This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

John 13:35
To kick off this initiative, we asked:

Are you a disciple of Jesus Christ? (Yes, No, I Don’t Know)
Was this question easy or hard to answer?
Is this an important question?
What would you need to be able to answer this question?

This month:

**Starter**

I now understand discipleship to be...

Am I open to becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ? Why or why not?

My primary barriers are...
Overview

What do you mean by Intentional Disciple?

Few Christians would argue the premise that we are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ. What “being a disciple” means and what that looks like in our lives, is a great deal more confusing. At St. Dominic’s, we invite you to engage the concept of discipleship head-on. Maybe you’re already a disciple. If so, hopefully you will discover how to be more intentional about your discipleship. Maybe you’re not yet a disciple. If so, hopefully you will enter into a deeper understanding of what it means to be a disciple and become more hungry to respond to Jesus’ call.

What is asked of me?

First, pick up a booklet at St. Dominic’s each month and follow along. If you can, attend one of the Explore (everyone is welcome) sessions offered each month. If you want to go deeper, sign up for a Small Christian Community. Small community will meet twice a month to discuss. We hope to be able to offer committed small communities and drop-in small communities as we get a better understanding of people’s interested. Please see the back cover for specific dates.

When did the Intentional Disciples initiative start?

St. Dominic’s kicked off the Intentional Disciples initiative in September 2013. We are gradually rolling it out to the whole parish. We hope to be able to connect people whenever they learn about the initiative or are ready to get involved.

What if I’m not sure how much of this I’m ready to do?

Pick up a booklet, and try it out. Pray about it.

I’m interested, but I just don’t have the time.

We understand that this will not fit everyone’s interest or schedule. We would like to ask you to pray for this initiative in the parish.

Jesus, let us hear your call anew.
Bless us with the courage to respond.
Clear away all barriers. Make us your disciples.
Format
Each month we’ll pick several scripture passages around an aspect or theme of discipleship. We’ll spend the month exploring that theme, going deeper and challenging ourselves. September and October will be months we’ll roll this out to the parish. We’ll be forming small communities as we go. We plan to make this a yearlong initiative. Here’s the planned format for each month:

**Week 1 - Explore**
Break open the scripture and explore discipleship. Our goal here is not just to understand how discipleship functioned when Jesus walked the Earth, we want to understand what discipleship means in our lives, today.

You can explore the scripture on your own through this book, or you can attend one of the presentations offered (see the upcoming schedule on the back cover).

**Week 2 - Share**
Consider joining a small community to discuss the meaning of discipleship to you. There is something powerful about gathering with others to explore our relationship with Jesus.

If you can’t join a small community, you can take time each day to pray the scripture and reflect on your own journey.

**Week 3 - Act**
This week we’ll challenged ourselves to take some practical step exploring discipleship in our daily lives. We’ll do this on our own, so if you’re part of a small community, there will not be a meeting this week.

**Week 4 - Share**
Gather again in your small community or reflect on your own.
Week 1 - Explore

This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

John 13:35

Intentional Disciples love one another! It sounds simple, doesn't it? Yet, we recognize that learning to love is a lifelong process. We’ll explore Love through a large number of New Testament passages that approach the subject from different angles:

● God Is Love
● Jesus and Love
● Love God & Neighbor
● Love One Another
● Love Is...
● Love Your Enemies & Serve One Master
Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us.

We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him. In this is love brought to perfection among us, that we have confidence on the day of judgment because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment, and so one who fears is not yet perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Read prayerfully: What do we learn about love? How are disciples called to love?
Jesus and Love

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.

John 13:1 Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end.

John 14:15-21 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, 17 the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. 19 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live. 20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you. 21 Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him."

Read prayerfully: What do we learn about love? How are disciples called to love?
One of the scribes, when he came forward and heard them disputing and saw how well he had answered them, asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" 29 Jesus replied, "The first is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! 30 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Jesus answered and said to him, "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.

But as it is written: "What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him,"

Read prayerfully: What do we learn about love? How are disciples called to love?
Love One Another

John 13:33 My children, I will be with you only a little while longer... 34 I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. 35 This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

John 15:9 As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. 12 This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. 13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. 16 It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. 17 This I command you: love one another.

Romans 13:8 Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

1 Corinthians 16:13 Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong. 14 Your every act should be done with love.

Read prayerfully: What do we learn about love? How are disciples called to love?
Love is...

