

MISSIONARY FAMILIES OF CHRIST

SESSION No. 1: JESUS THE MESSIAH

Goal: To meet Christ and to know the truth that God loves us and has a plan for our welfare.

Expanded Outline:

A. The situation in the world today.

1. The world is hurtling toward global disaster.
 - a) Wars (cite some of the current wars going on).
 - b) There is poverty.
 - * Starvation in different parts of the world.
 - * Poor people even in rich countries.
 - c) There is murder.
 - * Particularly despicable is abortion, resulting in the killing of millions of unborn children.
 - d) There is social injustice.
 - e) Assault on the family, environmental disaster, global terrorism, assault on religious freedom. A tsunami of evil is over the entire world.
2. The world has turned away from God.
 - a) Even many Christians have turned away from authentic faith.
 - b) The Church that Jesus established is being assaulted from every side, even from within.
 - * Modernism, liberalism, dissent, disunity.
 - * There are wolves among the sheep.
3. Only God can make things right.
 - a) The good news is that God has His wonderful plan for us. Jer 29:11.
 - b) God wants to show us the way. Is 48:17.
 - c) In fact, God sent His own Son to save us.
 - * This is the greatest manifestation of His love and concern. Jn 3:16.

B. So we need to look to Jesus.

1. We need to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord. Rom 10:9.
Only Jesus is able to save. Acts 4:12.
2. Who is Jesus?
 - a) Jesus is a truly impressive person.
 - * Billions today claim to be his followers.
 - * Thousands have been martyred for their faith in him.
 - * The book about him, the Bible, is the No. 1 best seller of all time.
 - b) Jesus is an absolutely unique figure in human history.

- * He was pre-announced and his coming was expected. Because of Old Testament prophecies, people were waiting for the Messiah, which saw its fulfillment in Jesus.
 - * Once he appeared on the scene, he struck history with such impact that he split it in two, dividing it into two periods: BC (before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini).
 - * Every other person who came into this world came into it to live. Jesus came into the world to die. His death was the goal and fulfillment of his life.
- c) Most important of all, Jesus is God.
- * Time and again throughout his public ministry, Jesus claimed to be God.
 - Jn 8:58. Jn 10:30.
 - It was unmistakable to the Jews that Jesus was claiming to be God, because in both instances their reaction was to try to stone him for blasphemy.
 - * As proof of his divinity, Jesus forgave sin. Mk 2:3-12. To the Jews, only God could forgive sin.
 - * As further proof, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Jn 11:41-44. To the Jews, only God had the prerogative to give life or to take away life. Jn 5:21.
- d) Jesus himself was raised from the dead. He lives.

C. To overcome the serious disorder in the world, we need Jesus.

1. Behind what is wrong in the world is an evil being.
 - a) The Bible tells us about the reality of Satan. Eph 6:12.
 - We are not just confronted with particular wrongs in society. Behind all these is something bigger. Satan is orchestrating all these evils.
 - On our own we cannot overcome Satan.
 - b) Our human efforts apart from God will prove useless. Jn 15:5.
 - * On our own strength we cannot overcome the challenges in our Christian life.
2. And so we need Jesus.
 - a) He is a spiritual being more powerful than Satan.
 - b) He is the vine from which we draw life, strength and power.
 - c) In Jesus we experience the fullness of God's love. Jn 3:16.
 - * When you are tempted to doubt God's love, just look at the crucifix and see Jesus hanging on the cross for you.

D. What do we need to do?

1. Never forget the reality.
 - a) God loves you. God sent His own Son Jesus. In Jesus we are saved and restored to our relationship with God, with the fullness of life that He intended.

- b) God does not want you to live lives of pain, poverty or injustice. God wants the world to be a place of peace, justice and happiness. A place where He would reign!
- 2. We are given a choice: to live under the dominion of darkness, a life of slavery under Satan, or to live in the kingdom of God, a life of freedom, dignity, peace and happiness.
- 3. Let us accept Jesus the Messiah as our Savior and our Lord.

