



PREVIEW

CCO FAITH STUDY SERIES
PARTICIPANT GUIDE

PREVIEW **TRUST**

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Trust Participant Guide

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Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord

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The cover image for *Trust* is a rock. It represents the truth that our God is a steadfast and sure foundation, and that entrusting ourselves to his love and providence is the safest, most fulfilling road we can take.

‘I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house.’

Luke 6:47-49

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Fr. Jean C. J. d'Elbée, *I Believe in Love: A Personal Retreat Based on the Teaching of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*. Sophia Institute Press, 2001 (English translation by Marilyn Teichert and Madeleine Stebbins of *Croire à L'Amour*). All Rights Reserved. Used with permission. This book can be ordered at www.sophia institute.com or by calling 1-800-888-9344.

Christopher West, *Good News About Sex & Marriage: Answers to Your Honest Questions about Catholic Teaching*, Revised Edition. Servant Books, 2007. All Rights Reserved. Used with author's permission.

Christopher West, *Theology of the Body for Beginners: A Basic Introduction to Blessed John Paul II's Sexual Revolution*. Ascension Press, 2009. All Rights Reserved. Used with author's permission.

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*To St. Thérèse of Lisieux,
who taught and modelled that trust is the
golden key to unlock the heart of God.*

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Faith Study Objectives

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CCO's Mission

Proclaim / Equip / Commission. To bring people to Christ, build them up as Catholic Christians, and send them out to reach others.

Objectives

The ultimate goal of CCO's Faith Study series is to form Missionary Disciples who embrace their baptismal call to pursue holiness and embrace the Church's primary mission of evangelization. The 5th General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean (the Aparecida Document) outlined five fundamental aspects of the process of forming Missionary Disciples:

1. The Encounter with Jesus Christ
2. Conversion
3. Discipleship
4. Communion
5. Mission

These five aspects of the formation of a Missionary Disciple can be found in this series. Discipleship begins with embracing the call to become a disciple of Christ. A disciple is one who has made a personal decision to follow Jesus Christ. This person has encountered Him and experienced a conversion of heart and mind (*metanoia*). The first goal of this series is to offer every participant the opportunity to make the personal decision, whether as a recommitment or for the first time, to embrace a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

People who make this important decision have started down the path of discipleship. Each lesson presents a step on the path towards greater maturity in their calls to holiness in Christ and in their readiness to fulfill their baptismal calls to serve in the mission of evangelization. Each participant should, therefore, grow in communion with others, in pursuit of holiness and in response to the mission of the Church.

CCO's collective ministry experience has demonstrated that effective evangelization also requires an individual dimension. We firmly believe that the renewal of the world will be accomplished one person at a time. To accomplish this, each book in the series has a prescribed topic for a one-on-one meeting between the leader and each participant. These one-on-one meetings are vital to the individual support of each participant and should be treated as an integral part of the program. This Faith Study Series is more than just an opportunity to add to our knowledge of the Catholic faith. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, it is designed to bring participants to a real and effective encounter with Jesus Christ and to progressively build them into the Missionary Disciples the Church needs them to be to "make his proclamation of joy resound in the new millennium" (St. John Paul II, Papal Welcoming Ceremony at the 17th World Youth Day [Toronto, July 25, 2002]).

Goals of Each Thematic Study

CCO has formulated five small group thematic Faith Studies: *Discovery*, *Source*, *Growth*, *Trust* and *Commission*. These are Faith Studies, not Bible studies in a pure sense (i.e. the study of long passages of Scripture in their context). CCO Faith Studies look at particular Scripture passages and other Church documents as they relate to certain topics or themes (e.g. prayer, the love of God, the Holy Spirit).

The series does not attempt to teach comprehensive theology. It is simply meant to (re)introduce participants to the basics of the Catholic faith, challenging them to greater holiness by means of group discussion.

Leaders should understand the purpose of each study in the series: what it teaches, how studies complement each other and the objectives of each lesson. Small group sessions should be purposeful (for example, we want to avoid spending hours looking up verses that may quickly be forgotten). Adhering to the objectives of each lesson will help leaders to communicate their content effectively.

