

WHITE PAPER

# Making Missionary Disciples



Curtis A. Martin





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# Executive Summary

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*“I dream of a ‘missionary option’, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything...for the evangelization of today’s world...”* said Pope Francis (*Evangelii Gaudium* para. 27). Is this your dream as well? Would you like to see your parish, apostolate or family flourishing? Do you desire to have a culture of missionary disciples who serve with great generosity and joy? Are you prepared to welcome thousands of lost and broken souls into the merciful embrace of the Church?

There is an awakening among Catholics that we ought to become a Church of missionary disciples. Much is being said and many wonderful programs have arisen to help make that vision a reality. What can each of us do to experience the “needle-moving” outcomes that would result in the transformation of which Pope Francis speaks and for which we all long?

*“The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew... I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the church’s journey in years to come.”* (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* para. 1)

After talking with our people, evaluating our inputs and outcomes and even hiring an outside researcher to come in and evaluate the long-term impact of our efforts, we were thrilled to see that there are, in fact, three habits that begin to transform lives and foster a culture of encounter and witness: Divine Intimacy, Authentic Friendship and Clarity and Conviction about Spiritual Multiplication. This white paper will explain these three habits and the three-phased

“Method Modeled by the Master,” which we have implemented and which has led to the hope-filled results of our work. In FOCUS, the Method Modeled by the Master has been described by the elements of “win, build, send,” which are echoed in Pope Francis’ terms of encounter, accompaniment and Spirit-filled evangelizers.

*“To create a culture of encounter and witness, we must live explicit lives of discipleship. We are called not only to believe in the Gospel but to allow it to take deep root in us in a way that leaves us incapable of silence: we cannot help but to announce the Gospel in word and in deed. This missionary outreach is at the heart of discipleship.”* (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization* p. 14)

We are keenly aware that there are major differences between university parishes, Newman Centers, Catholic chaplaincies and your parish, apostolate or family. But our more than 20,000 alumni have moved on from college and are now living their lives in parishes that are not unlike the one you attend. We know a little bit about different venues, since there are great differences within the 137 campuses we serve — from Benedictine College and Franciscan University to Cal Berkeley and Harvard. Still, despite the differences in these venues, we have seen that these three habits, when applied to this three-phased method, have borne fruit more consistently than anything else we have seen or tried. It is our prayer that these habits will bring new life to you and those with whom you share life — and that this Method Modeled by the Master will bring transformation and fruitfulness to you, your parish, your apostolate and your family.

# Introduction

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*“I dream of a ‘missionary option’, that is, a missionary impulse capable of **transforming everything**...for the evangelization of today’s world...”*

**Pope Francis**

*Evangelii Gaudium* para. 27



Is this your dream as well? Would you like to see your parish, apostolate or family flourishing? Do you desire to have a culture of missionary disciples who serve with great generosity and joy? Are you prepared to welcome thousands of lost and broken souls into the merciful embrace of the Church?

There is an awakening among Catholics that we ought to become a Church of missionary disciples. Much is being said and many wonderful programs have arisen to help make that vision a reality. The energy going into these efforts is impressive, and lives are being changed. Most would agree, though, that we have yet to see the “needle-moving” outcomes that would result in the transformation of which Pope Francis dreams and for which we all long.

Working with amazing pastors and campus ministry staff on college campuses throughout the country, the missionaries and student leaders of the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (“FOCUS”) have been blessed to be involved in an evangelization effort that is bearing tremendous fruit. We are far from being a perfect organization, and we have made many mistakes along the way. We will continue to do so, and

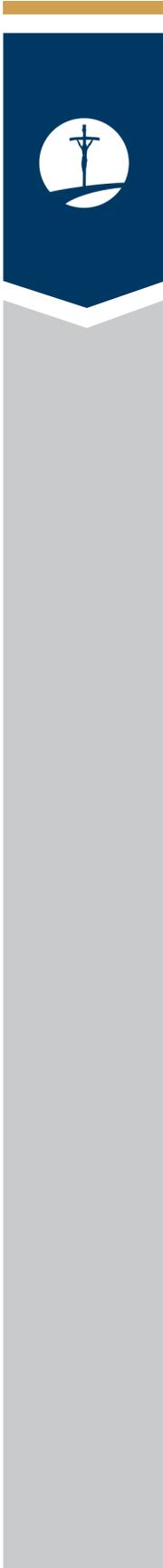
hopefully we will continue to learn from both our successes and our failures. Every member of our staff and every student volunteer is on a journey, including myself. We are not fully who we ought to be, but it is our desire to become the man or woman God created each of us to be.

Perhaps that is part of the reason that, in our nearly 20 years of work on college campuses, FOCUS has experienced the blessing of continual growth. Beginning with 20 students on one college campus in 1998, there are now more than 40,000 students and alumni who have participated in our program. The numbers are not overwhelming, since there are 70 million Catholics in the U.S. alone, but the momentum and the quality of the individual stories points to something that offers great hope. What I am about to share with you in this White Paper has blessed us, and we hope that it will bless you as well.

Working in what could be called one of the most hostile environments in our culture — the university campus — we have watched the Church flourish and grow. While programs are vitally important, our work has confirmed over and over again that people are everything. Everything begins to change when a culture of missionary disciples is established. As the saying goes, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” When a plan to foster missionary disciples is implemented in your parish, apostolate or family, lives are changed, churches come alive and poverty begins to be addressed, in all of its forms.

*“In the end, evangelization means to set out with Christ in order to pass on the gift we have received, to transform poverty of every kind.” (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Gospel, Catechesis, Catechism: Sidelights on the Catechism of the Catholic Church p. 44)*





So, if culture is the key, how do you change the culture? This idea can be a bit daunting. I am reminded of the comedian Steve Martin, who once gave a list of the ten things you need to do to become a millionaire: “Step number one: Get a million dollars.” Part of the problem is, how do you get started? A good start will make all the difference. Before we get started, though, let’s begin with the end in mind so that it will be clear where it is we want to go.

Over the nearly two decades of our mission to university students, we in FOCUS have kept an eye on our results to see what has been happening. We have noticed that some of our efforts have borne more fruit, while others have borne less. We have asked the question, “Why?” Was the difference in the execution of our plan? Was it in our people? Were there other variables over which we could have had some stronger influence that would have helped us yield more fruit, rather than less? We were always willing to accept less fruit, because every soul is worth the effort — but with all things being equal, we would prefer to bear more fruit rather than less.