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Participant's Handout

SESSION No. 1: JESUS THE MESSIAH

1. The situation in the world today.
 - * Serious disorder in society: war, poverty, murder, etc.
 - * On a personal level: loneliness, depression, fear, etc.
 - * Man makes various efforts to improve the world but is not succeeding because these are not based on God's wisdom.
2. The world needs Jesus.
 - * Satan is real and is behind the evils in the world. On our own strength, we cannot overcome the challenges in our life.
 - * Jesus is the fullness mission of God's love. In Him, God's plan for restoration can begin to happen in our lives.
3. What we need to do.
 - * We are given a choice: to live under the dominion of darkness, a life of slavery under Satan, or to live in the kingdom of God, a life of freedom, dignity, peace and happiness.
 - * God sent His own Son Jesus out of His love for you. In Jesus we are saved and restored to our relationship with God, with the fullness of life that He intended. life. We need to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord. Rom 10:9

Discussion starter

1. Who is Jesus Christ to you? How would you describe your relationship with Jesus Christ now?
2. What can you do to respond to His invitation of having a personal relationship with Him?

Scripture readings:

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

The challenge

God has loved you with an eternal love. 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? Will you open your mind to explore the richness of God's plan for you through the rest of the Christian Life Seminar?

MISSIONARY FAMILIES OF CHRIST

SESSION No. 2: CALLED TO WITNESS

Goal: To understand what it means to live Christ as a living witness to him.

Expanded Outline

- A. God has done everything to enable us to experience salvation. But we need to respond. We need to live out the good news that is Jesus in our lives.
- B. What is authentic Christianity? It is meeting Christ, living Christ, and sharing Christ.
1. To meet and know Christ is to be in a personal relationship with him.
 - a) Jesus is alive and wants to be intimately involved in our lives.
 - b) It is being a friend of Jesus.
 2. To live Christ is to respond to the call to holiness and discipleship.
 - a) We are to be holy as God is holy. 1 Pt 1:15-16.
 - * We are called to Christian perfection. Mt 5:48.
 - b) We are to be true disciples. Lk 9:23.
 - * Self-denial.
 - * Embrace of the cross.
 - * Following Jesus.
 3. To share Christ is to participate in witnessing to Jesus and proclaiming the gospel in the normal day-to-day circumstances of our lives.
 4. Further, we are to love God and neighbor. Mk 12:28-31.
- C. Loving God.
1. What it means to love God with all our heart.
 - a) To love God with all our heart is to be totally committed to Him.
 - * It is a decision to put God first, to be loyal to Him, to place His will and interest above our own.
 - b) How do we put the Lord first in our life?
 - * It requires a decision to obey Him. Jn 14:15.
 - * We need to develop a personal relationship with Him.
 - We need to spend regular time with Him in prayer.
 2. What it means to love God with all our mind.
 - a) To love God with all our mind means to serve Him with the use of our mind, or simply to make available our minds for His purposes.
 - b) Using our minds can have incredible consequences for society.

- * It can be applied to contribute to world progress (e.g., science, neurosurgery). Or it can become an instrument for destruction (e.g., nuclear bomb, biological warfare).
- c) How do we love and serve God with our mind?
- * Keep your mind clean and holy.
 - * Be very discerning in the use of TV, the Internet and other media, which can expose our minds to inputs not consistent with Christian living.
 - * Let your mind be preoccupied with the things of God.
 - How you can please God.
 - Fill your mind with thoughts of God. Read the Bible, Christian books and other helpful Christian literature that can help form your mind.
3. What it means to love God with all our strength.
- a) This means making *all* our resources available to God—time, money, energy, possessions, gifts, abilities.
- * We are God’s creation. He owns us. What we call “ours” is not really ours but His. We are mere stewards.
 - * We have a responsibility to manage and use well the resources given to us. We must act according to God’s interests.
- b) Concrete steps we can take:
- * With money: Tithing, resource sharing, almsgiving.
 - * Time and talent.
 - Use it not just for ourselves, but for others.
 - Volunteer to do Christian service.
4. What it means to love God with all our soul.
- a) We are to love God with our whole being (Lk 10:27)—emotional, spiritual, mental, physical. The love of God must engage the total person.
- b) We are God’s creation, called to be holy, intended by Him to spend eternity together with Him. While in this world, we are to love God with all our soul.

D. Loving neighbor.

1. Loving God and loving neighbor go together. 1 Jn 4:20-21. Thus it is clear: no love for others, no Christianity.
2. What Christian love is not.
 - a) Love is not only having positive feelings.
 - * Love is often equated with feelings of sexual attraction, personal affection.
 - * But feelings change and thus cannot be the sole basis for love.
 - b) Love is not always saying “yes.”
 - * To serve others or to put them first does not mean never turning down opportunities to serve. Sometimes you are unable. Sometimes you should not, even if able.
 - * We have the wrong concept of a loving person as a nice guy who tries to please everybody.

