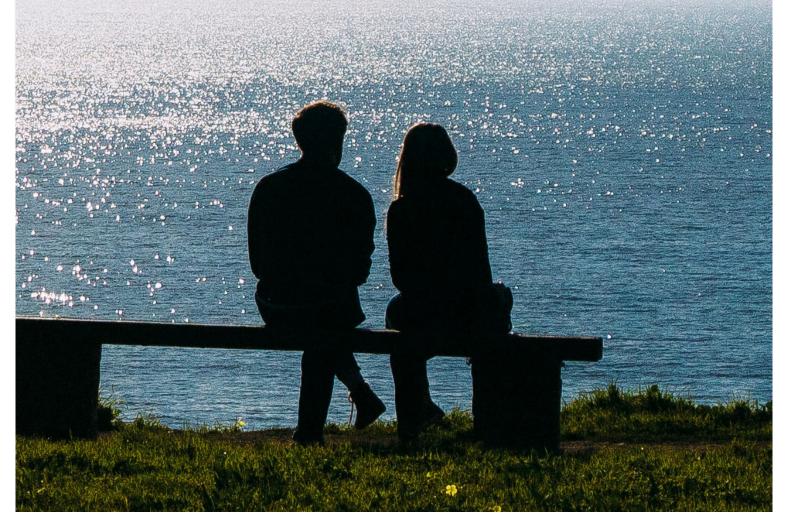
# VIRTUE GROUP for Couples

Leader Guide





## Introduction to DISCIPLESHIP AND SMALL GROUPS

Session 1: Virtue overview

Session 2: Charity

Session 3: Faith

Session 4: Hope

Session 5: Fortitude & Prudence

Session 6: Temperance & Justice

## **SESSION OUTLINE**

- · Open in prayer
- Short Introduction
- CCC & Bible quotes for discussion
- Take away & practice
- Partner up & check in
- Close with prayer

## "GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS"

- MATT 28:19

Jesus' parting words at his Ascension, his marching orders to the apostles then and to us now - go do what I did. Jesus spent three years hanging out with twelve friends, teaching them and loving them. They were the original small group. When he left he instructed them to do the same. And they did. They travelled the world telling people about their experience with the Son of God and the Good News of his Passion, death, and resurrection.

Now it's your turn, only instead of roaming the globe, you will meet via Zoom.

Discipleship means simply being in a relationship with Jesus that is alive, being excited about it, striving to deepen it, and sharing your experience with other people. You do not need to be a theologian or an expert, just a person who loves and trusts Jesus. Your role is to share the small group experience with your friends. The Holy Spirit will do the heavy lifting because he knows the hearts of those in your group.

Being in a small group gives us the chance to pause, pray, and be with others. We experience freedom to have conversations about God and faith. We feel supported. We learn. We love.

The job of facilitating a small group is easy. Start by asking Jesus who he wants you to invite to your group. He will make it clear. The most important thing you can do for your group members is pray for them by name daily.

When you meet each week, be friendly, loving, and warm. It may take a few weeks for people to trust each other and open up. That's ok.

Be comfortable with some silence. When you ask a question, let people take a minute to think about their response. The silence is always shorter than it feels. If people ask questions you can't answer, that's ok too. You can empower them to research the answer or you can tell them you will look into it for next week. Don't be afraid to ask a probing question such as "what else do you see" or "tell me more." For some of the questions, there is guidance for you as the leader on what insight we are looking for.

Recognize that the session may not follow the guidelines exactly. The group may go off on a Holy Spirit led discussion and that may very well be what they need. If they get too far off topic, gently remind them of the discussion.

Above all, entrust the group to Jesus and believe that it will be what he desires it to be. If you have any questions, email fredianim@archmil.org.

## Session 1: VIRTUE OVERVIEW

### PRAYER & WELCOME (10 min)

Introduce selves (name, how long married, why joined, what you'd like to get out of the group, quarantine struggle, quarantine blessing)

St. Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians from prison and it reflects his great love for the Philippian community. It is a joyful letter filled with hope. Paul is not despairing because he is in prison, he is thankful for their prayers and he pledges prayer for them. Paul writes about the transforming power of Jesus' death and resurrection for the faithful and the joy we can find in suffering.

## **READ PHILIPPIANS 4:8** (15 min)

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

- What speaks to you in this passage?
- How did you feel when you read this?

## **READ CCC 1803** (15 min)

A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions.

- What does the first sentence suggest?
- Are we able to do good and be holy on our own?

