Family Study Guide
for
Go Make Disciples: Building a Culture of Conversion and Discipleship

PARENT GUIDE
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Archdiocese of Oklahoma City
7501 Northwest Expressway
Oklahoma City, OK 73132
405-721-5651
ArchOKC.org
ArchOKC.org/2030
Archbishop Coakley wrote all of us a letter. He is giving us something we have to do, he is calling us into mission! This is a very exciting time and we don’t want to miss out on this chance to become closer to God and help our Church!

In his Pastoral Letter he says, “We are called to be disciples; called to pursue holiness and mission; called to become saints. We are still called to evangelize, to be witnesses, and to live authentic lives as missionary disciples.”

Just like God is always asking us to get to know Him better and tell others about Him, the Archbishop is asking us to really take our faith and mission to share the Good News seriously.
In the opening of his Pastoral Letter, the Archbishop shares how he has hiked the Camino de Compostela, a long walk in Spain, a number of times. He shares how these trips have taught him a lot about life.

Can you think of a trip our family went on that meant a lot to you?

Did we have a problem on our trip where we had to turn to our faith for hope that everything was going to be okay? Maybe we got lost on the way there, or maybe we fought too much and had to learn to have more patience with each other?

Life is a journey, and it is one that we all are on. Like the Archbishop said, “We all are pilgrims on a journey, a Camino, to heaven . . . it’s a path marked with hills and valleys, over smooth and rocky terrain.”

Sometimes life will be easy and fun, but there will be other times that life is hard and in all of those times we have to trust God with all our hearts, during the good and the difficult.
Let’s close our eyes and focus all of our attention as we read several thoughts from Archbishop Coakley’s letter to us.

- “I call you to be disciples and go make disciples! This is why we are here! This is our mission.” – pg. 6
- “The deepest desire of my heart is to see the Church of central and western Oklahoma flourish as a community of faith that nurtures and raises up fervent missionary disciples. Our task is to prepare good soil to receive the seed of faith.” – pg. 8
- “Missionary discipleship is the fruit of good soil. If the goal throughout our archdiocese is to make more disciples, then we must address these kinds of obstacles, and do all we can to prepare good soil in our hearts.” – pg. 15
- “Till the soil of your heart, be generous in your response to Christ. Say ‘yes’ to him and embrace the call to holiness. Be a disciple and accept his challenge to go and make more disciples!” – pg. 21

The whole point of the Pastoral Letter is this: **Be Disciples Yourselves, Go Make more Disciples of others!**

**PRAY:**

*Lord Jesus, we pray that you would help our hearts to be open to the power of these words. Give us the grace of your Holy Spirit to share everything You have taught us with others and to respond generously to all that you are asking of us. Help us start in our family. Helps us get to know you better, God. Amen.*
Good Soil

Have we ever planted something? Did any of us ever plant a bean seed when we were in elementary school?

Even if we’ve never planted anything, we all know that we need good soil, a healthy piece of the earth, if we want to grow something. Jesus used this example all of the time when He was on earth, and it still works for us today! If we want to grow spiritual fruit, we need good soil!

But what is spiritual fruit and why is it so important?

Spiritual fruit happens when we are really living and loving our faith in God. When we are in love with God, we can’t help but tell others about Him…and when we help someone else’s faith grow, that is some GREAT spiritual fruit!

Listen to this part from the Archbishop’s Letter to you and me:

“Indeed, the primary work of a spiritual life is to cooperate with God’s grace and cultivate the good soil in our hearts to rid ourselves of those things that compete, distract and hinder our receptivity to God’s life-giving Word. The more good soil in our hearts, the greater our capacity to bear fruit for the Kingdom. Bearing fruit is the evidence of authentic discipleship.” – pg. 11

What do you think this means?

