



Kenrick-Glennon Seminary

Following Jesus in Freedom and Love
A Retreat by Fr. Jim Mason

STUDY GUIDES I-IV

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Part I Study Guide

Love: Hearing the Heartbeat of Jesus

REFLECTION

Read Phil. 4:6-8 – “Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

Lord, I know You will take care of me. Help me cultivate a confident, grateful heart. Show me where my heart experiences truth, peace, and beauty and where I become anxious. I wish to bring my troubled heart to You, surrendering with it all my worries. I wish to listen for Your voice throughout my day.

Spend a few moments in silence, listening to Him speak to your heart. Notice where your heart finds resonance and rest – and where your heart experiences unrest, pulls away, or resists.

DISCUSSION

1. Do I put things in eternal perspective? How much time do I spend worrying about things that mean nothing in salvation history?
2. “In all circumstances, give thanks.” The enemy does not understand gratitude. Thank you, Jesus! What can I thank Jesus for today?
3. “Spirits” are the inner movements – thoughts, feelings, and desires – of our hearts and souls. Am I aware of these inner movements in my life? Do I weigh them in prayer when making discernments in my life? Is this from the Lord, or is it from me?
4. It is easy to fall into a “checklist spirituality” mentality. But have I been with Jesus today? Did I listen to the beating of His Heart today? Did I share mine with Him and tell Him what’s going on in my life?
5. Am I bothered more by my mistakes than by my sins? Human frailty is a reality. Our mistakes are opportunities for humility – to need Jesus. This is a movement of freedom.
6. How have I experienced God’s love? If I place my ear to His Heart, as did St. John the Beloved Disciple, what do I hear? How is His Heart beating for me?

PRAYER

Jesus, I desire to be one with You. May my heart beat in rhythm with Yours. May my thoughts be Your thoughts. May my hands be Your hands. May my steps be Your steps. Nourish me. Teach me. Guide me. Console me. Crucify me. Jesus live through me and in me. Amen.

Part II Study Guide

Relationship: Living in Freedom

REFLECTION

Read Luke 15:20 - When he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him.

In this passage, before the son can even speak, the Father is filled with compassion and runs to the son, embracing and kissing him. Lord, I am Your beloved son or daughter! You do not wait for me, but as my Father, you run toward me and embrace me! Let me know the depths of your love for me. Let me hear you say these words to me always: "You are my beloved son and my beloved daughter, in you I am well pleased." Let me feel your loving embrace.

Spend a few moments in silence, listening to Him speak to your heart. Notice where your heart finds resonance and rest – and where your heart experiences unrest, pulls away, or resists.

DISCUSSION

1. We may be a “free” people, but our society is plagued with addictions, anger, depression, anxiety, and brokenness. When do I feel most free?
2. What keeps me from living freely?
3. We often have *disordered* wants and desires. What are my disordered affections towards false pleasures and addictions? Have I asked Jesus to reveal these false pleasures to me and can I surrender them to Jesus, asking Him to set me free?
4. We live in an entertainment culture, spending time and money on restaurants, movies, video games, smart phones, and other forms of recreation. While everyone needs a balance of work and relaxation, God created us for more. What can I do in my own life to free myself from the need for things and entertainment? How can I help my friends, family, and loved ones be free?
5. In the Second Century, pagans saw that Christians lived differently. Christians loved. Christians had hope. Christians lived with courage. Christians died with dignity. How am I living differently? In what ways can I encourage my family to live with courage, hope, and dignity?
6. Everyone deals with loneliness at some point in life. But there is a difference between loneliness and solitude in the Lord. What can I do when I feel most lonely? When I feel lonely, do I turn to things which might leave me feeling empty?
7. St. Therese of Lisieux believed that Jesus loves each of us most by saving us. She was able to turn to Him in her “littleness” (weakness, vulnerability, sinfulness, etc.) and place total dependence upon Him. What does it mean to be childlike? What does this “littleness” mean for my life?

PRAYER

Jesus, free me of everything that keeps me from you. Free me of the cancer of sin. Free me from the addiction to false pleasures. Free me from fears that confuse and paralyze me. Free me from lies and deception. Free me from every obstacle that prevents me from understanding your deep and infinite love for me. I want to live in the freedom of Your love. Unite me to you. Amen.

Part III Study Guide

Identity: Our First Vocation

REFLECTION

Read Genesis 1:27 - God created mankind in his image; in the image of God created them; male and female he created them.

St. Athanasius said that the “Son of God became man so that we might become God.” Imagine a king becoming his subjects so that his subjects could become heirs of his kingdom! God’s love for me is greater than any love I can imagine. He made me in your very image and likeness. “You formed my inmost being. I praise You, because I am wonderfully made.” – Psalm 139

Spend a few moments in silence, listening to Him speak to your heart. Thank Him for the ways He shows His love for you. Notice where your heart finds resonance and rest – and where your heart experiences unrest, pulls away, or resists.

