, should take steps to assume full responsibility for the spiritual and material needs of the family.

The Holy Family of Nazareth is our model. We should seek the protection and guidance of the Holy Family of Nazareth to make God's plan happen. With all the challenges that families face, we need God's power, the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. Discussion guides.

- a) For the men: Have I assumed full responsibility for the spiritual and material needs of my family?
- b) For the women: Have I supported my husband in his role and done my share in building up a Christian family?

H. SESSION No. 8 LIFE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. Goal:

To stir up expectant faith and an eager desire for a greater working of God in people's lives through the Holy Spirit.

2. Core Message:

The starting point for understanding life in the Holy Spirit is to realize that it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to experience God and have a living relationship with him. The early disciples received and experienced the power of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, a Jewish holiday celebrated fifty days after Passover. We too can receive and experience this life in the Holy Spirit since God has promised us the Holy Spirit. Thus we simply take God up on his promise and we will experience the same relationship with Jesus, the same transforming power, and the same courage for proclaiming the gospel.

We will also receive the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit. But we need to avoid the obstacles to these gifts through: unrepentant attitude, feeling unworthy, fear, doubt, pride, and being selective as to what gifts we want. This new life in the Spirit is the authentic Christian life. And God desires it for all. We should thus look forward to this new life and to experiencing your own "Pentecost," remembering that "there is no Pentecost without the Virgin Mary." Thus with the Virgin Mary, we can live a life in the Holy Spirit.

3. Discussion guide:

Share about your experience of God's Spirit in your life.

I. SESSION No. 9 RECEIVING THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. Goal:

To lead people to understand and receive the power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

2. Core Message

God promised to give his people the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit that God promised through Ezekiel, Jesus gave to his disciples and is giving to us. With the Holy Spirit, we gain a new nature, a new spiritual power, a power to serve.

We also receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There are two teaching gifts: wisdom and healing; three sign gifts: faith, healing, and miracles; and four revelational gifts: prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

During the pray over session, we will claim God's promise. We should desire the gifts of the Holy Spirit and, in particular, the gift of tongues. We should ask for these spiritual gifts in faith, and then cooperate with God's Spirit in order to receive them. God makes the offer. We accept and receive the power of the Holy Spirit.

J. SESSION No. 10 GROWING IN THE SPIRIT

1. Goal:

To teach the basic tools to growth and maturity as Christians.

2. Core Message:

The Christian life can be pictured as a wheel that has three components: the outer rim, the hub, and the spokes. The outer rim represents the daily Christian life; the hub, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the spokes, the tools through which the Holy Spirit is transmitted from the hub (Jesus Christ) to the outer rim (our daily life). There are five spokes corresponding to the five tools that we can make use of to grow in the Holy Spirit: prayer and study, service and fellowship, and the sacraments.

Our prayer must be faithful, led by the Holy Spirit, and centered on Jesus. We study to know more about God by reading the Scriptures and Christian publications and attending teachings. We serve by making ourselves and our resources – time, talent, and treasure – available for God's work. Fellowship is the expression of the spiritual reality that we are brothers and sisters belonging to one family and doing things together. The sacraments, particularly the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of Holy Communion, are the most important means to grow in the Spirit. If we are faithful in using these tools, we will grow in the Holy Spirit and be more blessed in our family life.

3. Discussion guide.

What tools to Christian growth have not been fully utilized in your life?

K. SESSION No. 11 THE LIFE AND MISSION OF COUPLES FOR CHRIST

1. Goal:

To explain the life and mission of Couples for Christ and to inspire people with the desire to be part of this community.

2. Core Message:

Couples for Christ (CFC) is a Christian community for the renewal and strengthening of family life and making the love of God felt among the poor. It started in June 1981 in Manila, Philippines, with 16 couples. It is a highly evangelistic community. It is officially recognized by the Vatican's Pontifical Council of the Laity as a private international association of pontifical right. As such, it has a God-given vision and mission, a statement of philosophy, and a 5-point commitment – The Covenant of Couples for Christ – which is embodied in a small white card that we carry with us all the time.

In CFC, we support one another primarily through households, which are small groups composed of from 4 to 7 couples and headed by a leader-couple. The households meet once a week in the home of members. We also have teaching and formation programs as well as regular activities such as leaders' conferences, theme weekend retreats, anniversaries, and others. We invite everyone who completes the CLP to be a part of God's work in Couples for Christ and to be ready to make the covenant.

3. Discussion guides.

- a) Do you agree with the CFC statement of philosophy, which embodies its beliefs and ideals?
- b) Do you see the covenant of Couples for Christ as the ideal of Christian family life that God calls us all to?

L. SESSION No. 12 TRANSFORMATION IN CHRIST

1. Goal:

To encourage people to live out actively the new life in the power of the Holy Spirit, and to excite them about becoming a part of the CFC community.

2. Core Message:

This talk marks the end of the Christian Life Program. But it is not really the end, but just the beginning. The Lord has laid the foundation for our transformation throughout the Christian Life Program. Our transformation, and what we have gone through, may be likened to the story of the man born blind in the Gospel of John 9:1-38. To continue our transformation, we need to grow in holiness and discipleship and have a greater commitment to service. This we can attain in Couples for Christ.

Christ could have restored the sight of the man born blind by merely saying the words "be healed." But Jesus has chosen to go through a "process" of making mud paste with spittle, rubbing it on the eyes of the blind man, and sending him to the Pool of Siloam. In the same way, Jesus could have transformed us and opened our eyes to his plan by some other means. But he has chosen to open our eyes and transform us through the "process" of the Christian Life Program. Let us thus praise and thank the Lord for calling us, for opening our eyes, and for starting the process of our transformation in Christ.

DISCUSSION GROUP LEADER'S GUIDE

A. PURPOSE OF DISCUSSION GROUPS

1. To help the participants to understand and digest the material presented.
2. To allow them to express their thoughts and feelings, and to give them a chance to ask questions.
3. To help people to open up and respond to God's invitation and grace.
4. To provide a place for them to begin to experience Christian fellowship, preparing the way to participation in Christian community (CFC) after the CLP.

B. THE ROLE OF A DISCUSSION GROUP LEADER

1. To help set the right tone.
 - a) Come promptly to each session at the time indicated by the team leader, so that the team meeting may be held as scheduled and there will be enough time for you to greet the participants as they come in, especially the members of your discussion group.
 - b) Be warm and friendly, even if people are a little stiff at first. New people will warm up as you are warm with them. Take special care to establish an atmosphere of love and interest in the group.
 - c) Be joyful and outgoing. Meet other men and women who are not in your group. Encourage your group members to get to know more people outside their own group.
 - d) Participate enthusiastically in whatever is going on. Sing the songs, listen attentively (even if the talk is familiar), and follow quickly any lead the team leader gives.

