

Leader Preparation Guide

Until Christ Is Formed in You

Movement Four: Formation · Galatians 4:19; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12; 2 Timothy 2:2; Acts 18:24-28

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim

Discover from St. Paul's own descriptions of his pastoral work what accompaniment actually costs him, in his own bodily language, and then discover the four generation instruction in 2 Timothy 2:2 that makes formation reproduce instead of terminating in the person who did it.

Catholic Touchstone

Formation is personal, costly, and aimed past itself. In catechesis it is Christ who teaches, and everything else is taught with reference to him, so the person forming another has to be attached to Christ rather than substituting for him.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Galatians 4:19, and the word Paul chose

"My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!"

The verb is *ōdinō*, the word for labor pains. A man uses it about his own pastoral work, and does not seem to find it strange. Whatever St. Paul thought he was doing with the Galatians, it was not administration.

And note the word "again." He has already done this once with these people and he is doing it a second time. Formation is not a single successful handoff, and anyone in your group who has poured themselves into somebody who then drifted should hear that from the Apostle rather than from you.

Note also the goal, which is stated precisely: the goal reaches past agreement or membership: "until Christ be formed in you." The thing being produced is not a copy of the one forming.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, two family images in six verses

Verse 7: gentle among you, "like a nurse taking care of her children." Verse 11: "like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you." Maternal and paternal, in the same passage, about the same work.

Verse 8 is the cost: "we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us." Not the message only, but themselves; the passage is plural throughout, and this study treats Paul as speaking for the missionary team. And he gives the reason plainly: affection.

Verse 9 is the second cost: "you remember our labor and toil, brethren; we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you." They supported themselves by labour so as not to be a financial burden; if Paul's trade is invoked, cite Acts 18:3.

A textual note worth knowing before someone finds it. In verse 7 the manuscripts are genuinely divided between *ēpioi*, gentle, and *nēpioi*, little children or infants. It is one letter, and the preceding word ends in that letter, so a scribe could easily go either way. RSV2CE reads "gentle." Some modern translations read "infants," giving a striking image of the apostles as babies among them. Both readings are defensible and the evidence is genuinely split. If it comes up, say so; do not pretend the text is settled.

2 Timothy 2:2, and the verb that is not "teach"

"And what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

Count the generations: Paul, Timothy, faithful men, others also. Four, in one sentence.

And the verb is *parathou*, from the same word family as *parath'k'*, a deposit entrusted for safekeeping. Not broadcast, not explain, not teach. Entrust, in the sense of handing over something valuable for safekeeping.

The criteria are faithfulness and the ability to hand it on: the verse says faithful men "who will be able to teach others also". Timothy is told to look for people who will keep the deposit and be able to hand it on, and nothing is said about numbers.

Acts 18:24-28, the best model of correction in the New Testament

Apollos arrives at Ephesus: an Alexandrian, eloquent, well versed in the Scriptures, instructed in the way of the Lord, fervent in spirit, and he "spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus." That is a remarkable list of compliments. And then: "though he knew only the baptism of John."

Priscilla and Aquila hear him, and "they took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately." A married lay couple, tentmakers, take a brilliant public preacher aside privately and fill in what is missing. St. Luke names Priscilla first.

Notice everything that does not happen. No public correction, no letter to the leadership, no confrontation in the synagogue, and no attempt to shut him down. They took him.

And notice the result, which is the payoff of this session and the reason it comes where it does in the study.

The payoff your group will not see coming

Acts 18:27-28: Apollos crossed to Achaia, and there he "greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully confuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus."

Corinth was in Achaia, and Acts 19:1 places Apollos at Corinth. And the memory verse your group learned last week was 1 Corinthians 3:6: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."

That is the same Apollos. The man Priscilla and Aquila quietly corrected in a private conversation becomes the man St. Paul names as his fellow worker in the verse this group has been carrying around for a week. Do not tell them. Get it out of them in Build 6.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Elijah and Elisha, and what Elisha actually asked for

This is tonight's live discovery, and it turns on a detail most people have never noticed. The passages are 2 Kings 2:1-15 and Deuteronomy 21:17. Read them together before the session.

Moses and Joshua

Exodus 33:11 has Joshua, a young man, refusing to leave the tent of meeting. Numbers 27:18-23 has Moses laying hands on him publicly before the whole congregation. Deuteronomy 34:9 says Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. Years of proximity, then a public commissioning, then a real transfer.

