

St. Mary's of the Lake, Watkins Glen, NY
St. Benedict's, Odessa, NY



Made for Discipleship, Part III

Fr. Jeffrey S. Tunncliff
December 7, 2023

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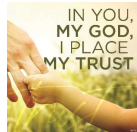


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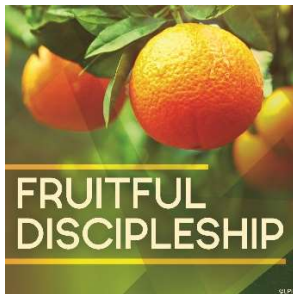
Webinar Tips

- All participants are muted to reduce background noise
- If slides are not fully visible, check at the top center of your screen for “fit to window” under arrow.
- If you would like to ask a question, at the bottom of your screen you should see a box with the letters “Q & A”. Click it and you can type your question. It will show on my screen.
- In addition to the slides, you should see a video of me. It should appear in the upper right of your screen. It should not block any significant content on the slides. If it does, you can drag it around.

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Opening
Prayer

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Review Part I

- An end to Christendom → need for stronger discipleship
- Works of mercy
- Bible verses on discipleship
- “A disciple is someone who has made, in Saint John Paul II’s words, a “***personal and conscious decision***” to give their ***entire*** life to God” (Glemkowski, 55, my emphasis).

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Review Part II

- Catechesis vs. Formation
- Valid vs. fruitful Sacraments
- A Personal Relationship with Jesus
- 5 Thresholds of Discipleship

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Questions from Part II

- “Why do we feel awkward about talking about our relationship with God? How do we get beyond that so that we can be disciples to others?”
 - In his book, *The Church’s Mission in a Polarized World*, Fr. Wessman cites a study showing how people are more likely to give a wrong answer if it *conforms* to the answer they have seen others give (41).
→ we want to feel part of the group
 - We haven’t done it before. So, we don’t know how to. We can learn by doing it.

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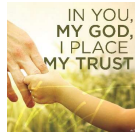


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Questions from Part II

- “When discipleship is hard what do you recommend? I know prayer but what actions?”
 - “Are there spiritual directors locally? Are you a spiritual director? How often should someone meet with a spiritual director?”
 - 1 Kings 19:5-8 – Food for the journey – the Eucharist
 - The communal life of the early disciples (see Acts 2:42-47) → Love thy neighbor and small Christian Communities
- “More about putting discipleship into action! What does this require of us?”

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The Problem of Evil

- Spiritual warfare
- The devil exists
- Evil can be defeated - St. Michael - Revelation 12
- Actually, evil ***has already been*** defeated. It was defeated on the Cross


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Help!

We are in a battle against evil. We need help that comes from God (Revelation 12).



St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.
Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou,
O Prince of the heavenly hosts, **by the power of God,** thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

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Spiritual Warfare

Hell does exist!

- Ezekiel 18:26-28 “When the just turn away from justice to do evil and die, on account of the evil they did they must **die**. But if the wicked turn from the wickedness they did and do what is right and just, they save their lives; since they turned away from all the sins they committed, they shall live; they shall not die.”
- Some think it doesn’t exist or that it is empty because God forgives everything → nothing to fear
 - Matthew 7:13-14 – enter through the narrow gate
 - Matthew 7:21 – not everyone who says to Jesus Lord, Lord will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

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Fr. Dwight Longenecker, *Immortal Combat*
My blog “Does Evil Exist” -
<https://blog.renewaloffaith.org/blog/does-evil-exist/>

- “The book begins with a foreword by Michael H. Brown. **Brown states, “evil is the word “live” spelled backward. Evil is also living backward, for darkness aims us at the inverse of good”** (x).”
- “Fr. Longenecker discusses how in years past, we would speak about being at war with Satan and evil. We tend to no longer speak in terms of warfare. For example, he discusses how the hymns that speak of Christian warfare are no longer found in today’s hymnals” (11).

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Fr. Dwight Longenecker, *Immortal Combat*
My blog “Does Evil Exist” -
<https://blog.renewaloffaith.org/blog/does-evil-exist/>
cont’d

- Fr. Longenecker says, “We haven’t beaten our swords into plowshares; we’ve been them into pacifiers” (12, See Isaiah 2:4, Joel 4:10, Micah 4:3).
- Fr. Longenecker says, “We all must choose, and not to choose is to choose” (14). He goes on to say, “To stand on the sidelines and watch the battle is be on the side of Satan, because all it takes for evil to triumph is for enough good men to do nothing” (15).

