



Appendix

PRAYER BEFORE CONFESSION:

Oh most merciful God! Prostrate at your feet, I implore your forgiveness. I sincerely desire to leave all my evil ways and to confess my sins with all sincerity to you and through your priest. I am a sinner; have mercy on me, Oh Lord. Give me a lively faith and firm hope in the Passion of my Redeemer. Give me, for your mercy's sake, a sorrow for having offended so good a God. Mary, my mother, refuge of sinners, pray for me that I may make a good confession. Amen.

HOW TO GO TO CONFESSION:

- You have the option to go to confession anonymously (behind a screen) or face-to-face.
- After the priest greets you in the name of Christ, make the Sign of the Cross. He may choose to recite a reading from Scripture, after which you say, *"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [state how long] since my last confession. These are my sins."*
- Tell your sins simply and honestly to the priest. You might even want to discuss the circumstances and the root causes of your sins and ask the priest for advice or direction.
- Listen to the advice the priest gives you and accept the penance from him. Then say an Act of Contrition for your sins. The priest will then absolve you of your sins and will pray the Prayer of Absolution. This prayer is a beautiful affirmation of God's mercy. Listen to its powerful words: *"God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins. Through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."*
- Afterwards, spend some time thanking and praising God for the gift of his mercy. Fulfill your penance as soon as possible.

ACT OF CONTRITION:

Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you and I detest all of my sins because of your just punishment, but most of all because they have offended you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace, to sin no more and avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen.

A simple prayer from the heart is also acceptable:

Lord, I am sorry for my sins. I thank you for your forgiveness, strength and love.

DO YOUR PENANCE:

When we go to Confession, we are cleansed and freed from our sins. Although the absolution we receive takes away the sin, it does not, however, remedy all the problems that sin causes. When we sin, we weaken ourselves as well as our relationship with God and our neighbours. We must repair the harm caused by our sin (e.g. return stolen goods or restore the reputation of someone about whom we have gossiped). That is why the priest gives us a penance.

The penance given usually depends on the gravity of the sin committed. Penance can consist of prayer, an offering, works of mercy, service to neighbour, voluntary self-denial, sacrifices, and above all the patient acceptance of suffering that brings us closer to Christ. The sacrament of Confession is not complete until you do your penance. It should be done immediately in the church, if it is a penance of prayer. Otherwise, it should be done as soon as possible.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods besides me.

Did I fail to love God, to make him first in my life, to thank, trust and love him as he deserves? Did I fail to pray? Have I doubted or denied my faith? Was I careless in saying my prayers? Do I give God time every day in prayer? Do I make a god out of my work, possessions, or image in the eyes of others so that these rule my life instead of God? Am I angry toward God because of illness or misfortune? Have I been involved with magic, horoscopes, Ouija boards or fortune telling?

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Did I curse or swear? Did I use God's name in vain, lightly, carelessly, by blasphemy? Have I used foul language or jokes? In conversation, have I passively listened to slander and to jokes demeaning the Church or God's authority?

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation? Did I leave Mass early without good reason? Have I received communion at least once a year? Did I receive communion in a state of serious sin? Have I been to confession recently? In any of my previous confessions, did I lie to or deliberately conceal something from the priest? Have I allowed myself to become so dominated by my work and chores that I have not set aside Sunday for spiritual and family activities?

Honour your father and your mother.

Did I honour and obey my parents? Did I respect my brothers and sisters? Did I respect others with lawful authority, especially teachers and professors? Did I speak rudely to them? Did I speak about them to others in a derogatory way? Did I fail to help my parents (at home, or in their time of need)? Did I spend time with my family, or avoid them? Do I blame my parents for my own shortcomings?

You shall not kill.

Did I give in to feelings of anger or jealousy? Did I keep hatred in my heart? Have I ever struck anyone in anger, intending to injure the person? Did I fight, give a bad example or cause scandal? Have I abused alcohol or drugs? Have I had or in any way permitted or encouraged abortion? Have I nurtured thoughts about suicide?

You shall not commit adultery & you shall not covet your neighbour's wife.