Formation as domestic and constant

Deuteronomy 6:6-9: these words shall be upon your heart, and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise. The Old Testament assumes formation happens in ordinary hours rather than in scheduled sessions.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | The Rule of St. Benedict on adapting to the person in front of you

In its chapter on the abbot, the Rule of St. Benedict teaches in substance that one who is given charge of souls must adapt himself to many characters, coaxing one, reproving another, persuading another, and that he must accommodate himself to each according to what that person actually is.

The principle is fifteen centuries old and it is the opposite of a one-size-fits-all application of a curriculum; the Rule itself supplies a structured common programme. What forms one person will not form the next, and the person doing the forming has to change shape rather than expecting the other to.

The Rule of St. Benedict, chapter 2, on the qualities of the abbot. A faithful summary, not a quotation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope St. Paul VI on the test of whether it worked

Pope St. Paul VI wrote that the person who has been evangelized goes on to evangelize others, and he called this the test of truth and the touchstone of evangelization. It is unthinkable, he said, that someone should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming someone who bears witness to it and proclaims it in turn.

That is 2 Timothy 2:2 stated as a criterion. Formation should ordinarily dispose people to hand on what they received, while respecting their freedom and their circumstances.

Pope St. Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi 24 (1975).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine on the conversation he could not get

In the Confessions, St. Augustine describes wanting to pour out his troubles to St. Ambrose and repeatedly being unable to obtain the sustained private conversation he wanted. The bishop was besieged by people with needs, and in the little time he had free he was reading or resting, and Augustine could not bring himself to interrupt. The long private conversation he wanted never came about, though he did have some contact with him.

And he was formed anyway, by hearing the man preach and by watching how he handled the Scriptures. That indirect presence and observation can form a person is the inference this study draws from his

account. This is worth holding onto by anyone convinced they are failing because they cannot get the ideal one to one time. Sometimes the formation is happening in the parts you are not counting.

St. Augustine, Confessions VI.3-4.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

The Catechism is unusually direct about who is actually doing the teaching when one Christian forms another.

- **CCC 426.** At the heart of catechesis we find a Person, the Person of Jesus Christ. This is the same sentence Session 1 was built on, now applied to formation rather than to first contact.
- **CCC 427.** In catechesis it is Christ who is taught, and Christ alone who teaches; anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ's spokesman, and must let Christ teach through his mouth. The Catechism is explicit that the catechist has to attach himself to Christ rather than stand in for him.
- **CCC 5.** Catechesis is an education in the faith of children, young people, and adults, with a view to initiating them into the fullness of Christian life. Note the word initiating: it is aimed past itself.
- **CCC 900.** The laity have the obligation and the right to work so that the divine message of salvation is known and accepted.
- **CCC 1656-1657.** The family is the domestic church, and parents are the first heralds of the faith for their children.
- **CCC 2226.** Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God.
- Applying CCC 427 to a coffee shop conversation with a friend is our extension of the paragraph, not its wording.

THREAD WATCH

THREAD WATCH | leader only

Thread A, "With him, and sent." One session from payoff. Tonight it is running underneath 2 Timothy 2:2: the people entrusted with the deposit are chosen so that they can hand it on. Do not comment; Session 12 has the phrase that closes it.

Thread B. Resolved. If it comes up tonight in the form "so who formed Apollos, really," you may answer it directly now. That freedom is new as of last week.

The Movement Four question, answered tonight. Last week: what are you handing them to? The Church and her sacraments. This week the sharper answer: to the capacity to do this without you.

Watch for. Somebody in your group has poured years into a person who drifted. Galatians 4:19 says "again." Make sure that word lands on them, and do not turn it into a lesson for the whole room.

SESSION GOALS

1. Have the group notice that St. Paul reaches for childbirth, nursing, and fatherhood to describe what most of us would describe as mentoring.

2. Land the cost in 1 Thessalonians 2:8 and 2:9: not the gospel only but himself, and a job worked at night so his presence would cost them nothing.
3. Have them count the four generations in 2 Timothy 2:2 and notice the verb is entrust rather than teach.
4. Work Acts 18:24-28 as the model of private correction of a sincere and partly wrong believer.
5. Let the group discover for themselves that this Apollos is the Apollos of the verse they memorized last week.
6. Have them find what a double portion actually meant, from Deuteronomy 21:17.
7. Move the ladder to handing over: connect one of the three to someone who is not you.