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Fr. Dwight Longenecker, *Immortal Combat*

My blog "Does Evil Exist" -

<https://blog.renewaloffaith.org/blog/does-evil-exist/> cont'd

- "How did Satan get Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit ([Genesis 3](#))? ***It was not by force but by "cunning"***. He asked them what God had said and distorted those words. He distorted their desire to lead them to seek to become like God (see Fr. Longenecker 30-31). ***Satan distorted our desires such that we make ourselves the center of our own universe*** (see Fr. Longenecker 33-34)"

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Fr. Dwight Longenecker, *Immortal Combat*

My blog "The People of the Lie" -

<https://blog.renewaloffaith.org/blog/the-people-of-the-lie/>

"The first sign Fr. Longenecker identifies about the People of the Lie is that ***they think they are never wrong*** (55). The most accomplished of them will not "deny and defend" in an argument. Rather, ***they will deflect*** (55). The second sign he describes about them is that they always have a sacrificial lamb, meaning they always have ***someone else to blame*** because there is nothing wrong with them (56, cf. 58).

He says, "Finally, the People of the Lie are impervious to criticism. They never apologize. They never repent" (60). Furthermore, "There cannot be a cure because a cure would have to begin with an admission that there is something wrong with them" (61)." (cf. Matthew 7:1-5 – Stop Judging)

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Fr. Dwight Longenecker, *Immortal Combat*

My blog "Our Weapons Against Evil" -

<https://blog.renewaloffaith.org/blog/our-weapons-against-evil/>

Fr. Longenecker writes, "The Christian life is a battle, or it is nothing at all. The baptized are warriors, and the Church is not mild; it is militant" (135).

#1 - Sacraments – we need God's Grace (136)

#2 – "Sacred Scripture" (136)

#5 – Sacrifice - devil doesn't understand sacrifice

#7 – Steadfast

#10 – Suffering - "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will" ([Matthew 26:39](#)).

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Persecution – Religious Freedom

Opportunities for Witness

- Modern day martyrs
- Persecution in other countries
- Freedom ***of*** religion in our own country vs. people who want freedom ***from*** religion
- Conscientious Objection – if one must be free to do as they want, then health care workers should not be forced to perform procedures or provide services that go against their beliefs.


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From Part I
Are You a
Cultural Catholic
Spectator Catholic
or a Cafeteria Catholic
or an Intentional Disciple?

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It is **not** easy to be
an intentional disciple!

Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me

Vs.

My yoke is easy, my burden light

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Barriers to Discipleship

- Suffering – the world says avoid suffering at all costs
Colossians 1:24 – “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church.”
- Earthly Wealth
Matthew 19:24 - “Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God” (cf. Mark 10:25, Luke 18:25)

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Barriers to Discipleship cont'd

- Desire for **immediate** gratification
Romans 8:18 - “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us.”

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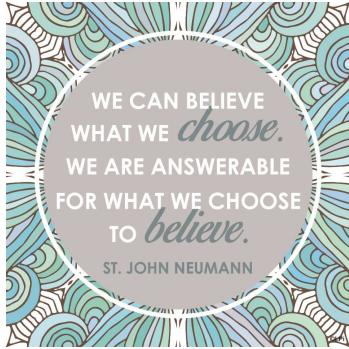
Barriers to Discipleship cont'd

- Society says be quiet
 - Jesus on Division - Luke 12:51 "Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division."
 - Paul in Acts 20:26-27 "And so I solemnly declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, for I did not shrink from proclaiming to you the entire plan of God." (cf. Ezekiel 3:17-21)
- The world denies "truth"
 - John 8:32 - "and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."


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The Catechism of the Catholic Church on "Conscience"

"Deep within his conscience man discovers a law **which he has not laid upon himself** but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment...**For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God**...His conscience is man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths." (1776, original quote from *Gaudium et Spes*)

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Conscience - Right and Wrong

- "We have the power to *choose* right or wrong – but we do not have the power to *declare* what is right and wrong and have it be so" (Williams, 10).