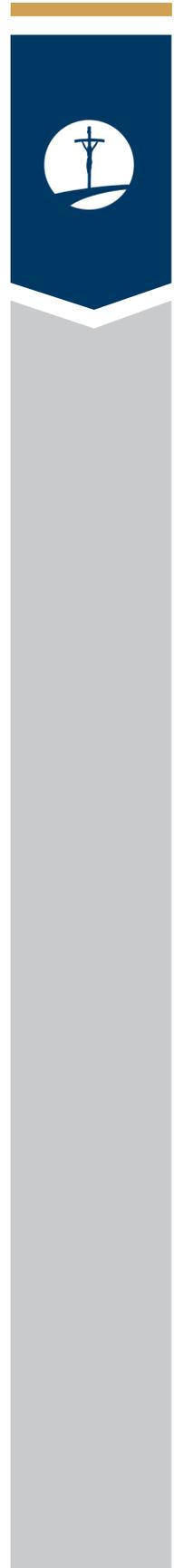
*“By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.” (Jn 15:8)*

Evangelizing and disciple-making is much like farming: Ultimately, God controls the harvest, but there are principles and activities which good farmers utilize and which lesser farmers do not. Over time, more skilled farmers will tend to out-produce their less-skilled counterparts, even if the results vary in any given year. Through this lens, we looked at the harvest the Lord appeared to be bringing about in our own work. Where were the patterns of success, and why did those patterns exist? What were the various inputs (the things we were doing) that led to the outcomes (changed lives) for which we were praying and working so hard?

After talking with our people, evaluating our inputs and outcomes and even hiring an outside researcher to come in and evaluate the long-term impact of our efforts, we were thrilled to see that there are, in fact, three habits that make a difference. What I would like to share with you in the rest of this White Paper are both the three habits and the three-phased “Method Modeled by the Master”, which we have implemented and which has led to the hope-filled results of our work.

We are keenly aware that there are major differences between university parishes, Newman Centers, Catholic chaplaincies and your own parish, apostolate or family. However, our more than 20,000 alumni have moved on from college and are now living their lives in parishes not unlike the one you attend. We know a little bit about different venues since there are great differences between the 137 campuses we serve — from Benedictine College and Franciscan University to Cal Berkeley and Harvard. Still, despite the differences between venues, we have seen that these three habits, when applied to this three-phased method, have borne fruit more consistently than anything else we have seen or tried.

So, let's take a look at the three habits that, when practiced by your leaders, will ensure fruitfulness from your efforts. Then, let's look at the three-phased Method Modeled by the Master that will give your parish the pathway to lasting renewal so it can become a spiritual home for a multitude who are waiting for the right invitation to become who they were meant to be. We begin with the three habits: Divine Intimacy, Authentic Friendship and Clarity and Conviction about Spiritual Multiplication.





## The Three Habits: **Divine Intimacy**

The first habit, the habit upon which everything else rests, is Divine Intimacy. The very first sentence of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a quote from Jesus Christ:

“Father, ... this is eternal life, that they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (*CCC Prologue*)

This is the only definition of eternal life I have found in the Scriptures, and it comes directly from Christ. Jesus chooses to define eternal life in light of *relationship*. The English translation loses some of its impact: We only have a single verb for “knowing” in English — “to know” — and that one verb describes various things. In the Spanish language and other Romance languages, the translation is clearer. In Spanish, there are two words for “to know”: *saber* (to know information), and *conocer* (to be acquainted with someone). When translated into Spanish, the meaning becomes clearer since Jesus uses the verb *conocer*. Eternal life is not knowing things *about* God, as important as that is; eternal life is being in relationship *with* the living God. But Jesus did not speak English or Spanish: He spoke Aramaic, the spoken form of Hebrew. The word Jesus actually used was *yada* (יָדָעַ), which has an even more powerful definition than *conocer*. *Yada* means to be in deep, intimate, life-long, life-giving, covenantal love. The first time *yada* is used in the Bible is in the book of Genesis:

“Now Adam knew [*yada*] Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain...” (*Gen. 4:1*)

God is calling us to know Him so intimately that we become family — that we might participate in His divine life and become adopted members of His perfect family: the Blessed Trinity.

Divine Intimacy is ignited by an encounter with Jesus and nourished by a life of the sacraments and prayer. Without Divine Intimacy, all our efforts will fall short. A friend of mine told me a couple years ago that, in his experience, many Catholics live in a “loveless marriage with God.” Because of baptism, they are in covenant with God — but the love, joy and goodness of the covenant has slipped away, or maybe it was never there. Encounters are those moments when you “fall in love” or are reminded of the great love you have for the people in your life. If you are dead in sin, the encounters breathe new life into you; if you have drifted away, they call you home. When you are living an active Catholic faith, moments of encounter fill you with the fruits of the Spirit:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...” (*Gal 5:22 – 23*)

Being in covenant is like being in a marriage; living from a place of encounter is like being in love. God wants every person on earth to be in love with Him and to be in covenant with Him.

Divine Intimacy is a gift, but it must be nurtured once it is received. In FOCUS, we have found that there are certain habits that cultivate and nurture Divine Intimacy: daily mental prayer, frequent participation in the sacraments, the Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet, spiritual reading, service to the poor and a willingness to step beyond your comfort zone so that God can prove His faithfulness to you over and over again.





## The Three Habits: **Authentic Friendship**

Authentic Friendship is the second habit we have come to see as essential if we want to bear fruit. To live in Authentic Friendship, our lives need to be grounded in Divine Intimacy. I will always fall short in loving my friends, but if my friends and I are living from Divine Intimacy, we will still be growing in our ability to be better friends. A life alive in God is a life of growing in virtue, and virtue is all about friendship. Generous people will always have better relationships than selfish people; kind people will always have better relationships than mean people; honest people will always have better relationships than dishonest people.

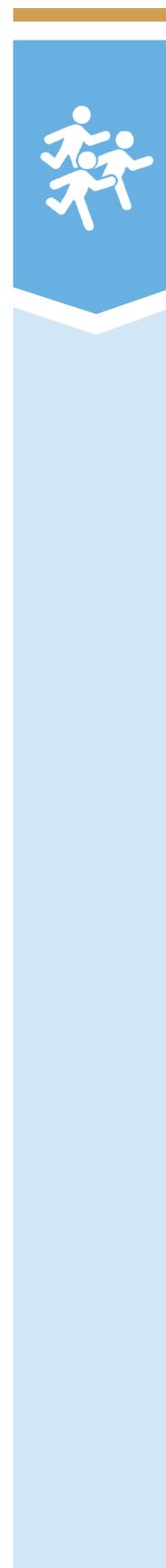
Within Authentic Friendships, we share life together and assist one another on the pilgrimage of this life. In our work with university students, we have various scheduled activities that we have found to be very helpful. For example, weekly small group Bible studies have been a powerful way to deepen our faith and strengthen our friendships; also, participating in service projects, mission trips and different events together have been very helpful in opening up opportunities for friendships to flourish. However, the time offered in addition to those scheduled activities is where Authentic Friendship blossoms: Meals, activities, playing and praying together outside of the formal meetings is where lives are changed.

