See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God.

1 John 3:1
**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. In September and October, we rolled this out to the parish. We have formed several small communities, but it is not too late to join one if you are interested (see the back cover). 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.
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...

How does my discipleship impact my relationships?
Week 1 - Explore

You are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Galatians 4:7

“You are a child of God.” This is a phrase I’ve heard thousands of times, but I never really thought about it much. What got me really thinking about it were other words like “adoption,” “sons and daughters,” and even the deeper meaning of “redemption.” Suddenly, I realized it was all over the place in the scripture and in our liturgy. Wrestling with what it truly means to be adopted by God, changes how we understand what Jesus Christ did for us. It changes how we view ourselves and others. It changes what it means to be a disciple.

This month we’ll dive deep into the scripture passages that teach us about the fundamental reality of our new relationship with God. How do we live out this relationship as Intentional Disciples?

See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God.

1 John 3:1
The Power to Become Children of God

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; 5 the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it... 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him. 12 But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, 13 who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

Read prayerfully: Why is it important that we are Children of God? How does this change our lives?
Baptized & Beloved

Mark 1:9  It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. 10 On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. 11 And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Galatians 3:26  For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendant, heirs according to the promise.

Read prayerfully: Why is it important that we are Children of God? How does this change our lives?
A New Family

Mark 3:31  His mother and his brothers arrived. Standing outside they sent word to him and called him. 32 A crowd seated around him told him, "Your mother and your brothers and your sisters are outside asking for you." 33 But he said to them in reply, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 And looking around at those seated in the circle he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. 35 For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

Galatians 4:3  In the same way we also, when we were not of age, were enslaved to the elemental powers of the world. 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. 6 As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Read prayerfully: Why is it important that we are Children of God? How does this change our lives?
The Spirit of Adoption

Romans 8:14  For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 

15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, "Abba, Father!"

16 The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Ephesians 1:3  Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us.

Read prayerfully: Why is it important that we are Children of God? How does this change our lives?
Key Insights

General

- The terms “Child(ren) of God,” “Adoption,” and even “Redemption” all point to an important, new reality for disciples.
- What Jesus is by nature, we become through adoption.

The Power to Become Children of God

- The prologue of John’s Gospel echoes back to Genesis 1.
- It’s no surprise that the early Church saw in Jesus Christ the continuation of God’s work of creation.
- Jesus is the light in the darkness of our lives.
- Jesus does more than give us a new perspective; he offers us a new relationship.
- Genesis 1 tells us we are created in God’s image. John 1 tells us we become part of God’s family.

Baptized & Beloved

- Jesus doesn’t need to be Baptized, and he doesn’t become God’s beloved, but Jesus does show us the way.
- Through Baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we become what Jesus already was.
- Can we hear the Father’s voice, “With you I am well pleased”? Can we live as beloved?
- This new relationship is not a “me and God” thing. It’s a whole new family that alters all of our relationships.

A New Family

- Jesus is not rejecting his family, but he is redefining what it means to be part of his family.
- We are not God’s children because our parent’s made us that way. God has no grandchildren. We have to respond to God’s free gift to us.
- The word “ransom” may sound strange here, but it means to “buy back,” to “redeem.”
- In the Jewish tradition, the redeemer was your relative with the responsibility to buy you back if you fell into slavery.
- God makes himself our relative, and takes the responsibility to by us back from our slavery (e.g., sin, death).
The Spirit of Adoption

- How do we live as Children of God?
- Follow the Spirit
- Resist the slavery of sin
- Turn to God as Our Father
- Forgive and seek forgiveness
- Seek and share His Grace

Further Readings

Mark 10:13 And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." 16 Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

Luke 20:36 They can no longer die, for they are like angels; and they are the children of God because they are the ones who will rise.

John 12:34 So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. Then how can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" 35 Jesus said to them, "The light will be among you only a little while. Walk while you have the light, so that darkness may not overcome you. Whoever walks in the
dark does not know where he is going. 36 While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of the light." After he had said this, Jesus left and hid from them.

Matthew 5:9  Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Romans 8:18  I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. 19 For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; 20 for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22 We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; 23 and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that sees for itself is not hope. For who hopes for what one sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance.

2 Corinthians 5:17  So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.

Ephesians 1:8b  In all wisdom and insight, 9 he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him 10 as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth. 11 In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the one who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, 12 so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ. 13 In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised holy Spirit, 14 which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 5:1  So be imitators of God, as beloved children.