- e) Pray out where there is an opportunity. Express your prayer in a way that teaches the new people how to pray, but does not overwhelm them (e.g., grant that we may be martyrs), and does not use unfamiliar jargon (e.g. Jesus, thank you for your all sufficient and substitutionary sacrifice that purchased my redemption).
2. To help evangelize those in your discussion group.
- a) Remember the names and important details of your discussion group members. By this you communicate a great amount of concern.
 - b) Tailor the program inputs to your members' needs during the discussion. You have freedom to lead discussions as you think best, with the goal of making the message of the talks connect with each one in a personal way.
 - c) Follow up regularly with your group members during the week, especially during Module One of the CLP. If necessary, meet with them for further discussion. Encourage them to be open, to persevere and to turn to the Lord to seek out His will for them. Contact those who miss talks and get together with them for make up sessions.
 - d) Intercede for them and do spiritual warfare on their behalf. Fast and pray for them.
 - e) Do whatever is appropriate to bring to issue each one's relationship with Christ. It is your responsibility to help them personally and to do all you can to bring them to commitment to Christ.

3. Important general comments:

- a) The team members' love for one another and for the participants is a crucial element of the program.
- b) Participating in the singing and fully in the prayers is crucial, because that is the way the participants will learn how to pray.
- c) Faithfulness to all meetings is absolutely essential. Being punctual is presupposed.
- d) Prepare for the sessions by studying the goals and content of the sessions beforehand. Pray and think about the discussion starters and guides. Know what your members should be taking home from the session and help them to appropriate that.
- e) **Read and study this Team Manual!**

C. LEADING A DISCUSSION GROUP

- 1. The discussion groups form and begin right after the talk. The men meet separately from the women.
- 2. When first meeting as a discussion group, try to establish a relaxed atmosphere. Don't be overly serious, but maintain control. Inspire confidence in others that you know what everybody is supposed to be doing. Remember that many people have never been in this type of discussion group. Be clear about instructions like sitting in a circle, etc.
- 3. Start and end every discussion with a short prayer. Moving into Module Two and Module Three, you may ask others in your group to lead the prayer if they seem ready, but don't put them on the spot.
- 4. For the first session, start with introductions and let everyone get to know one another.

5. Assure them that the principle of confidentiality is at work in your discussions. Whatever is shared basically remains only within the group. General reports during team meetings maintain the anonymity of sharers.
6. Let the group know that they are free to ask relevant questions or bring up relevant problems.
7. For Module One, if the participants are still not very open or are still shy, you may have to begin the sharing yourself. This also is a good way of showing them how the discussion/ sharing is to be handled.
8. If the group is eager to respond to the talk, allow them to without bothering with the discussion starter.
9. Encourage shy people who don't speak much by asking them questions. Don't put them on the spot, however. Start with easy general questions at first, then work your way up to more specific things about themselves. Make sure every-one gets to talk during the discussion. Don't allow anyone, including yourself, to take too much time and dominate the discussion.
10. One way to control dominant people in discussion groups is to speak to the person before the session begins. Encourage their sharing but impress them with the limited amount of time and the need for everyone to share.
11. Don't let the discussion get off the subject. Gently but authoritatively tell them that it is time to stop this line of conversation. Suggest another time or place to the people involved.
12. It is usually best to open up the discussion to any questions only after you are sure they have understood the main points of the talks, or if they won't share. Quite often questions asked do not have anything to do with the talk.
13. When answering questions, you don't need to offer everything on the subject, but only what will help the person most at this time in his/her life. On the other hand, be willing to say "I don't know" and/or "I'll find out."

14. Don't take up serious theological issues in the discussions.
15. Don't talk down to people or appear to be an expert on something you are not.
16. Avoid Christian jargon. New people may not be able to enter into the meanings of the phrases we know so well.
17. Take notes and write down significant details of conversations in your group so that you can keep track of your people's progress and also as a basis for the team meeting afterwards.
18. As you listen to the talk, discern which points your people especially need to hear and try to bring those out in your sharing or in theirs.
19. Keep your eye on the time. Make sure that there is enough time for everyone to share.

D. TEAM MEETINGS

Team meetings are usually held both before and after the session itself. The pre session meeting helps prepare for the session. The post session meeting is for evaluating what happened in the session.

The team meeting is almost the only opportunity that team members have to discuss the progress of the CLP. It should be a time for support and encouragement, a time that builds unity, faith, and love. The team should spend time not talking about administrative details but having a concrete discussion of the problems and situations they are facing.

Aside from these, the team meetings also help to create a spiritual unity among the team members, help the team members to learn to better serve the Lord, and communicate what is happening in the CLP as a whole.

E. MAKE UP SESSIONS

Any participant who misses any talk will have to have a make up session, which consists in listening to a recorded talk (audio or video) and having a short discussion with his/her leader.

It is the discussion leader's responsibility to give personally the make up session. It should be done within the week immediately after the session missed. The purpose is to ensure that the participant understands the talk and to give him/her an opportunity to discuss the same.

F. GUIDELINES FOR PERSONAL DIALOGUES (one to one)

1. First Dialogue.

After the talk on Repentance and Faith ending Module One, the discussion group leaders meet individually with each of the members of their group. These meetings should be held within the week prior to the start of Module Two.

The purpose of this meeting is to see how the participants are doing, and more importantly, to see whether they are ready to go on.

Readiness to go on consists in being willing to repent and turn away from serious wrongdoing. Has the person repented for serious sin? You need to ask them directly and get a direct response. If they are unclear as to what is serious sin, go through the list. Note that what is important is willingness to turn away from sin. Sometimes the actual turning away may not be accomplished in a single, immediate act (e.g. breaking off with a mistress or giving up addiction to liquor). But if they are willing to repent and continue with the CLP, they may be allowed to go on. Work out with them a timetable for finally setting their lives right, and follow up on them through the succeeding weeks.

NOTE: No one should be allowed to take module two if there are serious things that the person is not willing to take steps to amend.

Readiness also involves a willingness to follow Jesus and to learn more about Him.

These individual meetings may be held at any place convenient to both leader and participant. It may be at either's home or office, in a church, in a restaurant, at a park, etc. The only requirements are privacy and a peaceful atmosphere.

If there are any issues on wrongdoing that you cannot resolve, refer them to the team leader. Also inform the team leader of any participant who cannot be allowed to go on, prior to the start of Module Two.

Guide Questions for the Meeting

- a) We have been talking and discussing basics of our faith. Are there any questions that have not been answered? Is there any unclarity that I can help you with?
- b) The first step to a full and committed life with the Lord is repentance, i.e., turning away from serious wrongdoing and turning toward the Lord. If there is serious wrongdoing in your life, are you willing to make a definite break with it? Serious wrongdoing includes the following:
- Non Christian religions and non Christian practices (e.g., Freemasonry, New Age, Transcendental Meditation, etc.).
 - All forms of the occult, spiritualism, witchcraft.
 - Sexual wrongdoing (adultery, masturbation, active homosexuality, perversity, etc.).
 - Murder, stealing, cheating.
 - Lying, slander, gossip.
 - Drunkenness, drugs.

Note for Catholics: To make repentance full and effective, go to sacramental confession and make a firm resolution to lead a new life acceptable to Jesus.

- c) Is there anything you wish to share or discuss with me? Is there any other way I can help you?
- d) Are you ready to turn away from sin, confess (if there is serious wrongdoing), and commit your life to the Lord? Accept Him as Lord and Savior?