To find authentic friends and to be authentic friends ourselves is critical to finding the transformation for which we hope. Too often, we allow the relational aspects to be eclipsed by the formal. Godparents and sponsors attend the mandatory meetings, but they will never have the impact their duties call for without Authentic Friendship with those whom they sponsor. Authentic Friendship takes time, and we have very little time, so this means we can only have a few of these types of friendships. Jesus was God, and He had this type of relationship with only 12 men. He impacted



many more people and knew many more people, too, but the number of people who can be deeply invested in is a relatively small number.

Saints come in clusters. Think of St. Paul, St. Timothy and St. Titus — or St. Monica, St. Ambrose and St. Augustine — or St. Francis and St. Claire. Sometimes they are simply referred to as “companions,” as in St. Charles Lwanga and Companions. The easiest way to become a saint is to share life with other saints. When we are surrounded by people whose number-one goal in life is to become a saint, and when we join them in that pursuit, we help each other along the way. We inspire one another. We encourage one another. When we fall, we can help one another up. We can serve the poor side by side. We can forgive one another. In short, we can love one another. Divine Intimacy and Authentic Friendship are the most central aspects of a missionary disciple’s life — and they lead to and provide the foundation for the third habit of highly fruitful disciples.





## The Three Habits: **Clarity and Conviction about Spiritual Multiplication**

This third habit is impossible without the first two. Divine Intimacy breathes life into us. Authentic Friendship allows us to share God’s life and love with others. Spiritual Multiplication makes it possible for this generation of missionary disciples to address poverty in all of its forms and to invite every single

person in this generation to come to know the love and mercy of Jesus Christ.



So, what is Spiritual Multiplication? Spiritual Multiplication is the habit of living Divine Intimacy and Authentic Friendship in such a way that we invest deeply in a few and impart faithfulness and fruitfulness, and then we walk with them as they go on to do the same.

St. Paul traveled the known world inviting multitudes to faith in Christ. He, like Jesus, traveled with a small group of men with whom he shared his life deeply. One of these missionary disciples was St. Timothy. After having spent years together, they were separated and St. Paul was sent to prison, awaiting his martyrdom. He wrote to St. Timothy and reminded him of the importance of imparting not just faithfulness but also fruitfulness:

“...what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2 *Tim* 2:2)

Faithfulness is essential, and so is fruitfulness. In just a moment, we will discuss the three-phased Method Modeled by the Master and how to live in such way as to impart both faithfulness and fruitfulness. For now, I would like to share how this way of living offers the greatest opportunity for fruitfulness compared to any other method or program we have seen for raising up missionary disciples.

It is essential to note that this method is fundamentally relational, and any attempt to demonstrate the eventual effectiveness will run the risk of sounding formulaic. To reduce this method to a formula would be a devastating mistake. We have seen that, when we solely examine the process and lose sight of Divine Intimacy and Authentic Friendship, fruitfulness is lost. At the same time, when we live the first two habits without the third, we also lose our ability to bear fruit.

This is how it works. Imagine a single missionary disciple in your parish, apostolate or family. They are friends with many others, but their deep-seated desire to live as a disciple leads them to form a handful of very deep friendships. This first missionary disciple plays the role of an older brother or sister to a few others — not replacing or competing with the spiritual fatherhood of the pastor, leader or parents, but rather complementing their roles. (I have seen this work in my own family as my older children have loved and helped their younger siblings.) As the missionary disciple begins to work with a few friends who are living from a place of encounter, they all agree that they are going to do whatever it takes to become saints and help each other become saints. As they share life together, they begin to mature in their faithfulness. After some time (typically one to two years on a university campus), the original missionary disciple invites the friends they have been mentoring to go beyond faithfulness and also live fruitfulness by going out and repeating the process. Each of those friends then finds a small number of people in whom *they* can invest, too.

We have been inviting university students to follow this habit of faithfulness and fruitfulness for almost 20 years. Here is what happens. (For the sake of demonstration, I will use the number three; in our experience, the number of people will vary from three to seven or eight — but the impact from just three is awesome.)

So here is our example. The single missionary disciple works with three “younger” missionary disciples who have begun to live from a place of encounter. After a period of time, the three are invited to go work with





## By 3's

CYCLE	NUMBER THAT YEAR	TOTAL
Cycle 1	1	1
Cycle 2	3	4
Cycle 3	9	13
Cycle 4	27	40
Cycle 5	81	121
Cycle 6	243	364
Cycle 7	729	1,093
Cycle 8	2,187	3,280
Cycle 9	6,561	9,841
Cycle 10	19,683	29,524
Cycle 11	59,049	88,573
Cycle 12	177,147	265,720
Cycle 13	531,441	797,161
Cycle 14	1,594,323	2,391,484
Cycle 15	4,782,969	7,174,453
Cycle 16	14,348,907	21,523,360
Cycle 17	43,046,721	64,570,081
Cycle 18	129,140,163	193,710,224
Cycle 19	387,420,489	581,130,733
Cycle 20	1,162,261,467	1,743,392,200
Cycle 21	3,486,784,401	5,230,176,601
Cycle 22	10,460,353,203	15,690,529,804

a small number of new missionary disciples. Once each of the three have gone out and found three more, the total number of missionary disciples increases by nine, adding up to 13 missionary disciples (that is the one original missionary disciple, plus the three with whom they worked directly for a total of four, plus the nine new disciples for a total of 13). After another period of time, the nine new missionary disciples are invited to go out and repeat the process.

Please note that, during this time, the one is still investing in the three and the three are investing in the nine. The key is to continue to care for caregivers, to feed those who are feeding others. Also note that, while the number of missionary disciples

is growing, the original missionary is still working with the three people with whom they started; as the number of people who need to be cared for increases, so does the number of caretakers.