- c) Love is not self-seeking.
 - * The focus in loving is not ourselves but others. By its nature, Christian love is ready for self-denial.
3. So what is Christian love?
- a) Jesus spoke of a love that is connected with keeping God's commandments. Jn 15:9-10.
 - * There can be no Christian love apart from righteousness. Loving is not compatible with sinning.
 - * The world's experience shows that love apart from God has become convoluted with sin (e.g., sex outside marriage).
 - b) Jesus was specific about how we are to love one another. Jn 15:12.
 - * We are not free to change or dilute Jesus' direction.
 - c) How does Jesus love? Jn 15:13. With a self-sacrificial love.
 - * It is not just giving our time, imparting our wisdom, praying for others, etc., but it is being willing to die for others.
4. But most are not called to actually die for others. How then do we translate love into practical everyday terms?
- a) The answer is in Jn 13:1-5 (the foot-washing episode).
 - * What Jesus did was most unusual, because it was the task of the youngest slave. Thus Peter objected.
 - b) Thus, dying on the cross was not the only example Jesus gave. He demonstrated Christian love as service love.
 - c) When he finished, Jesus told them to do likewise. Jn 13:14-15.
 - * Later he commanded them to love each other according to his example. Jn 13:34.
5. And who is our neighbor? Can you choose whom to love?
- a) The answer is in the parable of the good Samaritan. Lk 10:29b-37.
 - * The Jews hated the Samaritans, who had inter-married among the gentiles. Thus it was remarkable for this Samaritan to help the Jew who was robbed and beaten.
 - b) The implication for us: all persons in need of our help are our neighbors.
6. How do we love in *everyday* life?
- a) Characteristics of Christian love. 1 Cor 13:4-7.
 - b) Read the passage yourself but substitute "I" for "love."
- E. God has loved us. Jesus has saved us. We are to respond by witnessing to God's love and salvation.

MISSIONARY FAMILIES OF CHRIST

Participant's Handout

SESSION No. 2: CALL TO WITNESS

1. Authentic Christianity is all about meeting, living and sharing Christ.
 - * To meet and know Christ is to be in a personal relationship with him
 - * To live Christ is to respond to the call to holiness and discipleship.
 - * To share Christ is to participate in witnessing to Jesus and proclaiming the gospel in the normal day-to-day circumstances of our lives. It is a call to love God and to love your neighbor

2. God wants us to make loving Him our highest ideal. Thus God made it into a commandment of the highest priority.

3. We are to love God with all our heart, mind, strength and soul
 - * Not an emotion, which is changeable, but rather a commitment, a decision to love.
 - * We are to be totally committed to God, to put Him first.
 - * We need to have a personal relationship with God, and spend regular time with Him in prayer and the Bible.
 - * We are to serve God with the use of our mind.
 - * We keep our mind clean and holy.
 - * We use our mind according to God's truths and not according to the world's ways.
 - * We give God all our resources--time, money, energy, gifts, abilities, possessions.

4. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves.
 - * Loving neighbor, together with loving God, form the core of the Christian life.
 - * Christian love is:
 - Connected with keeping God's commandments.
 - A self-sacrificial love.
 - Committed service to others.
 - * Our neighbor is anyone who is in need of our help.

Discussion starter

How have I loved God in a concrete way?

Scripture readings

Matthew 22:36-38 and Mark 12:28-30	1 Corinthians 13:1-13
John 14:21-24	1 John 2:7-11
John 14:21-24	1 John 3:16-18
Romans 12:1-2	1 John 4:7-21

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 the model of your life?

MISSIONARY FAMILIES OF CHRIST

SESSION No. 3: REPENTANCE AND FAITH

Goal: To start to live Christ by repenting of sin and turning to a renewed faith in Jesus.

Expanded Outline

A. We can see that we fall far short of the authentic Christian life.

1. We are now called to respond to God's love, grace and fellowship. Our proper response is repentance and faith. Mk 1:15.
 - a) We need to repent, i.e., to reform our lives.
 - b) And we need to believe in the gospel, i.e., have faith in Jesus and the message he brings.
2. Repentance and faith go together. It is a double-action response. It is inadequate just to have one without the other.
 - a) To just reform our lives is an inadequate response to God. Even pagans can be good. We need to also believe in Him and in His plans and promises.
 - b) To simply believe in God 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.

