



THE
SEARCH

FIND THE MEANING OF LIFE

AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE STUDIOS

Session 1 "What Do You Seek?"

Session 1 Reflection: It seems that we are restless creatures. We have an appetite in our hearts that is difficult to satisfy, though not for a lack of trying. Many have looked to satisfy this appetite with things like power, money, fitness, adrenaline, pleasure, and honor. Unfulfilled, they keep searching to fill the longing. Is it possible that the longings of our hearts were not meant to be filled by anything in the world around us? Is there something more?

Session 1 Discussion Questions:

1. Take a minute and jot down thoughts you want to capture from the video.
2. You are living in your dash right now. What do you want out of your dash? What does "the dash" represent?
3. What does happiness look like to you?
4. What do you think when you read/listen from our first session, "According to counselor Jim Owens, many suffer from "destination addiction," the belief that happiness will not arrive until a particular circumstance changes in our lives." What does "destination addiction" mean to you? How do you see that playing out in the world around you?
5. How do you think marketing or social media sways our thoughts about happiness?
6. They related the story of Bill Hanzlik, the coach from the Denver Nuggets. Have you ever had an experience that seemed negative turn into something positive?
7. Are people throwing away religion because they do not know what it offers?
8. Jesus's first words in the Gospel are "What do you seek?" What are you looking for in your life right now?
9. What is the one thing you have learned from this session?

Session 1 Prayer: Dear God, thank you for this moment. Thank you for the opportunity to wrestle with the big questions in life. May our parish family and those we love, come to a sense of peace about who we are and what is the purpose of our lives. Amen.

Session 2 "Who are You?"

Session 2 Reflection: The sheer scale of the universe is hard to imagine. Current scientific estimates indicate that the universe is 93 billion light-years in diameter, growing at an increasing rate, and has existed for about 13.7 billion years. The more you contemplate the vastness of the cosmos, the smaller you may start to feel. However, it is important not to confuse small with insignificant. Scientists claim that the precise age, size, and rate of expansion in the universe is what allows life to exist on this "little" planet we call earth. One could argue that we humans are so insignificant that the universe is bending over backward to sustain us!

Session 2 Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think of the difference between body and soul?
2. What makes us different from other animals?
3. How do you know you are more than just your physical being?
4. Dr. Paul Camarata says, "You think of the other things the brain can do, the higher cognitive functions, the thinking, the intellect, the will to do something, to go beyond yourself-it has to point to something greater." What is this something greater that all the things the brain can do point to?
5. What image with the near-death experience sticks in your mind? What struck you the most from the information shared regarding near death experiences?
6. What comes to mind when we hear Dr. Dean Innerst say, "We are rational animals...That means that we can think, that we can will freely, that we can love. So, the rational part of us which makes us a particular kind of being, not just an animal, is precisely what we call the soul."
7. Following C.S. Lewis's line of thought, he said there is a God-shaped hole inside each us that only God can fill. What do you think of that?
8. Chris Stefanick mentioned how Jesus began his ministry with the question "What are you looking for?" What do you think about the possibility that God is looking for you?
9. He really talked about our unique significance. We each stand out against the galaxy. What do you think?
10. You have a soul, intellect and human will. Your soul will last longer than Mount Everest. What do you think of that?
11. What is the one thing you have learned from this session?

Session 2 Prayer: Dear God, it seems impossible that our existence is by chance. Thank you for the gift of life. Thank you for the ability to know and to love. May each of us come to a greater understanding of our dignity and the dignity of others. Amen.

Session 3 "Why a God?"

Session 3 Reflection: Some people attempt to use science to discredit those who believe in God. They try to create a division between faith and science as if the two are against each other. It may be surprising to hear that some of the leading scientists throughout history were not only people of faith, however, priests. Theology has traditionally been considered a sacred science; it seeks the truth, just as science seeks verifiable facts. Ultimately, theology aims to answer questions that science cannot like: "Why is there something rather than nothing? Why is that something ordered and not chaotic? What caused that order? What is my place in the order of things?"

Session 3 Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think people reject God?
2. Is the Church anti-science? Give proof.
3. What is the relationship of science to faith? How are they similar and how are they different?
4. Big Bang/ Creation. What did you understand from the video?
5. Dr. Jack Wetterer says, "Science can tell us the 'how' of things, 'how' the universe works. But it can't address certain questions about the 'why' of the universe—why was it created; why are we here?" What do we need to have to understand the "why" of things in the universe?
6. Why are we forgetting our basic longing for God?
7. The video refers to God as love. Is that your image of God? Where did you get your image?
8. Chris Stefanik says, "I think we are the first era in history to have so many people say, 'God if you are really there, why don't you reveal yourself?' I think God is looking down from Heaven saying: 'Did you not notice everything?' What is this everything that God is asking us to notice?"
9. What good does God's existence make in a person's life?
10. Do you agree with Chris Stefanik with this statement and why? "Faith is a choice. It's a reasonable choice. But let me go a step further. If you want a meaningful life, if you want joy and peace and happiness and a sense of purpose, it is also a necessary choice."
11. What is the one thing you have learned from this session?