DISCOVERY—Evangelization. The first four lessons of this Faith Study introduce the basic concepts of the Christian faith. In the fifth lesson, participants are invited to make a commitment to Christ and choose to become his disciple. The sixth lesson helps them understand how to begin to live this new commitment within the context of their relationship with Jesus and the community of the Church.

SOURCE—Holy Spirit. This Faith Study looks at the Holy Spirit's vital role in our lives, which is to direct us to be holy, and empower us to overcome our sinfulness.

GROWTH—Daily Christian Growth. This Faith Study explores living out of a commitment to Christ. It explains the essential components of the Christian life (prayer, Scripture, sacraments, fellowship, service and witness).

TRUST—Deepening trust in God. This study helps participants grow in trusting the Lord in all aspects of life so as to live in greater freedom.

COMMISSION—Missionary Identity. This Faith Study explores the Church's deepest identity, which is Her missionary character. The lessons examine truths and principles about evangelization and discipleship that CCO has learned over years of active missionary engagement.

Trust Goals

Struggling to trust God is a universal experience as a result of Original Sin. Many people are slowed in their spiritual growth—or even turn away from God completely—because they feel they can't trust God. *Trust* seeks to inspire participants to relate to God as a good Father who is eminently trustworthy. It invites them to personally entrust their whole lives to God's providential care. The faith study addresses the following topics:

- God's nature and our relationship with him as his adopted children.
- The relationship between trust, freedom and obedience.
- Understanding how God's providence moves us towards our ultimate perfection.
- The call to childlike abandonment.
- Trusting God's provision in life's major challenges and daily struggles.
- Two particular topics that often cause struggle: human sexuality and vocation.

The first five lessons are designed to help participants develop a strong foundation of trust. They have a clear progression towards the fifth lesson, culminating in the prayer of entrustment at the end of Lesson 5. Lessons 6 and 7 take a different approach than the first five lessons. Having accompanied participants on a journey to a personal entrustment of their lives to God, Lessons 6 and 7 apply this trust to two areas of common struggle: sexuality and vocation. In designing this faith study, we felt it important to address these two particular topics in the context of trust. This, in part, comes from CCO's experience with university students—these are regular topics of conversation in campus ministry. However, it is not only young adults that struggle to trust God in these two areas; people of all ages can struggle to trust God in matters of sexuality and vocation. As such, we have designed the lessons for all age groups.

Lesson 7 (on Vocations) may not seem applicable to all participants, particularly the section on vocational discernment. However, Lesson 7 is still highly recommended for all groups as there are important points regarding specific blessings of each primary vocation that can serve as a blessing for anyone to consider. For groups on a CCO campus, all lessons are mandatory.

RECOMMENDED READING

- *I Believe in Love: A Personal Retreat Based on the Teaching of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, by Fr. Jean C.J. d'Elbée
- *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*

***Trust* Small Group Information**

TIME:

PLACE:

LEADER:

PHONE NUMBER:

EMAIL:

PARTICIPANTS:

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LESSON 1

Trust, Identity and Freedom

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Introduction

Trusting someone else is one of the hardest things for any person to do. Many people find it even more difficult to place their trust in God. The modern world makes independence one of its highest goals. We are taught to trust ourselves above all others, becoming the authority to judge what is true and false, right and wrong. Individuals decide what their lives look like, now and in the future. The Gospel, however, calls us to place all our trust in God. We are invited to trust God with every aspect of our lives: our past, present and future. In the midst of the modern emphasis on independence and trust in one's self, God's call to trust him is a countercultural proposition that can be hard to grasp.

Our deepest trust is in a person we know intimately and personally. In this sort of relationship, we don't trust the other solely because of their previous actions. We trust them because we know they're trustworthy.

**1 Think of someone you trust wholeheartedly.
Why do you trust them this way?**

Let's start *Trust* by reminding ourselves of who God is and that he is indeed worthy of our trust.

Who is God?

People have pursued this question since the dawn of time. Many people would claim it's impossible to answer, but our Catholic faith teaches that it's possible to know God because he has revealed himself to us. That's worth contemplating: the creator of the universe chooses to reveal himself to his creation—us—so we can know him and love him. Not only did he reveal his existence, but he reveals himself as the Blessed Trinity. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that the Trinity is the revelation of God's "innermost secret" (CCC 221). A key point God reveals from the Blessed Trinity is that he is *relational*. Within the one God, there are three persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—united in an eternal exchange of love. The very essence of the Trinity is a loving relationship. God's relational love in the Trinity is so deep that he chose to create us so we could experience his love. To us, he is therefore a faithful, loving Father who desires a relationship with his children.

