



LEARNING MODULE I

Seminar # 21

Faith, Spiritual Practices

Learning Objectives

1. What is the issue.
2. How can the issue impact the family.
3. What are the options.

Pathfinder: The 12 Key Issues a Family Faces

#1 Enabling vs Consequences

#2 Addiction Behavior

#3 Family Intervention

#4 The Police

#5 Emergency Medical Services

#6 Legal Court System

#7 Treatment Centers

**# 8 Support Agencies
Mapping**

9 The Relapse

#10 Successful Lifelong Recovery

#11 Bereavement (Learning how to move forward)

#12 Spirituality, Faith Practices

What is the issue?

How can churches help find a solution to the drug epidemic? It seems simple enough, Churches are focused on God, have families in their congregation that are experiencing this epidemic and have knowledge of how to practice faith in suffering. It would seem all three elements exist in what a family experiences on their journey with substance use disorder. However, even though doctors, counselors, politicians, prosecutors, mayors, and treatment centers have all converged to address this issue, the churches have been the least committed to provide a family focused ministry for this large population.

This is the purpose of “Invest in the Family Ministry”, a church-based ministry for family’s experiencing the substance use disorder epidemic. What has been the case for many churches is most do not have the strategy, structure, process within their existing ministries to adapt and support the unique blend of needs required by this group. Also, their family’s needs are not only of a spiritual nature; but include education learning about what the journey with substance use disorder will entail, how to use their faith practices in their suffering. This is a complicated disease only further exasperated by a social stigma which prevents families from seeking help. It becomes more elusive when they do not know where to begin. The “Invest in the Family Ministry” clears up all these issues so they can focus on giving this over to God.

The “Invest in the Family Ministry” model offers a home in your church for these families by providing: 1. Education Learning Seminars, 2. Spiritual faith practice development paths, and 3. Networking to support referral resources. It is a harbor (Ark) in the storm; so, they can get educated, organized, and networked. These are the key elements needed to empower a family. Knowledge is Empowering.

This manual is designed to be modified so it meets the specific attributes of your faith practices. By meeting the family in their suffering and coming to their level we do God’s work better, than if we ask the family to rise to our level. The education seminars and spiritual development tracks can be self-administered by the family in their home, at your Church as a group or in a large seminar where the community is invited.

This same approach (meet them where they are) is designed in the ministry model to provide “spiritual development” as a starting point. Again, not asking them to rise to where we are, but rather meeting them where they can grow best, from their world. Given that every family is different, it will be theirs to decide the best path for their family, it is our role to provide options and support in how to move forward.

In connecting the family to referral resources, often a family does not know where to begin, what to ask for, what to expect. This is another role of the ministry. The family’s needs will change over time. So will their required support needs change. The ongoing ministry will assist in matching the right level support at each stage of their journey. They will not have to travel this road alone. But first there needs to be a ministry to fulfill this purpose, with purpose driven volunteers.

How can the issue impact the family?

FROM: APOSTOLIC LETTER, SALVIFICI DOLORIS OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF JOHN PAUL II

TO: THE BISHOPS, TO THE PRIESTS,

TO: THE RELIGIOUS FAMILIES AND TO THE FAITHFUL OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

RE: ON THE CHRISTIAN MEANING OF HUMAN SUFFERING

THE QUEST FOR AN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION OF THE MEANING OF SUFFERING

Within each form of suffering, we find a core element of what is hard to accept and what is which will remain for us a ministry. But we ask the question just the same: Why is there suffering, especially to those who are justly living their lives?

These questions are difficult, when an individual put them to another individual, the bias of the other is lamented from their understanding, what they feel is true. But when asked of God, our answers are not as direct. This is because, if the question is big enough to bring to God, then the effort to search for His answer is warranted.

God answers our questions in many ways, in prayer, through others, through our faith, spiritual practices and scripture. We encourage you to use all of them in your search for an answer. But in scripture regarding suffering, we can suggest a few parts of the bible to read. Those would be found in both the old testament and new testament.

In the Old Testament we find in the book of Exodus and the people of Israel, God's chosen people are wandering suffering in the desert. Although still being provided for, they are lost yet He is close. At time we are like these people in our own life. We know God is there, we know He loves us, but our suffering is not removed.

Then we can look at all the Book of Job and tell of his story in suffering.

10. Man can put this question to God with all the emotion of his heart and with his mind full of dismay and anxiety; and God expects the question and listens to it, as we see in the Revelation of the Old Testament. In the Book of Job, the question has found its most vivid expression.

The story of this just man, who without any fault of his own is tried by innumerable sufferings, is well known. He loses his possessions, his sons, and daughters, and finally he himself is afflicted by a grave sickness.

In this horrible situation three old acquaintances come to his house, and each one in his own way tries to convince him that since he has been struck down by such varied and terrible sufferings, he must have done something seriously wrong.

For suffering—they say—always strikes a man as punishment for a crime; it is sent by the just God and finds its reason in the order of justice. It can be said that Job's old friends wish not only to convince him of the moral justice of the evil, but in a certain sense they attempt to justify to themselves the moral meaning of suffering. In their eyes suffering can have a meaning only as a punishment for sin, therefore only on the level of God's justice, who repays good with good and evil with evil.