2. Second Dialogue.

After the 8th session on "Life in the Holy Spirit" ending Module Two, the discussion group leaders once again meet individually with each of the members of their group. These meetings should be held prior to the next session (Receiving the Power of the Holy Spirit) which is the start of Module Three.

The primary purpose of this individual meeting is to help the participant prepare for the prayer session where the participant is prayed with for a

renewed outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Pray-over Session sometimes causes unclarity in the mind of the participant. The discussion group leader will try to clear up any question concerning this. The meeting also serves to give encouragement and support to the participant and to find out specific areas where he/she needs to be strengthened and prayed for.

These individual meetings should be held as early as possible during the week so that the participant may have enough time after this meeting to adequately prepare himself/herself for the prayer session. Don't wait until the last minute!

Guidelines for the meeting

- a) Start with a prayer. Foster an atmosphere of concern, friendliness, and informality.
- b) Find out if there are any questions regarding what has transpired in the program or if there are any problem areas. Discuss these.
- c) Check the participant's understanding of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, particularly the gift of tongues. Explain these concepts again. If there is any hang up or fear in any of these areas, help the participant to get over them.
- d) If the participant has any involvement in the occult and the like (fortune telling, card reading, spirit of the glass, etc.), which may or may not have been brought out in the first individual meeting, lead the participant to renounce verbally this involvement.
- e) Make sure that any serious wrongdoing which the participant disclosed during your first individual meeting is no longer present in his/her life. Find out if there are other areas of wrongdoing which the participant has not disclosed.
- f) Find out if there are other obstacles to the full release of the Spirit in his/her life. Check areas of unforgiveness, resentments, hatred, bitterness, etc. Lead the participant to forgive the cause(s) of all these negative emotions. Pray for a repentant and forgiving heart.

- g) Find out if the participant has had any traumatic experiences, so that you can pray for healing of memories during the prayer session.
- h) Find out if there are other areas of concern or difficulties that the participant would like to share with you.
- i) Ask if the participant has any prayer intention, or any specific areas that he/she would want to pray for during the Pray-over Session.
- j) Encourage the participant (if Catholic) to go to confession, to go to Mass and receive Holy Communion, and to pray prior to the Pray-over Session.
- k) Pray together at the end of the meeting.

3. Reminders.

- a) The principle of confidentiality is still very much in force. Keep to yourself whatever information is brought out, except what you cannot handle, in which case you should bring the same to the team leader. Any discussion of serious problems should be only with the team leader (or if necessary with the supervising Unit Head or the Chapter Head), and should not be specifically taken up during the team meeting. The team meeting is a time of sharing in general, to see where people are at. Always avoid gossip, slander, or any wrong way of speaking about any participant.
- b) Inform the team leader immediately of any problem you cannot handle or of any obstacle to being prayed with for the Pray-over Session. Don't wait till prior to the prayer session itself.

TEAM MANUAL

APPENDICES

COMMITMENT TO CHRIST

Do you renounce Satan and all wrongdoing?

Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that he died to free us from our sins, and that he rose to bring us new life?

Will you follow Jesus as your Lord?

Lord Jesus Christ, I want to belong to you from now on.

I want to be free from the dominion of darkness and the rule of Satan, and I want to enter into your Kingdom and be a part of your people. I will turn away from all wrongdoing, and I will avoid everything that leads me to wrongdoing. I ask you to forgive all the sins that I have committed. I offer my life to you, and I promise to obey you as my Lord.

AMEN.



APPENDIX B

GUIDELINES ON PRAYER FOR THE PRAY-OVER SESSION

1. Much of the effectiveness of the prayer session on the participants will be related to the kind of atmosphere which the team itself establishes. Thus the atmosphere should be one of:
 - a) FAITH. We need to turn to the Lord and put our faith in Him. We need to be centered on the Lord. And the more we have faith, the easier it will be for the participants. Faith catches. In an atmosphere of worship and faith, it is much easier to have faith.
 - b) PEACE. We do not want to encourage emotional excitement. Rather, we want to encourage relaxed joy. Those conducting the prayer should be warm and friendly and relaxed and should themselves convey a mood of peace and calmness to the participants.
 - c) OPENNESS. We should be especially open to spiritual gifts during this time. The Lord will work through the team with prophecy and words of wisdom, with discernment and faith, and even with healing. If we obey the promptings of the Spirit, we will see God work in many ways that we might not have expected.
2. The gift of tongues.
 - a) The participants should come to see tongues as another means of growing closer to Christ. It is a gift we can all use right from the start of our new life in the Spirit. A person should claim this gift in confidence. No one needs to wait for this gift or shy away from it because of unworthiness. It is a gift God gives freely, simply because we ask for it. No one has to "psych himself up" or feel emotionally ready to receive the gift.
 - b) Three conditions dispose a person to receive the gift of tongues:

- He should desire the gift. Simply because it is a gift that comes from God.
 - He should ask in faith for the gift. Faith means relying on God's promise (Lk.11:13) and looking expectantly to Jesus to give the gift.
 - He must cooperate with God by speaking out in faith and expecting God to give him the utterance. What is needed is active, not passive, faith.
- c) There are some people who come seeking to receive the gifts of the Spirit who say that they do not want to have the gift of tongues. This is a wrong attitude because it would be placing limits on God's working. It is not being open to the Lord. Everyone should want to receive the gift of tongues.
- d) Tongues may not be of first importance in itself, but it has great consequences in a person's spiritual life. It can revolutionize a person's prayer life. A person who prays in tongues can normally pray more easily, and his prayer will be more likely to be filled with praise and worship. But even more significantly, tongues usually turns out to be the gateway to the charismatic dimension.
- It builds a person's faith in a very concrete way. It gives him a clear experience of what it means to have the Holy Spirit forming something new through him. Yielding to tongues is an important first step, and it is worth putting effort into encouraging a person to yield to tongues.
- e) At the same time, we should make it clear that speaking in tongues is neither a necessary sign, nor by itself a certain sign, that a person has received the power of the Holy Spirit. We should encourage the participants to be open to this gift, as a valuable way of praying, especially in praising God, but we should not put too much stress on it that their attention will be on tongues and not on the Lord and his gift of the Holy Spirit.

3. Suggested Procedure in the Pray-over Session.

- a) Ask the participant to sit down, just relax, and be open to the workings of the Holy Spirit.
- b) Ask if there are any other specific areas that he wishes you to pray for, aside from those already discussed in your individual meeting. Ask if he desires any specific gift(s) from the Holy Spirit.
- c) Start with praising the Lord. Ask the participant to join you here. Then ask the Lord's protection for the participant and his loved ones and also for yourselves. Claim God's power and victory over the situation.
- d) Do a short prayer of exorcism, which means the casting out of evil spirits or the telling of spirits to leave a person or place free. It should be done simply and undramatically, in a quiet voice, so that only those praying for a particular person will hear it. Simply command whatever evil spirits there are to depart. If you have any discernment as to the kind of evil spirit present, then simply command that spirit to depart.