B. Repentance.

1. The Greek word for repentance is "*metanoia*," which literally means a change of mind.
 - a) It is not just a simple confession of wrongdoing. Rather, it refers to a change in direction.
 - * 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 behavior.
 - b) More specifically, repentance means:
 - * A turning away from sin, evil, wrongdoing.
 - * This includes a turning away from running your own life. It is turning to a life of obedience to God and having Jesus on the throne of your life.
2. What repentance is not.
 - a) It is not dependent on feelings.
 - * Rather, it depends on an objective decision to accept only God's righteousness into one's life and reject anything not compatible with this.
 - b) It is not being sorry for sin because we are afraid of the consequences.
 - * We should not confuse sorrow for sin with sorrow for the consequences of sin. We must hate sin itself.
3. What must we do to repent?

- a) Be honest. Admit that we have sin in our lives.
 - * Call a spade a spade. If it is sin, do not call it a “growth experience.”
 - b) Renounce sin. Actively turn away from sin and decide not to do it again.
 - c) Ask God’s forgiveness.
 - * Because every sin is a sin against God. Ps 51:6.
 - * Be confident of God’s forgiveness. 1 Jn 1:9.
 - * Story of the prodigal son. Lk 15:11-24. If we turn back to our Father, no matter how badly we have lived our lives, He will restore us to our rightful place as His child.
 - d) Avail of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, i.e., go to a priest for confession.
4. There are specific sins we need to renounce. These are serious sins that are totally incompatible with a relationship with God (that is, mortal sin). We are not referring to just so-called “small stuff” (i.e., venial sin, e.g., character flaws like always getting irritated), though these too have to be repented of. These mortal sins are:
- a) Spiritualism and the occult.
 - * This includes witchcraft, fortune telling, seances, playing spirit of the glass, etc.
 - b) Sexual wrongdoing.
 - * This includes sexual intercourse outside marriage, adultery, *active* homosexuality.
 - c) Abortion. Also contraception, which the Church says is an intrinsic evil.
 - d) Serious crimes such as murder, rape, kidnapping, robbery, corruption.
 - e) Drunkenness (not just drinking but drunkenness) and getting stoned on drugs.
 - f) Not going to Sunday Mass every week.

C. Faith.

1. Faith is belief in the gospel, which is the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.
2. 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 open the door to our own heart. No one can do that for us.
 - 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. Example of Peter walking on the water (Mt 14:25-29).

3. God has promised us new life. Faith is accepting that life and letting God show us how to live it. We must be willing to do whatever God wants of us, and actually do it.

D. Consequences of repentance and faith.

1. Acts 16:31.
 - a) A promise of salvation from sin, Satan, death.
 - b) A promise of forgiveness and eternal life with God.
2. Luke 11:9-13.
 - a) A promise of new life in the Spirit.
 - b) We can pray for a greater release of the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

- E. 2,000 years ago, Jesus sounded the call to repentance and faith. It is the same call to us today. We are called to turn away from sin and all obstacles to God, and to accept Jesus as Lord.

MISSIONARY FAMILIES OF CHRIST

Participant's Handout

SESSION No. 3: REPENTANCE AND FAITH

1. God loves us, God sent His own Son to die for us, God has initiated a relationship with us as Father. Our proper response to all God has done for us is repentance and faith.
2. The Greek word for repentance is “metanoia,” which literally means a change of mind.
 - * It is a change of direction in life. It is a change in the way we live our lives, dropping an old set of ideals and values and adopting new ones.
 - * Specifically, repentance means a turning away from sin, evil, wrongdoing and running your own life.
 - * Further, it is turning to a life of obedience to God and having Jesus on the throne of your life.
3. Specific serious sins we must renounce: participation in non-Christian religions; spiritualism and the occult; sexual wrongdoing; serious crimes (murder, rape, etc.); drunkenness and drugs.
4. Faith is belief in the good news of salvation in Jesus.
 - * It is a belief in Jesus as our personal Savior.
5. Consequences of repentance and faith:
 - * Salvation from sin, Satan, death.
 - * Forgiveness and eternal life with God.
 - * New life in the Holy Spirit.

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 readings

Mark 1:14-15	1 John 1:5-10
Galatians 5:13-21 and	Luke 15:11-24
1 Corinthians 6:9-11	Luke 11:9-13
Ephesians 5:1-10	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.

MISSIONARY FAMILIES OF CHRIST CHRISTIAN LIFE SEMINAR

SESSION No. 4: The GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Goal: To understand the role of the Holy Spirit, and to receive the baptism in the Spirit.

