

# Heroic

Become the man  
God created you to be.

Developed By:

Fr. Matthew Hawkins

Justin Reyes

Andy Day

St. James Cathedral, Orlando, FL

# Introduction

This study is an attempt to help men follow Jesus and become the men God created them to be. This is most fruitful when done so within the context of being a Catholic Christian. Therefore, this study is written from a Catholic perspective. There is nothing better in this world than the Catholic faith. It is the pearl of great price Jesus spoke about, because it's the fullness of the Christian faith. Once we embrace the truths of the Catholic faith, then we can start to become the men God destined us to be.

On the following pages are six topics to be discussed by a group of men who seek to live a more heroic life: your past, identity, mission, prayer life, the Sacraments, and relationships.

It is recommended to allocate ample time for discussion so all can listen and share, discuss one topic at a time per gathering, and choose a setting with no distractions. It is also very important to begin and end each session with prayer, asking for our Lord's mercy and guidance and the intercession of all the saints. In particular The Virgin Mary, our spiritual mother given to us by Christ, and St. George, patron saint of soldiers, as we battle for our destiny.

May Our Good Lord guide us, Our Lady pray for us, and St. George intercede for us, as we strive to be more like Jesus every day and say "yes" to our vocation from God.

# Group Norms

- † Group size should be no less than 3, but no more than 6, to allow ample time for discussion.
- † It is preferred to have at least one clergy member participate in the group, or at the least, a very-well-formed lay member of the church, to help steer the conversation, and align it with truths of Catholicism.
- † It is recommended to have one group leader to steer the conversations, keeping them on track and connected to previous and future sessions.
- † Participants should not try to “solve” the problems of others; that is not what we are here for – but we are here to listen, encourage, and challenge each other to grow in holiness.
- † What is said in the group must stay in the group. This is sacred. Participants should not share personal details about other participants with those not in the group.
- † It is crucial for every session to begin and end in prayer. Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the group can fall apart and fall into jealousy, pride, and gossip. The devil will try to break apart something that is working well.
- † Each participant should be very open, as if they were sharing with a close friend or brother. But it may take time for this trust to develop.

# **(1) Your Past: Where do you come from?**

Every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future. Where do you come from? What is your story? We cannot know where we are going unless we first start with where we are from. Our Lord knows our past, desires to meet us exactly where we are, then bring us to where we need to be. Do not be afraid to be open and honest about your past, so that you can begin to carve your future.

“Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, ‘Here is a true Israelite. There is no duplicity in him.’ Nathanael said to him, ‘How do you know me?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree.’ Nathanael answered him, ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.’” – John 1: 47-50 (NABRE)

## **For Discussion:**

1. Where were you born, and who are your parents? What is their story?
2. What was your childhood like? How did it shape who you are?
3. What were the values instilled by your parents, friends, and society as a boy?
4. What were your hopes and dreams as a boy? Did your life have direction?
5. What triumphs have you experienced during your life?
6. What challenges, or sorrows have you faced? Have they left any scars?
7. Who were your heroes and role models that shaped your understanding of what it means to be a man?
8. What are your hopes for your future and what do you think you need to get there?

## (2) Your Identity: Who Are You?

Be honest with this question. A lot of men hide behind fake answers, or try to ignore the question, or rationalize their response. But you need to be honest with yourself before you run out of time – who are you? Who are you trying to be? And how are you going to get there?

We cannot answer these questions without knowing Jesus. Is there something holding you back from a deep relationship with Him? Whatever it is, let it go, and let Him in.

“You move us to delight in praising You; for You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”  
– St. Augustine of Hippo

### For Discussion:

1. Who are you? How would you answer this question if a stranger asked?
  2. Are you satisfied with your answer? Why or why not?
  3. Jesus is the ideal of man and “Jesus reveals man to himself and makes His supreme calling clear”. What are those characteristics in Christ that challenge you most?
  4. What defines you (what brings you joy/peace or anxiety): work, family, money, possessions, recreation, shame, regret, sinfulness?
  5. Do you experience freedom or are you enslaved to the things/circumstances/responsibilities of your life?
6. What is your relationship with Jesus like? What do you want it to be like?
7. How can you take your relationship with Jesus to the next level?

### **(3) Your Mission: Where are you going?**

Once we know who we are, then we can start discerning where we are going.

You are a child of God, and with that comes all the gifts of being a son – being spoiled, disciplined, and loved. It also means you have a mission, a task, unique to you; there is not an opt-out in this case. Mission flows from identity – we are not just an individual son or daughter being loved, but we are a part of a Church with an identity and mission. Jesus gave us all the Great Commission, but He also later sent the apostles to specific places through the Holy Spirit. How do you find your mission? Bring your desires, longings, fears, and dreams to the Lord in prayer. Then let Him speak to your heart. Then act.