TIMED PLAN

Minutes	Movement
0:00-0:05	Opening prayer.
0:05-0:12	Field report on rung ten, bringing someone into a room.
0:12-0:18	Win questions.
0:18-0:24	Read all four passages aloud, in the order listed, with Acts last.
0:24-0:36	Build 1 and 2, the labor pains and the two family images.
0:36-0:44	Build 3, 2 Timothy 2:2 and the four generations.
0:44-0:54	Live discovery: what Elisha asked for.
0:54-1:06	Build 4 and 5, Apollos and how he was corrected.
1:06-1:14	Build 6, the payoff. Do not rush this.
1:14-1:24	Build 7, the build-then-press on multiplication language.
1:24-1:30	Send questions, Live It This Week, take-homes, closing prayer.

If you only have 75 minutes, cut these first

- Read only Galatians 4:19, 2 Timothy 2:2, and Acts 18:24-28 aloud, and summarize 1 Thessalonians yourself. Saves five minutes.
- Run the Elisha discovery with 2 Kings 2:9-14 only, plus Deuteronomy 21:17. Saves five minutes and keeps the payoff intact.
- Fold Build 2 into Build 1. Saves eight minutes.
- Do not cut Build 6. It is the best cross-session moment in the study.

IF IT GOES SIDEWAYS

IF IT GOES SIDEWAYS | leader only

If someone hears "spiritual father" or "spiritual mother" as a claim to authority over another adult, take it seriously and answer from CCC 427: it is Christ who teaches, and the person forming is a spokesman rather than a substitute. St. Paul's images do not license domination or substituting yourself for Christ. They do not

deny the real derivative authority of parents, clergy and catechists either.

Anyone in your group who is a parent of an adult child who has left the faith will hear Deuteronomy 6 and 1 Thessalonians 2 as an indictment. Get ahead of it. Say out loud, once, that formation done faithfully does not guarantee an outcome, and point back to Session 9 rather than restating it.

If the group starts building a program tonight, slow them down. Acts 18 has no program in it. Two tentmakers had a private conversation.

If someone volunteers that they are the Apollos in the room, sincere and recently corrected, receive it warmly and move on quickly. Do not let the group examine them.

Discussion Guide

Until Christ Is Formed in You

Galatians 4:19; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12; 2 Timothy 2:2; Acts 18:24-28

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you formed twelve men slowly, in ordinary hours, and one of them still walked away. Give us patience for the long work, and keep us from needing to see the finish. Form yourself in the people we love, and let us not mind if they end up nothing like us. Amen.

FIELD REPORT

FIELD REPORT | five minutes, no fixing

Six minutes. Two or three people.

Last week you brought someone into a room with other believers in it. Who spoke to them that was not you?

Leader: if the answer is nobody, do not defend the parish. Write the number down. It is the most useful piece of data your group will produce in thirteen weeks, and it belongs in front of whoever runs hospitality.

WIN

- ▶ Who taught you something that stuck? What did they actually spend on you?
- ▶ Have you ever been corrected privately by someone who could have embarrassed you publicly? What did that do?

BUILD

Read all four passages aloud in order: Galatians 4:19, then 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, then 2 Timothy 2:2, then Acts 18:24-28. Read the Acts passage last and read it twice, because the session ends there.

- 1. Galatians 4:19. What image does St. Paul reach for, and what is strange about him using it? Then look at one small word in the middle.**

ANSWER | share after the discussion

Childbirth. The verb is the one used for labor pains. A man uses it about his pastoral work and shows no sign of finding it odd.

The small word is "again." He has already done this once with these people and is now doing it a second time. Whatever formation is, it is not a single successful handoff.

Say that plainly, and then leave it alone. Somebody in this room has poured years into a person who

drifted, and the Apostle has just told them he had the same experience with an entire province.

And notice the goal: the goal reaches past agreement and past membership: "until Christ be formed in you." What is being produced is not a copy of the one doing the forming.

2. 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12. Find two different family images. Then find the two things it cost him.

ANSWER | share after the discussion

Verse 7: like a nurse taking care of her children. Verse 11: like a father with his children. Maternal and paternal, six verses apart, about the same work and the same people.

The first cost is verse 8: they shared with them not only the gospel of God but their own selves, and he gives the reason, that they had become very dear to him. The affection is the stated cause, not a technique with warmth applied afterward.

The second cost is verse 9: they worked night and day so as not to burden any of them, supporting themselves by labour rather than being kept.