Expanded Outline

- A.** To overcome sin, to reform our lives, to be holy, to be true disciples, to love our neighbor, all these are very difficult. We cannot do this on our own strength. We need a power outside ourselves. That is the Holy Spirit.
1. Many people during the prophet Ezekiel's time were enmeshed in sin and spiritual lifelessness, like many Christians today. This is what God said to them:
 - a) Ez 36:26. God's promise of the Holy Spirit.
 - b) Ez 36:27. God's promise of help and power to do what is right. The Holy Spirit gives us the power.
 2. The Spirit that God promised through Ezekiel, Jesus gave to his disciples.
 - a) First Jesus stressed the Spirit's importance. Jn 16:7.
 - b) Then Jesus told them he would send them the Spirit so they can be true witnesses. Lk 24:48-49.
 3. Much of Christianity today looks weak, lacking in power and effectiveness.
 - a) But Christians have not always been so lifeless. The early Christian movement was dynamic, strong, attractive.
 - From a small sect, it conquered the Roman empire.
 - b) That same power is available to us today. That is the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - c) We need to know the Holy Spirit not just as a doctrine, but as a Person Who truly affects our lives.
 - d) Such life in the 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, giving them gifts, sending them on mission.
 4. God wants all men to have this new life. This new life in the Spirit is available to all who turn away from a life of sin and receive Jesus as Savior and Lord.
- B.** Receiving the Holy Spirit (what does it mean?).

1. The experience of the early disciples.
 - a) Jesus promises the Holy Spirit and tells them to wait. Lk 24:49.
 - b) On the day of Pentecost (a Jewish holiday), the Holy Spirit came. Acts 2.
 - An exciting event. Noise like a strong wind, fire, speaking in tongues.
 - Pilgrims from all over were amazed.
 - Peter proclaims the gospel. 3,000 are converted!
 - The Holy Spirit created bonds of love and unity among the new Christians. The Church was born.
 - c) Others as well received the Holy Spirit.
 - Acts 8:14-17 (Samaria). Acts 10:44-46 (Cornelius). Acts 19:6 (Ephesus).
 - Those who received the Holy Spirit knew the Lord more personally and more experientially.

2. What does receiving the Holy Spirit (or being baptized in the Spirit) mean for us today?
 - a) We can experience the same power and gift of the Spirit that the early Christians did.
 - Same relationship with Jesus.
 - Same transforming power.
 - Same deep worship.
 - Same power for speaking the gospel.
 - b) We can receive the same spiritual gifts. 1 Cor 12:1,4-11.
 - Expound briefly on each gift (Reference: Book “Renewing the Face of the Earth”).
 - c) A word on the gift of tongues.
 - Tongues is a common experience with the baptism in the Spirit. Just like in Acts.
 - It is a gift from God. Thus it is important.
 - Unlike the other spiritual gifts, tongues is a gift that is immediately manifest.
 - Tongues can have great consequences on one’s spiritual life, especially prayer and worship. 1 Cor 14:2 -- We are enabled to truly speak to God. 1 Cor 14:14 – We are able to connect with God in prayer because it is our spirit connecting also to God who is a spiritual Being.

3. How can we receive the baptism in the Spirit?
 - a) God has promised us the Holy Spirit. Lk 11:9-13.
 - b) So we simply take God up on His promise. We ask our Father to give us the Holy Spirit.
 - We can be sure we will receive the Spirit because God said so. We just need to ask in faith.

C. We would like to pray for and with you for the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

1. First, as a manifestation of repentance and faith, we will ask you to make your re-commitment to Christ. This was your baptismal commitment. Then we will pray over you.
2. Be aware of obstacles to receiving God's gifts.
 - a) An unrepentant attitude. Refusing to admit sin as sin.
 - b) Feeling unworthy. As such, we draw away from God's offered embrace.
 - c) Fear.
 - Of what others will think, of looking foolish, of being overtaken.
 - Of what God might ask of us.
 - d) Doubt. That God promised and will give the Spirit if we ask.
 - e) Pride. Attitude of not wanting or needing God's gifts.
3. You know what you need. Ask for it.
 - a) More courage to live the Christian life, strength to fight temptation, more knowledge of God, etc.
 - b) God is offering you various gifts. Be open to whatever God wants to give you.

D. The prayer session.

1. Explain the procedure quickly.
2. Sing the song "Create in me."
3. Do the prayer of "Commitment to Christ."
4. Pray over for baptism in the Spirit. At some point, sing "Spirit of the Living God."
5. After the praying over, have a short worship time (including singing in tongues).