Now, continuing with the example: The nine go out to reach 27 more people. Up to this point in time, there has been little noticeable change in a large organization like a parish — but in the next few cycles of growth and fruitfulness, the culture will begin to shift as the 27 reach 81 and the 81 reach 243. These 243 parishioners are fully engaged; they are people of prayer, service and generosity. In the next cycle of growth, the 243 reach out to 729. You now have more than 1,000 missionary disciples in your parish. The 729 reach out to 2,187 — and the ever-expanding fruitfulness is not only changing lives, but is also changing the culture. Note that, because growth is incremental — one person reaching out to three — everyone

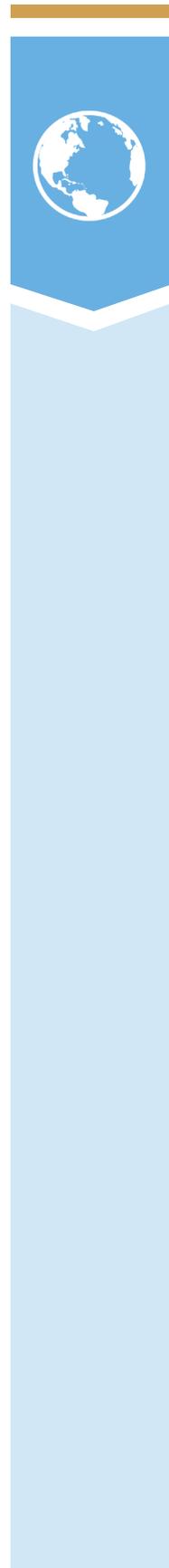
is known, loved and cared for. The large suburban parish is a unified body, filled with healthy cells. If you keep this up, what your parish would have started with could reach more than 387,000,000 missionary disciples by the nineteenth cycle

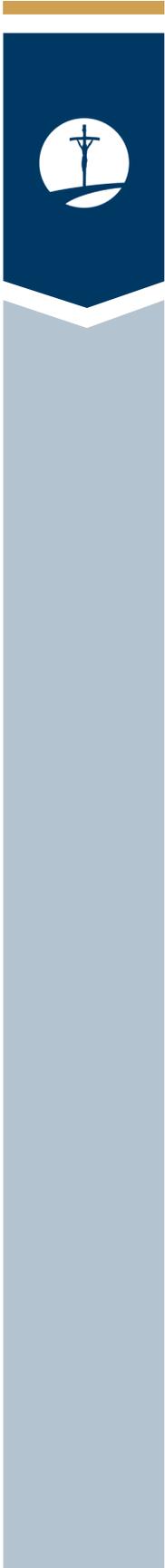
of fruitful growth. That number is greater than the number of people who live in the United States today! And by the twenty-second cycle, every man, woman and child could be reached with God's mercy, and poverty could be addressed in all its forms.

The actual number does not matter all that much; what is critical is that there is faithfulness *and* fruitfulness. By using the example of three, we reached the world in 22 cycles. If you drop the number of people to two, it would take 33 cycles of growth; if you expanded it to four people, it would take just over 17 cycles. Spiritual Multiplication is the only method of evangelization capable of reaching the world in this generation — and when it does, it is the only method that would allow for everyone to be known, loved and cared for.

When we have shared this with others, we sometimes have this objection: “Isn't this just a Ponzi scheme for sharing the Gospel?” This is exactly *not* a Ponzi scheme. Let me explain. First, in a Ponzi scheme, the person at the beginning, or “top of the pyramid,” stands to gain from everyone below them; with Spiritual Multiplication, the benefit moves from the original missionary disciple to everyone else involved. Second, the real reason this method is the exact opposite of a Ponzi scheme lies in what is being passed from person to person. In the Ponzi scheme, money is being taken from the bottom of the pyramid and given to the top. When you give someone money, it is no longer yours. But Spiritual Multiplication is sharing love, truth and mercy with others. And when you share spiritual goods, you don't lose them — you actually gain them to a higher degree. When I share material goods, I give them away; when I share love, my love increases.

God deeply desires that everyone in each generation would have the ability to come to know His love and mercy. He modeled it for us first, and then He commissioned us to imitate Him by making disciples. Let us take a closer look at this three-phased approach to raising up missionary disciples. By following this method, along with cultivating the habits we have already discussed, we are able to respond to the urgency of the call. This generation is waiting for us to become what we were meant to be. Everyone on earth is experiencing poverty of some kind, and they are waiting to be cared for by people who have experienced the enriching reality of life in Christ. Let us take a quick look at the Evangelical Imperative to which we have all been called.





## The Evangelical Imperative

*"I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a new evangelization and to the mission ad gentes. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples." (St. John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio sec. 3)*

We live in a moment of great opportunity. There has never been a time when there have been more vibrant, engaging and faithful catechetical materials available in such abundance. The Augustine Institute, Dynamic Catholic, The St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology, Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), Ascension Press, Ignatius Press, and many other organizations have changed the landscape of catechesis. Other programs such as Cursillo, Christ Renews His Parish (CHRP), The Amazing Parish and Alpha are available to ignite renewal within parishes — and many others provide parish leaders with a wide variety of options for engaging the faithful and evangelizing new members. This is good news for a Church seeking renewal, as the Catechism teaches:

“Periods of renewal in the Church are also intense moments of catechesis.” (CCC 8)

At the same time, many parishes have experienced frustration in their efforts to utilize these tools effectively. You may ask, “What is wrong with the tools?” I would respond, “Nothing. The tools are great — we just have a problem with our culture.” Our strategies and efforts do not bear the fruit we desire because, while we have a renewed desire for evangelization and disciple-making, our parish cultures have yet to become evangelizing, disciple-making cultures. And, as I mentioned before, culture eats strategy for breakfast.

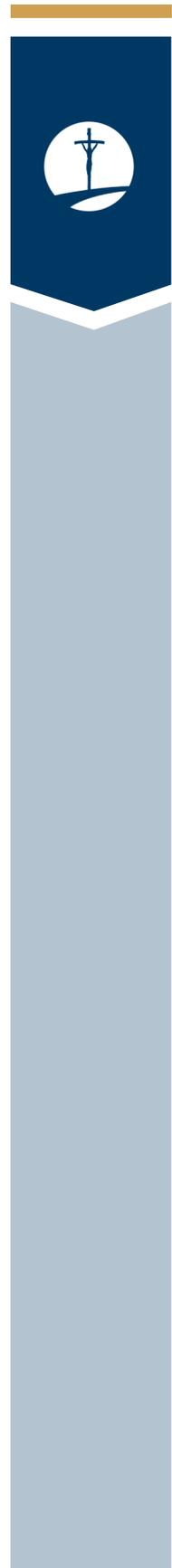
So, what can be done to light the fire of our culture so that our parishes, apostolates and families become receptive? We would like to think that this work is already underway. FOCUS alone has more than 20,000 alumni who are now living and working in parishes, serving other apostolates and raising families. There are other fine organizations doing great work on university campuses such as St. Paul's Outreach, Evangelical Catholic and The Brotherhood of Hope, and they all have alumni as well. There are also alumni from great youth apostolates

like Life Teen and Steubenville Youth Conferences in addition to the many faithful members of groups like the Knights of Columbus and ENDOW. There are plenty of sparks from which to start the fire.