NOTE: This is not the kind of exorcism called for when an individual is actually possessed. It is simply the same kind of prayer that is part of every Catholic celebration of the sacrament of Baptism. To avoid misconception some prefer to use the term "praying for deliverance from evil spirits". Then always ask for an infilling of the Holy Spirit for the void left by evil spirits.

- e) Pray that the participant be delivered from the bondage of sin. Pray for all those areas of wrongdoing or of weaknesses, all negative emotions, all areas of concern and difficulty, and any other obstacles to the full release of the Spirit in his life.
- f) Pray for healing of memories and for inner healing.

- g) Pray specifically for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
For example:

"Father, we now ask you, in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, that you pour upon ____ the Holy Spirit so he/she may receive new life" or any other variation. The important thing is that you ask specifically that the Holy Spirit descend upon the participant.

- h) Pray that the participant receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially those he specifically desires.
- i) Pray in tongues. Then you can ask the participant to pray in tongues. But you may have to help the participant to yield to tongues. Many will not understand or follow the instructions given in the opening remarks. Thus after praying with a person, you should lean over or kneel down and suggest that he should try to start praying in tongues. You should encourage him to speak out, making sounds that are not English or any other language he knows. You should then pray with him again.

When the person begins to speak in tongues, you should encourage him. Many will still be afraid that it is "just them." You can often supply the faith that will allow them to yield to the Spirit. Once the participant is able to pray in tongues, say a short prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord. If no tongues come, or the person feels inhibited, try encouraging but never force the person.

- j) Pray that the participant be given the grace to become a strong Christian. Pray that he commit himself to the Lord.
- k) Have a closing prayer for the participant, some words that will encourage and buildup him. End with the Glory be.
- l) Let the participant go back to his seat, exhorting him to continue praying until everyone is finished.

4. Pastoral notes.

- a) You should get a prayer partner to provide support. However, you as the discussion group leader will lead the prayer. The prayer partner is in a supporting role. It is the discussion group leader who has been with the participant for the past 8 sessions and who has had two individual meetings with him. Thus he best knows the participant and what his needs are. However, as is called for, the prayer partner gives support to the extent necessary. And in some cases where the discussion leader himself does not have the gift of tongues, it would be the prayer partner who should handle this portion.
- b) Pray in a low but audible voice. Usually there will be other praying teams in the same room. Your prayer should be loud enough to be heard by the participant and your prayer partner, but not too loud as to disturb the other groups.
- c) Apply the right amount of encouragement and understanding for each participant. Some people will yield to the Spirit beautifully without any encouragement at all. Some will need just a little push. Some will need patient encouragement. Some should not be pushed at all. Let the Spirit lead you and give you wisdom on how to help your people.
- d) Should the participant become restless, immediately pray that the peace of the Lord be upon him.
- e) If the participant cries, alleviate his embarrassment by telling him that tears are a gift from the Lord. It is called the gift of tears or the gift of cleansing.
- f) Be aware of what is happening to the participant. Don't be lost in your own prayers. Be sensitive to the situation and adopt your prayers, your procedure, and your whole self to it.

- g) There is no set length of time to the prayer of this sort. It can range from as short as five minutes to as long as 30 minutes or more. It is not how long it takes that is important, but how effectively the participants are led to receive the power of the Holy Spirit through the pray-over. However, your prayers should also not be so long that the whole session is stretched out. A good rule of thumb is to take no more than one hour to pray over your whole group.
5. Remember:
- a) Study this guide and other available materials well.
 - b) Prepare yourself spiritually, throughout the week but especially on the day of the prayer session. Pray, read Scripture, fast, and intercede for your people.
 - c) Have faith and trust in the Lord!



PRAISING THE LORD

Praising the Lord is an essential element in our lives as Christians. We in CFC are a people who are to live and serve for the praise and glory of His name.

Why praise the Lord?

1. Because the Lord is our Creator and we are His creatures. It is but proper and fitting that creatures should acknowledge and give glory to their Creator.
2. Because it is our vocation as Christians.
 - Eph. 1:11-12: "In Him we were chosen; for in the decree of God, who administers everything according to His will and counsel, we were predestined to praise His glory..."
 - Eph. 1:14: "... a people God has made His own, to praise His glory."

As Christians, we are God's people. If the purpose for which He made us His people is "to praise His glory", then praising the Lord must be the most important act we can ever do. In fact, it must be our main occupation so that every moment of our life should give praise to the Lord.

1 Cor. 10:31. "The fact is that whether you eat or drink whatever you do you should do all for the glory of God."

3. Because the Word of God explicitly tells us to do so.
 - Psalm 9:12: "Sing praise to the Lord enthroned in Zion."
 - Psalm 22:24: "You who fear the Lord, praise Him."

- Psalm 103:1: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all my being bless His holy name."

- Psalm 104:33: "I will sing to the Lord all my life, I will sing praise to my God while I live."

- * Psalm 150:6: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Alleluia!"

- * Heb. 13:15: "Through him let us continually offer God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name."

4. Because praise is the key that unlocks the power of God.

- Joshua 6:15-16,20: The walls of Jericho collapsed after the Israelites praised the Lord in procession around the city.

- Acts 16:25-26: Paul and Silas are delivered from their chains and imprisonment while they were praying and singing praises to the Lord.

5. Because this is how Jesus taught us to pray.

- Luke 11:1-4: The Lord's prayer has two parts. The first part is a prayer of praise and the second is a prayer of petition. Thus one thing Jesus teaches us here is to start our prayers always with praise.

What are we going to praise God for?

1. For His perfection.

- Eph. 5:19-20: "Sing praise to the Lord with all your hearts. Give thanks to the Father always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. For all the innumerable blessings He has given us.

- We praise God for His greatness, goodness, generosity, mercy, patience with our weakness, etc.

3. Even for the evils He allows to happen to us.
 - Romans 8:28; Eph. 5:20.
 - We should praise Him even for the trials and difficulties that came our way. As Christians, we believe that nothing happens which God does not allow to happen. If something bad has happened, then God must have a purpose in allowing it to happen. Since God's purpose can only be good, we therefore still praise Him, not for the bad happening but for His good purpose. So that "always and for everything" we praise the Lord.

How do we praise the Lord in a group prayer?

1. Speaking out loud our praises to the Lord.
 - Psalm 66:1-2,8: "Shout joyfully to God, all you on earth, sing praise to the glory of His name; proclaim His glorious praise." ... "Bless our God, you peoples, loudly sound His praise."
 - Hebrews 13:15: "Through him let us continually offer God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which acknowledge His name."
2. Songs and singing in the Spirit.
 - Eph. 5:18 19: "Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and inspired songs. Sing praise to the Lord with all your hearts."
 - Col. 3:16: "Sing gratefully to God from your hearts in psalms, hymns and inspired songs."
3. Raising of hands.
 - 1 Tim. 2:8: "...in every place the men shall offer prayers with blameless hands held aloft."
4. Clapping of hands.
 - Psalm 47:2: "All you peoples, clap your hands, shout to God with cries of gladness."

