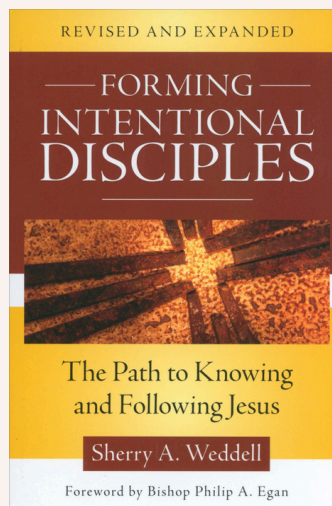


Forming Intentional Disciples Book Club Leader's Guide



A step-by-step guide
to leading a great book club



PREPARED BY THE DIOCESE OF CAMDEN
EVANGELIZATION CORE TEAM



Welcome and Thank you!

Welcome and thank you for your generous “yes” to the bishop’s call to lead a Forming Intentional Disciples book club. This is an essential first step toward our shared understanding of discipleship and evangelization. This book was chosen with care: it is firmly rooted in Catholic teaching, presents a clear understanding of evangelization, discipleship, and mission, and is accessible to both clergy and lay leaders. This is a formation tool, not an academic textbook, written to help our communities grow in faith and purpose.

As you enter into this role, we invite you to lead with an open mind and a receptive heart, trusting that the Holy Spirit will show up, guide your conversations, and move souls in ways that bear abundant fruit. Thank you for stepping into this mission.



Book Club Basics for Leaders



This guide is designed to help you confidently facilitate four one-hour sessions. Each session includes prayer, a short leader introduction, small-group discussion, and large-group sharing. Your primary role is to create a welcoming, prayerful space where participants can reflect honestly and enter more deeply into the Church's call to evangelization and discipleship.

General Session Structure (1 Hour Total)

- Opening Prayer – 2 min
- Introduction – 10 min
- Small-Group Discussion – 30 min
- Large-Group Sharing – 15 min
- Closing Prayer - 2 min

The ideal size of a small group is 6-8 people. If your book club has fewer than 8 participants, you may remain in a large group for discussion, then share key take aways during the last 15 minutes of the session.

1. Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and You shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who have taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that in the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

OR

Offer brief spontaneous prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide the conversation.

2. Introduction

Each week begins with a short orientation that includes:

Why Are We Reading Forming Intentional Disciples?

A brief reminder, particularly helpful if someone joins mid-series:

To level the playing field so we all understand the current challenges facing discipleship and evangelization.

To deepen our shared vision for missionary discipleship.

To understand how people come to intentional relationship with Jesus.

To equip our parishes to respond to the Great Commission:

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...” (Mt 28:19)

Session Preview

Session 1 - Chapters 1-3

- Many Catholics lack a personal relationship with Jesus and often operate without a clear understanding of what active discipleship looks like. When individuals intentionally choose to follow Christ, parishes become spiritually vibrant communities marked by deepened faith, committed participation, and missionary impulse.

Session 2 - Chapters 4-6

- God's grace invites people into a deeper spiritual quest beyond passive practice. This occurs by way of the five thresholds of conversion, the stages individuals typically pass through on the way to genuine discipleship. Nurturing trust and spiritual curiosity are vital early steps in helping others move toward an intentional relationship with Jesus.

Session 3 - Chapters 7-9

- The third threshold of conversion, "Openness," is reached when individuals begin to genuinely consider spiritual change. They need supportive accompaniment to move further through the "Seeking" threshold and on to active pursuit a relationship with Jesus. Parish leaders are encouraged to "Break the Silence" by talking about a lived relationship with God and engaging in threshold conversations.

Session 4 - Chapters 10-12

- We need to proclaim the "Great Story" of Jesus (the core Gospel message) as central to evangelization and to help individuals encounter Christ through parish life and ministries, making every aspect of church activity a pathway to personal encounter with Him. The Church should expect and plan for genuine conversion, recognizing the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in people's lives and fostering sustained prayer, accompaniment, and discipleship culture that anticipates real change.

Small Group Guidelines

To set the tone of productive conversation, review these guidelines before small-group time:

- Balanced participation – Make sure everyone has an opportunity to share.
- Confidentiality – Personal sharing stays in the group.
- Stay on topic – Keep discussion focused on the chapters.
- Identify a Note Taker – Captures key insights for large-group sharing.
- Identify a “Voice” for Sharing – One person presents the group’s summary during the large group time.

