



JOY

Y²AM

Ministry Plan

2019-20

Finding Christ
Through Commitment (May 2020)



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LEARNING SESSION ONE

MAY 2020

Finding Christ Through Commitment

MONTH:

May 2020

GOAL:

To learn about commitment

OBJECTIVE:

To describe how they are connected to God

ESTIMATED DURATION:

45 minutes

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

1. blank paper for each participant
2. pen for each participant
3. poster board
4. bibles

OPENING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Lord, allow us “to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice,” one that is, “holy and acceptable to God for this is Your true and proper worship.” Allow us “not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of our minds.” So that we may be able to “test and prove what is God’s will, His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Amen.

(a passage from Romans 12:1-2)

LEARNING SESSION:
JOY RESOURCES 2019-20

ICEBREAKER:

10 minutes

Tell us your name, and the best invitation you have ever received.

Remember:

It's always helpful to start with an activity to help participants relax and allow community to build. Early in the session, focus primarily on getting participants to open their hearts and connect with what's happening in the group. This is an opportunity to encourage participants to share their honest opinions and thoughts, as well as listen to those of others. Take this time to connect with what's important to them, and to understand what they've connected with.

ACTIVITY 1: BIBLE VERSES

10 minutes

Pass out a piece of paper, a pen, and a Bible to each participant. Give each participant one of the verses below and ask them to look them up in the Bible:

Matthew 4:19

Matthew 16:24

Mark 10:21

Luke 5:27

Luke 18:22

John 1:38-9

John 1:43

John 8:12

John 21:19

Debrief:

- Ask each participant give a brief description of their reading.
- What do these stories have in common?
- What invitation did Christ give to each of these people?
- How might Christ be inviting you, in your life, to follow Him?

LEARNING SESSION:
JOY RESOURCES 2019-20

ACTIVITY 2: DISCUSSION

10 minutes

Write the following 3 words on a board or poster board:
agreement, promise, and commitment.

Ask participants the following questions to facilitate the discussion:

- How do you define each of these words?
- What is the difference between the three words?
- What do these words have in common?
- How do you live out these words in your lives?

LEARNING SESSION:
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ACTIVITY 3: SCRIPTURE

10 minutes

Luke 5:1-11

“1 While the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. 2 And he saw two boats by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3 Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 4 And when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” 5 And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.” 6 And when they had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish; and as their nets were breaking, 7 they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” 9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken; 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men.” 11 And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.”

LEARNING SESSION: JOY RESOURCES 2019-20

Debrief:

- Who are the characters in this passage and what are their roles?
- What conversation did Christ have with these individuals?
- How did these conversations transform them?
- How did Christ make something impossible, possible?
- How could Christ be inviting each of us to deepen our relationship with Him?

LEARNING SESSION:
JOY RESOURCES 2019-20

CONCLUSION: WRAP-UP

5 minutes

Go around the circle and ask each individual to name one new idea they learned during the session.

CLOSING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

*“Thank You, Lord, for Your strength and guidance in my work. You are the fulfillment of all good things. Fill also my soul with joy and gladness, that I may praise You always.”
Amen.*

LEARNING SESSION TWO

MAY 2020

Finding Christ Through Commitment

MONTH:

May 2020

GOAL:

To learn about worship

OBJECTIVE:

To create a commitment to God

ESTIMATED DURATION:

45 minutes

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

1. Divine Liturgy books
2. blank paper for each participant
3. pen for each participant
4. a few copies of the Saint story below
5. a few copies of the debrief questions
6. copies of the small Paraklesis

OPENING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

“Christ our Lord, You gave sight to the blind man and wisdom to simple fishermen. Give to our minds the grace of the Holy Spirit. We ask for understanding to learn and choose to do good works to glorify You.”

Amen.

LEARNING SESSION:
JOY RESOURCES 2019-20

ICEBREAKER:

10 minutes

Tell us your name, and the first word that comes to mind when you hear the word “commitment.”

Remember:

It's always helpful to start with an activity to help participants relax and allow community to build. Early in the session, focus primarily on getting participants to open their hearts and connect with what's happening in the group. This is an opportunity to encourage participants to share their honest opinions and thoughts, as well as listen to those of others. Take this time to connect with what's important to them, and to understand what they've connected with.

LEARNING SESSION:
JOY RESOURCES 2019-20

ACTIVITY 1: SAINT STORY

10 minutes

Break up the large group into three small groups based on their answer to the icebreaker question. Give each group a copy of the story of Saint Maria of Paris and the debrief questions.

<https://incommunion.org/2004/10/18/saint-of-the-open-door/>

Instruct groups to read the story and work together to answer the questions. After a few minutes, have the groups come back together into one and have each group share their answers.

Saint Maria of Paris

Mother Maria was born in Russia in 1891. As a child she once emptied her piggy bank in order to give money to the painting of an icon that would be part of a new church. At seven she asked her mother if she was old enough to become a nun.

When she was fourteen her father died. Maria felt this was so unfair that she stopped believing in God for a while. When she was eighteen Maria married a Bolshevik, one of the people who wanted to overthrow the government of Russia.

Little by little her love for Christ came back. She prayed and read the Gospel and the lives of saints. She wanted "to proclaim the simple word of God." She decided to study theology, which in those days was only for men preparing to be priests.