1Corinthians 13:1

If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. 2 And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. 4 Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, (love) is not pompous, it is not inflated, 5 it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, 6 it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails. If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing. 9 For we know partially and we prophesy partially, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. 12 At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known. 13 So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Read prayerfully: What do we learn about love? How are disciples called to love?
Love Your Enemies & Serve One Master

Matthew 5:43-48 You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Luke 16:13 No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

John 12:25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life.

Read prayerfully: What do we learn about love? How are disciples called to love?
Key Insights

General
- Most of these passages represent statements instead of narrative stories.
- This means that they teach us about love more than they demonstrate love to us.
- The Greek language has several words that get translated into the English word love.
- The Greek word at the heart of these passages is *agape*, which implies “self-gift” and “self-sacrifice.”

God Is Love
- This gives us a unique Christian insight into God.
- Other religions might talk about God’s love, but only Christianity understands God as Love.
- This is only possible because God is a triune relationship: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- When we love authentically, we participate in the life of God.
- Understanding God as Love is the first, essential step in understanding everything else: Creation, Incarnation, Redemption, Heaven, Invitation, Eucharist, etc.
- Our invitation to love others is grounded in God’s love for them.
- Simply put, we are called to love like God.

Jesus and Love
- While we are taught about love, it is even more true that the whole story of Jesus is a love story.
- When we read the story of Jesus in this light, we begin to see the depth of God’s love.
- I don’t know about you, but I find the statement, “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you,” one that I could meditate on for the rest of my life.
Love God & Neighbor

- Here, we hear the word “commandment,” and that can often bring up rule-based expressions of faith.
- Another word from the Old Testament that is used in place of commandment is law.
- While law can also have negative connotations, what if we thought about law as in “Law of Gravity” instead of a new, arbitrary legal requirement.
- Loving God and neighbor is the foundation of Christian discipleship.

Love One Another

- Here is where we get the explicit connection between discipleship and love.
- Disciples have a mission: “It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain” (John 15:16).
- What is the difference between being a “slave” and being a “friend” of Jesus?

Love Is...

- Paul’s treatise on love is, perhaps, the most frequently read scripture at weddings.
- Sometimes we feel like we already know it, but you can see how important it is to explore.
- If you want to know what love is and is not, 1 Corinthians 13 takes a deeper than any other scripture.

Love Your Enemies & Serve One Master

- Some aspects of love are easy, but Jesus challenges us beyond easy love.
- If we want to love like God, we need to go beyond easy love.
Saint Thomas Aquinas

“An act of love always tends towards two things; to the good that one wills, and to the person for whom one wills it: since to love a person is to wish that person good. Hence, inasmuch as we love ourselves, we wish ourselves good; and, so far as possible, union with that good. So love is called the unitive force, even in God... And by the fact that anyone loves another, he wills good to that other. Thus he puts the other, as it were, in the place of himself; and regards the good done to him as done to himself. So far love is a binding force, since it aggregates another to ourselves, and refers his good to our own. And then again the divine love is a binding force, inasmuch as God wills good to others.”

*Summa Theologica, First Part, Question 20, Article 1, Reply to Objection 3.*

“I answer that, God loves all existing things. For all existing things, in so far as they exist, are good, since the existence of a thing is itself a good; and likewise, whatever perfection it possesses. Now it has been shown above (Question 19, Article 4) that God's will is the cause of all things. It must needs be, therefore, that a thing has existence, or any kind of good, only inasmuch as it is willed by God. To every existing thing, then, God wills some good. Hence, since to love anything is nothing else than to will good to that thing, it is manifest that God loves everything that exists. Yet not as we love. Because since our will is not the cause of the goodness of things, but is moved by it as by its object, our love, whereby we will good to anything, is not the cause of its goodness; but conversely its goodness, whether real or imaginary, calls forth our love, by which we will that it should preserve the good it has, and receive besides the good it has not, and to this end we direct our actions: whereas the love of God infuses and creates goodness.”