Many bishops have recognized that the majority of young leaders for our parishes, apostolates and families will pass through our universities. If they have a vibrant faith, they will become the key to our future. They will become seminarians and later priests; religious women and men; mothers and fathers of the next generation; Catholic school teachers; parish volunteers; staff members and financial donors: In a word, they will become *disciples* whose lives revolve around their faith in Christ and their love for one another. The opposite is also true. If young leaders are not evangelized and cared for, they will be less engaged at every level, which will weaken our Church for years to come. Aware of this, many bishops have made the strategic decision to place some of their most joy-filled, evangelistically minded (and frequently young) priests in the role of campus ministry. And while much more is needed than simply a faithful priest who loves his priesthood and his people, there is no replacement for him. As someone who has been involved in the lay apostolate for 25 years, I can say with conviction that the priest is the single-greatest factor in fruitfulness and effectiveness.

Every parish is unique and distinct, as are the neighborhoods they serve. With this great diversity, how can there be a single solution that fits and serves all parishes, apostolates and families? I would propose an analogy. The amazing diversity we find in people is awe-inspiring: billions of people throughout the centuries, and not one of them is the same. The countless factors which influence diversity stagger the mind: gender, ethnicity, cultural norms, personality — the list goes on and on. Yet, in the very midst of this diversity, we have bone structures that are remarkably similar. Our skeletons provide support and a framework for our bodies to function. So, might there also be some fundamental principles which could provide reliable support and a framework for the renewal of our parishes, which would also allow us some consistency amidst all the amazing diversity?

*“...the vital core of the new evangelization must be a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the person of Jesus Christ, that is, the preaching of his name, his teaching, his life, his promises and the Kingdom which he has gained for us by his Paschal Mystery.” (St. John Paul II, Ecclesia in America sec. 66)*





# The Method Modeled by the Master

Evangelization is to share the good news, the bad news and the even better news and to invite people to join the adventure.

**The good news:** You were created to be amazing! As St. Catherine of Siena put it, “If you are what you were meant to be, you would set the world on fire.” You were actually conceived twice — first in the mind of God, as Scripture tells us:

“...he [the Father] chose us in him [the Son] before the foundation of the world...” (*Eph. 1:4*)

God loved the idea of you so much that, at the chosen time, you were to be conceived a second time, just under your mother’s heart when your life was to begin.

**The bad news:** You are not who you were meant to be. Sin has wounded you and separated you from God. Our problem is actually far worse than we might have imagined. At first glance, we may think that, with some effort toward self-improvement, we could close the gap between who we are and who we ought to be. But the Church teaches us that the gap is so great that we are incapable of closing it with our own effort:

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (*Rom 3:23*)

And,

“For the wages of sin is death.” (*Rom 6:23*)

**The even better news:** While we were unable to save ourselves, “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (*Jn 3:16*).

Jesus lives, dies and rises from the dead *for you* so that you can become who you were meant to be. When we see what

Jesus went through for each of us, we can see two fundamental truths. One: If that is what it took to save us, we must have been in pretty bad shape. And two: If that is what it took to save us, Jesus must think we are worth the effort.

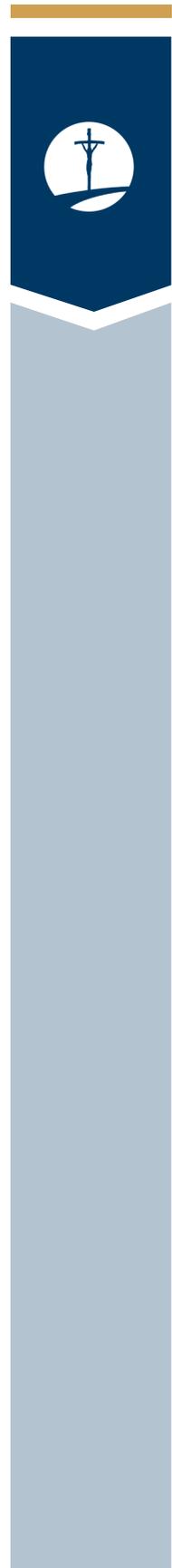
Salvation is a gift, freely offered to each of us by God. Before a gift can be owned, though, it must be accepted. The decision to accept God's saving gift means making the fundamental choice to become a disciple of Jesus. God's gift is a complete gift of Himself to you and for you; the only appropriate response is a complete gift of ourselves in return.

When we accept God's gift of salvation, we begin to listen to what He says and do what He asks. As we do so, we experience renewal. Our culture will be renewed when there are sufficient people in the culture who have been renewed. Following Jesus means to begin seeking to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut 6:4).

As we begin to love Jesus, we begin to imitate Him. Upon examination, Jesus' methods are quite surprising. In fact, the closer you look, the more surprising they seem to be. Jesus is the Savior of the world — that is the entire world throughout all of history, past, present and future. In my copy of the Bible, He does not even show up until page 1,200, whereas our need for salvation is revealed on page 3. The human race runs into trouble very early on, and Jesus waits centuries — millennia — to come to our rescue. True, God sent the patriarchs and the prophets — but if any of us were writing the script, we may have been a bit quicker to send in the Savior.

When Jesus does show up, His actions are even more surprising. He arrives as a poor baby. He is called to save the entire world — but with the one exception of His journey to Egypt in His childhood, he never travels more than a few days' journey from his birthplace. In addition, He appears to be in no hurry to begin His important work. In fact, he is 30 years old and still living at home. When He finally begins His public ministry, His strategy is to find 12 men and go camping for three years. I think it is safe to say that not one of us would have authored the script this way. But His ways are the best ways, and He has asked us to imitate Him.

Jesus tells us about a farmer who sows seeds with such reckless abandon that the seeds fall on the path, into the shallow rocky soil





and among the weeds (Mt 13:3-7). Whereas if we were planning to farm, we would probably be more careful to place the seeds only in the good soil. But Jesus is not concerned with efficiency in the same way we tend to be. He is offering life to anyone and everyone. His harvest reflects His loving abandon for souls. On the cross, Jesus is accompanied by His mother Mary, who was conceived without sin and embodies the good soil. To her side was Mary Magdalene, who had been sinful and possessed by devils — but because Jesus scattered seed everywhere, He reached her in her darkness and renewed her so that she could become good soil. Both of the thieves crucified at Jesus' side were offered mercy; as far as we know, only one chose to receive it.