Did I consent to impure glances or thoughts? Did I give my mind over to lustful thoughts or fantasies? Have I encouraged them by stares, curiosity or impure conversations? Did I neglect to control my imagination or desire of other people? Was I immodest in dress or behaviour? Did I look at pornography, impure books, magazines or videos? Am I guilty of impurity with myself, premarital sex or adultery? Do I live chastely according to my state in life (married, single, consecrated celibate)?

You shall not steal.

Have I stolen? What or how much? Did I return it or make up for what I stole? Have I cheated on tests or homework? Did I waste time at work? Did I do graffiti? Have I been extravagant in my manner of life, to the neglect of the poor at home and abroad?

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

Have I lied, gossiped? Have I talked about other people behind their backs? Do I always tell the truth? Am I sincere? Did I reveal secrets that I should have kept confidential? Am I critical, negative or uncharitable in my talk? Have I injured the reputation of others by speaking about their failures and sins with little desire or intention to help them? Have I condoned prejudice and hatred toward people of other nationalities, races or religions?

You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.

Is my heart greedy? Am I jealous of what another has? Am I envious of others because I don't have what they have? Do I habitually compare myself with others? Do I work, study, and keep busy to counter idle thoughts? Am I critical, negative, or uncharitable in my thoughts of others? Is my heart set on earthly possessions or on the treasures of heaven? Do I give to those in need, so as not to cling to my possessions?

Understanding the Relationships Diagram

The relationships diagram is an effective tool to help people open their hearts to Jesus. Although the analogy presented is not perfect, it can still be very helpful in describing the various types of relationship with Jesus. To make the most of this tool, it is important to understand it well and practice presenting it clearly.

Much of the following text is taken from the *Discovery* leader notes. The notes have been consolidated here for convenient reference.

PROPER ASSESSMENT

Studies show that most people have not given up on their belief in God or their desire to somehow be connected to Church. The problem lies in their experience, perception, and understanding of their faith, God and the Church.

Imagine you just bought a house in a new city, perhaps a suburb of Toronto. What would happen if you left your seven-year-old child in the heart of the city and told him to find his way home? The task would be very difficult for him, as he is unfamiliar with his surroundings and does not know where his new home is located.

Many Catholics find themselves in a similar bind. Due to lack of knowledge and experience, they do not know how to assess their spiritual condition. Their only real reference points are people such as:

- Jesus (perfect);
- Saint Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa), who gave up everything to serve the poor;
- Their parish priest, who might have said something like, “we must live like Jesus—he himself gave up everything to serve God,” and
- Grandma, who prays all the time.

When they compare themselves to the likes of Saint Teresa of Calcutta, their lives will obviously fall short. Although they would like to be more spiritual, they do not see how they could possibly imitate Saint Teresa of Calcutta or even their parish priest. On the other hand, they have not killed anyone nor committed any major crimes, so they feel they are not “all that bad.” Most people find themselves somewhere in the middle, between “bad people” and saints, often spiritually paralyzed and making no progress.

Using the relationships diagram, we hope to assist people in determining where they are, spiritually, and where they would like to be, so that we can help them make their way back home to the Father.

CALL TO RESPOND

The purpose of the relationships diagram is to encourage people to open their hearts to Jesus Christ. The first four lessons of *Discovery* pave the way for the call to respond to Christ in Lesson 5.

This invitation is a call to conversion:

“ *Conversion means accepting, by a personal decision, the saving sovereignty of Christ and becoming his disciple. The church calls all people to this conversion.* ”

Redemptoris Missio, 46

Although God continuously calls us to conversion, many people are not aware of this invitation. Dr. Alan Schreck writes:

“ *[S]ome Catholics have neglected the importance of this conscious, personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Catholics sometimes assume that persons who are baptized, attend Mass and receive the sacraments regularly have obviously accepted Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of their lives... this is often not the case, many Catholics have not yet made a deliberate, adult decision to believe in Jesus Christ and give their lives fully to him.* ”

Dr. Alan Schreck, *Catholic and Christian*, p. 25.

As small group leaders, we must understand Jesus' invitation and encourage people to respond to it. In the follow-up meeting after Lesson 5, participants are encouraged to respond to Jesus' invitation by praying *aloud*. This prayer is not simply a nice way to end the meeting—it is an opportunity to truly give our hearts to the Lord.

