

Discussion Guide for the Video

CATCHING FIRE, BECOMING FLAME

with
ALBERT HAASE, OFM

Note: This booklet offers only an abbreviated guide with questions for groups and individuals, while Fr. Albert Haase's paperback book *Catching Fire, Becoming Flame—10th Anniversary Edition* is the best accompaniment to this video presentation. The book offers full study materials on every lesson offered by Fr. Albert, plus many additional lessons not included in the video. To order copies of the book, please visit www.paracletepress.com or call 1-800-451-5006.

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SESSION ONE THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY AS A PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION



Father Albert summarizes: “The spiritual journey is a process of being transformed by the Spirit of God into a ‘little Christ’ for the loving service of the present moment.”

What does that mean the spiritual journey is *not*?

What does that mean the spiritual journey *is*?

God uses many occasions and experiences to wake us up. What has recently awakened you to the idea that you need to get serious about a spiritual life?

Consider the stage of purgation: taking a moral inventory of your life, and using will power to rid your life of specific sins. Then, what are the three steps, following the acronym CPR that Fr. Albert offers as essential to helping you do this?

SESSION TWO YOUR IMAGE OF GOD



When Jesus called God “Abba,” it changed how people thought about God, and it demonstrated how Jesus understood and related to God.

Father Albert summarizes: “The most important aspect of a person’s spiritual life is their image of God. How you think about

God. Because if you have a healthy image of God it will catapult you to holiness.”

Consider your image of God: What is it, right now, today?

Our image of God should challenge us to move beyond ego, to die to ourselves, to challenge us to pour our lives out in love.

SESSION THREE

THE EXAMEN



This prayer practice, designed by St. Ignatius of Loyola, has a 500-year history. It will deepen your sensitivity and awareness of the presence of God in your life.

The Examen is not meant to be a prayer for examining conscience. The purpose of that sort of prayer is conversion, focusing on you, so that you might lead a more moral life. The Examen focuses on God, not you: You look for where God has been in your life over the last twelve hours.

The first step is gratitude. We look over our present life and thank God for any gifts, graces, or blessings we have received. Fr. Albert’s twenty-minute practice of the Examen sometimes consists solely of this first step.

Step two is the petition to the Holy Spirit. We ask the Holy Spirit to open up our eyes, ears, and hearts as we review the events of the past few hours, since our last practice of the Examen. This is also a prayer for enlightenment and insight as we seek to understand the many and varied ways the Spirit of God calls us to spiritual transformation.

The review forms the heart and soul of the Examen, and is the third step. We survey and probe the immediate past hours. Event by event, hour by hour, we ask ourselves questions such as: Where was God speaking to me and challenging me? How was the Spirit inviting me to be more Christlike?

The fourth step is asking for forgiveness. We express sorrow and ask forgiveness for still living on autopilot, unaware and unconscious of God’s surrounding presence in the daily routines.

Then, the Examen concludes with the renewal. In this step, we look over our upcoming daily schedule as we now know it and anticipate the approaching hours or events where we need to be particularly attentive to the pending manifestation of the divine presence or call. We anticipate God’s presence in order to participate in it. We ask ourselves: Where might the God of disguise surprise me? What situation might the Spirit use to mold me?

SESSION FOUR

SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER



Do you remember the “prayer of last resort,” according to Fr. Albert’s grandmother? Is there an underlying truth to that humorous example from his childhood? How does Fr. Albert’s grandmother’s way of prayer relate to the parable told by Jesus in Luke 18:1–8?

Take time to discuss Fr. Albert’s seven principles of prayer with others:

1 – Prayer should heighten your sensitivity and make you more aware of God.

- 2 – Pray from where you are, not where you think you should be.
(Read Luke 18:9–14)
- 3 – The best way to pray is the way that works for you.
- 4 – Frustration in prayer is a sign that you are trying too hard.
- 5 – Growth in prayer is growth in silence.
- 6 – Dryness in prayer is a (good) sign that God is calling you to
“let go” of your way of praying, so that the Spirit can pray
within you.
- 7 – Listen to your distractions; learn from them, and pray from
them.

SESSION FIVE GOD’S WILL AND DECISION MAKING



We don’t so much follow a master blueprint that God has for our lives. Instead, God gives us free will and we have to learn to make good decisions. In making decisions, we listen to:

- Our head, for what makes sense.
- Our heart, for our deepest desires.
- Our gut, for what feels right. And that’s good.

But consider also the five things mentioned by Fr. Albert that we each need to consider when we make decisions:

- My past—it helps me to decide which direction to go.
- My potential—for my unique God-given talents and abilities.
- My present identity—to the responsibilities and obligations that I’m committed to.
- My passion—which has been placed there by God.
- The faith factor—so that I may commit to doing things God’s way, not my way.

SESSION SIX THE CHALLENGE OF FORGIVENESS



As we have been forgiven, so we are challenged to forgive other people. Read the parable of Jesus about the slave and the master in Matthew 18:21–35.

Consider Fr. Albert’s seven points about forgiveness:

- 1 – For Christians, forgiveness knows no boundaries. We must always forgive.
- 2 – Jesus never makes anyone beg for forgiveness (even as he hangs upon the cross—see Luke 23:34). Study Luke 7:36–50.
- 3 – The best time to forgive is now; it is never “convenient” to forgive.
- 4 – Forgiveness is a decision, an act of the will (not a feeling).
- 5 – Forgiveness is also the best thing you can do for yourself. To refuse to forgive is to remain a prisoner.
- 6 – You gain nothing by keeping grudges alive.
- 7 – If you still have trouble forgiving, pray for the gift and it will come.

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