Session 3 Prayer: Dear God, thank you for giving us the ability to observe, study, and be in awe at the created universe. May we be drawn to understand more deeply not only creation, however, the Creator-You. We ask for the gift of faith. Amen.

Session 4 "What's Our Story?"

Session 4 Reflection: We all love a good story---from the characters, the twists and turns of a captivating plot, and the dynamics of a conflict, to the resolution at the end. Perhaps we love stories because they give us insight into ourselves, revealing to us a deeper sense of meaning in our lives. The Bible is the story of God's love for you and me. It begins with him creating us out of love, redeeming us by that love, and finally transforming us in his love. This divine author is love—an eternal exchange of love within the life of the Blessed Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. What a story!

Session 4 Discussion Questions:

1. Where does our (Christians) love story begin? What was God's original plan for us?
2. How do we recapture God's love story for us? Is His love a burden for us?
3. Do you see the Christian life as a set of rules? Explain
4. What do you think about the statement Dr. Ben Akers mentions about "The Fall"? "What happens with The Fall? Because the most important and foundational relationship with God is broken, all these other relationships fall apart as well. The intellect becomes darkened; the will becomes weakened; the passions are disordered; the relationship between Adam and Eve is broken; the relationship with creation is broken as well; the world becomes broken.
5. What is your understanding of the difference between heaven and hell?
6. What does Dr. Sean Innerst mean when he said, "We don't live in the world God made. We live in the world we have made of the world God made?"
7. What do you think of the statement that Chris Stefanick mentioned, "We ask God why there are children dying of starvation in Haiti when God says, 'I was about to ask you that same question?'"
8. Why did Chris Stefanick say, "For a Christian, joy isn't what happens when life is going perfectly; it's what happens when you know you are loved perfectly, even when life is a mess."
9. "Without a love story, marriage is just a to-do list," what do you think of that quote?
10. Do you know someone who has a great relationship with God? How do you know it's great?
11. What is the one thing you have learned from this session?

Session 4 Prayer: Dear God, the story of salvation has been called the greatest story ever told. What makes this story great is that it impacts each of us personally in that it is our own story. Created out of love to be redeemed and transformed by love may each of us say yes to a saving relationship with you. Amen.

Session 5 "Who is Jesus?"

Session 5 Reflection: It is without question that no person has changed the world like Jesus of Nazareth. Time is measured by His birth, churches were built to worship Him in every corner of the world, cities were named after His followers, and His life has captured countless works of art and literature. Is He a legend, a liar, a lunatic? Or is He who He claimed to be-God in the flesh? Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" (Mathew 16:15). He asks the same question of us.

Session 5 Discussion Questions:

1. Who do you say personally Jesus is? Answer as if one of your doubting friends asked you?
2. Do you have a mental image of Jesus? Describe it.
3. Why did Jesus choose unqualified men to follow Him?
4. Who has Jesus been to you throughout your life?
5. What do you think when Chris Stefanick said, "Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all of history? That makes no sense at all. A guy that had no money, no armies, no power-the most dominant figure in all of history.
6. "At the center of Christianity is the claim that God came looking for us." Why did God come looking for us?
7. C.S. Lewis wrote that there are three options to believe in Jesus. "Jesus was either a liar, or a lunatic, or He was in fact the Lord. And you have to make your choice." What does this statement mean to you?
8. Jesus's followers died to attest that Jesus was real. They died to give witness to his death and resurrection. Is there any cause or anyone you would die for right now?
9. Why does the Church have the Sacraments for us to receive and what do the Sacraments do for us?
10. Was there ever a time when you were going through a hard time and you experienced God's love?
11. What is the one thing you have learned from this session?

Session 5 Prayer: Dear Jesus, in Your divinity You reveal to us who God is and, in Your humanity, You reveal to us who we are. May we have the confidence to respond like Peter to the question: Who do you say that I am? "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God". Amen. (see Mathew 16:16)

Session 6 "Am I Saved?"

Session 6 Reflection: A wealthy young man approached Jesus asked: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17). Like the young man, who saw salvation as a future event, we often want to be assured that life after death will be good. We sometimes fall into the mentality that getting to Heaven is a matter of punching a particular ticket or checking all the boxes on a list. Jesus' first instructions almost sound like that. "Follow the commandments," He replied (see Mark 10:19). However, just as the young man thinks he has a handle in his salvation Jesus adds, "Sell everything, give it to the poor, and follow me" (see Mark 10:21). When the young man walked away, even the disciples were surprised. They asked Jesus: "Who then can be saved?" (Mark 10:26). Jesus replied, "With man, it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27). Jesus redirects their focus from "what must I do" to "what only God can do."