As we pray this prayer, we should trust that God is listening. He promises to hear whoever calls out, and to take his place in the heart of whoever opens the door to him. *This time of prayer is a sacred moment to be revered and to be approached with confidence.*

As leaders, we should set the tone for this time by emphasizing its importance. Many of our study participants are deeply moved by this time of prayer and regard it as a life-changing moment: the moment they chose to give their lives to Jesus.

NON-THREATENING

The relationships diagram provides a non-threatening way to share Jesus Christ that strips away arguments over “issues,” guilt trips, and perceptions of being preachy. It brings individuals face-to-face with God in a way that does not cause them to compare themselves to anyone else. People see where they *are* on their spiritual journey, and where they *would like to be*.

The rest of the appendix will look at common stumbling blocks for people in their understanding of the relationships diagram.

Intimacy, not Perfection

The relationships diagram shows commitments we make (whether consciously or not), not degrees of spiritual perfection. Although living our faith is essential to our relationship with God, the person in the second kind of relationship with God is not necessarily less “religious” than the person in the Christ-centred relationship. The defining question is one of commitment: *whom have I chosen to place at the centre?*

Looking at the commitment between spouses can help us understand commitment to God. Marriages take time to mature. A newly married couple has more to learn about being good spouses than a couple who has been married fifty years. However, although one couple has been married fifty years and the other only one day, both are equally in a committed marriage relationship.

The same concept can be applied to the spiritual life. Consider a person who has lived a life of sin (e.g. the “good thief” next to Jesus on the cross). He sees the light and turns his life over to Jesus. Even though Jesus is now at the centre of his life, this person may not demonstrate a real maturity and ability to trust in God shortly after his conversion. He is no less a child of God than the greatest of saints. He just needs time to grow in holiness and conform himself to God.

Inevitably, you will encounter people who feel uncomfortable claiming they are in the Christ-centred relationship. They may think it would be too arrogant to do so, that it would be more humble to say their commitment is represented by the second image or somewhere between the second and third image. Or perhaps they are trying to live the commitment shown in the third image, but realize that they often fail.

This attitude can often be attributed to the mistaken belief that being in a relationship with Jesus is about “measuring up” or mastering the Christian life.

Ask participants, “What do you think is the difference between the person who sees their commitment to God represented by the second image and the person who would say it is like the third image?” They will likely answer, “The person who says the third image trusts more, is more committed, etc.”

From this perspective, it is completely understandable that they would hesitate to say they are in the Christ-centred relationship. To say you have the Christ-centred relationship would sound arrogant, as if you were a saint! In their minds, a person who has not yet mastered the Christian life can only be in the second kind of relationship.

To address this misunderstanding, remind participants of Peter Kreeft’s question: “Why should God let you into heaven?” This question will help them to see upon whom they depend for salvation.

Have them look at the second image and ask, **“What would the person in the second kind of relationship answer if they were before Jesus?”**

This person might respond, “I’ve done all these things for God, I’ve been good—or at least I haven’t been *all that bad*.” Someone in this kind of relationship trusts personal deeds (works alone) to get into heaven. Many Catholics, knowing the Gospel, still have the mindset that they have to “measure up” before God will “show up.”

The second image is actually a place of independence and pride. It’s like saying, “Yes, I believe in Jesus, and I have to somehow keep him happy with me, or prove myself to him.”

Look at the third image and ask, “**What would the person in the Christ-centred relationship say?**” This person would say, “God lets me into heaven because of Christ’s death and resurrection.”

Assure your group that if we understand who Jesus is, we will see that it is not proud to say, “I am in the Christ-centred relationship.” If we think salvation is about how good and skilled we are at living the Christian life, then the third image would indeed be a proud choice. But if we understand that it is Jesus who opens heaven to us and gives us the grace to follow his model of life, then we see *that the Christ-centred relationship is the most humble*.

Most participants do not choose a “works” (it depends on me) mentality with a rebellious attitude. They just need to be encouraged to freely choose Christ with childlike faith. They do not need to prove anything, but they will have to cooperate with God’s grace—hence the need for follow-up teachings to help them live their conversion in an ongoing way.