DISCUSSION

1. Our first vocation or “call” is to be God’s beloved sons and daughters. How can I live out this vocation? Do I treat others as my beloved brothers and sisters? What does it look like to live in the truth of each person’s blessed likeness to God our Father in my family, home, and parish?
2. In Luke 4:1-13, Jesus was tempted in the desert by the evil one, offering carnal pleasures, pride, and material wealth. What are the biggest temptations of our day? How can I counteract those false pleasures and disordered desires?
3. There is a difference between *knowing* Jesus and *having a relationship with* Jesus. Relationship is an action of the heart. How can I grow from knowledge of Jesus into relationship with Him? Have I brought this to Jesus in prayer?
4. How do I handle rejection? Can I surrender those disappointments and sorrows to Him in trust?
5. More people than ever suffer from anxiety, depression, and despair. They are weighed down by guilt and feelings that they are unredeemable. Many feel isolated and unloved. How can I counteract these lies in my own life and help my family and friends do the same?
6. God created me with a purpose and instilled in me a desire to know and fulfill it. Can I ask Jesus to help me discover my own purpose and learn how to live it? Can I help others find their purpose?

PRAYER

Jesus, open my eyes that I might see Your love for me. Jesus, open my ears so that I might hear You. Jesus, open my mind so that I can know that I am truly loved by You. Jesus, open my heart so that I receive You and feel Your loving embrace. Amen.

Part IV Study Guide

Mission: Leaving the Empty Tomb

REFLECTION

Read Luke 20:1-3: “But at daybreak on the first day of the week they took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb; but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.”

Think about the empty tomb and the reactions of all who entered and saw that the Lord was indeed, risen from the dead. What is my reaction to this news and how do I live this out in my daily life? He tells me with the apostles to, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.” MK 16:15. Lord, let me leave the empty tomb to proclaim the Good News to every nation, knowing that You are in fact, with me. I am not alone; I am called to be engaged, confident, and vigilant in this apostolic mission.

Spend a few moments in silence, listening to Him speak to your heart. Notice where your heart finds resonance and rest – and where your heart experiences unrest, pulls away, or resists.

DISCUSSION

1. When good things happen to us, we want to share our news – and yet, we shy away from talking about our faith. We often do not know what evangelization should look like. What drew people to Jesus? How did He touch people’s hearts?
2. The empty tomb seems safe but, at the same time, it is lonely, dark, limited and stifling. Do I stay in the empty tomb or do I go out and preach the Gospel to all nations?
3. There is no lack of resources in this day and age. Have I thought about how to use the good things God gives me as *opportunities* to evangelize?
4. God has equipped men and women to confront evil in spite of seemingly unsurpassable odds. Is there a saint or historic figure who inspires me to do this? What is courage? What is holy boldness?
5. In these COVID times, we are vigilant about our physical health. How can I take better care of my spiritual health? Can I practice “social distancing” from those things which take me away from God and my vocation?
6. While it might be tempting to be nostalgic for the “good old days,” we were born for this time. What are the blessings of this time? Come, Holy Spirit! Can I think of creative ways to touch the people in my life and bring them the love of Jesus?

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, soul of my soul. I love You. Enlighten, guide, strengthen and console me. Tell me what I ought to do and commend me to do it. I promise to be submissive in everything you ask of me and accept all that you permit to happen to me. Only show me what is Your will. Amen. - Cardinal Mercier

Resources

Barron, Bishop Robert, *To Light a Fire on the Earth*
 Cisek, Walter, S.J., *With God in Russia*
 D'Elbee, Fr. Jean, *I Believe in Love*
 Dreher, Rod, *The Benedict Option*
 Dreher, Rod, *Live Not by Lies*
 Gallagher, Timothy, OMV, *The Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living*
 Liagre, Pere, C.S.Sp., *A Retreat with Saint Therese*
 Martin, Ralph, *The Fulfillment of All Desire*
 Philippe, Jacque, *In the School of the Holy Spirit*
 Philippe, Jacque, *In the Way of Trust and Love: A Retreat Guided by St. Therese of Lisieux*
 Richter, Msgr. Thomas, *Integrated Evangelization: How to Facilitate the Encounter with Christ*
 Shea, James P. *From Christendom to Apostolic Mission: Personal Strategies for an Apostolic Age*,
 University of Mary Press
 Stinissen, Fr. Wilfrid, O.C.D., *Into Your Hand, Father: Abandoning Ourselves to the One Who Loves Us*
 Stinissen, Fr. Wilfrid, O.C.D., *The Holy Spirit, Fire of Divine Love*
 Trueman, Carl, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*
 Van Thuan, Francis Xavier Nguyen, *Five Loaves & Two Fish*

For more information on this retreat and other talks and presentations by Fr. Jim Mason, visit kenrick.edu.