If we wish to follow Jesus, we need to watch Him closely to imitate Him. Jesus is, of course, remarkably “gifted”: He performs many miracles, curing the sick and raising the dead. Throughout the centuries, He has given similar gifts to some of His saints. (If you have been given those amazing gifts, please be generous with your time and energy.) But we will not be turning our attention to the big, miraculous things Jesus did. It is in the little, ordinary things He did that we can find a method each of us can follow. This method is not dependent upon great gifting, but rather on living a renewed life with great character. You cannot control your gifting, but you can, with God's help, form your character.

Jesus' life is a combination of two ways of living. In Jesus, the extraordinary was ordinary: He gathered the multitudes, healed the broken and raised the dead. However, even if you have extraordinary gifts, you are also called to the second way of living — Jesus also lived the ordinary in an extraordinary way. He lived friendship with abandon. Think of the 30 years of His private life, living in an Eden-like world with His mother who, like Eve, had been created without sin. Humanity had longed to live in right relationship since the Fall — and for a brief moment over 30 years, Jesus and Mary lived in a love we can only imagine. Once He began his public life, Jesus did not change His mode of living; He expanded it, gathering 12 men, imperfect as they might have been, and walking with them over countless miles. The depth of investment Jesus made in these men was awe-inspiring — and, I would add, is the model for becoming the people, the families and the parishes we are meant to be. This way of living is the key to living as missionary disciples.

So often, our parishes are preoccupied with programs and activities, trying to offer services to as many people as they can — but Jesus was preoccupied by His people. He invested in them and formed a culture that could reach others. For Jesus, His people were His program. We can push back against this idea: “But we have to care for everyone!” So did Jesus. You have a parish; He had an entire world.

At the heart of Jesus’ public ministry, there were a handful of people with whom Jesus lived. He shared His life with them, He spoke with them, He walked with them over many, many miles — and even when He was with the multitudes, these 12 Apostles were right at His side. Jesus lived a life of authentic friendship with a relative few, and He imparted both faithfulness and fruitfulness. This simple mode of living can be imitated by almost anyone — and, as we will see, it unleashes the capacity to transform lives, renew parishes and transform the world.

Jesus did not only model this method; He commissioned us to follow His example. With His final words on earth — after His death, after His resurrection, on the last of the 40 days and moments before His ascension into heaven — Jesus said:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” (*Mt 28:18-20*)

This would appear to be the most authoritative statement ever made. Yes, Jesus is God, and everything He says is completely authoritative — but among His sayings, it would appear that He highlights some statements over others. Sometimes Jesus will highlight importance with His phrasing. For example, when speaking about baptism in John Chapter 3 or the Eucharist in John Chapter 6, Jesus utilizes *oath language*, saying, “Truly, truly”, or, depending on the translation, “Verily, verily” or “Amen, amen” (Jn 3:3, 6:32). In other places, Jesus highlights the significance of His words by the setting within which He says them. For example, His words at the Last Supper would appear to be all the more meaningful given the context. In the case of the Great Commission, Jesus does both. The context is His farewell address, and His wording is provocative. He begins by saying “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.” Jesus is the only Person in the history the world who





could have said this, and He only says it once, so what follows must be important.

One of the simple interpretive tools we share with the FOCUS missionaries is this: When you see the word “therefore” in the Bible, stop and look back to see what it is there for. The word is a connector, and it unites two themes. In this case, the two themes are these: “All authority” and “make disciples.” Jesus has just given us an authoritative commission. Yet, it would appear that we often take it as a mere suggestion — that creating programs or even fostering believers could be an acceptable alternative. Making disciples is a tremendously time-consuming activity. In fact, it is more a way of life than it is an activity. So, let us take a look at this three-phased Method Modeled by the Master. The phases are Encounter, Accompaniment and Spirit-Filled Evangelists & Multipliers.

## The Method Modeled by the Master: **Encounter**

In FOCUS, we have used a simple phrase to describe the basic principles of evangelization and disciple-making. The phrase is “win, build, send”: *win* people into friendship both with yourself and with God, *build* them up in the knowledge and practice of the faith, *send* them out to do the same. Pope Francis follows the same three-fold pattern, but he utilizes different terms, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in their excellent publication, “Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization”, proposes a model along the same lines. Pope Francis’ terms are “encounter, accompaniment and Spirit-filled evangelists.” We will utilize Pope Francis’ terms as we look at the fundamental principles — the skeleton, if you will — that will allow us consistent practices while respecting our great diversity. As we walk through these principles, I hope you notice how the three habits mentioned earlier (Divine Intimacy, Authentic Friendship and Clarity and Conviction

about Spiritual Multiplication) are woven throughout the method since they are the habits that give the method the power to work.

We mentioned before the statement of St. Catherine of Siena: “If you are what you were meant to be, you would set the world on fire.” The Encounter is what causes the fire. Encounters are those experiences where people leave lasting impressions in our lives, and they can either feed or wound our relationships. I remember the first time I met my wife; I remember our first kiss; I have had many encounters with her over the years, and they shape the love story that is our marriage. In some cases, an encounter can move us from having no relationship into having a new and amazing relationship. In other cases, encounters strengthen existing relationships.

Just a few months ago, my father passed away. I was there with my mother and my only brother. My dad died at about 2:00 in the morning. After he passed, we sat up for hours, laughing and crying, remembering different times we had been with him and our memories of him. Those encounters were the foundations of our relationship with him. In the same way, our encounters with God form the foundations of our relationship with Him.

Whether we are away from Christ and are in need of an encounter to bring us to (or back to) Him, or whether we have been walking with Him for years but we feel our sense of relationship with Him could be strengthened, encounters are the wellspring of relationships. Our life with God is meant to be a love affair that leads us into covenant. Catholics are in covenant because of our baptism. But our faith can sometimes feel more like rules than relationship. There is a saying in parenting: “Rules without relationship lead to rebellion.” Do we see our relationship with God as essentially a love story? Because He does, and He wants you to see it that way, too. Encounters begin, sustain and deepen relationships. Unless we are living our faith from a place of encounter, we will be unable to start a fire. You can’t give something you do not possess yourself.

Encountering Jesus is the foundation for all renewal. People who live from a place of encounter are aware that God is very near to them and that He loves them. As the well-known Christian song sings:

“You’re a good, good father / it’s who you are... / And I’m loved by you / it’s who I am...” (Housefires, “*Good Good Father*”)





The Gospels themselves can be seen as a series of encounters that are being retold. As we read the Gospels, we are reading the memories of the Apostles: Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they share their memories. You could almost imagine the Apostles thinking, “Remember that time Jesus gave that sermon on the mountain, or the time he forgave that woman who had been caught in adultery?” The various encounters they had with Jesus formed their relationship with Him and transformed their lives. Our ability to encounter the risen Jesus is what allows us to form a relationship with Him and transforms our lives as well.