- We must be open to the graces, the extra love, that God sends us so that our hearts can be healthy soil where a tiny seed of faith can grow and grow.
- There are many things that can get in between us and God. When we sin, when we make bad choices, or when we don’t make time for God, God’s love has a harder time growing in our hearts.
• The healthier the “soil” in our hearts, the more we will grow in faith and help others become closer to God too.
• Once we start really living out our faith, much fruit will begin to grow, we will do and say things that help people get to know God better – and that’s how we know we are really trying to be like Jesus.
Lead a discussion here, with the aim to fill in these details with the whole family. Bring it down to your kids’ level and have a great discussion! (Younger families- omit Group of People Represented)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Soil</th>
<th>Condition of our hearts</th>
<th>How the world can affect us</th>
<th>Group of People Represented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hard Path</td>
<td>Lack of understanding, unreceptive to faith</td>
<td>Birds (the enemy) come and steal away the seed before it ever sinks in</td>
<td>The Sadducees and Pharisees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Soil</td>
<td>No depth of heart, seed can’t sink any roots</td>
<td>The sun (trial, persecution) comes and the plant withers</td>
<td>The Crowds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thorny Soil</td>
<td>The seed takes root, but grows up alongside thorns and weeds, which choke off growth</td>
<td>The plant gets choked off by the thorns (the cares of the world and the delight in riches) and can’t bear fruit</td>
<td>The Crowds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Soil</td>
<td>The seed sinks in and takes root, and the plant grows</td>
<td>The plant bears fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold</td>
<td>The Disciples, followers of Jesus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Possible Family Discussion Questions:
1) Can I relate to any of these various types of soil from my own life, past or present? How?
2) How might God be convicting me about what needs to change in my heart?

Enemies to Growth

The hope for our family is that we have as much healthy soil in our hearts as possible. Anything that hurts our soil can be called an “enemy to growth” because it hurts us.

The Archbishop uses this next part of his Letter to talk about our main enemies. Our Catholic Church says that our enemies are the bad decisions of world, us focusing on what we want only, and the devil.

“Continued growth as a disciple calls for an understanding of the enemies and dangers we will encounter along the way, so we can protect ourselves against them. The Parable of the Sower captures the effects of these enemies as Jesus talks about the rocky soil, and the soil filled with thorns. This soil limits fruitfulness and can prevent it altogether. Missionary discipleship is the fruit of good soil. If the goal throughout our archdiocese is to make more disciples, then we must address these kinds of obstacles, and do all we can to prepare good soil in our hearts.” – pg. 15

How can we, as a family, do better about preparing good soil in our hearts?

Parents, take time alone or with your spouse to go over these various enemies. Don’t be afraid to dig down deep!
1. How have I experienced these “enemies” myself?
2. Is there a particular area where I seem to be more vulnerable? A “weak place” where the enemy seems to be tempting me? How could I strengthen that area?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enemy</th>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Can you think of how these things separate us from Jesus?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The World</strong></td>
<td>Busyness, Distractions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legitimate responsibilities – homes, jobs, families, involvements, sports, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noise – TV, technology, activities, entertainment, etc.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Secular mentality</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Flesh</strong></td>
<td>Excessive value on our own comfort and ease</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Neglecting prayer, skipping Mass</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temptations – food, entertainment, sexuality, etc.; not mastering our passions and becoming enslaved to them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Devil</strong></td>
<td>The enemy of our human nature, because he literally makes us “less human” with every sin he tempts us to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He looks for the “weak places” in us and there he tempts us</td>
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</table>
Tilling Good Soil

To till good soil means to take care of soil and keep it healthy.

One of the most important lessons of Archbishop Coakley’s letter is that growing closer to God and really following Him, won’t happen by accident. We have to be intentional about this, which means, we have to make a plan on how we are going to become closer to God- we need to till more good soil in our hearts!

“For fruitful discipleship to be a reality in our parishes, schools and homes, it requires intentional effort. The good soil needs to be cultivated and tilled. Every person, by virtue of their baptism, is called to the pursuit of holiness. This pursuit is the path of discipleship, and fruitful discipleship is rooted in good soil. In addition to dealing with these enemies to our holiness, we must cooperate with God’s grace to till the good soil in our hearts.” – pg. 15

How can we be more intentional as a family? Does anyone have any ideas?

We could make a commitment to God to say a prayer together every day, even if it is a short prayer. We have to start talking to God more.

We could read out of a Children’s Bible, one story a night.

We could be more involved in our parish. Maybe join the Moms or Parents Group.
In the Live It! section, we talked about how time in prayer, as well as the experience of community with others can be ways to till good soil in our hearts. As we end this time together, we are going to experience a little of both at the same time by praying together.

For this time of prayer, we are going to imagine that we are Jesus’ disciples, we are his best friends. We are with him as he is telling the Parable of the Sower...

**PRAY:**

“Lord Jesus, we invite you to be with us today. Come with your Holy Spirit and inspire our imagination in this time of prayer. Open our hearts so we can be open to you and all that you desire to speak to us.”

