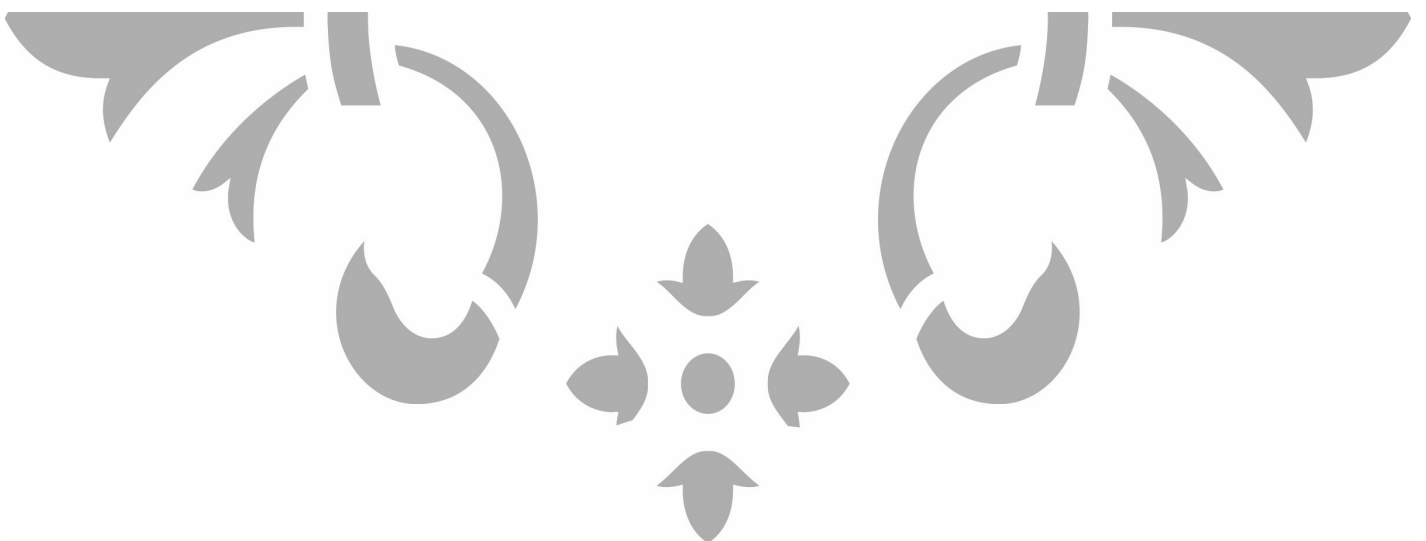


5 Minutes with Christ

Spiritual Nourishment for Small Groups

Based on the book of reflections by ACE Advocates for Catholic Schools

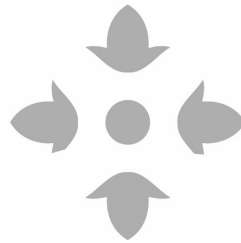


5 Minutes with Christ: A Small-Group Study

Introduction

The book *5 Minutes with Christ* walks us through the life of Christ, from the announcement to Mary of her impending pregnancy to Jesus' resurrection. Among other things, it reveals God's love to us through his incarnation. And it lays out for us characteristics that model "kingdom living" for us—that is, the way a life well lived looks from God's perspective.

The studies here take a closer look at that love and some of those characteristics, focusing first on Mary and then on Jesus. All follow the same arch. First, a context-setting question leads you to consider God, then the two readings invite you to think about God in relationship to humankind, and the final question asks you to apply those realities to your own life.



A Few Pointers for Reflecting on Scripture

Be Expectant. The Bible is God's living Word. As the Spirit is present in it, so the Spirit is present in you. It takes no special experience or knowledge to read and reflect on it. God *will* meet you there. Before you begin, say a simple prayer, asking God to remove any distraction that stands in your way and to open your heart to what the Word has to say.

Look Closely. Read the passage carefully, and think about the who/what/where/when/and how: Who is there? What is happening? When? Where? And how? Put yourself into the passage. What do you see, smell, taste, feel? Choose one of the characters and become him/her. What questions come to mind? What words, phrases, or concepts don't you understand? Does the passage turn in any unexpected ways? What intrigues you?

Listen. Do you sense that God is speaking to any part of your life through what you're reading? Is there a promise to trust, a command to obey, or an example to follow or avoid? Is there a deeper insight into God or your experience with God? What action are you going to take in response to what God is saying to you?

Enjoy. God made us to be in community. Let yourself revel in that gift as you share, struggle, question, and celebrate together God's presence in the Word.