5. Dancing.

- 1 Chronicles 13:8: "...David and all Israel danced before God with great enthusiasm, amid Songs and music on lyres, harps, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets."
- 2 Sam. 6:14-16: "Then David, girt with a linen apron, came dancing before the Lord with abandon...King David leaping and dancing before the Lord..."
- Psalm 149:3: "Let them praise His name in the festive dance."
- Psalm 150:4: "praise Him with timbrel and dance..."



ANNEX D

TITLES OF JESUS

- A. From the book of Revelation.
 - 1. Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:11)
 - 2. First and last (Rev. 1:17)
 - 3. Lord God almighty (Rev. 4:8)
 - 4. Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5)
 - 5. Root of David (Rev. 5:5)
 - 6. Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11)
 - 7. Word of God (Rev. 19:13)
 - 8. King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16)
 - 9. Beginning and end (Rev. 21:6)
 - 10. Root and offspring of David (Rev. 22:16)
 - 11. Bright morning star (Rev. 22:16)
- B. From the prophets.
 - 12. Emmanuel (Is. 7:14)
 - 13. Wonder Counselor, God Hero, Father Forever, Prince of Peace (Is. 9:5)
 - 14. Root of Jesse (Is. 11:10)
 - 15. Son of man (Dan. 7:13)
 - 16. Shoot (Zech. 6:12)
- C. From the gospels.
 - 17. Messiah (Mt. 1:16)
 - 18. Son of God (Mt. 4:3)
 - 19. Lord (Mt. 7:21)
 - 20. Son of David (Mt. 15:22)
 - 21. Holy One of God (Mk. 1:24)
 - 22. Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29)
 - 23. Bread of life (Jn. 6:35)
 - 24. I Am (Jn. 8:58)
 - 25. Gate (Jn. 10:9)
 - 26. Good shepherd (Jn. 10:14)
 - 27. Resurrection and the life (Jn. 11:25)
 - 28. Way and truth and life (Jn. 14:6)
 - 29. True vine (Jn. 15:1)
- D. Others
 - 30. Holy and Righteous One (Acts 3:14)
 - 31. Author of life (Acts 3:15)
 - 32. Judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42)
 - 33. Blessed and only ruler (1 Tim. 6:15)

FASTING

The team is greatly encouraged to fast at least once a week during the entire course of the program, not only as a means of personal spiritual growth, but more so as a personal sacrifice for the intention of the participants, the people whom the Lord has entrusted to our care.

What is fasting?

Fasting refers to abstaining from food for spiritual purposes. Fasting is not:

1. Dieting, which stresses abstinence from food for health for physical reasons. It is motivated by vanity.
2. Hunger strike, which has for its purpose the gaining of political power or the attracting of attention for a certain cause. It is motivated by the desire for power.

How do we fast?

The normal means of fasting involves abstaining from all food, solid or liquid, but not from water. However, one could also engage in a partial fast, which is a restriction of diet but not total abstention. Just consider what your body can take or how far you yourself want to go.

We can fast on the day of the session itself. We can start our fast after the previous night's supper or at midnight and end our fast with supper before the session or continue the fast until the session's fellowship.

Who should fast?

The list of Biblical personages who fasted is like a "Who's Who" of Scripture: Moses the lawgiver, David the king, Elijah the prophet, Esther the queen, Daniel the seer, Anna the prophetess, Paul the apostle, and of course Jesus Christ the Son of God. So we're in good company when we fast.

Generally, the whole team should fast once a week during the whole course of the CLP. But obviously there will be some people who for physical reasons should not fast. For example: diabetics, expectant mothers, and heart patients. If you have any questions about your fitness to fast, seek medical advice.

What is the Scriptural basis for fasting?

(Mt. 6:16 18) Jesus says, "When you fast..." Jesus already assumed that people would fast, and what was needed was instruction on how to do it properly.

(Mt. 9:14 15) Jesus says, "When the day comes that the groom is taken away, then they will fast." The "day" refers to the present church age. Jesus expected his disciples to fast after he was gone.

Why should we fast?

1. The first and most important reason is that fasting is a means of worshipping God and centering our lives and our existence on the Lord.
 - Like the prophetess Anna, we need to worship in fasting and prayer (Luke 2:37).
 - As in the case of the apostolic band at Antioch, fasting and prayer go together (Acts 13:2 3).
2. Fasting is also a weapon for spiritual warfare (Mt. 17:21). We can expect Satan to be angry at the work we are doing, and he will be trying to stop us and the participants from receiving what God has to offer. We need to fast in our fight against evil forces.
3. Fasting is a way by which we can control our body and the desires of the flesh. In life we crave for so many things (not just food) which we do not need until we become controlled or enslaved by them. By fasting, we learn to discipline ourselves and to keep our desires in the proper perspective. Fasting helps us keep our balance in life.
4. Fasting reveals the things that control us. We cover up what is inside us with food and other good things, but in fasting these things surface. If pride controls us, it will be revealed. Anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, fear – all these will surface during fasting.

And knowing these things within us is a great benefit to one who longs to be transformed into the image of Christ. We can now come before the Lord and pray for healing in these areas.

5. Fasting is a way by which we grasp the reality that we live not by bread alone, but more importantly by the Word of God (Mt. 4:4). We are totally dependent on the Lord for our existence. And our spiritual life is much more important than our physical life.

6. Fasting is a way by which we can relate, though admittedly in a very small way, to the sufferings of people who don't have adequate food or other necessities of life. By actually experiencing doing without, we can empathize more with their plight.

7. Other values of fasting are increased effectiveness in intercessory prayer, guidance in decisions, increased concentration, deliverance for those in bondage, physical well being.

Covenant of the Couples for Christ

Trusting the Lord's help and guidance,

1. I shall live as a follower of Christ.
 - Pray everyday for at least 15 minutes.
 - Read Scriptures everyday for at least 15 minutes.
 - Participate regularly in the worship life of my church.
 - Avoid sin and wrongdoing.
 - Put good order into my private life.
2. I dedicate myself to the task of building a strong family for Christ.
 - Seek regular weekly dialogue with my spouse & children.
 - Exercise my duties actively as a parent.
 - Pray with my family daily and celebrate the Lord's Day together.
 - Invest generous amounts of time for home and family.
3. I will make myself available to the Lord for service.
 - Bring other couples to Christ.
 - Make time to serve in COUPLES FOR CHRIST whenever I am called to serve, and follow directions of those who have responsibility for my service.
4. I will relate in love and loyalty to other families in COUPLES FOR CHRIST.
 - Attend my small group meetings weekly and support the good order of the meeting.
 - Faithfully attend all other meetings.
 - Accept other couples whom the Lord adds to our number.
5. I shall study and seek to grow as a Christian person and in understanding and fulfillment of my marriage vocation.
 - Attend all courses, retreats, workshops and conferences of COUPLES FOR CHRIST.
 - Diligently study all materials given to me.

May our Lord Jesus Christ help me to live the covenant of the COUPLES FOR CHRIST everyday for His greater honor and glory and for the good of my brothers and sisters.

TALK HANDOUTS

COUPLES FOR CHRIST CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM

Participant's Handout

SESSION No. 1 : GOD'S LOVE

Brief Outline:

A. God's Love Creates

- God created man in his image. In the divine image, God created him. What better demonstration of God's love than being created in the image of the Creator!
- But man, in the exercise of his God-given gift of free will, rejected his Creator by sinning.

