SHERRY WEDDELL’S
 FORMING
 INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES
 STUDY GUIDE

By Ximena DeBroeck
Introduction

We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him. — 1 John 4:16

Go and make disciples! The Gospel commissioning recorded in Matthew 28:19 summarizes what evangelization is about: it is about making disciples. In her book Forming Intentional Disciples, Sherry Weddell offers us a great opportunity for reflection from two perspectives. First, perhaps the most obvious, is that the disciples whom we are commissioned to “make” ought to be intentional and deliberate about their discipleship. Second, maybe more subtle, is that it offers us a chance to reflect on our own discipleship. Sherry invites us to ponder the current realities of the Catholic Church in the United States, and in so doing she offers us an entry point to ponder our own journey of faith.

This short study guide is presented as a resource that may be used with adult formation groups. The most important thing to remember as we embark on this intentional journey is to share the good news about God’s love for us and his desire for an intimate relationship with us.

Ximena DeBroeck, M.A.
Coordinator of Adult and Sacramental Formation
Department of Evangelization, Archdiocese of Baltimore

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Chapter 1
GOD HAS NO GRANDCHILDREN

In this chapter, Sherry Weddell discusses the alarming statistics that describe the reality faced by the Catholic Church today. What reality is Sherry addressing? The current situation in our parishes and dioceses is that many Catholics no longer practice the faith. On Page 39, she states:

If this trend does not change, in ten years it will cease to matter that we have a priest shortage. The Builders will be largely gone, the Boomers retiring, and our institutions — parishes and schools — will be emptying at an incredible rate. . . . So let’s be clear: In the twenty-first century, cultural Catholicism is dead as a retention strategy, because God has no grandchildren. In the twenty-first century, we have to foster intentional Catholicism rather than cultural Catholicism.

1. What is your initial reaction to the statistics presented in this chapter?

2. What do you think the author means by “cultural Catholicism”?

3. Did you grow up Catholic? If so, was having a personal relationship with God a central element of the formation you received?

4. Reflect on the following passage:

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God.” The two disciples [of John’s] heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” (Jn 1:35-39)

What is the invitation offered by Jesus? Is this the beginning of a relationship?

5. Is there someone close to you — family, friend, or co-worker — who is no longer practicing the Catholic faith? Have you asked this person to share his or her story?

6. What are some of the reasons used to explain why so many people describe themselves as “none”?
1. On Page 54, three spiritual journeys are described. What are they? Do you see them as separate or interrelated journeys?

2. In your journey of faith, have you been formed from the perspective of these being separate or interrelated journeys?

3. Reflect on the “normal” values listed on Pages 60-61. Which of these values are you most comfortable with, and which one do you think is most challenging to you?

4. What is your own experience of small intentional gatherings of disciples?

5. Are you familiar with the word kerygma (see Page 66)? What is it?

6. What are your memories of hearing the kerygma and your understanding of the kerygma? Why do you think the kerygma is essential to the journey of faith of a disciple?

In this chapter, Sherry presents excerpts from the document that guided the topics of conversation during the recent gathering of bishops in 2012 to discuss the New Evangelization (the Synod on the New Evangelization). Highlighted multiple times during the synod was the importance of having a relationship with Christ and, thus, with the Father and the Holy Spirit. She states that this relationship involves three spiritual journeys. The manner in which these journeys are nurtured and lived has an impact on our discipleship.

The concept of what is considered “normal” is also presented. Sherry describes that what is perceived as “normal” is skewed. For instance, we have lost the sense that desiring and having a personal relation with Jesus is “normal.”