Suggested Small Group Study Schedule

Think of this as a "communal discovery" study because, rather than one leader sharing his/her insights and answering the group's questions, there is a facilitator assisting the community in digging into the reflections. The *group* discovers the truth together through asking and answering good questions.

Follow a schedule something like this, noting that anyone can open with prayer or do the readings.

Open with a short prayer.

“Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see and our ears to hear what you have to say to us.”
Or “Speak Lord, your servants are listening.”
Or another prayer of your choice.

Read aloud the context-setting question (5 minutes).

Let the group reflect individually on it.

Read aloud and reflect on the Scripture passage (15 minutes) .

Remind the group of these tips for reading:

- a) Look for the "facts" such as who, what, when, where, and how
- b) Enter the text experientially by becoming one of the characters in the story
- c) Notice the questions that come to mind

Share observations/questions and respond to the questions provided in this guide.

Read aloud and discuss the Reflection and its application (15 minutes).

Again, share observations, questions, and responses to the questions in the guide.

Summarize (5 minutes)

The facilitator or another member of the group sums up what has been read and discussed.

Trust Jesus, the text, and the Holy Spirit to be the authority of your time together. ‘God with you’ and ‘God in you’ will help you interpret and apply the readings.





Session 1
Mary, Christ's First Teacher
The Annunciation, 5 Minutes with Christ page 3

Opening Prayer

Set the Context.

Mary is the first person to hear God's dramatic plan to become a human. What is it about Mary, do you think, that made God choose her to be the mother of Jesus?

Read the Scripture passage.

Picture yourself as a young teen being visited by an angel—something you've never seen or probably even imagined before. In that light, what images, phrases, or words strike you? Re-read the passage and briefly discuss Mary's response to the angel; what characteristics about her does it reveal? What do those characteristics suggest to us about God?

Read the reflection.

Talk about what strikes you.

Apply.

Discuss the second-to-the-last line: "In moments when we feel either blessed or worn down, we too can go beyond the question to find the answer, the heart of the message." What does this say to you? How might it direct the way you begin your day tomorrow?

Closing Prayer



Session 2

God Becomes a Human Being

The Word Became Flesh, 5 Minutes with Christ page 14

Opening Prayer

Set the Context.

What does it mean to you that God became a human being? What does it suggest about God?

Read the Scripture Passage.

What words, phrases, images strike you?

Read the reflection.

Discuss Christ's human qualities. Which ones are you especially drawn to, and why?

Apply.

On p. 15 the writer says, "We are the face of God on earth," and goes on to describe some of what that means for teachers. What does it mean to be the "face of God" where you live and work?

Closing Prayer



Session 3 God is Love

The Love of God, 5 Minutes with Christ page 37

Opening Prayer

Set the Context.

The word “love” has many meanings. What pictures, other words, ideas come to mind when you think of that word?

Read the Scripture passage.

Read this familiar passage through once, then re-read it as if you’ve never seen it before. What strikes you? What questions, hopes, fears, doubts does it bring up in you?

Read the reflection.

What does it mean to you that, as the writer reminds us here, “God is love”?

Apply.

Discuss these sentences from p. 38: “Love is not primarily about us or what we do or how we feel. Love begins with God’s love for us. We love only because we have first been loved by God.” What is your reaction to these words? Remember there is no right or wrong answer.

Closing Prayer



Session 4
Do Good to Those Who Hate You
Love Your Enemies, 5 Minutes with Christ page 49

Opening Prayer

Set the Context.

What gifts has God given you? How are you being asked to use them?

Read the Scripture passage.

What words, phrases, or images strike you? What were some of Christ's virtues that He used in counter-cultural ways?

Read the reflection.

Describe a community (a family, a school, a group of friends) that follows Christ's directives. What does it look like in practical terms? How do its members act, make decisions, and treat each other? How would this community interact with other families, schools, or groups to which you belong?

Apply.

Discuss the author's concluding sentence: "We remember that for Christ, the skills are important, but it's the criteria on the rubric that make all the difference." What criteria are on your rubric for yourself?

Closing Prayer



Session 5 Be Opened!

The Healing of a Deaf and Mute Man, 5 Minutes with Christ page 71

Opening Prayer

Set the Context.

How do you listen to God? How can you be more attentive to God's voice?

Read the Scripture passage.

What words, phrases, or images strike you from this passage?

Read the reflection.

Do you know people – like the author's mother – who are extraordinary in their perceptiveness to God and other people? How do they listen? How do they act?

Apply.