>> we need God's graces

 How can you pursue the good through concrete actions with your spouse?

### **VIRTUES DISCUSSION** (15 min)

**Theological** Charity: love of God & others

(from God) Faith: belief in God

Hope: desiring heaven

**Cardinal** Fortitude: strength in times of trial

(our effort) Prudence: common sense & good decisions

Temperance: moderation of pleasure
Justice: treating others equitably

- Which of these virtues do you feel good about in your life?
- Which of these virtues do you wish to grow in?

## THE TAKEAWAY & PRACTICE (10 min)

Below, write down one thing you learned in this session or one thing that is speaking to your heart. Write a short prayer (2 or 3 sentences) asking Jesus to keep this on your heart until we meet again. Pick a time to say this prayer each day.


## **DAILY CHECK IN (5 min)**

Take turns checking in daily with your spouse. This can be a short (5 minutes is okay) check in to hold each other accountable and connect or a longer conversation. Together pray the prayers you wrote above.

## Session 2: CHARITY

## PRAYER (5 min)

## **INTRODUCTION & 90 SECOND CHECK IN (5 min)**

The theological virtues are given to us by God. They are the "action of the Holy Spirit" (CCC 1813). They are so important we pray for an increase in them every time we pray a Rosary. Charity is one of the theological virtues (along with faith and hope which will be discussed in the next two sessions). Charity is love.

Charity is the "virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God." (CCC 1822) Charity is the first and most important virtue.

"So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (I Cor 13:13)

## **READ JOHN 15: 9, 11** (15 min)

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

- Reflect on the love you feel for your spouse. God's love for you as his son/daughter is infinitely greater. What feelings does that reality invoke in you?
- Do you ever doubt God's unconditional, extravagant love for you?
  - >> Want them to see the parallel between their own love for their spouse and God's love for them; recognize that they can go to him in prayer and ask for help in accepting this.

## **READ 1 COR 13: 1-4** (15 min)

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

- What is the message you hear in this passage?
- Finish the sentence for a 21st century wife/husband:
   If I do/have \_\_\_\_\_\_ but not love, I am nothing.
- When is loving a challenge and how can we begin to overcome that challenge?
  - >> Want them to recognize that they can go to God in prayer and ask for help.

## **READ CCC 1829** (15 min)

The fruits of charity are joy, peace, and mercy; charity demand beneficence and fraternal correction; it is benevolence; it fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested and generous; it is friendship and communion; Love is itself the fulfillment of all our works. There is the goal; that is why we run; we run toward it, and once we reach it, in it we shall find rest.

- What are the traits of charity?
  - >> beneficence, fraternal correction, reciprocity, generosity, friendship, communion

Below, write down one thing you learned in this session or one thing

How do these traits manifest themselves in marriage?

## THE TAKEAWAY & PRACTICE (10 min)

asking Jesus to keep this on your heart until we meet again. Pick a time to say this prayer each day.		

## **DAILY CHECK IN (5 min)**

Take turns checking in daily with your spouse. This can be a short (5 minutes is okay) check in to hold each other accountable and connect or a longer conversation. Together pray the prayers you wrote above.

## Session 3: FAITH

## PRAYER (5 min)

## **INTRODUCTION & 90 SECOND CHECK IN** (5 min)

"Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that the Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself. By faith 'Man freely commits his entire self to God.' For this reason the believer seeks to know and do God's will." (CCC 1814)

## READ MT 14: 22-33 JESUS WALKS ON WATER (15 min)

- What did Peter do first? Second? Third?
  - >> walked toward Jesus on the water in a storm big faith; seemingly impossible became afraid and doubted cried out for help
- What was Jesus' response?
  - >> immediately reached out his hand and caught Peter
- . How can we apply this parable to our marriage?
  - >> we can be certain Jesus will help us even in difficult situations if we have faith

### **READ MT 17: 18-20** (15 min)

And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you."

- What does Jesus promise if we have faith?
- Can Jesus do the impossible? Do you believe this?

## **READ CCC 1816** (15 min)

The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it: 'All however must be prepared to confess Christ before men and to follow him along the way of the Cross, amidst the persecutions which the Church never lacks.'

- . How can we grow in faith with our spouse?
- How can we as a couple witness the faith to others?

## THE TAKEAWAY & PRACTICE (10 min)

Below, write down one thing you learned in this session or one thithat is speaking to your heart.			3110 411	

Pray the Apostles Creed daily & reflect on what you are confessing belief in. Consider praying it with your children

## **DAILY CHECK IN (5 min)**

Take turns checking in daily with your spouse. This can be a short (5 minutes is okay) check in to hold each other accountable and connect or a longer conversation. Together pray the prayers you wrote above.