Ask the group which of those two costs they find harder, and why.

DIG DEEPER

A one letter problem in verse 7. The manuscripts are split between *ēpioi*, gentle, and *nēpioi*, infants, and the preceding word ends in that same letter, so a scribe could easily double it or drop it. RSV2CE reads "gentle." Several modern translations read "infants," giving the startling picture of apostles as babies among them. The evidence is genuinely divided. If a friend with a study Bible raises this, the honest answer is that we do not know, and that the passage works either way.

3. 2 Timothy 2:2. Count the generations in this one sentence. Then look hard at the verb.

ANSWER | share after the discussion

Four. Paul, then Timothy, then faithful men, then others also. One sentence, four handoffs deep.

And the verb is not teach. It is entrust, and it belongs to the same word family as *parathēkē*, a deposit left with someone for safekeeping. You are not being asked to broadcast something. You are being asked to hand over something valuable to a person who will keep it.

Notice the criteria: faithful, and able to teach others. Both are in the verse. What is not in it is prominence, eloquence, or reach; nothing is said about numbers anywhere.

LIVE DISCOVERY | let the group find it

Do not preview this. Most people have never noticed it.

Have someone read 2 Kings 2:1-14 aloud. It is a striking scene and worth the time.

First question: how many times does Elijah tell Elisha to stay behind, and what does Elisha say each time?

Second question: what does Elisha ask for when he is finally offered anything?

Now have a second person read Deuteronomy 21:17.

What they should find: a double portion is not a request for twice the power. Deuteronomy 21:17 says the firstborn son is acknowledged by giving him a double portion of everything the father has. In light of Deuteronomy 21:17 this is traditionally read as the firstborn's share, so Elisha appears to be asking for recognition as Elijah's heir rather than simply for twice the power. The wording of 2 Kings 2:9 does not state that conclusion outright.

Then read 2 Kings 2:12 aloud yourself. As Elijah goes up, Elisha cries out, "My father, my father!" That is the address the narrative gives us at the parting. The sons of the prophets speak of Elijah as Elisha's master; here Elisha calls him father.

4. Acts 18:24-28. Make a list of everything the text says was right about Apollos. Then find the one thing that was missing.

ANSWER | share after the discussion

An Alexandrian, eloquent, well versed in the Scriptures, instructed in the way of the Lord, fervent in spirit, and he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, and he spoke boldly in the synagogue. That is an extraordinary list of compliments.

And then: "though he knew only the baptism of John." His knowledge was still incomplete, in a man who was otherwise right, effective, and sincere.

Ask the group who they know who fits that description. Almost everyone will have someone: a Protestant friend who loves Christ and is missing something, or a Catholic who is fervent and has one piece badly wrong.

5. Verse 26. How is he corrected? List what happens, and then list what does not happen.

ANSWER | share after the discussion

What happens: Priscilla and Aquila hear him, take him, and expound to him the way of God more accurately. A married lay couple, tentmakers by trade, take a brilliant public preacher aside privately. St. Luke names Priscilla first.

What does not happen: no public correction, no letter to the leadership, no confrontation in the synagogue, no attempt to have him silenced, and no announcement to anyone that he had been wrong.

The verb is "took him," and everything in the session turns on it. Correction offered privately, by people with no standing to demand it, away from the public exchange of the synagogue. Acts does not tell us they had a prior relationship with him; what it shows is that they took him aside.

Point back to Session 3 if the group needs it: correction inside a friendship is a work of mercy, and correction from outside one is usually just noise.

6. Verses 27 and 28. Where does Apollos go next, and what does he do there? Now think about the verse you memorized last week.

Leader: ask the second half slowly, and let the room get there on its own. Do not say the name.

ANSWER | share after the discussion

He crosses to Achaia, and there he greatly helps those who through grace had believed, and powerfully confutes opponents in public, showing from the Scriptures that the Christ is Jesus.

Corinth was in Achaia, and Acts 19:1 places Apollos there. And last week this group memorized 1 Corinthians 3:6: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."

It is the same man. The preacher Priscilla and Aquila quietly took aside becomes the fellow worker St. Paul names to the Corinthians, in the verse your group has been carrying around for seven days.

Let that sit. Luke records one private conversation between two tentmakers and a man who was almost right, and the fruit of it shows up in a letter that has been read in the Church for two thousand years.

