

# WHERE Do I Fit In

While Salvation is a total gift from God that we receive through Jesus' Paschal Mystery, author James Campbell reminds us that through the choices we make, we have the option whether or not to accept this gift and participate in God's plan of Salvation.



by James  
Campbell

## Choose Life

In Deuteronomy 30:15–20, Moses presents the Hebrew people with a choice. This is Moses's last will and testament to the people. It is the time when the people are preparing to enter the Promised Land. Moses will not be crossing with them, so he is giving them a final instruction.

Moses reminds the people of all that God has done for them. He has brought them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, across the desert of Sinai. It has not been an easy road; there have been times of rebellion. But through Moses's intercession, God has kept the people under his protection.

Now they face the future, and Moses tells them they are at a crossroads in their faith. They can choose not to follow God and be destroyed, or they can follow God and live. Moses tells them, "Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live." (Deuteronomy 30:19)

Each day we are presented with choices that can lead us either to Salvation or to turn away from God. Each day we are called to reflect on our own history of the grace that we have been given through the sacraments and that lead us to life. Now is the time and the hour to choose life.

### It's Your Choice

Think about an important choice you've made during the past week. What options did you have, and what might have been the consequence of choosing each option? Why did you choose the option you did? On the lines below, write a prayer that can help you participate in God's plan of Salvation by making good choices.

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Reflect

**JAMES CAMPBELL** is the author of *The Stories of the Old Testament: A Catholic's Guide*.

Session 16 > The Protestant Reformation

# WHERE Do I Fit In



We often face difficult decisions in our lives. As members of the Church, we are called to develop our conscience so that when we follow our heart, we follow in Jesus' footsteps.



by Chris Lowney

## Decisions: Whom Do I Serve?

When I was about your age, my family was not poor, but we did not have lots of money either. And I used to imagine that money could solve every problem in life. If I had lots of money, I could buy whatever toys I wanted, the biggest and best television, and so on.

When I became an adult, I was lucky enough to get a job that paid a good salary, and, over the years, I had a good deal of money. I would not call myself rich, but I had more money than most people, more money than I needed to support myself. And, for sure, money can solve a lot of problems. If I need to pay a doctor or repair a leak in my house, I have the money for those things.

But when you have more money than you need, you also have choices to make. Is it OK for me to buy a brand new cell phone if my old one still works? Is it OK for me to buy the fastest and most expensive car I can find if a child in Africa does not have enough money to pay tuition to go to school? As a Catholic I find that I have to make choices about money all the time. It's natural for a human being to want to have fun and to have whatever things my neighbors have. But my faith teaches me that I'm not supposed to live only for myself and not to make myself the center of the whole world. Instead, I'm also concerned with the needs of the rest of the human family. And the way I interpret that it means that I shouldn't try to have

too many luxurious things for myself if some of my brothers and sisters don't even have the basic things they need in life.

So every time I have extra money, I have a choice to make about how to use it.

Reflect

### Making Decisions

Think about some of the resources you have, such as your time and your talents. On the lines below, write two or three questions you can ask yourself when you are faced with a decision about how to use your resources.

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**CHRIS LOWNEY** is the author of *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company that Changed the World*.

Session 17 > Renewal in the Church

# WHERE Do I Fit In?

Sometimes God's grace comes when we least expect it. Jennifer Courier, a mother, explains how she was able to find God's presence even amid unexpected news.



by Jennifer  
Courier

## Unexpected Blessings

One of the great blessings of my life came in the form of two sparkly, pink pieces of plastic. I was surprised—blessings are supposed to be big things, such as happiness and health, not something that fits in the palm of your hand and most people never see. But it's true.

One day I received a phone call from our daughter Kathryn's teacher. She calmly explained that something seemed to be wrong. "Kathryn just isn't getting it," she said. She appeared to be tuning out during storytime and not following simple verbal instructions. This was unsettling news to us since, at home, Kathryn seemed very well-adjusted. There were no signs of her struggling with simple tasks. My husband and I were extremely worried. Our little girl, the youngest of our four daughters, was struggling. So, now what?

I spent a lot of time praying, asking God for his guidance and grace in this challenging situation. I ended up taking Kathryn to have her hearing checked. My stomach dropped and my heart broke as I watched Kathryn struggle during the battery of tests. She was unable to hear anything at times. She stumbled and struggled to repeat back words and simple sentences at another volume level. All the while, she sat with a smile on her face completely unaware of what was going on. Four weeks later, Kathryn was fitted with a hearing aid. The doctor explained that Kathryn had developed excellent coping mechanisms such as lip reading and picking up on context clues. Now, with the hearing aid, she would begin the exciting journey of being able to hear and process all the

sounds around her. She was thrilled to wear the new hearing aids—beautiful cotton-candy pink with sparkles all over them.

These simple hearing aids have brought overwhelming blessings into my life. I loved seeing the look of awe on Kathryn's face each time she heard a new sound. I was thrilled to see the heartwarming kindness and generous spirit of the boys and girls in Kathryn's class and the dedication of her teachers and doctors who found a solution to help her. I am grateful that the school principal found money in a tight Catholic school budget to purchase equipment for Kathryn's teachers to use to help her. Kathryn now "gets it."