After her first child was born. Maria became even more trusting in God and her faith grew. She once spent hours visiting a small chapel best known for a healing icon. She prayed in a dark corner, thinking about her life as if to prepare for confession, finally feeling God's overwhelming presence. "God is over all," she knew with certainty.

LEARNING SESSION: JOY RESOURCES 2019-20

When the Bolsheviks succeeded in overthrowing the government of Russia, Maria fled with her family to France. A son and a daughter were born to her as they made the long journey over the course of a few years. They arrived in Paris in 1923. Three years later, everyone in the family came down with influenza, and Maria's younger daughter died.

For a whole day and night, Maria sat by her daughter's body, unwilling to leave the room. During those terrible hours, she came to feel that nothing else mattered but three words: "Love one another." Having lost both a father and a daughter to death, she now felt called to love those who had no one else to love them. She imagined a new kind of community that would connect spiritual life with service to those in need. Her bishop supported her vision, even to the point of granting her a divorce so that she could become a nun. She took her vows intending to give herself completely to social service." Mother Maria called it "monasticism in the world." From the beginning of her ministry, God provided for the needs of the new community. A house became available, and the furniture was donated as young Russian women who had no jobs heard about the nun who was willing to help them.

Her motto was: "Each person is an icon of God." She saw it as her job to venerate, respect and love the image of God in her brothers and sisters.

Mother Maria's day began with a trip to the market to beg for food or buy whatever was not donated. The cigarette-smoking beggar nun became well known. She would return with a sack of bones, fish, and overripe fruit and vegetables.

Sometimes the people she helped betrayed her trust. One time a guest stole some money. Everyone knew who had done it, but Mother Maria refused to accuse her. Instead she told everyone at the dinner table that the money had not been stolen, only lost, and she had found it. "You see how dangerous it is to make accusations," she said. The girl who had stolen the money burst into tears.

"It is not enough to give," Mother Maria might say. "We must have a heart that gives." If mistakes were made, if people betrayed a trust, the cure was not to limit giving. "The only ones who make no mistakes," she said, "are those who do nothing."

She was sure that there was no other path to heaven than living God's mercy: The way to God lies through love of people. At the Last Judgment I will not be asked how many prayers I recited. Instead I will be asked if I fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick and the prisoners. That is all I will be asked. About every poor, hungry, and imprisoned person the Savior says 'I': 'I was hungry and thirsty, I was sick and in prison.' To think that he puts an equal sign between himself and anyone in need. . . . It fills me with awe.

LEARNING SESSION: JOY RESOURCES 2019-20

The last phase of Mother Maria's life was during World War II and Germany's occupation of France. She could have left Paris before the Germans came, but she decided to stay. "If the Germans take Paris, I shall stay here with my old women. Where else could I send them?"

With the war came greater poverty and hunger for many people. Then Jews began to knock on the door asking if the priest who served the community would issue baptismal certificates to them. The answer was always yes.

Eventually, the Nazis arrested Mother Maria for trying to protect the Jews. They sent her to Germany, to a concentration camp where she lived for two years. She wasn't allowed to write letters, but prisoners who survived the war remembered her. One of them said: "We were awakened at three in the morning and had to stand out in the open in the middle of winter until all the prisoners were counted. She took all this calmly and she would say, 'Well that's that. Yet another day completed. And tomorrow it will be the same all over again. But one fine day the time will come for all of this to end.' ... She was on good terms with everyone. She was the kind of person who made no distinction between people."

On Holy Friday Mother Maria was selected for the gas chambers. She entered eternal life the following day. According to one story, she was just one of the many chosen for death that day. According to another, she took the place of another prisoner, a Jew, who had been chosen. It would have been in keeping with her generous life. In any case she gave herself consciously to the holocaust, by her example helping others to accept the cross. She radiated the peace of God and communicated it to all who knew her. Her day of commemoration is the 20th of July.

Debrief:

- How does this story relate to the theme of commitment?
- What type of life did you expect this Saint to have?
- How did St. Maria answer the call to commit herself to Christ?
- What lesson did you learn from this story?
- How can we follow the example of St. Maria to practice commitment to God in our busy daily lives?

ACTIVITY 2: DIVINE LITURGY

10 minutes

Read the following lines from the Divine Liturgy and then ask participants the following questions and facilitate a discussion:

“Commemorating our most holy, pure, blessed, and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, with all the saints, let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.”

Debrief:

- Where can the theme of commitment be found in this passage?
- What types of things do you think you would need to do in order to commit to God?
- How can you begin to commit yourself (and your life) to Christ?

ACTIVITY 3: CREATING A COMMITMENT

10 minutes

Pass out copies of the questions below and pens to the group. Allow a few minutes for participants to complete the questions on their own.

1. How do you pray/talk/relate with God?
2. How do you understand God to be working in your life?
3. How can you follow Jesus in your life?
4. What commitment can you create to live a life close to God?
5. What steps can you take everyday to commit yourself to this calling?

CONCLUSION: WRAP-UP & COMMITMENT

5 minutes

Go around the circle and ask each individual to name one new idea they learned during the session.

CLOSING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

“O Lord, You who steadied the hand of Peter as he began to sink on the stormy sea, if you are with me, no one is against me. Grant to me the shield of faith and the mighty armor of the Holy Spirit to protect me and guide me to do Your will. The future I put into Your hands, O Lord, and I follow You to a life in Christ.”

Amen.