**READ:**

Then the disciples came and asked him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” He answered, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. The reason I speak to them in parables is that ‘seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.’ . . . But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.” Matthew 13:10-17

Everyone keep your eyes closed.
As we imagine ourselves sitting with Jesus, and hearing his words to our question, what stirs in your heart? How does it feel to be one of Jesus’ best friends? Stay close to the Lord, sitting in his presence and soaking in this moment.

[Allow several minutes of quiet for everyone to reflect and pray. Afterward, take time for each person to share what they experienced in prayer.]

[Parents, below are additional prayer experiences you can do on your own with your spouse or as a family. At this point in the study, move on to the next section, Bear Fruit.]

1. Take a prayer hike outdoors, where you will be surrounded by things that are growing, living. Invite the Lord to walk with you and speak into your heart about how he is desiring you to grow and be more alive. Let the content of this study be in the backdrop as you take this time to pray. Talk with Jesus about all you learned, and what ways you feel called to respond to what he has taught you.

2. One of the times the Parable of the Sower appears in the Mass readings schedule, it is coupled with Isaiah 55 as the Old Testament reading. Take time to prayerfully read Isaiah 55:10-13.

   Questions to prayerfully reflect on: This message from Isaiah gives us great hope. God’s word, which we can also think of as the “seed of faith” from all we have heard from the Parable of the Sower, never goes forth and returns empty, or void. “It shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”

3. How have I seen the seed of faith (God’s word) bear fruit in my life over time? How has that seed of faith had effect despite the condition of the soil of my heart? What kind of hope does this give me for other areas in my life?

4. There is a good article on the Parable of the Sower on Aletia.org. The link to the article is: https://aleteia.org/2017/07/15/how-the-parable-of-the-sower-can-change-your-life/
5. Take time to prayerfully read the article and meditate on the questions at the end of the article:

- How does reading the Parable of the Sower as a call to conversion challenge you?
- What are signs that the Word of God has taken root and is growing inside a person?
- How is the Word of God “alive and active” in the Church? In you?

6. Pope Francis developed a beautiful prayer for Young people and Vocations. Take time this week to very intentionally join your prayers to those of the Holy Father and pray for young people. Make your prayer specific and personal if possible and pray for the young people in your own parish community, offering this prayer up for them:

LORD OF THE HARVEST,

BLESS young people with the gift of courage to respond to your call. Open their hearts to great ideals, to great things.

INSPIRE all of your disciples to mutual love and giving—for vocations blossom in the good soil of faithful people.

INSTILL those in religious life, parish ministries, and families with the confidence and grace to invite others to embrace the bold and noble path of a life consecrated to you.

UNITE us to Jesus through prayer and sacrament, so that we may cooperate with you in building your reign of mercy and truth, of justice and peace.

AMEN.
This last section of the study makes us think about some practical ways we can put what we have learned and have been talking about into real action in our daily lives – practical ways to bear fruit with what has been discussed throughout this study.

1. Go (whether alone or with your family, or with a group of friends) to serve in some way: Gospel of Life Disciples, Catholic Charities, a food pantry, a soup kitchen, Meals on Wheels, Sister BJ’s Pantry, etc. The Archbishop speaks in several places in his letter about how these kinds of corporal works of mercy are signs of the fruitfulness of discipleship.

2. Go serve another person or family in some way – make them a meal, help them with some project, show a random act of kindness, etc. Little ways of showing love to others and serving their needs can be a powerful expression of discipleship in action.

3. Join a Bible study or Discipleship Group. Many parishes throughout the Archdiocese have Discipleship Groups running. If your Parish has a ministry like this, consider joining one for a period of time and growing even more in your faith life. There are also deeper and longer studies that have been developed on the Archbishop’s new Pastoral Letter. You might be interested in digging even deeper than this one-session study was able to. Check out the additional study guide resources online, at ArchOKC.org/2030.

4. Get involved in some way at your parish: Attend the Moms or Parents Group, volunteer with some ministry, help out with Confirmation or Youth Ministry, volunteer to be an RCIA sponsor, volunteer to help with Baptism Prep ministry, etc. Most parishes have multitudes of options for how you could get involved. Check out what is needed at your parish.
How about we brainstorm some more ideas of our own?
Do we want to commit to doing one of these in the next several weeks?

**CLOSING PRAYER**

*Let’s close our time together by praying the prayer that Jesus taught us, His friends, to pray:*

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy Name Thy
kingdom come.
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive
us our trespasses, as we forgive those who
trespass against us. And lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from evil.
Amen