Pray. Listen. Act. Repeat.

“Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which He blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are His body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”

– St. Teresa of Ávila

#### **For Discussion:**

1. "Man only finds himself in a sincere gift of self." How are you "gift" to family/society/workplace/world? (Who you are before what you do)
2. What is your measure of success: on the last day, how will you determine that your life was successful?
3. What do you think your mission in life is? Have you found it?
4. What are the obstacles/distractions/pitfalls preventing your progress in fulfilling your mission?
5. How can you remove those obstacles with the help of God and other people in your life?
6. What are the ways in which you think God speaks to you, drawing you into your mission and helping you navigate life's twists and turns as you seek to fulfill it? Can you share examples?
7. Prayer is an essential part of hearing God's voice in our lives. How would you describe your prayer life? How can it be strengthened?

## (4) Prayer: How do you get there?

Prayer is the best part about being alive. In prayer, we get to experience the love of God while here on earth. We get to listen to Him, feel His Presence, and seek His guidance. There is simply nothing better, and it can fuel the rest of our existence. How do we pray? It's simple really: we make time for it. We may be tempted to think we don't have time, but that isn't true. Think about your whole day and where you can give God 2 minutes, then 5 minutes, then watch it grow from there. Pray from your heart. Speak to Him like He is your father. Then listen. Let Him speak back to you. And you will be changed.

"Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God. But when we pray, do we speak from the height of our pride and will, or "out of the depths" of a humble and contrite heart? He who humbles himself will be exalted; humility is the foundation of prayer. Only when we humbly acknowledge that "we do not know how to pray as we ought," are we ready to receive freely the gift of prayer. "Man is a beggar before God." – CCC 2559

### For Discussion:

1. How is your communication with the people around you? Is your ability or inability to share from the depths reflected in your prayer life?
2. How would you describe your prayer life? Does it come easy for you? Why or why not?
3. Do you speak about your thoughts/fears/desires/experiences to God (like a news reporter) or from them?
  4. What are the different ways in which you pray?
5. What do you think God is most commonly telling you in prayer? What does He try to remind you of time and time again?
  6. What holds you back from growth in your prayer life? How can you overcome?
7. For the saints, prayer is not simply something they do but who they are: how is your life (or how can it become) prayer?
  8. How can this group be praying for you?

## **(5) The Sacraments: How will you make it?**

Nourishment for the journey. God gave us the Sacraments to sustain us for our walk on earth. We have the Eucharist to strengthen us, Penance to wash us, and Confirmation to embolden us. Each Sacrament has its place and purpose, including those which enable us to live out our vocation – Holy Orders and Matrimony. But it all began with one Sacrament: Baptism. This sacrament is in fact what gave us our identity as a child of God. Draw near to the Sacraments and you will have the strength to live out your vocation. The Lord gave them to us for a reason.

“Christ instituted the sacraments of the new law. The seven sacraments touch all the stages and all the important moments of Christian life: they give birth and increase, healing and mission to the Christian's life of faith. There is thus a certain resemblance between the stages of natural life and the stages of the spiritual life.” – CCC 1210

### **For Discussion:**

1. We cannot give what we have not first received. What do we receive from the Sacraments that we may give to others?
2. Have you ever felt depleted/exhausted/inadequate when trying to give by your own strength?
3. As Christians, we are called to share in Christ's divine nature. How do we experience the divine life through the Sacraments?
4. What are other ways that God's "sacramental" presence (means of receiving grace) are experienced in your life?
5. Sacraments are a visible sign of an invisible grace; Christ is the primordial sacrament of the Father. How are we "sacraments" providing grace, love and life to others?
6. Which sacrament do you need the most right now and why?



## **(6) Relationships: How will you live?**

At the end of the day, everything comes back to relationships, beginning with our relationship with God. But if we get this primary relationship right – that with Our Heavenly Father – then we can get every other relationship right, including with ourselves. It all starts with Christ at the center. Making time for Him, learning from Him, and staying close to Him. Then He will show us how to relate to others, as He was the perfect example of how to live in harmony with others. Serve. Love. Repeat. Being drawn into relationship with Him also draws us into relationship with His Church. And it is within His Church that we find our identity and mission. And it is there where we learn how to pray, experience the Sacraments, and build relationships.

“This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” - John 13:15 (NABRE)

### **For Discussion:**

1. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." How do your expressions of love measure up to the ideal?
2. What are your best relationships, and why? What are your worst?
  3. "If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." Does this shock you? What could Jesus, the prince of peace and the master of mercy and the Lord of love, possibly mean?
4. "And the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God.'" What temptations/lies challenge you in your identity as son?
  5. What relationships in your life need more nourishing?