



FOUR

Transforming Discipleship through Education and Action

Clarifying the mission through Observe, Judge, Act

Objective: CFM forms disciples by educating its members and helping them to take action. This chapter intends to inform the CFM member of the purpose of the methodology used by the movement. CFM discussion guides bring topics that families deal with every day into a Christian, faith-based discussion. Discipleship is accomplished through teaching one to use the methodology of Observe, Judge, Act in their daily lives. Soon members will find themselves observing, judging and acting beyond the meetings and in their own daily circumstances.

GATHER

OPENING PRAYER

God, give me grace to accept with serenity
the things that cannot be changed,
Courage to change the things
which should be changed,
and the Wisdom to distinguish
the one from the other.
Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,

Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
Taking, as Jesus did,
This sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it,
Trusting that You will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will,
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.
Amen.

- Reinhold Niebuhr

REPORT ON ACTIONS

Take time to report on how you engaged in action as a result of the last meeting. It is encouraging to hear what others are doing and prompts us to put our faith into practice more intentionally.

Before your meeting, consider emailing the list of actions from your last meeting to all members as a friendly reminder of what will be discussed. Otherwise, during the meeting, encourage members to look back into the last chapter and re-read the actions together. Ask who has anything to report.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

The scriptures presented contain the words “Observe,” “Judge” and “Act.” The intent is to explore what the Bible has to say about these three verbs which are such an integral part of the methodology of CFM. One need not expound on each Scripture. The information below is for clarification if there are questions and might be particularly helpful for Observe question 1.

Consider the following readings:

“Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

- Matthew 28:20

Observe - This verse directly follows the great commission of the disciples – “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” As disciples, we are called to observe all that he has commanded us. Observe here not only means to see but to live out.

“You know how to judge the appearance of the sky, but you cannot judge the signs of the times.” - Matthew 16:3

Judge - Here Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and Sadducees who are able to read indications of coming weather but not the indications of the coming kingdom in the signs that Jesus does offer, his mighty deeds and teaching. We too are called to judge the signs of the times and act accordingly.

“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” - John 7:24

Judge - This Scripture verse follows an account where Jesus was accused of breaking the Sabbath for healing on that day. He counters with the message that we are not to judge according to appearance. Rather, “attend to the law, not merely in the letter, but in its spirit and design. Learn that the law which commands men to rest on the Sabbath day is subordinate to the law of mercy and love, which requires them to be ever active to promote God's glory in the comfort and salvation of their fellow creatures; and endeavor to judge of the merit or demerit of an action, not from the first impression it may make upon your prejudices but from its tendency, and the motives of the person, as far as it is possible for you to acquaint yourselves with them; still believing the best, where you have no certain proof to the contrary.”

- *The Adam Clarke Commentary*

“If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to

follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.”

- John 13:14-15

Act - Jesus not only tells us in his Word what to do, but He gives example and shows us the importance of humility and service in acting out our love of neighbor.

“Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.”

- Luke 11:28

Observe and Act - Words from Jesus himself who tell us to learn and live what we learn.

“Be doers of the word and not hearers only.”

- James 1:22

Observe, judge and act - An admonition to not separate learning and acting. This Scripture is a popular one for CFM.

1. Which Scripture quotes speak to you of education? Which quotes are about action? Each of the Scriptures have an element of education. The interesting fact is that education and action are linked. God does not expect us to learn without putting it into practice.
2. How does the Inquiry method of Observe, Judge, Act help us to live these Scriptures in our daily lives? CFM discussion guides use the Inquiry Method. It is an opportunity to explore a topic in depth. Members are encouraged to prepare for the meeting by identifying the topic and bringing their own observations regarding that topic to the meeting. This takes thought and preparation. While at the meeting, the topic is explored in two facets – first, in regard to the “signs of the times” by exploring what is happening in society and the world; and second in regard to the light of Christ’s teaching. Based on this exploration, members are expected to “judge” - which will ultimately help the group to develop and carry out an appropriate action. True growth and improvement in the Christian life is accomplished through this methodology. It is a tried and true path of discipleship.

