



Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus

Sherry A. Weddell

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Describe your relationship with God I went to Mass every Sunday. I was on two committees at my parish. I read the Catechism of Catholic Church. I didn't eat meat on Fridays during Lent

Too often we approach our faith like we would a checklist or a resume.

While the knowledge of our faith and the experience of faith is certainly important, how would our lives be different if we had a real, living relationship with God?

As a Catholic, a lay leader, a parish staff member, or a pastor, it is critical to understand this growing chasm that is allowing even active parishioners to slowly fade away from the Church.

This book provides parishes and individuals with a foundation on which to build a new formation process that establishes a relationship with God. Ultimately every person can become a true disciple of God, leading to a profound change in the individual and the parish, creating a vibrant and active faith community.

Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus Details

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From Reader Review Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus for online ebook

Kim says

While I'm not a Catholic, when a colleague shared the idea of intentional disciples as a metaphor for our work in education redesign, I became intrigued. Weddell's presentation of the changes in religious practice in both the U.S. and the world are also fascinating, as are the five thresholds on the path to discipleship:

1. Trust
 2. Curiosity
 3. Openness
 4. Seeking
 5. Intentional Discipleship
-

Beverly says

I found it rather difficult to read because it was so abstract. I think the takeaway is that intentional discipleship is a personal relation with God, and a constant discernment of what God is asking me to do. (I reread this book in Aug 2014 after participating in a "Called and Gifted" workshop, and in preparation for a "Making Disciples" workshop presented by the author. It made much more sense. Weddell is saying that each of us has been given a gift, we need to discover it and use it to evangelize, which means spread the gospel, in words and actions.)

Evan says

This may not be a timeless spiritual classic or literary feat, but without a doubt, this was the most timely and poignant book I read all year. It was certainly the one I talked about the most with people, and as a seminarian, I'm generally inundated by deep spiritual/theological classics... It is not a cynical book in the least. It is simply honest and ACTUALLY hits upon the ethos of the "postmodern" believer and nonbeliever. I think Weddell just puts her finger right on the nerve of what have become the dull or provincial assumptions that go into an average Catholic modus operandi. It has the effect, I think, that those who object or are unmoved by her theses (for example, the Catholic "culture of silence"- the pseudo-StFrancis quote that has justified countless Catholics from ACTUALLY talking/preaching Jesus and the Gospel), are those who need to be challenged by her message. Anyone who works in a Catholic parish or other ministerial setting must read this book. However you react, it will certainly generate discussion about the critical questions we must honestly face today in the New Evangelization.

Beth says

Although the premise of this book is very well thought out, the author did not quite convince me that intentional discipleship is the path that I am meant to follow. The main reason for that is I felt she failed to fully explain her examples and the theological backings for her thoughts about intentional discipleship. There were many instances where she would start to talk about the 'why' a particular step in formation was so

important, but would then lead directly into how one would accomplish this, without a firm grounding in theology. That grounding in theology or scripture would be helpful to me - especially as I work to spread the Good News to others.

The best chapters were the last two - directed at leadership in parishes that gave specific steps as to how to talk to others about intentional discipleship - and ways to bring that charism into a church community. And that is what intentional discipleship is truly - a charism. It is not meant for anyone, yet for those who believe in it, it is a transformative experience - as any charism is. Just as we need intentional disciples who are 'on fire' with the Spirit, so too do we need those who seek God's love and prayer in solitude, through teaching, through preaching, and all the many other ways in which the Body of Christ makes himself present here on earth.

Sarah says

When I started reading this book as part of a summer-long study, I knew it would be a good read and I thought it would be worth the time I was investing in it.

It was way more than worth it. It was transformative.

There's something in the air right now, and Forming Intentional Disciples captures part of it.

We're all looking around us in our pews, under the kneelers, around the parish, and wondering, "what the heck do we do now?"

This has been one of the best handbooks I've read, and it's going on the special shelf I have for books that not only have I marked up so much I can't ever share them, but that I have to reread in large sections. No, it's not more important than the Bible or the Catechism (different shelf), but this is a book for our times.

This is a book for those of us in the pews. It's a book for those of us who've wondered why we bother, who hang onto whatever thread of "why" we've found (for me, it's the Eucharist) and try to squelch the hunger for more.