→ Thus, we need to discern what is right and wrong. This is not just something we do in a crisis moment. ***It needs to be an ongoing process*** (pray without ceasing) so when needed, we can be ready to make a decision. In discernment, we depend on the gifts of the Holy Spirit of knowledge, understanding, wisdom and right judgment (good counsel).

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A “Well-formed Conscience”

- Our desire to have a well-formed conscience is part of our response to what God has placed deep within us.
- “Conscience must be **informed** and moral judgment **enlightened**.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1783)
- “The education of the conscience is a lifelong task.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1784)

Yet, LORD, you are our father; we are the clay and you our potter: we are all the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:7)

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With a **Well-formed** Conscience

“Citizens are obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities **when they are contrary** to the demands of the moral order. **“We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).”** (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2256)

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What does it mean to “tolerate”?

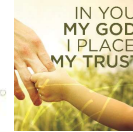
Toleration does not mean saying an action or behavior is okay (thus not against our beliefs).

We can state our objection to something and still be tolerant of people actually doing it.

We do not speak “hate speech.” We speak for good behavior. We speak out of love for the sinner.

- To make a good choice a person must understand what their choices are and what the consequences are and have a well-formed conscience.

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Tolerance Must Work Both Ways

“Let us lie in wait for the **righteous one**, because he is **annoying** to us; he opposes our actions, **Reproaches us for transgressions of the law and charges us with violations of our training**. He professes to have knowledge of God and styles himself a child of the LORD. To us he is the censure of our thoughts; **merely to see him is a hardship for us**, Because his life is not like that of others, and different are his ways. He judges us debased; he holds aloof from our paths as from things impure.” (Wisdom 2:12-16)

They never deny what he says.

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Hearing Other Opinions

We may frequently encounter people who disagree with us. What should we do?

- **Pray for them!**
- Should we stop interacting with them?
 - Listen to what they have to say so we can address their questions or see where we need to clarify our teaching to help them understand. To do this, we need to study and understand our own faith.
 - Then, if they still disagree, tolerance is required, but not giving up our own beliefs.

We do need to be careful that our listening to them in no way condones or appears to condone their position. We pray for the grace to hold to our faith and offer compassion.

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A Good Disciple:

- Shares their faith – ex. woman at the well (John 4:4-42)
- Good discipleship includes/starts in the home – domestic church
- Discipleship is not centered on the quantity of what we do but the quality
- Requires patience – “time is often required before positive results are witnessed” (Wessman, 221)
- Does not seek division but acknowledges it will happen at times (shake the dust from your feet – see Matthew 10:14)
- Christmas opportunities to point people to faith

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USCCB - Go and Make Disciples

46. Goal I: To bring about in all Catholics such an **enthusiasm** for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others.

53. Goal II: To **invite** all people in the United States, whatever their social or cultural background, to hear the message of salvation in Jesus Christ so they may come to join us in the fullness of the Catholic faith.

56. Goal III: To foster gospel values *in our society*, promoting the dignity of the human person, the importance of the family, and the common good of our society, so that our nation may continue to be transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ

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A Final Remark on Relationship

Regarding disciple as student, Fr. Riccardo writes, “As we dive into the gospel together, our goal is not merely to learn something, but to experience something – in short, to let God overwhelm us” (27).

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*"I have competed well; I have finished
the race; I have kept the faith."*

2 Timothy 4:7

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Future Schedule

- I need ideas for topics please!
- When you exit this webinar a short evaluation questionnaire should come up to invite your feedback.
- My website is being redesigned. Presently, I can update the blog but not the website. I will be emailing out the slides with a link to the video on my YouTube channel.
 - Parts I & II are already available online at <http://www.renewaloffaith.org/madefordiscipleship>

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Resources

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Second Edition. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997.

Glemkowski, Tim, *Made for Mission: Renewing Your Parish Culture.* Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor. 2019.

Longenecker, Fr. Dwight, *Immortal Combat: Confronting the Heart of Darkness.* Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press. 2020.

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Pauley, James C., *An Evangelizing Catechesis: Teaching from Your Encounter with Christ.* Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor. 2020.

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New Jersey, Catholic Book Publishing Corp. 2010.

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<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/evangelization/go-and-make-disciples/go-and-make-disciples-a-national-plan-and-strategy-for-catholic-evangelization-in-the-united-states.cfm>

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