SOCIAL INQUIRY

CFM discussion guides bring topics that families deal with every day into a Christian, faith-based discussion. Discipleship is accomplished through teaching one to use the methodology of Observe, Judge, Act in their daily lives. Pope St. John XXIII speaks of discipleship in his encyclical, *Mater et Magistra* (Mother and Teacher):

“In Our view, therefore, formal instruction, to be successful, must be supplemented by the students' active co-operation in their own training. They must gain an experimental knowledge of the subject, and that by their own positive action.

“It is practice which makes perfect, even in such matters as the right use of liberty. Thus, one learns Christian behavior in social and economic matters by actual Christian action in those fields.

“The Lay Apostolate, therefore, has an important role to play in social education especially those associations and organizations which have as their specific objective the Christianization of contemporary society. The members of these associations, besides profiting personally from their own day to day experience in this field, can also help in the social education of the rising generation by giving it the benefit of the experience they have gained.”

- Pope St. John XXIII

“Pope Pius X was talking with a group of cardinals and asked them what they thought was the one thing most necessary for the salvation of society.

“To build Catholic schools,” said one.

“To multiply churches,” said another.

“To increase the clergy,” was a third suggestion, but the Pope shook his head at all the answers.

“No, no,” he said. “What is most necessary at the present time is to have in every parish a group of laymen who are at the same time virtuous, well-instructed, determined, and really apostolic.”

- *The Great Mantle-The Life of Giuseppe Melchior Sarto, Pope Pius X.*

“Action does not precede development. They take place simultaneously. Development through action, therefore, is essential. Action is the love of Christ through love of others. A mere intellectual development is sterile, apostolically, unless it is used to love others either by direct action or by refashioning institutions which mold human life.”

- Fr. Reynold Hillenbrand, “Basic Ideas of CFM”

From your own experience, **OBSERVE:**

1. Considering the Scripture quotes above, what do they say to you about the act of judgment? How does this compare to your understanding of what "judging" means? *In CFM we do not judge people but do evaluate situations and circumstances using right judgement. (See the comments after the Scriptures in the section above, particularly John 7:24.)*
2. List some satisfying actions that your involvement in CFM has inspired you to take. *The actions shared might be personal or group related. Group members routinely expose and invite one another to new ideas of action and service.*
3. Share ways in which your faith has grown and your spirit has flourished since you began using the Observe, Judge, Act method. *Since CFM teaches and inspires change and action, members can share their experiences.*

In light of Christ’s teachings, **JUDGE:**

1. Why did you become a member of a CFM action group?
Why have you stayed in CFM?
2. How have your family members taken a role in their own formation--and in the formation of the Church--as disciples of Christ? Has this changed from the past generations?
3. How has the Observe, Judge, Act Method helped you better understand who is “my neighbor” and what it means “to love your neighbor as yourself?” [The quote in the Social Inquiry above by Hillenbrand points out that development and action go hand in hand. For a person to really learn something, it must simultaneously include a related action on the student’s part. Once you know your neighbor, you must take action to love him as yourself.](#)

Based on what has been discussed, **ACT:**

1. Learn more about the history of CFM. (Literature is available from the national office or on the [CFM website](#).) Share with the group what you learned and what this means to you
2. Sit together as a CFM group at Sunday Mass.
3. Plan to get together with CFM member from another group or another parish. Ask them about how they deal with specific group problems and challenges. Ask what resources they use and recommend. Share your own resources and successes.
4. Consider being a CFM ambassador, writer, or serve in another way beyond your local action group. [Visit www.cfm.org and contact the national office.](#)

TAKE CFM HOME

1. Identify a current challenge/problem that you have within your family.

2. Using the steps that CFM uses (Observe/Judge/Act), do research into the topic related to the challenge/problem (observe). Follow through with the Judge and Act steps.

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Take a look at the Observes for the next meeting to see what needs to be done in preparation.

**** Plan to bring research about the Christian Family Movement to the next meeting.**

Date _____ **Time** _____ **Place** _____

1. Phone or email host if you cannot attend.
2. Look ahead at the Observe questions for the next meeting.
3. Who could you invite to join our group?

If children have come to the meeting with their parents, gather them to join you in the closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

Adapted from the letter of St. Paul to the Colossians 1:9b-12

May [we] . . . be filled with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding to live in a manner worthy of the Lord, so as to be fully pleasing, in every good work bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with every power, in accord with his glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy giving thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light.

And let us pray the Prayer for the Christian Family Movement (found on Page 80).

WORKS CITED

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