This book has been something that has seeped into me and made me think and consider and examine. I feel like I've internalized it but also that I could reread it next week and learn even more.

Even more importantly, I feel like this book has given me a mission of sorts, a direction and a way to look. Yeah, I did have that before, but it wasn't so well articulated.

I consider this book part of a small pile that anyone serious about their faith should read and share. Highly recommended.

Andrew says

After everything I heard, I was pretty underwhelmed, especially after Bishop Loverde of Arlington cited a couple quotes from her book in his apostolic letter on the New Evangelization. I really don't know where to start. I think Weddell offers a lot of good thoughts on promoting an active relationship with Jesus. I wasn't entirely comfortable though, with a couple things. One, her list of five steps in the conversion process. She

would acknowledge, I think, that individuals need to be considered one on one, but I could see people trying too hard to categorize a potential convert rather than looking at what that person needs to take the next step. Second, she pushed the sacraments aside--they barely got a mention. She asserts that many Catholics are leaving the Church because they believe can find a deeper relationship with Christ, in evangelical Protestantism. But what about the Eucharist, where Jesus is truly present to us? Evangelizing in the parish is inseparable from Catholic tradition and the sacraments. She didn't get into the idea of a Catholic identity at all. She was too dismissive of that. My own spiritual journey was more intellectual, so perhaps I wasn't her target audience. Again, she raises many good points on the need to deepen our personal relationship with Jesus, but I think Weddell oversimplified some of the problems facing the modern Church.

Jess Mearns says

Thoroughly enjoyed this book... what a good read for someone who is interested in ways to evangelize and disciple...and also for anyone curious about why it may sometimes seem rare to hear conversations about a relationship with Jesus Christ among practicing Catholics. It really pinpoints the problems that the Church is faced with in the 21st Century and how we can work towards resolving those problems

Mary Sanchez says

The Catholic Church continues to lose members to evangelical churches because parishioners say they are seeking a more personal relationship with God. The author suggests 5 thresholds one should experience to know and follow Jesus on a personal level.

1. Trust
2. Curiosity
3. Openness
4. Seeking
5. Intentional Discipleship

This book will certainly challenge the reader to examine and revitalize his/her own spiritual needs and think about his individual gifts which can be used to assist with the evangelization mission of the church for all parishioners.

Irene says

Rooted in extensive research and pastoral work across the country, Weddell argues that the majority of self-identified Catholics have never actually been evangelized, heard and responded to the call to radically follow Christ. This book does an excellent job of laying out the issue but does not adequately develop the solution. Nonetheless, it has my head spinning with thoughts and questions. I see she has a subsequent book. I plan on reading that one to see if some of those questions are answered in it.

Joyce Donahue says

Sherry Weddell nails it. The Catholic Church has a serious disciple deficit. so much of what she says sounds very familiar, but it is the way the statements about the issues and the proposals for solution are put together that is unique. I will be passing this one on to my pastor and parish council.. and to people in my diocesan office.

Paul says

This book is inspirational, and even manages to use polling and sociology to some kind of good purpose, which I have been waiting decades to see.

I guess this is as good a place as any to muse for a moment: All those people who used to come to church every Sunday and now don't...were they ever meaningfully Christian at all? I mean, there's a ton of nuance to that question that I'm not about to try to engage with here, but I throw this out here just to suggest that we're probably going through a period of sloughing off of dead, fake, peer pressure Christians more than we are actually undergoing some sort of tragedy. There is a lot of happy talk that gets foisted about when people talk about the "new evangelization" or whatnot, but there really is plenty of hope in our situation. The hermetically sealed Christianity of holy innocence and the Index and whatnot is shattered. Guess what? That means we have to actually engage with the sins that poison the lives of everyone else and see if our Gospel has answers to it. As a matter of fact, it does! How did it spread in the first place? Same reason.

Rusty Tisdale says

I liked it, I really did. However, the information is overwhelming, and it has a tendency to come off as a bit formulaic. A bit. Also, there is a tendency to over-emphasize the negative in Catholicism over those things we get right. Also, a lot is riding on a particular view of discipleship. Many of the best "followers of Jesus" I've met in the Church are reticent about talking about their faith, but live it powerfully.

