

INTENTIONAL SEEKERS GO BEYOND GOOD



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GOOD BAD UGLY

ST. DOMINIC'S OCTOBER 2014

*Trust in the LORD and do good
that you may dwell in the land and live secure.*

Psalm 37:3

INTENTIONAL SEEKERS

Overview

What do you mean by Intentional Seeker?

Last year at St. Dominic's we focused on Intentional Discipleship. It was an opportunity to explore what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, and to become more intentional about discipleship. Let's face it, before we can truly be disciples we must acknowledge and engage barriers that prevent us from starting the journey. We all have barriers! The question is not whether or not we have barriers, it is whether we are willing to seek ways to overcome those barriers. This series is a way we can all explore some of the most common barriers present in our own lives and in the lives of those around us.

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* sessions (everyone is welcome) offered each month. If you want to go deeper, sign up for a *Small Christian Community*. Small communities 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 interests. Please see the back cover for specific dates.

When did the Intentional Seeker initiative start?

St. Dominic's kicked off the Intentional Seeker initiative in September 2014. 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.

*Dear Jesus, grant your way to all who seek you,
your truth to all who want to know you,
and your life to all who share your love.*

Format

Each month we'll have a theme based around a common question or barrier. We'll pick scripture passages and other writings that will help us explore this theme. We'll spend the month going deeper and challenging ourselves. In September and October, we will roll this out to the parish. We will form several small communities. 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 texts and explore the questions and barriers. Our goal here is to recognize that we not alone in our search. Many people today and many people throughout history have traveled this road. What are some of the answers that others have found? What insights speak to me? What difference would it mean in my life if I overcome this barrier? How can I help others who are struggling with this barrier?

You can explore the theme on your own through this book, or you can attend a presentation (see the upcoming schedule on the back cover).

WEEK 2 - SHARE

Consider joining a small community to discuss the themes and barriers in our lives. There is something powerful about gathering with others to explore our desires and our struggles.

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

WEEK 3 - ACT

This week we'll challenged ourselves to take some practical step 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.

INTENTIONAL SEEKERS GO BEYOND GOOD

Starter

What does it mean to be a good person?

What's wrong with seeing the world as being comprised of good people and bad people?

What would you tell someone who asked, "Is being good good enough?"

WEEK 1 - EXPLORE

"Isn't it enough to just be a good person?" We've all asked (or been asked) this question. Let's state up front that it is clearly better to be a good person than a bad person. The problem is that the very statement assumes that there are only two camps: good people and bad people. Once we claim that we're in the good people camp, our work is done. It doesn't take an exhaustive reflection on the world to realize that the world doesn't easily fit the two-camp theory. As one example, we have other sayings too like, "I'm no Mother Teresa." Here we're saying that we're good, but we're not *that* good. We realize that goodness is a continuum between really, really good people (saints, heroes, etc.) and really, really bad people (megalomaniacal dictators, serial killers, etc.). Our claim of goodness is really just a statement like, "I'm not a serial killer." Great! Amen! But is that enough for a lifetime?

[A man asked Jesus], "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone."

Mark 10:17-18

Jesus' statement above expresses the Christian understanding of *goodness*. Goodness is, first and foremost, a quality of God. God is *all good*. In this understanding, our goodness is good to the extent that it participates in God's own goodness. This explains the continuum that we see in the world and differences we see between the I-am-a-good-person people and the Mother-Teresa-good people. Some people seek and become more God-like. Others rest in their self-proclaimed goodness. Still others never really try.

With this realization, our questions expand:

- What's the difference between a good and a really good person?
- What goodness comes easy to me, and what goodness is hard?
- How can I become a better person?
- I'm good, but am I good *for* others?

This is not about guilt; it is about growth. Intentional Seekers go beyond good. This month we'll focus on growing in goodness.

Exercises

Take some time to reflect on the goodness that you see in the world:

1) Make a list of qualities that you identify as goodness

2) Honestly rate yourself on a continuum for that quality

RRBP = Really, Really Bad Person; Saint = Mother Teresa

(1)

(2)

RRBP <-----> Saint

e.g., compassionate

<----->

e.g., forgiving

<----->

e.g., serving

<----->

<----->

<----->

<----->

<----->

<----->

What insights do you get from this exercise?

What are some key areas of growth?

Where do you find insight and inspiration for growth?

Where do you find encouragement and support for growth?

Main Texts

Goodness Comes From God

Matthew 19:16 Now someone approached him and said, "Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?" ¹⁷He answered him, "Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." ¹⁸He asked him, "Which ones?" And Jesus replied, " 'You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; ¹⁹honor your father and your mother'; and 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" ²⁰The young man said to him, "All of these I have observed. What do I still lack?" ²¹Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to (the) poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." ²²When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

"Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile."
— *Mother Teresa*

Read prayerfully: What qualities of God's goodness do we follow? How does Jesus model these qualities for us?

Goodness Bears Fruit

Matthew 7:15"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶By their fruits you will know them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Just so, every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰So by their fruits you will know them.

"The Simple Path: Silence is Prayer, Prayer is Faith, Faith is Love, Love is Service. The Fruit of Service is Peace"
— *Mother Teresa*

Read prayerfully: What is the evidence (fruit) of my goodness? If it was a crime to be good, would there be enough evidence to convict me?

Goodness Is Being For Others

Matthew 25:31"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, ³²and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' ⁴⁰And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

"A life not lived for others is not a life."

— *Mother Teresa*

Read prayerfully: Is there a difference between being good and being good for others? How might my goodness be lived out for others?

Goodness Is Loving One Another

^{John 15:9}As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. ¹⁰If 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. ¹²This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I 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. ¹⁶It 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. ¹⁷This I command you: love one another.