Session 6 Discussion Questions:

1. What was your reaction to the story about the father and son in the Armenian earthquake?
2. Why is there no need to fear death?
3. What is Jesus' ultimate act of Love? Why did He choose the cross?
4. Chris mentioned that we often define ourselves by what has happened to us or by our struggles. Is this true? How might someone move themselves out of those defining qualities?
5. Why did Dr. Michael Barber say, "I think for a lot of people salvation is just fire insurance...But the reality is that in the New Testament, salvation isn't just about what will happen to us after we die- it very much pertains to the here and now as well. In fact, what is it that we need to be saved from: we are enslaved by sin." What does this mean to you?
6. Explain "Sin is not just a violation of a rule; it's a violation of reality... Whenever we sin, we are acting not just against God...we are acting against our own best interests." Explain "Sin is not just a violation of a rule; it's a violation of reality... Whenever we sin, we are acting not just against God...we are acting against our own best interests."
7. Why did Jim Beckman say, "Make no mistake about this--God is attracted to your poverty. He actually wants to come into that mess." Why?
8. Noelle Garcia says, "The triumph of our faith is not that there is no suffering. The triumph of our faith is that He has defeated it." What does she mean by this?
9. Explain: "Jesus did not just come to make bad people good. He came to make dead people alive." What does Chris Stefanick mean by this statement?

10. How does Christ's sufferings correlate to sufferings in our own lives?
11. "Have you said yes to God? Love does not force himself on you. Love waits for your yes." What does this statement from Chris Stefanick mean to you?
12. Does following Christ mean your life will be easy? Explain.
13. God wants to come into our mess. Can you share a time when you have experienced God coming into your life and loving you?
14. Is salvation a one-time thing? Explain.
15. How do you understand God's rules?
16. What is the one thing you have learned from this session?

Session 6 Prayer: Dear Jesus, it is said that you were no greater teacher than when you were hanging on the Cross because it is there we see the window into the very life of the Blessed Trinity---total selfless love. Thank You for making it possible for us to share in this blessed Trinitarian love. Jesus, we trust in You! Amen.

Session 7 "Why a Church?"

Session 7 Reflection: St. Augustine, in reference to Holy Communion, wrote: "But what you can see, and receive what you are." Jesus did not simply leave us a message or instructions to follow. He left us a living, dynamic Church where we could continue to encounter Him and be transformed into His likeness.

Session 7 Discussion Questions:

1. What does the astronaut's love of the Eucharist tell you?
2. Are we called to have a relationship with the Church or a relationship with Jesus? Why?
3. Why do we need the Church even when there has been scandals throughout our history?
4. Why did General Kevin Chilton say, "I had the great opportunity to take some pretty spectacular journeys in my life... A harder journey to take is a journey of faith. It doesn't sound exciting like a space flight, but it is ultimately the most important journey we can take as human beings."?
5. Do you agree with Chris Stefanick with his statement, "The Church is essentially a way for us to encounter the presence of God that we need to live life to the full. It's the place where we can look for authoritative teaching, interpreting all that He left us and helping us to apply it to our lives." Why do you agree or disagree?
6. What has been your experience of church?
7. What do you think about the statement? "What research shows is that people who went through their life connected to a community... ended up physically and emotionally in much better shape than their peers. As a Catholic, this research is no surprise to me, that we made by relationship (the Trinity) for relationship."
8. Jonathan Pageau said, "We have bodies; we exist in these bodies, and so the spiritual life of the person also has to include the body. The liturgical experience (what we do at Mass and with the Sacraments) is part of that. How? Why?"
9. Why do you think it is true what Chris Stefanik said, "The fact that God saves us as a family means... that we have an organized religion. Religion was never meant to be a private, personal thing."
10. Expand on the thought of Chris Stefanick. "A lot of people say, 'I don't want to follow some man-made religion.' You know what, I do not either. Our religion was founded by Jesus Christ."
11. The next time you hear someone say, "I don't need a church. I see God in nature." what will you say?

12. What is the one thing you have learned from this session?
13. How has this small group experience affected you?
14. How will you continue after these 7 weeks?

Session 7 Prayer: Heavenly Father, You made us to be in communion with You and with one another. Thank you for the blessing of those who know, love, and care for us. Lord Jesus, thank You for the gift of the Church and the part it plays in Your plan for humanity. Forgive us for the times we fail to be the people You desire us to be. Holy Spirit, thank You for dwelling within us and for the gifts you give us to build up the Church. Help us to produce the fruits of Your love more abundantly in our lives. All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was, in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen!

The Search Participant Guides are available upon request.

Coordinator Manuals

Coordinator Manual EN

Manual del Coordinador ES

Discussion Question References

<https://olphcctx.org/thesearch>

Our Lady of Perpetual Help, 5830 Williams Drive Corpus Christi, TX 78412

<https://stbonifacechurch.org/>

St. Boniface, 1200 Warrior Ln, Waukee, IA 50263