The point of reference in this case is the doctrine expressed in other Old Testament writings which show us suffering as punishment inflicted by God for human sins. The God of Revelation is the Lawgiver and Judge to a degree that no worldly authority can see. For the God of Revelation is first the Creator, from whom comes, together with existence, the essential good of creation.

Therefore, the conscious and free violation of this good by man is not only a transgression of the law but at the same time an offence against the Creator, who is the first Lawgiver.

Such a transgression has the character of sin, according to the exact meaning of this word, namely the biblical and theological one.

Corresponding to the moral evil of sin is punishment, which guarantees the moral order in the same transcendent sense in which this order is laid down by the 11. Job however challenges the truth of the principle that identifies suffering with punishment for sin. For he is aware that he has not deserved such punishment, and in fact he speaks of the good that he has done during his life. In the end, while it is true that suffering has a meaning as punishment, when it relates to a fault, it is not true that all suffering is a consequence of a fault and has the nature of a punishment.

The figure of the just man Job is a special proof of this in the Old Testament. Revelation, which is the word of God himself, with complete frankness presents the problem of the suffering of an innocent man: suffering without guilt.

Job has not been punished, there was no reason for inflicting a punishment on him, even if he has been subjected to a grievous trial.

The Book of Job poses in an extremely acute way the question of the "why" of suffering; it also shows that suffering strikes the innocent, but it does not yet give the solution to the problem.

Thus, in the sufferings inflicted by God upon the Chosen People there is included an invitation of his mercy, which corrects to lead to conversion: "... these punishments were designed not to destroy but to discipline our people"(26).

Therefore, first and foremost we see suffering because it creates the possibility of rebuilding goodness in the subject who suffers.

This is an extremely important aspect of suffering. It is profoundly rooted in the entire Revelation of the Old and above all the New Covenant. Suffering must serve for conversion, that is, for the rebuilding of goodness in the subject, who can recognize the divine mercy in this call to repentance. The purpose of penance is to overcome evil, which under different forms lies dormant

in man. Its purpose is also to strengthen goodness both in man himself and in his relationships with others and especially with God.

This answer in the New Testament has been given by God to man in the Cross of Jesus Christ. A just man who suffered for all of humanity.

What are the options?

Hope is Faith in Practice

Addiction recovery is about more than just the absence of drugs in your system. Recovery from drug and alcohol addiction is a complex process and journey. Many parts are unknown and to step forward, one needs to place their faith in front of themselves and rely on Hope that God's promises are real and will be given to you.

In many ways understanding our journey is more than being proactive, it is our part of the deal in receiving God's grace, i.e., we need to do our part. Getting educated or providing education about the issues faced by a family might be for you, part of that deal. Get educated and share what you have learned.

The other area that we can take charge of is to open ourselves towards spiritual development. To strengthen those areas where we see ourselves needing improvement or more understanding. Taking ownership of how well we practice our faith and share it with others.

The third area of Hope is knowing where to go to find help and assistance, to ensure the best possible results. We feel a greater sense of Hope when others around us know how to help. Building a network of referral partners is a way to build hope in your future.

1. Get educated on the journey.
2. Develop our individual spirituality to strengthen our faith practices.
3. Build a network hope, by having the right people to help by bringing the right level of skills to address the issues you are likely to face.

A Faith-Based Approach to Family Empowerment and Intervention

True faith is more than hope. It is trust. When you trust yourself to do your part, trust your loved one to take responsibility for their own life, and trust God to take care of the rest, that is genuine faith.

Accept the Things You Cannot Change

Family members often unwittingly take responsibility for things that are not their responsibility. Here is who is responsible for what...

The family is NOT responsible for:

- Shielding the substance user from the natural consequences of his or her actions
- The emotions or hardships of the substance user
- Feeding and sheltering adult children, especially when they lie, steal, and disrupt family life.

The family is responsible for:

- No longer enabling their loved one to be comfortable in addiction.
- Arranging professional intervention and addiction services for their loved one
- Setting clear boundaries
- Attending to their own needs

The addict or alcoholic is responsible for:

- Admitting he or she has a problem.
- Accepting help when it is offered.
- Doing the hard work to overcome addiction.
- Committing to long-term recovery

Have the Courage to Change What You Can healing:

Substance users avoid addiction treatment because it is a difficult process to go through to achieve the reward of a sober life. Families likewise avoid intervention because they do not want to go through the difficult process of saying “no” to their loved one and weathering the emotional firestorm that it will bring.

To get through this process, families need two things:

Courage: Yes, this will be uncomfortable. Yes, your loved one will probably say that they hate you for refusing to continue accommodating them. Yes, you can weather the storm and enjoy a better life if you have the courage to do so. If you are called to serve, then consider following these steps. If it is to understand, then complete this study guide and workbook seminar.

Your Faith, Your Spirituality are Yours to Share.