2 Read Deuteronomy 7:9, Psalm 86:5, Ephesians 2:4-5, 1 John 4:9-10. What are the characteristics of God found in these passages?

DEUTERONOMY 7:9

PSALM 86:5

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1 JOHN 4:9-10

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3 How can remembering these characteristics help us grow in trusting God?

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Who am I?

Another key step in growing our trust in God is to feel confident in who we are in relation to God. If we lack confidence in our own identity, we may feel that we are not worthy of another person's love or care for us, and we are unlikely to trust someone if we don't believe that person loves us.

So, who does God say that we are?

4 Read Galatians 4:4-7. Who are we in relation to God?

5 What is the significance of being adopted children of God?

Throughout Scripture, God reaffirms the truth we have just read from Galatians 4: you are a beloved child of God, and he offers you adoption into his family. His love for you is personal, secure and unconditional. As St. Paul writes:

ROMANS 8:35-39

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

6 How does this passage speak to you about trusting God?

To put it plainly: you can trust God!

Trust and Freedom

7 Read Luke 4:16-21. How does Jesus describe his mission?

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When we trust God, we place ourselves in the hands of one who wants to set us free, and has the power to do it. Freeing us was at the heart of Jesus' earthly mission, and through the grace of the Holy Spirit we continue to experience this freedom today. We read above in Galatians 4 that God has adopted us as his children, freeing us from slavery to sin. St. Paul continues this theme in Galatians 5.

8 Read Galatians 5:1. From what have we been set free? How does being free from this affect us?

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9 Read Romans 8:1-17. How are we set free?

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10 What are the freedoms that are offered through Jesus and the Holy Spirit?

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What an incredible gift of freedom Jesus offers to us! God desires for us to share in his divine life and glory. What he asks from us in return is our trust in him. When we place ourselves under his care, living by the Spirit, he will free us from slavery to sin on earth and give us an eternal share in his divine life.

11 Read Hebrews 4:14-16. In light of the freedom that God offers us, how does he want us to approach him?

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We have incredible freedom, able to approach God *not* fearfully, but knowing that God is our loving father; a father who was willing to sacrifice his only Son so we could live in the freedom of the Holy Spirit and have a share in his glory for all eternity.

Trust is the key

Trust is the key to unlocking this freedom that God offers. God wants more than for us to simply state our belief in him; belief and trust are not the same thing. After all, as St. James wrote, even the demons believe in God (James 2:19). To experience the freedom that God desires for us, we have to place our trust in him. We have to be willing to put our lives in his hands and have confidence in him as a good father who will lead us to freedom. The rest of this faith study will help us explore various aspects of our lives where we can learn to grow in trust. As our trust grows, we will be able to go forward in our spiritual lives with bold confidence in God's plan for our lives.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux embodied this bold confidence in the Father's goodness—*Trust* is dedicated to her and placed under her intercession. Much of the material has been inspired by a book about her teachings, written by Fr. Jean C.J. d'Elbée: *I Believe in Love: A Personal Retreat Based on the Teaching of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*. To end this lesson, let's read the following quote from *I Believe in Love*.

“ For it is this confidence, and nothing but confidence, which will open the arms of Jesus to you so that He will bear you up. Confidence will be for you the golden key to His heart. ”

I Believe in Love, 26.

12 Take 10 minutes to reflect on your relationship with God. What are some areas of your life where you struggle to trust God? What is holding you back from trusting God in these areas? Where do you hope to grow in trust through this faith study? If you'd like, share some of your insights with the group.

Summary

It is common to struggle to completely trust God. However, when we come to know his nature—merciful, faithful, loving and good—and who we are in relation to him as his adopted children, we know he is eminently trustworthy. Jesus came to earth so that we could be freed from slavery to sin. The key to unlocking this freedom, and unlocking the very heart of God, is to place our trust in him.

Living It Out

CHALLENGE

Take 10 minutes before the next lesson to continue your reflection on the areas where you struggle to trust God. Pick a scripture from the lesson to memorize as encouragement to trust God.