3. Small Group Discussion

Divide your book club into small groups and invite them to use the Discussion Questions on the following pages to guide their conversation. It may be helpful to distribute the questions in advance, so participants may give consideration to their responses.

4. Large Group Sharing

The Small Group members who were designated as “The Voice” should offer a summary with key insights that arose during their discussions.

5. Closing Prayer

God, our Father, we pray that through the Holy Spirit we might hear the call of the New Evangelization to deepen our faith, grow in confidence to proclaim the Gospel and boldly witness to the saving grace of your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

SESSION I

Discussion Questions for Chapters 1-3

1. Do you perceive a need in the Church today to help lay Catholics become more fervent followers of Jesus Christ? How would you describe your parish's current efforts at discipleship?
2. If you were raised in a Catholic home, are your family members all still Catholic? What events among your friends and family seem to explain why some are Catholic, and others are not?
3. Reflect on the "normal" values listed on pages 60-62. Which of these values are you most comfortable with, and which one do you think is most challenging to you?
4. What can happen if we presume the first spiritual journey [page 56 in new version; 54 in original] is in place because the second and third are in evidence in one's life? What difference does it make when all three journeys are in place?
5. What success stories can you share? In what ministries of your parish is "discipleship thinking" the norm? In what areas is Christian discipleship not yet the standard for ministry?

SESSION 2

Discussion Questions for Chapters 4-6

1. It can be hard to settle our minds on the idea of “cooperating grace.” How would you explain the Catholic doctrine on salvation to others? (See page 107)
2. How was the bridge of trust built for you? Who are the people who helped you to come as far as you have in your personal journey? Have you ever been that link of trust for another person?
3. What are actions you can take at your parish to make your congregation a place of trust? Are there barriers in the public imagination – such as a concern about scandals or financial misdeeds – that require increased transparency in order to foster genuine trust?
4. Can you remember when you became “curious” about the faith – whether as a convert, revert, or cradle Catholic just waking up to mature discipleship? How would you explain the difference between an active and passive faith?
5. If a newcomer walked into your parish today, curious about the Catholic faith, would someone actively welcome him? Introduce him to others? Who would help him answer his questions?

SESSION 3

Discussion Questions for Chapters 7-9

1. Are you ready, spiritually, to acknowledge that certain leaders in your parish or diocese may not yet be disciples of Jesus? How can you treat those persons graciously and support them as they make their journey to discipleship?
2. Have you ever listened to a “threshold conversation”? What was it like? Can you think back to a time when perhaps you should have listened supportively and asked clarifying questions, and instead you jumped in with catechesis, or apologetics, or giving personal advice?
3. What ministries or events at your parish tend to create situations where a threshold conversation might occur? How can you prepare lay leaders to listen and respond?
4. What is the spiritual atmosphere in your parish? Have you noticed any change over the past several years? If God were to ask you to mentor a small group of seeking and new disciples in your parish, would you be ready to accept that task?
5. Over the next six months, what changes can you personally make, to help your parish disciple those who are at the threshold of openness? If you are currently at this point yourself, to whom can you go for spiritual mentoring?

SESSION 4

Discussion Questions for Chapters 10-12

1. Are you practiced in sharing the Gospel story? Have you ever heard it told especially well? How can you become more skilled at explaining and answering questions about the Gospel?
2. What are times and places at your parish when the Gospel story could be shared in a few quick words? In more detail?
3. How would you describe what your spiritual gifts are (or might be)? In what ways could you evangelize or disciple others using those gifts?
4. Think for a moment about the lay leaders of your parish. Which would you describe as “disciples”? As not yet disciples? [Or you don’t really know.] Over the next six months, what steps can you take to help the disciples learn to evangelize? To help disciples-to-be grow in their faith?
5. You’ve put a lot of time and energy over the course of this book study into learning about the need for evangelization and discipleship, and how to fulfill that need. How do you plan to take action?

A Note of Encouragement for Leaders...

Thank you guiding others through thoughtful conversation around what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. May God bless your efforts with abundant fruit and the joy of knowing you are building up the Body of Christ in the Diocese of Camden.

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Do you need more help?

The members of the Evangelization Core Team would be happy to assist you and answer any questions not covered in this guide. Please contact us at the email addresses listed above or call Ann Marie Ours at (856) 583-2904.