E. Closing exhortation.

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 being baptized in the Spirit with getting the gift of tongues.
 - 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 the gift 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, and so you have received 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.

MISSIONARY FAMILIES OF CHRIST CHRISTIAN LIFE SEMINAR

SESSION No. 5: GROWING IN THE SPIRIT

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

Expanded Outline

A. Introduction.

1. The baptism in the 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, study, service, fellowship and the sacraments.
3. The Christian life can be pictured as a wheel of a cart. It has three components:
 - The outer rim. This is the part of the wheel that meets the road. This represents daily Christian life.
 - The hub. This is the part of the wheel from which the power emanates to the rim. It holds the wheel together. The hub is our Lord Jesus Christ, who is at the center of our lives. The power is that of the Holy Spirit.
 - The spokes. These transmit the power and direction from the hub to the rim. In Christian experience, 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.

B. The first tool: prayer.

1. Prayer is the primary means for establishing and maintaining a deep and loving personal relationship between ourselves and God.
2. A successful prayer life involves 3 important principles.
 - a) Our prayer must be faithful.
 - Decide to spend time with the Lord everyday.
 - Decide on the practical details.
 - When? Decide on a specific time of the day, which you can then 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 increase later.
- Adopt a format to begin.
 - ACTS. Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, Supplication.
 - Use daily prayer guides (e.g., God's Word Today, The Word Among Us, Our Daily Bread).

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 your format 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 prayer but on the Lord.

3. In the Catholic tradition, the intercession of Mary and the saints is a powerful tool of prayer. A devotion to Mary and the saints is part and parcel of a Catholic's faith. Praying the Holy Rosary is such a tool.

C. The second tool: study.

1. We need to know God and understand Him and His ways. Study is a deliberate, focused exercise of the intellect, not referring primarily to scholarly or academic endeavor but to the wider process of understanding more about God so we can love and better serve Him.

2. Three ways we can learn more about God.

a) The Bible.

- This is the most important, because this 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 10 to 15 minutes.
 - Pursue a more deliberate study of portions of the Bible.
 - We should make it a goal to read the whole Bible.

b) Spiritual reading.

- After reading what God has said of Himself (Bible), we can read what men have said about God. We can draw on spiritual insights and study throughout the life of the Church.
- This includes reading spiritual books, magazines, articles, etc.

c) Teachings and preachings.

- Our teaching and formation program in MFC.
- The word of God spoken in the Sunday homily, in parish events, in conferences, etc.
- Begin the habit of taking notes.

D. The third tool: service.

1. 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.
2. 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, just like Jesus. 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.

3. Ways we can serve:

a) First we serve God by the way we live.

- Daily prayer and Scripture reading.
- Pursuit of righteousness and holiness.

b) We also serve by performing the basic responsibilities God has given us in our daily lives.

- E.g., as spouse, as parent, as employee, etc.

c) Then we serve our fellow men by recognizing the many built-in opportunities for service in day-to-day life.

- E.g., hospitality, offering a ride, babysitting, visiting the sick, etc.

- d)** We give witness to our faith in Jesus by the way we live our lives. Be alert to opportunities to share your faith verbally with family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and the world at large.
- e)** Make ourselves and our resources available for God's work. Our time, talent, treasure.
 - Do good works. James 2:14-17.
 - Support through prayer and financial giving sound Christian ministries that further the spread of the gospel.
 - Look for opportunities to give your time and energy to serve in a Christian group on a regular basis.

E. The fourth tool: fellowship.

1. Fellowship 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.
2. We do not become complete Christians by ourselves. We must be joined to others in order to experience the fullness of Christian life.
 - a)** We need the support of others. We need their wisdom and strength.
 - b)** We need to do things together. Fellowship is not an optional extra.
3. Some ways to experience Christian fellowship.
 - a)** Worship in liturgies, prayer meetings, conferences.
 - b)** Coming together for teaching and formation.
 - c)** Serving together (like the team in this CLS).
 - d)** Social gatherings.
4. MFC will be a way of enjoying Christian fellowship. More on this next session.

F. The fifth tool (for Catholics): the sacraments.

1. In the Catholic tradition, the most important tool for spiritual growth are the sacraments. They are the main channels of God's grace for our lives.
2. We recommend frequent confession and communion.

- a) Though confession is required only once a year, we should avail of this more often.
- b) Though communion is required only once a year, we should receive communion much more frequently, with the proper disposition.