B. God's Love Forgives

- The parable of the Prodigal Son—of which the central figure is the father—is a graphic story of God's love, a God who is passionately in love with all his children.
- Our Father in heaven patiently waits for us to come back. What awaits us is a lavish and generous love – a Father ready to forgive his children's sins, despite his children's past.

C. God's Love Redeems

- The fullest revelation of God's love is the giving of his only begotten Son to suffer and die that we may have eternal life. God's love is, most of all, a love that redeems.

Discussion starter

1. Share with one another how you came to the Christian Life Program and what you expect or seek to experience. Start with a brief introduction about your life.
2. Share about how you have personally experienced God's love.

Scriptures for daily prayer

Day		Day	
1	Isaiah 55:8-9	5	Ephesians 1:7-10
2	Isaiah 48:17-19	6	John 3:16-18
3	Jeremiah 29:11-14	7	Romans 10:9-13
4	John 15:4-7		

The Challenge

God has loved you with an eternal love that creates, forgives, and redeems. The ultimate manifestation of this love was sending God's own Son to suffer and die for you. Will you open your heart to receive the fullness of His love?

COUPLES FOR CHRIST CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM

Participant's Handout

SESSION No. 2 : WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

Brief Outline:

Realizing the importance of Jesus to us and to better understand who he really is, we ask: "Who is Jesus Christ?"

A. Jesus of History: Three things that make Jesus an absolutely unique figure in human history:

- Jesus is the only person in history ever pre-announced.
- He was born in Bethlehem of a virgin named Mary. Once he appeared on the scene, he struck history, dividing it into two periods: B.C. and A.D.
- Every person who came into this world came into it to live. Jesus came into the world to suffer and die. His death was the goal and fulfilment of his life.

B. Christ of Faith: What did Jesus do or say about himself that, in spite of his humble and short human life, he created such an impact in history?

- Jesus did many signs or miracles; Jesus forgave sins; Jesus gave life; Jesus claimed to possess all power in heaven and on earth; Jesus claimed that he will sit on the right hand of the Father and come to judge all mankind; Jesus claimed straightforwardly to be God; Jesus' contemporaries came to the realization that he was God.

C. We Truly Know Jesus Through the Cross

- The cross is the central point of our knowing and understanding Jesus Christ because his cross is both language (knowing) and parable (understanding).

The most conclusive proof that Jesus is Lord and God is his resurrection. When we truly know Jesus, when we take him as our Lord and God, when we develop a personal relationship with him, then we become truly Christian.

Discussion starter

1. Share about your Christian background.
2. Discuss how you saw or thought of Jesus before, and what new insights you have gotten through the talk.

Scriptures for daily prayer

Day		Day	
1	John 6:32-40	5	Mark 2:5-12
2	John 10:7-15	6	John 8:51-58
3	John 14:6-11	7	John 11:25-27, 38-44
4	John 5:18-24		

The Challenge

Jesus is God. Are you willing to accept him as Lord of your life? As Lord, will you allow him to rule your life totally?

COUPLES FOR CHRIST CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM

Participant's Handout

SESSION No. 3 : WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN

Brief Outline

After Stephen was stoned to death, many of the persecuted followers of Jesus fled to Antioch from Jerusalem. As a result, there developed in Antioch one of the largest and most active communities of the followers of Jesus. It was in Antioch that the followers of Jesus were first called Christians.

A. Misconceptions or incomplete notions about Christianity

- Christianity is a mere religious system.
- Christianity is a mere moral system.
- Christianity is a social, humanitarian system.
- Christianity is an escape from the realities of life.

B. Truths About Christianity

- Christianity is a relationship initiated by God out of his mercy and love for us.
- As Christians, we become a new creation and participate in the very life of Christ.
- As Christians, we become children of God and take on his nature, which is holiness.

C. Implications of Being a Christian

- A Christian is a person of faith. Heb. 11:1
- A Christian is a person of hope. Rom. 8:24-25
- A Christian is a person of love. Jn. 13:35

The Blessed Virgin Mary is the model Christian, the perfect disciple of Christ. As Christians, we become Christ's disciples. And as Christ's disciples, we ought to put our lives completely in his hands, and experience the tremendous peace of Christ flowing into our lives and into our families.

Discussion Starters

1. What misconceptions about Christianity do you identify with?
2. Are you experiencing the practical implications of Christianity in your life?

Scriptures for daily prayer

Day		Day	
1	Titus 3:3-7	5	Luke 12:22-31
2	Galatians 4:4-7	6	Luke 11:9-13
3	Colossians 3:5-10	7	Romans 8:28-39
4	Jeremiah 29:11-13		

The Challenge

To be a Christian is to have a loving, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Will you continue to be open to discover the fullness of being a Christian? Will you be willing to be Christ's disciple?

COUPLES FOR CHRIST CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM

Participant's Handout

SESSION No. 4 : REPENTANCE AND FAITH

Brief Outline

Our proper response to God's love for us is repentance and faith. Repentance and faith go together. It is a double-action response. We cannot just have one without the other.

A. What is Repentance?

1. What repentance is not:

- Not dependent on feelings; not being sorry for sin because of fear of the adverse consequences of sin

2. What then is true Christian repentance?

- a change in direction and not just a simple confession of wrongdoing;

• turning away from sin, evil, and wrongdoing. It means asking God for forgiveness and availing of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

- breaking away from running our own lives

3. Two essential characteristics of authentic repentance: honesty and humility.

B. What is Faith?

1. What faith is not:

- Faith is not just a feeling; not wishful thinking; not a blind leap.

2. What then is faith?

- Faith is man's response to God.
- Faith is a grace from God.
- Faith is belief in the gospel.
- Faith is a personal act and decision.

C. Consequences of Repentance and Faith

- The consequence of repentance and faith is a promise of salvation from sin, Satan, and death.
- At a personal level, one consequence of true repentance and profound faith is freedom from fear of death

Discussion starter

1. Share with one another areas where you need to turn more fully to God.
2. Share areas where you need to grow in faith.

Scripture for daily prayer

Day		Day	
1	Mark 1:14-15	4	1 John 1:5-10
2	Galatians 5:29-21 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11	5	Luke 15:11-24
3	Ephesians 5:1-10	6	Luke 11:9-13
		7	Hebrews 11:1-40

The Challenge

Jesus sounded the call to repentance and faith 2,000 years ago. This is the same call to us today. Turn away from sin and all obstacles to God, and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. Then take God up on all His promises.

COUPLES FOR CHRIST CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM

Participant's Handout

SESSION No. 5 : THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL: LOVING GOD

Brief Outline

Goals and ideals are important to move us on. Goals can direct our behaviour and plans for life. As Christians, loving God is our highest ideal. This is God's first and greatest commandment. (Mk. 12:28-30)

A. Loving God with All Our Heart

1. We need first to understand what Jesus meant by "heart."
 - The heart is the symbol of the core of who the man is. It includes intelligent thought and will, along with feeling or emotion.
2. To love God with all our heart means to be totally committed to him.
3. How do we put the Lord first and foremost in our life?
 - It requires a decision to obey him.
 - We need to develop a personal relationship with him.
 - We should be with God all the time

B. Loving God with All Our Mind and Soul

- We love God with all our mind and soul by keeping our mind clean and holy; using our mind according to God's truths and not according to the ways of the world; preoccupying our mind with things of God; protecting and preserving our mind from unholy influences; using our mind for God's purpose.