*Summa Theologica, First Part, Question 20, Article 2, Answer.*
Saint Catherine of Siena

"You are rewarded not according to your work or your time but according to the measure of your love." Dialogue 165

"Love transforms one into what one loves." Dialogue 60

"Love follows knowledge." Dialogue 1

"One who knows more, loves more." Dialogue 66

"We trust and believe in what we love." Dialogue 8

"There will be love in proportion to faith and faith in proportion to love." Letter T344

"And the eternal Father said, 'And if anyone should ask me what this soul is, I would say: She is another me, made so by the union of love.'" Dialogue 96

"They love their neighbors with the same love with which they love me." Dialogue 60

"The soul cannot live without love. She always wants to love something because love is the stuff she is made of, and through love I created her." Dialogue 51

"[Sin is] loving what God hates, and hating what God loves." Letter T29

"On two feet you must walk my way; on two wings you must fly to heaven." (The eternal Father's words to Catherine regarding love of God and love of neighbor). Raymond of Capua, Life of Catherine of Siena, 121

"Love does not stay idle." Letter T82

"The human heart is always drawn by love." Dialogue 26

"In your nature, eternal Godhead, I shall come to know my nature. And what is my nature, boundless Love? It is fire, because you are nothing but a fire of love. And you have given humankind a share in this nature for by the fire of love you created us." Prayer 12"The soul, as soon as she comes to know Me, reaches out to love her neighbors." Dialogue 89
"It is the nature of love to love as much as we feel we are loved and to love whatever the one we love loves." *Letter T299*

"Selfish love makes us unappreciative and ungrateful because we attribute all we have to our own shrewdness. And what is the evidence? Our ingratitude, shown in the sins we commit every day. Gratitude, on the other hand, is proof that we are attributing to God alone all that we have." *Letter T96*

"Hope comes from love, because people always trust in those they love." *Letter T352*

"Reflect that God requires nothing else of us except that we show our neighbors the love we have for God." *Letter T89.*

"It is because I do not love that I trust in myself rather than in God." *Letter T344*

"For you, high eternal Father, loved me without being loved by me." *Dialogue 108*

"I acknowledge and do not deny that you love me before I existed, and that you love me unspeakably much, as one gone mad over your creature." *Dialogue 167*

"You, eternal Trinity, are the craftsman; and I your handiwork have come to know that you are in love with the beauty of what you have made, since you made of me a new creation in the blood of your Son." *Dialogue 167*

"You are a fire always burning but never consuming; you are a fire consuming in your heat all the soul's selfish love; you are a fire lifting all chill and giving light." *Dialogue 167.*
Thomas Merton

- Love is our true destiny. We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone - we find it with another.
- The beginning of love is to let those we love be perfectly themselves, and not to twist them to fit our own image. Otherwise we love only the reflection of ourselves we find in them.
- Love seeks one thing only: the good of the one loved. It leaves all the other secondary effects to take care of themselves. Love, therefore, is its own reward.

Henri Nouwen

- The journey from teaching about love to allowing myself to be loved proved much longer than I realised.
- Jesus didn’t say, 'Blessed are those who care for the poor.' He said, 'Blessed are we where we are poor, where we are broken.' It is there that God loves us deeply and pulls us into deeper communion with himself.

Pope Benedict XVI, God Is Love, 1

- "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 Jn 4:16). These words from the First Letter of John express with remarkable clarity the heart of the Christian faith: the Christian image of God and the resulting image of mankind and its destiny. In the same verse, Saint John also offers a kind of summary of the Christian life: “We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us”.

*We have come to believe in God’s love:* in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. Saint John’s Gospel describes that event in these words: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should ... have eternal life” (3:16).
Recap & Prepare for Week 2

- Reread the scripture for this week.
  - Underline phrases that capture the essence of discipleship
  - Pick a phrase, one each morning
  - Write it on a slip of paper
  - Find seven times during the day to think about it and pray it

- Reflection questions:
  
  **What is love?**

  **What does love have to do with discipleship?**

  **How do we grow in love?**

  **What are our barriers to love?**
Individual Option

- Find 20-30 minutes where you won’t be interrupted.
- (10-15 minutes) Follow the prayer format listed in the Small Christian Community Process below.
- (10-20 minutes) Spend time reflecting on the questions outlined above.