G. Conclusion.

1. This CLS, your commitment to Christ, the baptism in the Holy Spirit--all these are just the beginning of a new life. We are "babies in Christ" and we need to grow. Make use of the tools provided by God.
2. If you are faithful, you will not be disappointed.

**MISSIONARY FAMILIES OF CHRIST
CHRISTIAN LIFE SEMINAR
PARTICIPANT'S HANDOUT**

SESSION No. 5: GROWING IN THE SPIRIT

1. The baptism in the Spirit is only a beginning. Now we need to grow in this new life of the Spirit.
2. There are 5 basic tools to growth.
 - a) Prayer. The primary means for establishing and maintaining a deep and loving personal relationship with God.
 - Must be faithful. Pray daily.
 - Must be led by the Holy Spirit.
 - Must be centered on a relationship with Jesus.
 - Can use other forms like the Holy Rosary
 - b) Study.
 - The Bible. Read daily.
 - Spiritual reading (books, magazines, articles, etc.).
 - Teachings and preachings.
 - c) Service.
 - By the way we live. Pursuit of righteousness and holiness.
 - Serving our fellow men.
 - Performing our basic responsibilities in life.
 - Giving witness to our faith in Jesus.
 - Giving of our time, talent and treasure.
 - d) Fellowship.
 - e) Sacraments (for Catholics).

Discussion starter

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

Scripture readings

1 Peter 1:13-16

Matthew 20:25-28

Matthew 6:5-13

James 2:14-17

Matthew 18:19-20

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

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?

MISSIONARY FAMILIES OF CHRIST CHRISTIAN LIFE SEMINAR

TALK No. 6: THE LIFE AND MISSION OF MFC: TRANSFORMATION IN CHRIST

Goal: To explain the life and mission of Missionary Families of Christ (MFC) and to inspire people with the desire to be a part of this committed group of Christians.

Expanded Outline

- A.** 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. Tonight we will discuss with you in greater detail how we learned to appropriate God's wisdom and power for our personal and family life as we entered into a committed relationship with one another as Christians.
- B.** What is Missionary Families of Christ (MFC)?
- 1.** MFC is a Christian evangelistic and missionary community committed in defending faith, family and life.
 - a)** It started in June 1981 in Manila, Philippines, with 16 couples.
 - b)** Now, MFC has sections for family members other than couples. Since 1993, it has ministries for kids, youth, singles, widows/separated, widowers/separated. It is a "womb-to-tomb" ministry.
 - c)** MFC also engages in the social dimension of the gospel. We have our work with the poor, work for justice, and work for life.
 - 2.** What are we called to do?
 - a)** Read the MFC Statements of Vision and Mission.
 - b)** Read the MFC Statement of Philosophy.
 - c)** Read the MFC Core Values.
 - 3.** From these we can see the importance of the mission of MFC today.
 - a)** The family as the basic unit of society is God's plan. However, there are many forces in the world today that seek to destroy the family. MFC has been raised by God to defend his work. Our task is to strengthen family life. This is our reason for being.

b) How do we accomplish our mission?

- By working for the renewal of individuals, families and the Church on a global basis.
- By providing a strong support environment for our members.

C. How do we support one another in MFC?

1. By our committed relationships.

a) We believe that we have a responsibility to encourage and support one another in the Christian life. Thus, we make a commitment to grow together as Christians.

b) We have a 4 point commitment that is embodied in our covenant.

- Read “The covenant of MFC” and explain briefly.

2. Through households. All members of MFC belong to cell groups that we call “households.” Following immediately after this CLS, we are inviting you to experience being in 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 as God’s practical wisdom.
- 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 or individuals.

c) The household meets once a week, on the same day of the week as mutually agreed on by its members.

- Less than once 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 (as far as possible), on rotation basis from week to week. Holding the household meetings in our homes has the following values:

- Worshiping 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 for our relatives, neighbors and friends.
- e) There are basically three ingredients in a typical household meeting (what we have been experiencing in this CLS): an extended period of prayer and worship, a time for sharing or discussion, and some time for fellowship.
3. By our ongoing teaching and formation.
- a) There is a formal first year teaching program.
 - Covenant Recollection (2 months after the CLS).
 - Marriage Enrichment Retreat 1 (3 months after the CO).
 - Evangelization Training (at the end of the year).
 - b) Beyond the first year, there are many other courses (MER 2, FCL) and various training modules for those who will undertake services in MFC.
 - c) Various teachings will also be given through our Pastoral Formation Office, in prayer assemblies, and during other occasions. We also have books on evangelization, marriage, working with the poor, etc.
4. By the other regular activities of our community.
- a) Monthly prayer assemblies (in lieu of the household meeting).
 - b) Anniversaries, Family Days, Evangelization Rallies, Leaders Conferences, etc.
 - c) Social activities