Understanding that we do not have to be perfect to live in the Christ-centred relationship is very freeing. We realize that our relationship with Jesus is secure. This does not mean that we believe we are “once saved always saved”—through serious sin we can still choose to turn our back on Jesus. We trust, however, that our security is established by God, not by our level of spiritual mastery. Without a sense of security and safety, it is difficult for this relationship to grow in intimacy and fidelity.

Fear of Failure

If we are *not* confident in the security of our relationship with God, we will live in fear of failure. It is essential to remember that though our failures are inevitable, Jesus will not fail us. We fear that if we fail, God will abandon us; we must recognize that God's love is unconditional (Lesson 1).

Jesus said, "I will never forsake you or abandon you" (Hebrews 13:5). This is his promise to us. He will not jump in and out of our lives. We can count on him to work with us, despite our failures. When we work with him and cooperate with his grace, we can trust that our relationship is secure.

Using marriage as an analogy can help participants to understand this concept. For the first few days of marriage, the husband and wife live perfectly together, playing house. But for the rest of their lives, they will fail each other on a daily basis; they are both human and thus tend to live for themselves in many ways. Despite their failures, however, they are confident in their relationship because they are *committed* to each other. Because of their commitment and love for each other, they work and struggle to strengthen their relationship. Their marriage is a work in progress; failures and mistakes do not end the relationship. Failure is an opportunity to repent.

The same thing is true of our relationship with Jesus: we will fail on a daily basis. The Lord knows our weaknesses and he is not surprised by our sin. We need only to come to him in honest repentance and ask for his grace to help us overcome our failures and weaknesses. Knowing God's mercy does not give us license to sin, however—we still ought to try to avoid all serious and deliberate sin, as well as those "everyday" failures.

We must also recognize that if we rebel through actions that "bring death" into our relationship with God, and choose not to repent, we are not cooperating with him or his grace. In fact, mortal sin cuts us off from God's love and salvation. It is like severing a branch from a tree, so that the sap can no longer reach it. The sacrament of Reconciliation is our opportunity to be reconciled with God.

We must remember that our failure is an opportunity to repent and grow. It need not be the destruction of the relationship. Struggles and challenges are all part of the development of the relationship. As long as there is repentance and forgiveness, the relationship can continue to grow.

What about Other Religions?

ACTS 4:12

There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.

JOHN 14:6

I am the way, the truth and the life.

As we see clearly in these verses, there is only one way to salvation. This does not sit well in a politically correct, democratic world. Many people would like to believe that all roads lead to God. Although it may seem more convenient to think this way in a pluralistic world, this is not what the Church teaches.

In *Nostra Aetate* (The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions), the Second Vatican Council affirms the value of learning about other religions. The document goes on to emphasize, however, that respect for other religions should not compromise belief in the divinity of Christ.

The Council also states that

“...though God in ways known to Himself can lead those inculpably ignorant of the Gospel to find that faith without which it is impossible to please him (Heb. 11:6), yet a necessity lies upon the Church (1 Cor. 9:16), and at the same time a sacred duty, to preach the Gospel. And hence missionary activity today, as always, retains its power and necessity.”

Ad Gentes, 7

It is important to understand that although the world religions agree on most moral or ethical issues, they do not share a common understanding of God, salvation and eternal life. Jesus is the only leader or prophet of a major world religion who claimed to be God, and who died and rose again to prove it.

The Church's teaching on the final judgment of those who do not know about Christ is that they *can* be saved. If they are saved it is not because they were exceptionally holy and squeaked in only by their works (in which case, the incarnation and redemption are not necessary for our salvation). Non-Christians who are saved are also saved because of Christ. It is Christ who, by his sacrifice, has opened the gates of heaven to them, even though they do not know him. Though they may never have heard of Christ, these people can abide by God's laws as they are revealed in nature and in their own consciences (Romans 1). God sees their hearts and can grant them the benefit of the salvation won by Christ.

What About Hell?

Yes, it is true—the Church teaches that there is a hell, where some will face eternal separation from God if they do not have sanctifying grace, which we receive through Baptism, faith, repentance and frequenting the sacraments.

JOHN 3:18

Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

JOHN 3:36

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him.