Encounter is so essential that Accompaniment and Spirit-Filled Evangelization are not possible without it. It would be like trying to renew family life with marriages that lacked love: The marriages are valid but not attractive. When we live from a place of encounter with Jesus, our faith becomes attractive. We hope to renew and strengthen the culture of our parishes, apostolates and families. If we want renewal, the first step is Encounter, by which we are led to see our faith as a love story, an adventure, not merely as a set of rules and activities. So, if Encounter is the necessary starting point, how do we go about creating encounters? We cannot — only God can — but we can *facilitate* encounters so that God is more likely to act. If you want to win the lottery, it would be helpful to buy a ticket. If you want to be struck by lightning, it would be more likely to happen if you played in the thunderstorm.

There are many ways to foster encounters with Jesus. We will focus on only three: Authentic Friendship, the daily reading of the Scriptures and time with the Eucharist.

### **Encounter Christ through Authentic Friendship**

The early Church Fathers gave us an image of our life in Christ. Imagine a cold steel bar and a hot burning fire. They have almost nothing in common. If you place the cold rod in the hot fire, though, something amazing begins to happen: The rod begins to take on the properties of the fire. It grows warm, it begins to glow — and if you were to take the rod out of the fire and touch it to some dry grass, it could actually start a fire itself.

Now imagine that the fire is God and we are the steel rod. When we are living in Christ through the sacraments and our lived encounters with

Him, we begin to take on the properties of God: The gifts and the fruits of the Spirit begin to manifest themselves in our lives. When people who manifest these godly qualities touch other people, they set their hearts on fire. The work of FOCUS has essentially been the work of sending young people who are living from a place of encounter with Jesus and who manifest the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. They manifest an “art of living” that is attractive, and they invite others to join them in that life. This is essentially the Method Modeled by the Master, who possessed the gifts and fruits of the Spirit in a perfect way and who went about inviting people to share life with Him.

*“The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.” (CCC 1831).*

*The nine fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22-23).*

It is in the midst of an ordinary life lived extraordinarily well that peoples’ lives are transformed. I know in my own life that it was a few people, filled with the love and life of God, who showed me what life in Christ looked like, and they showed me how I too could follow Jesus. It was in sharing life — playing basketball and football, going fishing, sharing meals, studying the Scriptures and caring for the poor — that I discovered the path of discipleship. One activity in particular they shared with me has had an amazing impact on my life and ability to help others follow Christ: the daily reading of Scripture.

## **Encounter Christ through the Daily Reading of Scripture**

St. Jerome said, “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.” We have found the opposite to be true as well: Knowledge of Scripture is knowledge of Christ. And it is not a simple knowledge of the facts about Jesus, but rather a relational, growing acquaintance with Jesus. We read the Scriptures to come to know not just things *about* Him, but to come to know *Him*. Pope Benedict XVI put it this way:

“Lectio divina: the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart. If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church — I am convinced of it — a new spiritual





springtime.” (Pope Benedict XVI, Address, 16 Sept 2005)

As we prayerfully read the words of Scripture, the very thoughts of God become our thoughts, allowing us to be transformed by the renewal of our minds (cf. Rm 12:2). In the Scriptures, we encounter challenges that invite us to grow. These challenges tend to come in two types: in the things that are not as clear, and in the things that are very clear. Commenting on the difficulties found within Scripture, St. Augustine said that God placed them in the texts so that we would return again and again to ponder the mysteries.

Becoming aware of the metanarrative of salvation history reveals deeper insights into the Scriptures and the heart of God. There are several great tools to learn more about salvation history: *A Father Keeps His Promises* (Dr. Scott Hahn), *The Great Adventure* video series (Jeff Cavins), *Walking with God: A Journey through the Bible* (Dr. Tim Gray) and *The Real Story* (Dr. Edward Sri) all provide an introduction to the narrative. Being equipped with a knowledge of Scripture allows us to live the second of the three phases of the Method Modeled by the Master – Accompaniment.

### **Encounter Christ through the Eucharist**

Our first event for FOCUS was a leadership retreat. Ted Sri and I had about two dozen students, and we were blessed to have Fr. Meinrad Miller with us. The second night, we had some time for quiet prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament. After the retreat was over, the students told us how they had encountered Jesus in a profound way as they sat in prayer in front of the Eucharist. Ever since then, we have had an evening of adoration at our conferences — and over the years, attendance has grown. Recently, we had more than 10,000 college students praying throughout several hours of adoration, and more than 4,000 young people went to one of the more than 100 priests to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. Thousands of young people have shared with us how taking some time to be with the Blessed Sacrament, sometimes for the very first time (not counting Mass) or at least for the first time in many years, led them to encounter Jesus and commit to start living as a disciple.

In my own life, it was similar. I had been away from the sacraments for several years, and I went on a Catholic retreat (to honor my mother, who was heartbroken that I had lost my Catholic faith).

While on the retreat, they had adoration. I sat quietly, remembering my catechism well enough to know that Catholics believed the Eucharist is truly the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. But I had not been practicing my faith. As I sat there thinking, I realized there were only two options: Either this truly was Jesus, and I should fall down and worship Him, or this was not Jesus and I was in a room with a bunch of people praying to a piece of bread. I prayed for faith, and that night had a profound effect upon me that began my return to the Catholic faith. I began to attend Mass, not receiving Holy Communion, and praying that if the Eucharist was Jesus that He would give me the faith to believe. After a few months, I went to confession and returned to my Catholic faith.

Having deep faith in the Eucharist and coming before the Eucharist is a wonderful way to encounter Christ. Encounter is the first and essential phase of the three-phased Method Modeled by the Master, and it equips us for the second phase: Accompaniment.

## The Method Modeled by the Master: **Accompaniment**

As I noted earlier, saints come in clusters. The influence of friendship is hard to overstate. Just as bad company corrupts good morals, godly company facilitates godliness. Sound teaching is imperative, but it is not sufficient. In the Method Modeled by the Master, Jesus shares His life with His disciples. Even before His public ministry, the investment He made in the Blessed Virgin Mary (and St. Joseph) is breathtaking. He was 30 years old and living at home — but far from keeping Jesus from His mission, His home life was the nearest thing to the Garden of Eden since the Fall. Jesus was God, Mary was sinless and Joseph was a just man: Life was lived beautifully in their home in Nazareth.