D. What Now?

1. Throughout this CLS, many things have happened:
 - a) Your repentance, personal conversion, and a renewed faith in God.
 - b) Your acceptance of Jesus as Savior and Lord.
 - c) Your empowerment through baptism in the Holy Spirit.
2. Now you need to allow the Lord to continue the process of your transformation in Christ. The Holy Spirit is at work so that you can grow to know, love and serve God more.
3. We have come to the end of our CLS. But actually, this is not the end. It's really just the beginning. We have before us a whole new life with God and with one another. It is exciting!
4. Let us rejoice that Jesus is our Lord.

E. 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. Lord, I give You My Heart; Lord, I Offer My Life, Christ is Enough, Forever or other songs of offering).
3. The leader invites everyone to read out the covenant of the Missionary Families of Christ (MFC). They all read out loud together.
4. The leader prays over the newly committed brothers and sisters, inviting the other brethren members to pray in their hearts 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 brethren to MFC 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.

Missionary Families of Christ

Vision

MFC is an evangelistic and missionary community committed in defending Faith, Family and Life.

Mission

We strive for holiness of life,
as we commit to renew the temporal order
through our work with the poor,
our work for justice,
and our work for life.

We are a servant of the Church,
working to renew her children through every generation,
until the Lord returns once again.

Missionary Families of Christ CORE VALUES

Our Core Values describe who we are and what we are called to do in the world. They provide parameters and constant guideposts in our moving on in our life and mission.

1. Centered on Christ.

In everything that we are and do, we look to Jesus, who is our Savior and Lord. Jesus is our model in our obedience to the Father, in our faithfulness to His call, and to total submission to His divine will. And as He who called us is holy, we ourselves will strive for holiness of life (1 Pt 1:15-16), and look to exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit in our day-to-day lives (Gal 5:22-23).

2. Evangelistic and missionary.

We are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus to the whole world (Mk 16:15). We are his witnesses (Lk 24:48). Every MFC member is an evangelizer, in the normal day-to-day environments of our lives. We look to doing mission beyond our own environments to the very ends of the earth.

3. Focused on the family.

Our life and mission is founded on strong families in Christ. We recognize that the future of humanity passes by way of the family. We defend and strengthen Christian marriage, we raise our children to be the next generation of God's people, we establish our homes as pieces of Kingdom ground. In our defense of the family, we are called to a strong advocacy and defense of the culture of life.

4. Being community.

We are part of the larger family of MFC, a global family of many different nationalities but all sharing brotherhood and sisterhood in Christ. We desire to move forward together in our life in the Lord, providing love, affirmation, friendship, support and healing. We are committed to the good of our brethren, always living the truth in love (Eph 4:15).

5. Living a preferential option for the poor.

We recognize Jesus' mission to bring glad tidings to the poor (Lk 4:18). We look to both the spiritual and material upliftment of the least among our brethren. In doing so, we will be in solidarity with the poor by striving to live a simple lifestyle, to share our resources, and to fight for social justice in the world.

6. Exercising servant leadership.

We are privileged to serve God and His people, both in and out of MFC. We serve with the mind and heart of Jesus, who came to serve and not to be served (Mt 20:28). Leaders are to serve with humility, self-sacrifice and submission to the Chief Shepherd, to whom we will render an account (Hb 13:17). He who wishes to be great shall be the least of all (Mt 20:26-27).

7. Being a servant to the Church.

We in MFC are an integral part of the holy Roman Catholic Church. We are submitted to our bishops and to the pope. Our life, formation and service will conform to Catholic values and ideals. We make ourselves available to be of service in the parishes and dioceses, especially in the areas of faith, family and life. We look to Mary, the mother of the Church, as our inspiration and help.

Missionary Families of Christ Statement of Philosophy

MFC adheres to a set of beliefs and ideals from which flow its Christian attitudes, values and behavior, as well as its programs, teachings 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). WE BELIEVE 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. WE BELIEVE that God ordained order in the family by giving the man the role as head of the family and the woman as 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. WE BELIEVE 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 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.