My Catholic faith allows me to see, feel, and accept God's grace and presence each and every day. I've learned that blessings come in all shapes and sizes—even in two little pieces of plastic.

### Unexpected News

Recall a time you received news that you did not expect. What was your initial reaction to the news? As you think back, how might God's grace have been present in your experience? Write your ideas on a separate sheet of paper.

**JENNIFER COURIER** is a writer, editor, wife, and mother of four girls.

Reflect

Session 18 > The Church Reaches Out

# WHERE Do I Fit In



We are often tempted to divide our lives into that which is sacred and that which is secular: We go to Mass on Sunday, and we devote the rest of our week to other joys and responsibilities. Coach John Beilein, however, points out that it is important to integrate our spiritual practice into everything that we do.



by John Beilein

## A Spiritual Practice I Can't Do Without

I coach men's basketball at a Big 10 university. It's a stressful job. The competition is tough; games are close. We perform in public—on television, in big arenas—surrounded by fans who badly want us to win and who are disappointed when we don't. For the players and coaches, the pressure is always on.

One of my biggest responsibilities as coach is to get everyone ready to play. That's what practice is for, and we practice hard almost every day of the week during the season. But practice in the gym is only part of getting ready. Mental preparation is important too. For me, spiritual preparation is also vital.

On the day of every game, I read from a book of daily reflections titled *My Daily Bread* by the Jesuit Anthony Paone. I've had this book for years. These reflections are simple and to the point, and they clear away the obstacles to my peace of mind. This spiritual reading is a big part of my game preparation.

When I'm prepared, I can get my team prepared. Before every game we have a meeting that lasts about 20 minutes. Just before this meeting, I read from my book and settle my spirit. Then I can go in and talk to the players about focusing their minds on what they need to do to play the game well. I read after the game too. The reflections talk about gratitude—something that's easy to feel if we win the game. They also talk about adversity. There's plenty of adversity in college basketball, and you can learn more from losing than you can from winning.

**JOHN BEILEIN** is the men's basketball coach at the University of Michigan.

I like variety in my spiritual life. At various times, I have prayed the Rosary and practiced other devotions. I pray the Examen of Saint Ignatius Loyola. I go to Mass frequently. I change things up to keep myself fresh. But my reading from *My Daily Bread* is a constant. It's a spiritual practice I can't do without.

Reflect

### Plan Your Week

For each day of the week, write one spiritual practice that you can integrate into your daily activities. Commit to completing each activity.

**Monday** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tuesday** \_\_\_\_\_

**Wednesday** \_\_\_\_\_

**Thursday** \_\_\_\_\_

**Friday** \_\_\_\_\_

**Saturday** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sunday** \_\_\_\_\_

Session 19 > Faith and Reason



# WHERE Do I Fit In?

When we experience pain and suffering, it can be difficult to maintain our hope and trust in God. Our tradition, however, reminds us to remain steadfast—for God works in ways that are beyond our human comprehension.



by Fr. Dan Reim, S.J.

## Finding Jesus Where I Least Expected

Kelly suffered from migraine headaches. They were never bad enough to keep her from her daily activities, but they were a constant, never-ending threat. She saw many specialists and tried many different treatments, but nothing seemed to work.

As time passed, Kelly became more and more depressed. She wondered, "Is this ever going to end?" She asked me, "Why won't God do something? Can't God make this stop?"

I felt helpless. I could have given her all kinds of theological explanations—that God, for example, is a good and loving God. That God doesn't give us pain. Or that God can heal us, but for some mysterious reason, doesn't always do so. But no explanation was going to help her ease the pain. And so we prayed. We prayed that God would heal her, either through her doctors or by some supernatural miracle.

But that prayer wasn't answered. Kelly's migraines continued, and her life became more and more difficult. And yet she continued to pray. She continued to believe that God knew her, loved her, and didn't want her to suffer.

Months passed. I had nearly given up hope that God would help Kelly. (And I'm supposed to be the professional "hoper"!) But there wasn't any reason to have hope.

And then, one day, Kelly called to tell me that it had been two weeks since she had her last migraine. She could see the sunshine in her life again. She felt alive! I was surprised and overjoyed. And I felt humbled that I hadn't trusted

God enough. And I was so impressed with Kelly—that throughout all this time, she had kept praying to God.

Kelly's miracle wasn't just her healing. As she told me, God kept giving her the grace, the strength, and the hope to go on. "Without God," Kelly said, "I could never have made it." Kelly's healing reminded me that Jesus can show up anywhere, at any time.

Reflect

### Surprise!

Take a moment to reflect on an experience that filled you with hope. Then in the box, make something—a poem, a paragraph, or a drawing—that reflects your experience.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin red border, intended for a student to write or draw a reflection.

**FR. DAN REIM, S.J.,** is a campus minister at St. Mary Student Parish in Ann Arbor, which serves the University of Michigan.

Session 20 > Celebrating Holy Week and Easter