MATTHEW 10:28

Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

“ Jesus often speaks of “Gehenna” of “the unquenchable fire” reserved for those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe and be converted, where both soul and body can be lost. Jesus solemnly proclaims that he “will send his angels, and they will gather . . . all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire,” [Mt 13:41-42] and that he will pronounce the condemnation: “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!” [Mt 25:41] ”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1034

Questions often arise concerning the salvation of those who have never heard the Gospel nor had a chance to respond to it (e.g. unbaptized children, those who lived before Christ, the faithful of other religions).

“ Thus, Catholic Christians must avoid two extremes in considering the salvation of non-Christians. They should avoid presuming that those who don’t believe in Jesus and his gospel will necessarily be condemned, but neither should Catholics presume that these people will be saved without accepting the gospel. ”

Catholic and Christian, Dr. Alan Schreck, page 23:

Is the Bible a Reliable Source?

Discovery relies heavily on the Bible as a key source in every lesson. However, there are those who would question the historical reliability of the Bible. Two key questions are often asked about the Bible:

1. Is the Bible an accurate reproduction of what was written by its original authors, or has its message been changed over the centuries?
2. Can we trust that what is written in the Gospels accurately reflects what Jesus actually said and did?

Is the Bible faithful to the meaning of its original authors?

When compared to other ancient documents of their time, the Gospels stand as the most documented works of ancient literature. Consider this comparison: much of what we know of First Century Roman history comes from three separate First Century Roman historians: Suetonius, Livy and Tacitus. For these three historians we have a combined total of fewer than 250 ancient manuscripts of their writings.¹ The ancient document with the second most ancient manuscripts available is Homer's *Iliad*, written around 800 BC, with about 650 manuscripts available today.² Scholars generally agree that these documents have been accurately preserved. However, today we have over 5700 ancient manuscripts of the New Testament.³ With this vast collection of manuscripts, scholars have been able to trace the accuracy of the copies of the New Testament that have been passed down, and have found that the oldest manuscripts are 97-99% identical, allowing us to know with certainty that the New Testament we have today is virtually the same as what was written 2000 years ago.⁴ If we consider today's copies of Homer's *Iliad* or any other ancient document to be an accurate representation of the author's original manuscript, then by the same criteria we can acknowledge that there is even greater evidence to support the claim that New Testament you find in your Bible is also an accurate reproduction of the original manuscripts.

Do the Gospels accurately depict the words and deeds of Jesus?

To answer this we can look to the timeframe when the original Gospels were written. The Gospels were written either by eyewitnesses (Matthew and John were both among the Twelve Apostles), or by those among the first generation of Christians (Mark's source was the Apostle Peter, and Luke was a First Century Christian who was a close friend of Paul). The Gospels were written in a time where there was much hostile opposition to Christianity amongst the Jewish and Roman authorities. During this time, many Christians were persecuted—and even killed—as a result of their Christian beliefs. Many of these same authorities were also eyewitnesses to Jesus' life and death. If the Gospels did not accurately depict the story of Jesus, the enemies of early Christianity would have been able to point out the inaccuracies through their own eyewitness testimony. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the story depicted in the Gospels was refuted by either Jewish or Roman authorities. In fact, there are multiple references that confirm details of the Gospel stories in the writings of contemporary non-Christian Roman and Jewish historians, including the Jewish historian Josephus' direct reference to Jesus having appeared to his followers, “restored to life” three days after his crucifixion—an explicit reference to the Resurrection.⁵ If the Gospels were in fact a collection of fabricated stories, it is highly unlikely that the Gospels, and Christianity itself, could have survived the refutation of the many enemies of Christianity in the First Century AD.⁶

Therefore, if the Gospels have been accurately preserved over the centuries, and if we have reason to believe that the Gospels are telling a historically accurate story of the life and teachings of Jesus, we must now wrestle with Jesus' most controversial and remarkable claims to be God or to have attributes ascribed only to God.

ENDNOTES:

¹ Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*, 2nd edition, (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 424.

² Edward Sri, *The Bible Compass: A Catholic's Guide to Navigating the Scriptures*, (West Chester, PA: Ascension Press, 2009), 72.

³ Blomberg, 424.

⁴ Blomberg, 85, and Sri, 73.

⁵ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, in *The Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whitman, (Delmarva Publications, Inc., 2016), Book 18, Chapter 3, Section 3.

⁶ Blomberg, 424.