In both His hidden life and public ministry, Jesus models an awe-inspiring commitment to personal relationships. When we are asked on campus, “How much time does discipleship take?” we respond, “All of it.” Or, as St. Paul wrote to the Church he founded in Thessalonica, reminding them how he formed them as missionary disciples:

“So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.” (*1 Thes 2:8*)

Those things in life that are the most natural are learned by modeling, not by mere instruction. Taking our first steps and speaking our first words, for example, were learned simply by living with people who walked and spoke. Holiness is meant to be learned the same way. Yes, there is a need for instruction — but demonstration is much more effective than explanation. We need to spend time with people who are living from a place of encounter and walk with them. As we seek to live as missionary disciples, we learn from one another, we motivate one another, we forgive one another and we love one another.

It is within these close relationships that mentoring occurs. This facilitates the maturing of new followers of Jesus who have begun to live from a place of encounter into disciplined followers of Christ. For friendship to become discipleship, there must be an explicit choice to place Christ at the center of the human relationships and the common pursuit of holiness as a primary aim of the friendship.

Relationship is everything. Our relationship with God and with others is both our salvation and our destiny. It is in the midst of relationship with others that we can ask and answer two fundamental questions: What do I need to learn so that I can think with the mind of Christ, and what do I need to be formed in to live with the character of Christ? Because of the nature of deep investment, this must be done with just a few people. It is possible to be loving towards a large group, but to love individuals deeply, the number must be limited. Jesus was God, and He chose only 12 men — and even then He spent some key moments with just Peter, James and John. Even when He spoke to the multitudes, His trusted friends were right there with Him as He did. From within a life of accompaniment, we learn to live lives open to the working of the Holy Spirit, and as we entrust ourselves to the Holy Spirit, we can be sent out to become evangelizers and multipliers.

# The Method Modeled by the Master:

## **Spirit-Filled Evangelists & Multipliers**

Jesus lived from a place of encounter with His Father. His identity as the Son of God is the fundamental reality of His existence. In the Son, we too have been called to be sons and daughters. Jesus also lived a life of intense accompaniment in His hidden and public life.

He then calls us to imitate Him and live lives of encounter and accompaniment and to invite others to do the same. He does so in the three distinct stages: He draws His disciples into friendship; He trains them through His public ministry; and He calls and commissions them in the Great Commission.

However, the training and commissioning are not sufficient.

After the Great Commission, the disciples were huddled in the Upper Room with Mary until Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to them on Pentecost. After that event, they were able to go out boldly, apply their training and share the good news with the world. They moved from being just disciples to disciple makers. This final phase of the Method Modeled by the Master is not possible without the Encounter or Accompaniment. However, this is the phase which opens up the good news to the world so that we can address poverty in all of its forms and invite everyone to know and experience the love and mercy of God through the Church.

In our experience, this is where the culture begins to change. As disciples become disciple makers, they come





alive in their faith in entirely new ways. As people begin to invest in others, those who do the investing come alive. While we are grateful that most of the students we serve remain active in their faith after graduation, there is a measurable, long-term increase in their faithfulness (participation in Church activities), alignment (agreement with Church teaching on countercultural topics) and engagement (continued investment in helping others Encounter Jesus and then accompanying them) if they became disciple makers while in college.

How long does it take to move from being a newly evangelized or re-evangelized Christian into living in Accompaniment and then becoming a Spirit-filled Multiplier? It varies. We have seen it take years, and we have seen it take only a few days. The average, on campus, is probably six months to a year. The timeframe can be shortened when we meet someone who has already encountered Jesus and who only needs a little help figuring out how to follow Him. If they are ready to serve, they can begin to love, care for and lead others more quickly because our work with them does not end when they begin to care for others. This is critical.

As I stated earlier, in FOCUS we use the terms “win, build, send” to represent Encounter, Accompaniment, and Spirit-Filled Evangelists & Multipliers. It is critical to note that winning and building do not end when someone has been sent to win, build and send others. It takes years to mature in Christ, and in some sense we never stop.

For example, I once worked with a young man named John. John had had a recent conversion back to his Catholic faith. He knew the basics, but he was still very young in his faith. I began to mentor him and teach him how to read the Scriptures. Just a month or so after we began, John began work with two different groups of men in two different cities. John did not know too much, but he knew the truths I had taught him over the past few weeks and he began to share those truths with the men he was working with. He began to invest his life in these men, and as a result, transformations began to take place.

Soon, the men with whom John was working were themselves working with other men. Over the next few years, hundreds of lives were impacted. From those first two groups, at least four men became priests, others became missionaries and still others became Spirit-filled evangelists and multipliers who are now living lives in parishes and raising families. Since then, John has matured. The basic Christian teaching I taught John has all been well covered; in fact, John has gone on to receive a master's degree from the

Augustine Institute. John speaks all over the country and teaches people about the faith, helping them to see the vision for becoming missionary disciples themselves. More importantly, John continues to invest deeply in a few and cultivate faithfulness and fruitfulness.

John's story is amazing, but it does not stand alone. John is just one of the more than 1,000 FOCUS missionaries of the past and present who have practiced "win, build, send" — helping people to encounter Jesus, accompanying them by investing in a few and sharing not only the gospel of God but their very selves, and sending them out to become Spirit-filled evangelists and multipliers. Thousands of students who never became full-time missionaries have walked the same path, living joy-filled lives and teaching others how to do the same.

I trust that, if you have read this far, you have a desire to see your parish, your apostolate and your family radiate a culture of missionary discipleship. We have looked at three habits that ensure our efforts will bear fruit and a three-phased Method Modeled by the Master, which offer a pathway for transforming the culture and even the world. If this is where you want to go and how you would like to get there, we are happy to help. We have materials in written, audio and video formats available at no cost, which we utilize in training our staff and student leaders. They are available to you here:

[www.focus.org](http://www.focus.org)  
[www.focusequip.org](http://www.focusequip.org)

We also offer free webinars that cover these various topics in more detail. It is our hope that you can experience the same culture-changing impact in your parish, apostolate or family that we have witnessed on our campuses.

For more information, please contact [info@focus.org](mailto:info@focus.org).

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## References

<sup>a</sup> <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2017/04/10/pope-gives-young-people-three-missions-ahead-of-synod-next-year/>

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<sup>c</sup> Jean II Restout's Pentecost (1732)





## About the Author

Curtis Martin is the Founder of the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS). He holds a Master's degree in Theology and is the author of the best-selling book *Made for More*. In 2011, Curtis was appointed to serve as a Consultant to the Pontifical Council of the New Evangelization. Curtis and his wife, Michaelann, live in Westminster, CO. They have been blessed with nine children.





On June 13, 2017, FOCUS consecrated the apostolate to Jesus through Mary, petitioning especially the graces offered at Fatima and Guadalupe.



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