1 John 3:1  See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.
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 changes in our relationship with God through Jesus Christ?**

**How does this reality change the way I see myself?**

**How does this reality change the way I see others?**
Individual Option
- Find 20-30 minutes where you won’t be interrupted.
- (10-15 minutes) Follow the prayer format *(Lectio Divina)* in the group exercise 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).
How To Pray The Scripture Using Lectio Divina

● Goal:
   ○ Engage one of the scriptures at a deeper level
   ○ Allow the Spirit to teach our hearts
   ○ Provide fruit to lead into the discussion and sharing

● Steps (Should take 10-15 minutes):
   ● Lectio (Reading, 2-5 minutes)
     ○ A participant reads the scripture passage
     ○ 30-60 seconds of silence
     ○ A participant reads the scripture passage
     ○ As the scripture is being read, the participants are invited to find a word, phrase, image, or idea that resonates with them. We’ll call this the focus.
       ○ Example: Imagine reading the Our Father text from Matthew 6. People might focus on: "Thy Kingdom Come," "Lead Us," "Our," the idea of fatherhood, an image of God’s Kingdom, Do I forgive others? Etc.
   ● Meditatio (Meditate, 5-10 minutes)
     ○ Stay with the focus from above.
     ○ There are different ways to do this: Why does it resonate? What does it mean in my life today? Repeat it as a mantra. Imagine it. How is this connected to discipleship?
   ● Oratio (Pray, 1-2 minutes)
     ○ Whatever comes up in meditation, form into a silent prayer offered to God.
   ● Contemplatio (Contemplate, 1-2 minutes)
     ○ After speaking a prayer to God, sit and listen or rest in God's love.
   ○ This leads into discussion and sharing.
     ○ Start with insights from the prayer.
     ○ Transition to sharing about discipleship.

● Tips
   ○ There is no “right way,” do what works for you
   ○ Embrace the silence
   ○ Let God find you
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)
  - Review the participant’s advice (page 14)
  - Prayer will be about 15 minutes
  - Review the prayer format: *Lectio Divina* (page 15)
  - Discussion will follow based on the prayer and the questions (page 13).

- Prayer (10/15 minutes)
  - Transition Passage: “In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the one who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ.” (Ephesians 1:11-12)
  - *Lectio Divina*: John 1:1-14 (page 6)

- Discussion (30/45 minutes)
  - Begin with insights from the prayer experience
  - Discussing the reflection questions (page 13)

- Action/Request (5/10 minutes)
  - The practical exercise is listed on the next page
  - Participants can share thoughts and plans
  - Review date of the next group session
  - Participants can request prayers from the group
Make a list of the ways your life reflects your relationship with God:

Make a list of the ways your life falls short of your relationship with God:

Pick one concrete change you will make in your life:

Action: When you give presents this Christmas, consciously select gifts that build up others as Children of God.
**Preparation**

- 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 (*Lectio Divina*) in the group exercise 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 & Check In (5/10 minutes)
- Review Format (5/5 minutes)
  - Review the participant’s advice (page 14)
  - Prayer will be about 15 minutes
  - Review the prayer format: *Lectio Divina* (page 15)
  - Discussion will follow based on the prayer the Act exercise (page 17)
- Prayer (10/15 minutes)
  - Transition Passage: “While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of the light.” (John 12:36a)
  - *Lectio Divina*: Mark 1:9-11 & Galatians 3:26-29 (page 7)
- Discussion (30/45 minutes)
  - Begin with insights from the prayer experience
  - Discussing insights from the Act exercise
- Action/Request (5/10 minutes)
  - Review date of the next Explore session
  - Participants can request prayers from the group
Extra: Wake up each morning saying, “Abba, Father, lead me today.”
THREE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES

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

2. Attend an “Explore” session to learn about this month’s scripture. Everyone is welcome. - or-

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

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UPCOMING “EXPLORE” SESSIONS

Monday, December 2, 7:30-9 PM, Aquinas Room
Young Adults’ Session*, Wed., Dec. 4, 7:30-9 PM, Parish Hall
Thursday, December 5, 12:00-1:30 PM, Aquinas Room
Sunday, December 8, 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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CONNECT WITH A SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Contact Scott Moyer at scott@stdominics.org

We would like to start a Wednesday evening women’s group. If you’re interested, please contact Scott.

Small Christian Community December Meeting Dates

Sunday: No meetings
YAG (Sunday): December 8 & 22
Monday: December 9 & 16?
Thursday: December 5 & 19