Create a Ministry Model of Your Own: In our brokenness we find the long reach of our Lord, our savior Jesus Christ. It is from our weakness where we come together and ascend; because of His grace given freely to us all, He includes those not invited to the banquet of others. We are all called to serve those that cannot serve themselves, as in the Good Samaritan, we seek the broken hearted and build a vessel of refuge for their healing. In providing an “*Invest in the Family Ministry*”, such an act of kindness, mercy and love is given to all.

Because no one knows when the thief will come by night, what he will steal or how our hearts will become ill with anxiety and fear, we must prepare ourselves within our spiritual development. It is not enough to become educated about the disease or networked into referral support services. This is the battle of good and evil, and we will fight it from our lowliness and weakness, because from there in our emptiness is our greatest strength, our lord God who gives to us His all. It is His promise in answering our prayers that we have hope. Let us stand up to stand together, from within this ministry, we will form our response to this our pain and suffering with the drug epidemic, a disease that kills our children and loved ones.

The *Invest in the Family Ministry* will start with a calling to all within the church who suffer in this epidemic to come and consider being involved in this new ministry, a calling to serve. From the church members some will lead, others will work, and many will follow but all will grow in their individual spiritual development.

There are four pillars in the ministry design:

1. **Culture:** As a ministry we are covering issues that family members are likely to face and provide for them a safe place to learn and grow by strengthening their continence as a family. This ministry will educate them on their journey, develop their spiritual faith and assist in guiding them to referral support resources both inside the church and from their local community.
2. **Structure:** As a ministry they will find a formal organization structure to support the process and implementation of the ministry services. It will require volunteers to be assigned specific roles and responsibilities supported with volunteer training and strong formal communication channels.
3. **Process:** The process consists of those programs that our ministry will provide, how these programs will be delivered and what should be the expected outcome. This will be the ministry’s workflow.
4. **Implementation:** How the ministry is presented to its members is important; from preparation through the final event, and then follow up. How the ministry communicates is important to ensure the most effective results. How the ministry develops and nurtures the culture of the ministry is important, to ensure it stays true to the teachings of the church in the practice of our faith and ministry.

This Ministry Development Model has Four Programs:

1. **The Purposeful Driven Ministry**, creates structure, process, and implementation, managed by purpose driven volunteers. It takes three volunteers to create the initial leadership in starting the ministry.

2. **The Family Solution Finder**, to educate the family on a journey with substance use disorder. The learning seminars are provided. One seminar for each monthly meeting. There are 32 seminars that cover the family's entire journey with substance use disorder. These are read, plug, and play seminars, no experience required.
3. **The SP~ARK's Program**, to provide learning resources and planning guides for spiritual development. In accordance with your faith, the individual family member will create their own plan for their spiritual development.
4. **The Family Resource Coordination, M.O.R.E.S. Program**, connects families with resources and services available from the church and local community.

This is empowerment, and these are the pieces made available through one single ministry, focused on your church family needs. It connects the church to the members that suffer, meeting them in their world, to love one another as God so loved us first.

Once the ministry is up and running, there are three programs that create content for a monthly meeting.

- The Family Solution Finder, 2. The SP~ARK's Program and 3. The M.O.R.E. Program.

I. MINISTRY CULTURE IS A PILLAR

There is work that must be done.

How is this accomplished?

By identifying to the volunteer "what work is needed", be clear, be precise, and be brief. Understanding that everything has its season and time. Those that volunteer need to understand "**what are they being asked to do**". Such direction will come from their direct leadership. A plan can be easily set-up to follow throughout the year. The process and structure will be set-up to support their personal spiritual development training and volunteer activity. We invest first in those who volunteer.

The time required to do this work.

How is this accomplished?

By identifying how much time it will take to complete each task, a volunteer will have a better understanding regarding the scope of their work contribution and compare it to their commitment in volunteering. Our culture is that "God makes big things from little acts". Therefore, little acts by volunteers will add up to bigger things. We invest in our ministry's.

Volunteer work requires growth.

How is this accomplished?

The spiritual development and growth of our volunteers' needs to be consistent (for all volunteers) moving forward. The objective of the Church ministry is both for the spiritual development of the family and the ministry volunteer. From within the spirit of the volunteer is God's love, to be shared in their visits with acts of kindness and mercy. Let us repeat this: "It does not come from the ministry; it comes from the volunteers". The volunteers are the *pearl of the Church*, like an oyster nurtures a grain of sand to one day become a beautiful pearl to be shared, so does the Church support a ministry that nurtures the volunteers to then go out and minister of our faith. One little act begets the other, and the other....

The spiritual development objective will be supported with a continuous training schedule for the volunteer, based on their personal goals with the goals & objectives of the ministry. A "culture of growth" is something that is formed, not something that just happens. When a volunteer grows in their spirituality, the ministry grows in spirituality, the Church grows in mercy and all experience the sharing of God's love which comes alive as we share in communion with Him. When we invest in our Church, all can grow together as one.

When the volunteer prepares for a visit, they will be asked to become familiar with their material which they will present during the visit. This preparation becomes a part of the volunteer's spiritual development. The adage, "*there is no better way to learn something, than to have to teach it*". This dual development is built into the structure and process of the ministry. Both family member and volunteer share in the experience of renewal, discovery, and application as to what the Holy Spirit is guiding us towards.