Claire Gilligan says

Exceeded my expectations! One of my first thoughts while reading this was, "Why wasn't this required reading in my undergrad catechetics curriculum?" Then I looked and discovered that it wasn't published until after I graduated (time flies, eh?).

She's got some statistics that impressed even jaded me, along with demonstrative stories--both of how we (as Catholic communities) are failing, and of how some of us are succeeding. Along with those, she shares strategies developed by working with hundreds, plausibly thousands of parish leaders over the years. Even though my situation isn't such that I'd implement any of the given plans per se, it's excellent food for thought, and I'm quite looking forward to exploring the issues further on the Called & Gifted retreat I'll be attending this weekend.

I rarely use this verb because it's sadly become trite, but this book convicted me to be more intentionally Christocentric in my teaching, in my relationships, and generally in every conversation I have about God. After all, if a person has never received/understood an invitation to 1) believe in the possibility of and 2) cultivate a personal relationship with God, what's the point of all the rest?

booklady says

Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus by Sherry Weddell is a startlingly honest book about the state of most Catholic parishes today. I recognized many truths and heard the reasons for them explained. However, it wasn't the problems which intrigued me so much as the hopeful signs, the solutions, and the positive maxim, "Never accept a label in place of a story." Her five thresholds of conversion were even more compelling as they're readily identifiable points along the spiritual journey where the Holy Spirit is actively at work and by careful listening pastors and other church workers can facilitate smooth transitions to full discipleship.

They are: 1.) Initial trust—a positive association with Jesus Christ, the Church, a Christian believer, or something identifiably Christian; not the same as active personal faith. 2.) Spiritual curiosity—intrigued by or desiring to know more about Jesus, his life, and his teachings or some aspect of the Christian faith. 3.) Spiritual openness—personal acknowledgement of openness to the possibility of personal and spiritual change. This is not a commitment to change. 4.) Spiritual seeking—moving from being essentially passive to actively seeking to know God. 5.) Intentional discipleship—the decision to follow Jesus in the midst of his Church as an obedient disciple and to reorder one's life accordingly.

When I finished *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* I had to walk away from it awhile. It contains a lot of statistics as well as a fair number of new concepts. The numbers were rather dismal but the ideas were hopeful and helpful, both on an individual and a group level. Yet as I'm not active in parish ministry anymore, I couldn't think what to do with this information. Reading some of the other reviews here on Goodreads I came across comments to the effect that Ms. Weddell doesn't offer enough solutions to the problems. If you are looking for some big fancy program which is going to 'fix' our broken parishes, then her book will be a disappointment. But I don't *believe* in programs anyway. I believe in Jesus and the Holy Spirit and in the power of Love, prayer, communication and personal testimony to change hearts and lives. So for me, this book is about how do I become a fully functional disciple? Some of this will involve my own relationship with Jesus, some will concern my other primary relationships, and the rest will involve what I do with, for and in my parish. If you want to change the world, or just your country, state, parish or home, best to begin with yourself.

Update: Today (July 20, 2014) at Mass a friend returned my copy of this book to me and I'm going to browse it again before passing it along to someone else. In listening to the Gospel and homily (on the Weeds and the Wheat) I thought about how often I compare myself to others, in hopes of getting that warm comfortable feeling that I am among the Wheat and *not* one of the Weeds. God seemed to be telling me not to be looking side-to-side and comparing myself to my brothers and sisters, but if I compare myself to anyone, to compare myself to Him. Then I can't help but be humbled and grateful, rather than smug and self-satisfied. Also, I'll realize I'm both Weed and Wheat and in need of His help to weed out the Weed and Yeast up the Wheat. Excellent book!

Dcn. Jedidiah Tritle says

Weddell offers good insights into catechetical problems within the Catholic Church, and offers a well-thought-out solution centered around a relational person-to-person method of evangelization. It can initially come off as a bit overly-Protestant in terms of the emphasis on relationality and personal relationship with Jesus Christ and lack of emphasis on the efficacy of the Sacraments and critical importance of the Church as an institution both Divine and human. However, there is plenty of good information to glean from this book, especially on how to evangelize rather than proselytize.