C. Loving God with All Our Strength

- Loving God with all our strength means giving God all our resources – time, talent, and treasure.

We cannot love God with all our heart, mind and strength by merely deciding to do so. What will make it possible is the power of the Holy Spirit.

Discussion starter

How have I loved God in a concrete way?

Scriptures for daily prayer

Day		Day	
1	Matthew 22:36-38 and Mark 12:28-30	4	Matthew 7:1-5
2	John 14:21-24	5	Malachi 3:7-10
3	Romans 12:1-2	6	1 Timothy 6:7-14
		7	John 4:34

The Challenge

Loving God is not as vague and impractical as you may think. It involves specific, practical actions, decisions and commitments. Can you make loving God your first and highest ideal? Are you ready to make Jesus and Mary the model of your life?

COUPLES FOR CHRIST CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM

Participant's Handout

SESSION No. 6 : LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR

Brief Outline

Loving God and loving neighbor form the inseparable core of the Christian life.

A. Characteristics of Christian Love

- St. Paul describes the characteristics of Christian love and how to love others. 1 Cor. 13:4-8. To love is to be patient; be kind; not jealous of others; not pompous or inflated; not rude; not self-seeking; not quick-tempered; not brood over injury; not to rejoice over wrongdoing; rejoice in truth; have forbearance; have trust and to believe in the best about other people; have hope; have endurance;

B. Loving Others as Jesus Loves

- Loving our neighbor is not an option. It is God's commandment.
- Jesus showed the example of Christian love when he washed the feet of his disciples. When he finished, he told his disciples to do likewise. Jn. 13:12-15.
- Jesus clearly commanded us to love our neighbor as he loves us.
- Our model for loving our neighbor is our Lord, Jesus Christ.

C. Who is our Neighbor?

- Jesus' teaching on loving our neighbor are revealed in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Lk. 10:25-37
- Jesus tells us that loving our neighbor is not a passive attitude but an active involvement.

Jesus said that we should love one another as he loves us. Jesus loves us regardless of who we are. He does not care if we are rich or poor, educated or illiterate, Samaritan or Jew. He died for all of us. He is "neighbor" to us all.

Discussion starter

1. Do you understand the Biblical meaning of love as contrasted with that of the world?
2. How have you failed to love in everyday life?

Scriptures for daily prayer

Day		Day	
1	Matthew 22:37-40 and Mark 12:28-34	4	1 Corinthians 13:1-13
2	John 13:1-5,12-15,34-35	5	1 John 2:7-11
3	John 15:9-17	6	1 John 3:16-18
		7	1 John 4:7-21

The Challenge

Jesus showed us the way to true Christian love by the parable of the good Samaritan, by his washing of his disciples' feet, and most of all by his dying for us on the cross. Are you prepared to love others in the way Jesus loved you?

COUPLES FOR CHRIST CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM

Participant's Handout

SESSION No. 7 : THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Brief Outline

The family as an institution is under attack from many fronts. We need to prevent the breaking up of families, to make our marriages more resilient. For this we need to put on God's mind and to follow his plan for the family.

A. God's Plan for the Family

- God has intended the family for the transmission of life
- The family is a place for teaching children and training leaders.
- The family is a domestic church.

B. Why God's Plan for Families is Not Happening

- God has lost his central place in the family.
- The family itself is losing its importance.
- The pace of modern life has become very fast making it difficult for lasting relationships to develop.
- The family is under attack by evil forces. 1 Pet. 5:8.

C. What can we do?

- Make a decision that in your family, you want God's plan to happen.
- Make time for the task of building a strong family.
- Pray together as a family.
- Fathers should take steps to assume full responsibility for the spiritual and material needs of the family.
- Learn more about God's plan for your family
- Seek other couples who share your concern about family life and be in regular fellowship with them.

God has a plan for our families. But the evil one wants to prevent this plan from happening. We should seek the protection and guidance of the Holy Family of Nazareth to make God's plan happen.

Discussion starter

1. For the men: Have I assumed full responsibility for the spiritual and material needs of my family?
2. For the women: Have I supported my husband in his role and done my share in building up a Christian family?

Scriptures for daily prayer

Day		Day	
1	Genesis 1:26-28, 2:18-24	5	1 Peter 5:8-10
2	1 Timothy 3:4-5	6	1 Peter 3:1-7
3	Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-25	7	Sirach 3:1-16
4	Ephesians 5:21-6:4		

The Challenge

God is trying to restore the Christian family back to His original plan. We are called to respond to His divine efforts and to be a part of His work. Will you take the steps necessary to have God's plan happen in your family?

COUPLES FOR CHRIST CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM

Participant's Handout

SESSION No. 8 : LIFE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Brief Outline

Much of Christianity today looks weak and lifeless. The early Christian movement was dynamic, strong and attractive. The source of this power was the Holy Spirit. We need to know and understand the Holy Spirit as a Person who can truly affect and change our lives.

A. Receiving the Holy Spirit:

- When we receive the Holy Spirit, we gain union with God, a new nature, and the power to serve as Jesus' witnesses. Acts 1:8

B. What Receiving the Holy Spirit Means Today

1. How can we receive the Holy Spirit?

- God has promised us the Holy Spirit. Lk. 11:9-13. So we simply take God up on his promise.

2. Next week, we can receive and experience the same power and gifts of the Spirit that the early Christians did. 1 Cor. 12:1,4-11.

- These gifts may be divided into 3 groups: two teaching gifts: wisdom and knowledge; three sign gifts: faith, healing, and miracles; and four revelational gifts: prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

- Gift of tongues is a common experience when we receive the Holy Spirit. It is an important first step and is often the gateway to a fuller life in the Spirit.

3. We need to avoid the obstacles to receiving God's gifts:

- An unrepentant attitude; feeling unworthy of the gift; fear of looking foolish or being overtaken; doubt; pride; being selective

C. How to prepare yourself for next week's prayer session.

- Have an individual meeting with your facilitator during the week.
- Think and pray about the "Commitment to Christ," which we'll all pray next week.
- Be aware of Satan's action. Call upon Jesus' name.

Discussion starter

Share about your experience of God's Spirit in your life.

Scriptures for daily prayer

Day		Day	
1	Ezekiel 36:25-27	5	Luke 11:9-13
2	Jeremiah 31:31-34	6	Acts 1:8,2:1-12
3	Joel 3:1-5	7	1 Corinthians 12:1-11
4	John 14:23-26		

The Challenge

God is calling us to live a life of holiness and spiritual power. For this, God has promised us the Holy Spirit. Will you trust in the promise of your Father? Will you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Will you ask for the infilling of the Holy Spirit in your life?