"Love is a fruit in season at all times and within reach of every hand."

— *Mother Teresa*

Read prayerfully: Do people around me know my love for them? How might I grow in love for others?

Key Insights

General

- To be good is to live the qualities of goodness.
- We all have areas to grow.

Goodness Comes From God

- We know something about goodness because we experience God's goodness (creation, life, love, etc.).
- People can be good without knowing God, but knowing God gives one special insights into goodness.
- Our goodness is often limited by what is easy for us to give.

Goodness Bears Fruit

- Goodness is not something we simply *are*, goodness bears fruit.
- Goodness is lived out in our actions.
- What fruit can I point to?

Goodness Is Being For Others

- Goodness means being good for others.
- A special focus is those in need.
- Especially those in need around us.
- How do people experience my goodness?

Goodness Is Loving One Another

- Living goodness is living love
- Love is the central command of Jesus
- Learning to love is the central work of our lives
- Perfection in love is truly what sets the Saints apart

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God... 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.

1John 4:7, 12

Extra Reading:

Excerpts from *The Joy of the Gospel* by Pope Francis

9. Goodness always tends to spread. Every authentic experience of truth and goodness seeks by its very nature to grow within us, and any person who has experienced a profound liberation becomes more sensitive to the needs of others. As it expands, goodness takes root and develops. If we wish to lead a dignified and fulfilling life, we have to reach out to others and seek their good. In this regard, several sayings of Saint Paul will not surprise us: “The love of Christ urges us on” (2 Cor 5:14); “Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel” (1 Cor 9:16).

10. The Gospel offers us the chance to live life on a higher plane, but with no less intensity: “Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others”

71. The new Jerusalem, the holy city (cf. Rev 21:2-4), is the goal towards which all of humanity is moving. It is curious that God’s revelation tells us that the fullness of humanity and of history is realized in a city. We need to look at our cities with a contemplative gaze, a gaze of faith which sees God dwelling in their homes, in their streets and squares. God’s presence accompanies the sincere efforts of individuals and groups to find encouragement and meaning in their lives. He dwells among them, fostering solidarity, fraternity, and the desire for goodness, truth and justice. This presence must not be contrived but found, uncovered. God does not hide himself from those who seek him with a sincere heart, even though they do so tentatively, in a vague and haphazard manner.

101. Let us ask the Lord to help us understand the law of love. How good it is to have this law! How much good it does us to love one another, in spite of everything. Yes, in spite of everything! Saint Paul’s exhortation is directed to each of us: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21). And again: “Let us not grow weary in doing what is right” (Gal 6:9). We all have our likes and dislikes, and perhaps at this very moment we are angry with someone. At least let us say to the Lord: “Lord, I am angry with this person, with that person. I pray to you for him and for her”. To pray for a person with whom I am irritated is a beautiful step forward in love, and an act of evangelization. Let us do it today! Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the ideal of fraternal love!

Recap & Prepare for Week 2

- Reread the text for this week.
 - Underline phrases that speak to your heart
 - Pick a phrase each morning, and write it on a slip of paper
 - Hold that theme in your heart throughout the day
 - At the end of the day, pray an Examen (below)
- Reflection questions:

What are some qualities of goodness you want to develop (i.e., areas of growth)?

What does it mean to be “good for another”?

Who in your life is most in need (possible recipient) of your goodness?

A Daily Prayer - The Examen

The Examen is an extremely fruitful daily prayer (set aside 5-15 minutes):

1. Take a moment to recognize that you’re in the presence of God
2. Thank God for the many gifts in your life
3. Invite the Spirit to walk back with you through your day, focusing on the specific theme of the day. Take the time to stop and really see that moment with new perspective.
4. Pray for God’s guidance for tomorrow.

WEEK 2 - SHARE

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 seeking God?
 - *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 seeking God.
- 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 15)
 - Prayer will be about 15 minutes
 - Review the prayer format : *Lectio Divina* (page 16)
 - Discussion will follow based on the prayer and the questions (page 14).
- Prayer *(10/15 minutes)*
 - Transition Passage: "Be the living expression of God's kindness." (Mother Teresa)
 - *Lectio Divina*: Matthew 7:15-20 (page 9)
- Discussion *(30/45 minutes)*
 - Begin with insights from the prayer experience
 - Discussing the reflection questions (page 14)
- 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

WEEK 3 - ACT

Revisit the exercise on page 6.. What areas of growth do you see?

We live out goodness for others. Who might receive the the fruits of this goodness (i.e., needs the goodness we are working to grow in)?

Action: Pick a specific goodness you want to grow in, and make a plan for how you will share that goodness with someone.

WEEK 4 - SHARE

Preparing

- Continue to use the phrases you highlighted when you prepared for Week 2:
 - Pick a phrase each morning, and write it on a slip of paper
 - Hold that theme in your heart throughout the day
 - At the end of the day, pray an Examen (page 14)
- 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 15)
 - Prayer will be about 15 minutes
 - Review the prayer format : *Lectio Divina* (page 16)
 - Discussion will follow based on the prayer the Act exercise (page 18)
- Prayer (10/15 minutes)
 - Transition Passage: "A life not lived for others is not a life." (Mother Teresa)
 - *Lectio Divina*: Matthew 25:31-40 (page 10)
- 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

THREE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH INTENTIONAL SEEKERS

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.



UPCOMING “EXPLORE” SESSIONS

Young Adults’ Session*, Wed., Oct. 1, 7:30-9 PM, Parish Hall

Sunday, October 5, 10:30-11:30 AM, School Basement

Monday, October 6, 7:30-9 PM, Aquinas Room

Other Explore Sessions may start in November

* 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>



CONNECT WITH A SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Contact Scott Moyer at scott@stdominics.org

or come to an Explore session to get connected