## Session 4: HOPE

## PRAYER (5 min)

## **INTRODUCTION & 90 SECOND CHECK IN** (5 min)

"Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit." (CCC 1817)

## **READ ROMANS 5: 2-5** (15 min)

Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

- What does it mean to "rejoice in our sufferings?"
  - >> not that we enjoy them, but we recognize the good that can come from them endurance, character, and hope
- How are you suffering as a human/husband/wife right now?
- How can you rejoice in your suffering?

### **READ ROMANS 12: 11-12** (15 min)

Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

- What does St. Paul suggest we do?
  - >> stay determined, let the Spirit shine in us, be patient, pray
- Share one concrete, specific way you can follow St. Paul's suggestion

## **READ CCC 1818** (15 min)

The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.

- What are some effects of hope?
- Which of these effects would you like most right now?
- Which of these effects would you like for your spouse right now?

## THE TAKEAWAY & PRACTICE (10 min)

Below, write down one thing you learned in this session or o	one
thing that is speaking to your heart.	


"Hope is expressed and nourished in prayer, especially the Our Father, the summary of everything that hope leads us to desire." (CCC 1820). Pray the Our Father slowly each day, reflecting on each line.

### **DAILY CHECK IN (5 min)**

Take turns checking in daily with your spouse. This can be a short (5 minutes is okay) check in to hold each other accountable and connect or a longer conversation. Together pray the prayers you wrote above.

## Session 5: FORTITUDE & PRUDENCE

## PRAYER (5 min)

## **INTRODUCTION & 90 SECOND CHECK IN** (5 min)

"Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life." (CCC 1808)

"Prudence is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it." (CCC 1806)

## **READ JOHN 16:33** (15 min)

I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

- . What speaks to your heart in this passage?
- How does this passage relate to the virtue of fortitude?

## **READ PSALM 118:14** (15 min)

The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.

- How does this passage help us in increasing our fortitude?
  - >> we are not alone; God gives us strength to persevere
- Where in your life as a husband/wife do you need more fortitude?

### **READ CCC 1806** (15 min)

Prudence is "right reason in action," write St. Thomas Aquinas...it guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience....with the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid.

- What are some real world examples of times when you've had to exercise prudence?
- Where can you use more prudence in your marriage?

## THE TAKEAWAY & PRACTICE (10 min)

Write down one thing you learned in this session or one thing that is speaking to your heart. Write a short prayer (2 or 3 sentences) asking Jesus to keep this on your heart until we meet again. Pick a time to say this prayer each day.

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## **DAILY CHECK IN (5 min)**

Take turns checking in daily with your spouse. This can be a short (5 minutes is okay) check in to hold each other accountable and connect or a longer conversation. Together pray the prayers you wrote above.

## Session 6: TEMPERANCE & JUSTICE

## PRAYER (5 min)

## **INTRODUCTION & 90 SECOND CHECK IN** (5 min)

"Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion." (CCC 1809)

"Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor." (CCC 1807)

## **READ SIRACH 18: 30, 32** (15 min)

Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites. Do not revel in great luxury, lest you become impoverished by its expense.

What is the cost of reveling in great luxury?

>> not looking for monetary cost

## **READ TITUS 2: 11-12** (15 min)

For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world.

- Is it harder in this time of uncertainty and social isolation to live temperately and why?
- How can we fight the temptation to binge watch Netflix or spend too much time on our phones or social media?
   Why should we fight it?
- What kind of assumptions do people make about sober, upright, godly living?

>> that it is boring

## **READ CCC 1807** (15 min)

Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man... is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of conduct toward his neighbor.

Are shelter in place/stay at home directives just? Why or why not?

## THE TAKEAWAY & PRACTICE (10 min)

Below, write down one thing you learned in this session or one
thing that is speaking to your heart. Write a short prayer (2 or 3
sentences) asking Jesus to keep this on your heart. Pick a time to
say this prayer each day.


## **CONCLUSION**

To live well is nothing other than to love God with all one's heart, with all one's soul and with all one's efforts; from this it comes about that love is kept whole and uncorrupted (through temperance). No misfortune can disturb it (and this is fortitude). It obeys only [God] (and this is justice), and is careful in discerning things, so as not to be surprised by deceit or trickery (and this is prudence). (CCC 1809 quoting St Augustine)