After his encounter with Christ, the figure from the passage was given the gift of hearing and clear speech. What impedes your ability to hear and speak clearly? What do you think is going unheard and unsaid? St. Benedict equated obedience with "holy listening." In fact, the Latin word "oboediere" means "to listen to." How are listening and obedience connected for you?

Closing Prayer



Session 6
Authenticity

Jesus Heals the Woman Crippled by a Spirit, 5 Minutes with Christ page 98

Opening Prayer

Set the Context.

For Christians, how do justice and compassion work together in the way we treat others?

Read the Scripture passage.

What words, images, messages, characteristics about Jesus strike you?

Read the reflection.

What in particular speaks to you, and why?

Apply.

On p. 100, the writer says, “The alignment of Christ’s challenging words with his gentle actions moves his disciples to conversion and imitation.” What is your reaction to this? Does it translate into your life now? In what ways?

Closing Prayer



Session 7

God's Need to Show Us Mercy

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, 5 Minutes with Christ page 128

Opening Prayer

Set the Context.

Has there been a time in your work when you felt you were denied something you had worked hard for or earned? On the other hand, has there been a time when you were surprised by a grace or blessing that you felt you did not deserve? How did you feel or respond to either situation?

Read the Scripture passage.

Read the Gospel passage, trying to place yourself in the mindset of any one of the workers. What words, phrases, or images strike you most powerfully during this read-through? After discussing these, read the passage aloud a second time.

Read the reflection.

Why do you suppose, as the author says here, that God has a need to show us mercy? Why doesn't God include personal merit as a requirement for accepting us? What does this suggest to you about God?

Apply.

At the bottom of page 129, the author writes, "The bottom line is that the fallen human condition is where the kingdom is most active." What does this mean? And what, in your mind, is the most challenging implication of this line for your life and work?

Closing Prayer



Session 8 Grain of Wheat

Jesus Predicts His Death, 5 Minutes with Christ page 153

Opening Prayer

Set the Context.

What personal characteristics do you believe are most important in a leader, and particularly for the leader of a Catholic school or Catholic classroom?

Read the Scripture passage.

Read the Gospel passage aloud slowly, and try to take the point of view of one of the disciples listening to Jesus speaking. What words or phrases stand out? After discussing these, read the passage aloud a second time.

Read the reflection.

The author reflects that “falling implies all those things that a leader of a classroom naturally dreads – a loss of control, an experience of letting go, a free-fall surrender.” How does it change or reinforce your concept of leadership, to consider a willingness to fall as a quality of a strong leader – particularly considering the leadership of Christ himself?

Apply.

Would you say that it is true of you, like the author, that you do not trust God to look out for your best interests? Why or why not? What does (or would) falling and dying look like in your life?

Closing Prayer



Session 9 Doubt

Doubting Thomas, 5 Minutes with Christ page 187

Opening Prayer

Set the Context.

When have you been mentally or emotionally absent from something that needed your attention? How did you respond when you realized your absence affected others? Have you ever locked yourself or your gifts away from others? What caused you to do this?

Read the Scripture passage.

What words, images, or phrases strike you here? Re-read the passage and discuss Jesus' reaction to Thomas' doubts. What does this tell us about God?

Read the reflection.

"Doubting Thomas" is a common title for the disciple. Does Fr. Sean's reflection shed any light on another way to perceive Thomas? Or others in your community who, like him, may have to see to believe? The word "persistence" is mentioned several times throughout the reflection. How does this passage and its reflection help you think about persistence as a virtue? As a characteristic of God's love?

Apply.

Are there areas of your life, your occupation, or your vocation where you need to believe without seeing? What causes you to doubt?

Closing Prayer



Session 10 Christ with Us

I am with You Always, 5 Minutes with Christ page 190

Opening Prayer

Set the Context.

Is there a person in your life who has always “been there for you?” Who are they? How were they there for you? What do you think their motivation for that ongoing presence was? What challenges do you face when *you* try to be present for someone?

Read the Scripture passage.

What words, images, or phrases strike you? Re-read the passage and, if you haven’t already, wrestle with these concepts: Jesus’ authority; our command to make disciples; and teaching others on Christ’s behalf.

Read the reflection.

What do you take from Andrea’s reflection that while here on earth, Jesus taught us, but when he ascended he continues to teach us? What does this mean for us as disciples of Jesus? What does it mean for us as teachers?

Apply.

Standing or kneeling alongside the people you serve when they experience challenge or tragedy can be difficult. Have you ever had someone accompany you through a difficult time? Have you ever helped someone else? What do you remember from this experience? How would you teach someone how to do this?

When have you experienced Jesus with you, when “he has taken up our journey?”

Closing Prayer