Advice For Participating In Small Christian Communities

- The facilitator’s role is to guide the flow of the meeting. They are not in the group to be experts. Help the facilitators by following their lead.
- During the discussion period, there will be multiple questions or topic for conversation. It is best to take them one at a time (i.e., let everyone share about one before moving to the next).
- Don’t attempt to give the “right answer.” Just share your experience, insights, and perspective.
- Please stay on topic (the questions asked).
- Pay attention to time. Keep your answers on the shorter side. You can always add more later.
- Make sure everyone gets a chance to speak (i.e., give others a chance to speak before sharing a second time).
- It’s ok to not share if you don’t feel comfortable, but challenge yourself to share occasionally.
- Give your attention to the person speaking. Please don’t start side conversations.
- Avoid asking follow-up questions. Let people share what they want to share. It is always good to affirm others.
- Avoid answering other people’s questions (i.e., taking on the role of expert).

Small Christian Community Process - First Meeting
(Suggested timing based on a 60/90 minute meeting)

- Welcome & Check In (5/10 minutes)
- Review Format (5/5 minutes)
  - Prayer:
    - Transition phrase spoken by a facilitator followed by 30-60 seconds of silence
    - We’ll use *Lectio Divina* (Divine Reading)
    - *Lectio* (Reading)
      - A participant reads the scripture passage
      - 1 minute of silence
      - A participant reads the scripture passage
    - *Meditatio* (Meditate)
      - Focus on a word or phrase that resonates with you
      - Repeat it to yourself or sit with it
    - *Oratio* (Pray)
      - Offer a prayer based on your meditation
    - *Contemplatio* (Contemplate)
      - Dwell in God’s love
  - Discussion:
    - Review the participant’s advice (above)
    - Discussion will be a response to the prayer and reflection questions (page 18)
  - Action/Request
    - Review plans for what to do between meetings
    - Participants can share thoughts, plans, and request prayers
- Prayer (10/15 minutes)
  - Transition Phrase: “Love transforms one into what one loves.” -- Catherine of Siena
  - Reading: 1 John 4:7-12 & 1 John 4:16-21
- Discussion (30/45 minutes)
  - Begin with insights from the prayer experience
  - Discussing the reflection questions (page 18)
- Action/Request (5/10 minutes)
  - The practical exercise is listed on the next page
  - Participants can share thoughts and plans
  - Participants can request prayers from the group
Week 3 - Act

Make a list of people you know who need to feel God’s love. Do something loving for one person on your list.

Make a list of people or groups that are your enemies (e.g., that you frequently have negative thoughts about). Say a prayer for them. List one way that God might view them lovingly.
Week 4 - Share

Preparing
● Continue to use the scripture phrases you highlighted when you prepared for Week 2:
  ○ Pick a phrase, one each morning
  ○ Write it on a slip of paper
  ○ Find seven times during the day to think about it and pray it
● Week 3 exercise:
  ○ Plan to share something about your Week 3 exercise
  ○ If you were not able to do it, plan to share your barriers.

Individual Option
● Find 20-30 minutes where you won’t be interrupted.
● (10-15 minutes) Follow the prayer format listed in the Small Christian Community Process below.
● (10-20 minutes) Journal about the experience of the exercise from Week 3..

Small Christian Community Process - Second Meeting
(Suggested timing based on a 60/90 minute meeting)

● Welcome and Check In (10/15 minutes)
  ○ Casual conversation: People can talk about what is happening in their lives.
● Explain Format (3/3 minutes)
  ○ Review format
  ○ Discussion will be based off the practical exercise
● Prayer (12/17 minutes)
  ○ Transition Phrase: “Love does not stay idle.” -- Catherine of Siena
  ○ Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
● Discussion (30/45 minutes)
  ○ Begin with insights from the prayer experience
  ○ Continue discussing the exercise (previous page)
● Action/Request (5/10 minutes)
  ○ Participants can share thoughts and plans
  ○ Participants can request prayers from the group
Extra: Write a love letter to God.
THREE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES

1. Pick up a booklet, and explore on your own.

2. Attend an “Explore” session to learn about this month’s scripture.

3. Check out a Small Christian Community to join with others to go deeper.

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UPCOMING “EXPLORE” SESSIONS

Young Adults’ Session*, Wednesday, Oct. 2, 7:30-9 PM, Parish Hall
Thursday, October 3, 12:00-1:30 PM, Aquinas Room
Monday, October 7, 7:30-9 PM, Aquinas Room
Sunday, October 13, 10:30-11:30 AM, School Basement

* The Young Adults group is a community of single and married Catholic adults in our 20s and 30s; to find out more, visit: http://stdominics.org/youngadults

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TO CONNECT WITH A SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

http://www.stdominics.org/signup