COUPLES FOR CHRIST CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM

Participant's Handout

SESSION No. 9 : RECEIVING THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Brief Outline

Like many Christians today, many people during the time of the prophet Ezekiel were enmeshed in sin and spiritual lifelessness. Ez. 36:24-28. The Holy Spirit that God promised through Ezekiel, Jesus gave to his disciples and to us. With the Holy Spirit, we gain:

- A new nature, spiritual power. Gal. 5:16-23. The inward dimension.
- A power to serve. Acts 1:8. The outward dimension.

A. **Gifts of the Holy Spirit**

1. We are here to claim God's promise of the Holy Spirit.
Lk. 11:9-13.
2. God is offering you nine gifts of the Holy Spirit.
1 Cor. 12:4-11
 - You know what gifts you need. Ask for these gifts. But be open to whatever God wants to give you.
3. We should all desire and ask for the gift of tongues.
- Tongues is a gift of praise. It is a means to enrich our prayer life.

B. **This is a prayer session for the release of the power of the Holy Spirit.**

C. We must nurture the new life and God's gifts.

- Do not allow Satan to rob you of your gift.
- Do not expect all problems to go away at once, though many will.
- Be faithful to a regular time of daily prayer.

Scriptures for daily prayer

Day	
1	Galatians 5:16-25
2	Romans 8:5-13
3	1 Corinthians 14:1-5
4	1 Corinthians 3:16-17
5	2 Corinthians 4:16-5:5
6	Ephesians 6:18
7	Matthew 25:14-23

The Challenge

You have claimed Christ's promise of the Holy Spirit to anyone who asks. You have begun a new life in faith. Will you commit yourself fully to Jesus Christ and grow into the life in the Holy Spirit?

COUPLES FOR CHRIST CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM

Participant's Handout

SESSION No. 10 : GROWING IN THE SPIRIT

Brief Outline

The Christian life can be pictured as a wheel that has three components:

- the outer rim: This represents daily Christian life, where we encounter the realities of daily living.
- the hub: The hub represents our Lord Jesus Christ, who is or should be at the center of our lives. The power is that of the Holy Spirit.
- the spokes: The five spokes represent the five tools or means for us to grow in the Holy Spirit, namely, prayer and study, service and fellowship, and the sacraments.

A. Prayer and Study

1. The first tool is prayer. A successful prayer life involves 3 important principles: Our prayer must be faithful, led by the Holy Spirit, and centered on a relationship with Jesus.
2. The second tool is study. There are three ways we can learn more about God: Reading and reflecting on the Bible; Reading Church's publications and other spiritual books; Attending teachings and listening to preaching.
3. In the Catholic tradition, the intercession of Mary and the saints is a powerful tool of prayer. Reading books on the lives of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints is also a good way to understand how the Holy Spirit acts in our lives.

B. Service and Fellowship

1. The third tool is service. We need to take on a mentality of service so that we see our whole life given over to God's work. We serve by making ourselves and our resources – our time, talent, and treasure – available for God's work.
2. The fourth tool, fellowship, refers to almost everything that Christians do together as a body.

C. Sacraments

1. The fifth and most important tool for Catholics to grow in the Holy Spirit is the regular reception of the sacraments, particularly the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

We are still "babies in Christ" and we need to grow. This will happen if we make use of the 5 tools provided by God.

Discussion starter

What tools to Christian growth have not been fully utilized in your life?

Scriptures for daily prayer

Day		Day	
1	1 Peter 1:13-16	Day	Matthew 20:26-28
2	Matthew 6:5-13	6	James 2:14-17
3	Matthew 18:19-20	7	1 Corinthians 12:12-27
4	Hebrews 4:12-13		

The Challenge

God's call for every Christian is to grow in holiness. To this end, God has provided us with the tools for growth. Will you eagerly avail of these tools and strive to be holy as God is holy?

COUPLES FOR CHRIST CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM

Participant's Handout

SESSION No. 11 : THE LIFE AND MISSION OF COUPLES FOR CHRIST

Brief Outline

A. What is Couples for Christ?

1. Couples for Christ (CFC) is a Christian community for the renewal and strengthening of family life and making the love of God felt among the poor. It started in June 1981 in Manila, Philippines, with 16 couples.
2. What are we called to do?
 - Read the "CFC Statement of Vision and Mission"

Through Building the Church of the Home, CFC has established the Family Ministries (since 1993): Kids for Christ (KFC), Youth for Christ (YFC), Singles for Christ (SFC), Handmaids of the Lord (HOLD), and Servants of the Lord (SOLD).

Through Building the Church of the Poor (BCOP) CFC lives out the social teachings of the Church through CFC ANCOP (Answering the Cry of the Poor) and the CFC Social Development Programs.

- Read the "CFC Statement of Philosophy"

B. The Covenant of Couples for Christ (Read the Covenant of CFC)

C. How do We Support One Another in CFC?

- Through small groups which we call "households."
- Teaching and formation.
- Regular activities of our community.

Think and pray about "The Covenant of CFC". Look at the covenant as an ideal, not yet fully in place, but as what God calls us to.

Discussion starter

1. Do you agree with the CFC statement of philosophy, which embodies its beliefs and ideals?
2. Do you see the covenant of Couples for Christ as the ideal of Christian family life that God calls us all to?

Scriptures for daily prayer

Day		Day	
1	Psalm 22:28-32	5	Deuteronomy 8:11-20
2	Psalm 144:12-15	6	Deuteronomy 26:16-18
3	Colossians 3:18-21	7	1 Peter 2:9-10
4	Psalm 127:3-5		

The Challenge

God is trying to restore the Christian family back to His original plan. We are all called to respond to His divine effort and be a part of His work. Are you ready to do your share in renewing, strengthening and supporting Christian family living?

COUPLES FOR CHRIST CHRISTIAN LIFE PROGRAM

Participant's Handout

SESSION No. 12 : TRANSFORMATION IN CHRIST

Brief Outline

We need to allow the Lord to continue the process of our transformation in Christ. The Holy Spirit is at work so that we can grow to know, love and serve God more. As we come to the end of the Christian Life Program, we should ask ourselves, have we achieved this transformation in Christ?

A. Continuing our Transformation

- To continue our transformation in Christ, we need to grow in holiness and discipleship and have a greater commitment to service.
- As we grow and are transformed, God wants us to raise up families in the Holy Spirit that will renew the face of the earth.

B. Our Transformation: Story of the Blind Man

- Our transformation, and what we have gone through during the past weeks, may be likened to the story of the man born blind in the Gospel of John 9:1-38.
- As we come to the end of the Christian Life Program, we should ask ourselves, have we achieved this transformation? From one who only remotely knows "the man called Jesus," are we now ready to proclaim him as "my Lord"?

C. Transformation Through Couples for Christ

- We will continue to grow in personal holiness through our regular prayer time and Scripture reading, reflection and study; through our faithfulness to the covenant of Couples for Christ; and through the CFC Formation Program.
- As a member of Couples for Christ, there will be numerous opportunities to render service.
- In Couples for Christ, we will develop a greater commitment to evangelization.

Let us all rejoice and be glad. Let us praise and thank the Lord for calling us, for opening our eyes, and for starting the process of our transformation in Christ.