And note where it lands the group: they will never know what their small correction, or their invitation, or their unremarkable errand, turns into.

7. Someone says: this multiplication language turns people into a pipeline. "Disciples who make disciples" is a church growth technique with a Bible verse attached, and real friendship is not a strategy. Are they right?

ANSWER | share after the discussion

Work the build-then-press below. The objection is describing a real failure mode accurately and drawing the wrong conclusion from it.

BUILD THEN PRESS

Build the objection at full strength:

Build it at full strength, because the failure it describes is common and everyone has smelled it.

People can tell when they are a project. Being someone's spiritual assignment is degrading, and the person on the receiving end always knows, however warm the manner.

Discipleship multiplication has a real history as a program, complete with charts, tiers, and metrics, and it has produced a great many exhausted people running systems on other people's souls.

And there is a Catholic version of the problem: parishes importing models built for a different ecclesiology, ending up with pipelines where they should have had a parish.

The strongest form of the objection comes from tonight's own text. Galatians 4:19 is labor pains, not throughput. Nobody goes into travail over a conversion funnel. If St. Paul's language is bodily and costly, then managerial language about generations is a foreign import.

Then press, from the text:

Now press, from the text.

First: read 2 Timothy 2:2 again and notice what it does not say. It does not say teach many people. It says entrust what you heard to faithful men who will be able to teach others. The verb is about handing over a deposit for safekeeping, and the criterion is faithfulness. There is no number anywhere in the verse.

Second: 1 Thessalonians 2:8 states the motive out loud. He shared his own self with them **because they had become very dear to him**. The affection is given as the cause. That is not a technique with warmth added;

it is warmth that produced the work.

Third: Acts 18 has no program in it at all. Two tentmakers heard a man preach, took him aside, and talked to him. If multiplication were a system, this is where the New Testament would show us the system, and instead it shows us a private conversation between three people who worked with their hands.

Fourth: Galatians 4:19 says "again," which no pipeline says. A pipeline does not go into labor twice over the same person.

Now name the real distinction, and give the objector the credit. Multiplication without travail is exactly the pipeline they are describing, and they are right to hate it. Travail without multiplication terminates in you, which is the failure Session 10 named: the friend who has you and nothing else. The answer is not to drop 2 Timothy 2:2. It is to keep it welded to Galatians 4:19, so that what reproduces is the labor and not the system.

SEND

- ▶ Who has poured into you? Have you ever told them?
- ▶ Is there anyone whose faith currently depends more on you than on Christ and his Church? What would it take to change that?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

Rung 11 of the ladder. Hand something over. This week you deliberately make yourself less central.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- Introduce one of the three to another believer who is not you, and then get out of the way. A dinner, an introduction after Mass, a text that puts two people in touch.
- Then leave it alone for a week. Do not check on it, do not ask how it went, and notice what that costs you.
- Separately: name one person you could hand this study to. Someone faithful, who would be able to lead it for others. Write the name down.
- And if there is someone who formed you, tell them this week. Many never learn what their care produced.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you are the one who teaches, and everyone else is only lending you a voice. Take from us any wish to be needed. Give us the patience of a long labor and the freedom to be forgotten, and form yourself in the people you have put in front of us, whatever it costs and however little of it we get to see. Amen.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!"

Galatians 4:19

Leader Reference Card

Until Christ Is Formed in You

Every passage used in this session, in the order it appears.

Passage	Where and why
Galatians 4:19	Primary text. Labor pains, and the word "again."
1 Thessalonians 2:7-12	Primary text. The nurse and the father, and the two costs.
2 Timothy 2:2	Primary text. Four generations, and the verb "entrust."
Acts 18:24-28	Primary text, read twice. Apollos, and the private correction.
Acts 19:1	Build 6. Places Apollos at Corinth, which was in Achaia.
1 Corinthians 3:6	Build 6. Last week's memory verse, and the payoff.
1 Corinthians 4:15	Leader prep. Countless guides, but not many fathers.
2 Kings 2:1-14	Live discovery. Elisha refuses to leave, and asks for a double portion.
Deuteronomy 21:17	Live discovery. The double portion is the firstborn son's inheritance.
Exodus 33:11	Old Testament Roots. Joshua would not depart from the tent.
Numbers 27:18-23; Deuteronomy 34:9	Old Testament Roots. Moses lays hands on Joshua.
Deuteronomy 6:6-9	Old Testament Roots. Teaching in ordinary hours, at home and on the road.