Good Enough is
Good Enough
Confessions of an Imperfect Catholic Mom
Companion Study
Session One: Foreword and Introduction

I. Review small-group rules. (See end of document for guidelines.)

II. Opening Prayer
   
   Leader: We have gathered today to pray together, so that we may grow in our understanding of the mystery of faith and follow God’s path ever more closely.
   
   Moment of silence.
   
   Leader: Lord, pour out on us the spirit of understanding, truth, and peace. Help us to strive with all our heart to know what is pleasing to you and when we know your will, make us determined to do it. We ask this through Christ our Lord.
   
   Response: Amen.

III. Gospel Reflection: Matthew 6:24-34
   
   “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

   Please take a moment to silently reflect on the passage. When you are finished, feel free to share any insights you had with the group. Some questions to ponder: What is Jesus saying to us in this passage? Do his words reveal any particular strength or weakness within us? How are his words applicable to our daily life? What is one concrete thing we can implement to try to address his challenge to us in daily life?

IV. Discussion Questions:
   
   1. The author includes a quote from C. S. Lewis in the epigraph, which states:
      
      Now what was the sort of “hole” man had got himself into? He had tried to set up on his own, to behave as if he belonged to himself. In other words, fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms. Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realizing that you have been on the wrong track and getting ready to start life over again from the ground floor—this is the only way out of our “hole.” This process of surrender—this movement full speed astern—is what Christians call repentance. Now repentance is no fun at all. . . . It means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death. --C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

      What aspects of parenthood, if any, do you have trouble surrendering to God’s care? Why? Has there been a time in parenting where you’ve hit a proverbial wall and had to entrust the outcome to him? What happened?
2. In the Introduction, the author reveals that she developed control issues and perfectionism as a coping mechanism for dealing with the addiction in her childhood home. Do you identify with any of these coping mechanisms? If so, why? Do you have any other coping mechanisms you’ve developed that at one time helped you survive but may have lost their effectiveness in your current vocation? What are they? What can you do to overcome these impediments to relationships?

3. Is it tempting to view your faith as insurance policy you purchase to protect yourself and your children from sin and suffering? Do you believe that if you follow Jesus and the Church’s teachings, you will reduce the potential risks we face in life: illness, adultery, addiction, financial ruin, and other pains? Where did this idea come from?

4. What parenting practices promoted by the world do you find unhelpful (The Tiger Mom phenomenon, for example)? What parenting practices promoted by your friends—Catholic or otherwise—do you find unhelpful? Do you possess any unhelpful ideas about Catholic parenting? If so, what are they and how are they unhelpful?

Homework for next time: Please read chapter one and come prepared to discuss.

V. Closing prayer:

Petitions: If agreed upon by group, keep a list of individual petitions from each of the members. Collectively the group can pray for one another and the intentions over the course of the next week.

Pray The Litany of Humility for Parents as a group.
O Jesus! Meek and humble of heart,  
Hear me.
From the desire to have my children and myself be esteemed as intelligent and accomplished in the eyes of the world,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire to have a picture-perfect Catholic family,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire to have it appear as if my family and I have it all together,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire to protect my children from all pain,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire to have my family, especially my children, and me praised,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire to have my family, especially my children, and me preferred to others,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the tendency to compare my familial situation to another’s,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire to control my children’s behavior and choices,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire to be approved by other parents or by family members and even by my own children,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being humiliated by wacky kid behavior or even by the sinful behavior of older children,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of warping my children and dooming them to failure because of screwy parenting,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of suffering rebukes from my grown children for the parenting decisions we made,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being calumniated because we may make counter-cultural parenting decisions,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being forgotten by my children when we have raised them and they leave,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of failing my children because of personal weaknesses and human inadequacies,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear that my children will lose their faith in you and leave the Catholic Church,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear that the world and all the evil in it will swallow my children whole,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear that every other family is “functioning” and “normal” except for my own,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear that taking care of myself mentally, spiritually, physically, and emotionally is selfish,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear that my children must behave perfectly at Mass and know all the rote prayers and teachings of the Catholic Church or else we have failed in our catechetical duties,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear that I have to make perfect parenting decisions or else my children will be failures,  
Deliver me, Jesus.
That my children may love you above all things of this world,  
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.
That my children may value the opinion of their future spouses or superiors more than mine,  
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.
That my children may one day chose their own vocational responsibilities and set me aside,  
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.
That my family may become holier than I am, provided that I may become as holy as I should,  
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.
Amen.
I. Review small-group rules. (See end of document for guidelines.)

II. Opening Prayer

Leader: We have gathered today to pray together, so that we may grow in our understanding of the mystery of faith and follow God’s path ever more closely.

Moment of silence.

Leader: Lord, pour out on us the spirit of understanding, truth, and peace. Help us to strive with all our hearts to know what is pleasing to you and when we know your will, make us determined to do it. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Response: Amen.

III. Gospel Reflection: Matthew 7:7-14

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets. “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Please take a moment to silently reflect on the passage. When you are finished, feel free to share any insights you had with the group. Some questions to ponder: What is Jesus saying to us in this passage? Do his words reveal any particular strength or weakness within us? How are his words applicable to our daily life? What is one concrete thing we can implement to try to address his challenge to us in daily life?

IV. Discussion Questions:

1. Are there any coping mechanisms described in this chapter with which you can identify? If so, which ones and how did you develop them? How do these mechanisms affect the way you relate to your family?

2. What are a few of your strengths that help you in your marital and parenting vocations? How do your weaknesses affect your vocation? Is it difficult for you to identify your strengths and weaknesses? Why?

3. What is one aspect of dealing with your spouse and/or children you find particularly challenging? Why?

4. Is there an area in your life that would benefit from outside help, such as from a spiritual director or a counselor? What is it?

5. What is one challenging surprise you’ve faced in parenting for which you never could have prepared?

Homework for next time: Please read chapter two and come prepared to discuss

V. Closing prayer:

Petitions: Review and add to list of petitions.

Refer to the Litany of Humility for Parents and pray it as a group.
I. Review small-group rules. (See end of document for guidelines.)

II. Opening Prayer
   Leader: We have gathered today to pray together, so that we may grow in our understanding of the mystery of faith and follow God’s path ever more closely.

   Moment of silence.

   Leader: Lord, pour out on us the spirit of understanding, truth, and peace. Help us to strive with all our hearts to know what is pleasing to you and when we know your will, make us determined to do it. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

   Response: Amen.

III. Gospel Reflection: Matthew 22:24-40
   When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them [a scholar of the law] tested him by asking, “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

   Please take a moment to silently reflect on the passage. When you are finished, feel free to share any insights you had with the group. Some questions to ponder: What is Jesus saying to us in this passage? Do his words reveal any particular strength or weakness within us? How are his words applicable to our daily life? What is one concrete thing we can implement to try to address his challenge to us in daily life?

IV. Discussion Questions:
   1. Do you have a tendency to be moderate or immoderate in self-care? Why? Were your own parents good examples of this? What did they do well, and what needed improvement?
   2. What are some hobbies you enjoy? Do you still engage in those hobbies? Why or why not?
   3. When are you most tempted to neglect yourself? Why? What are some safeguards you can implement to prevent gross self-negligence?
   4. Do you prioritize your faith, or do you let yourself get caught in the rhythms of daily life without taking time to grow in your faith? What is one way you can be more intentional about your faith this week?
   5. How do you communicate with your spouse? Does that need to change? How do you maintain your marriage as a priority amid the demands of life?

   Homework for next time: Please read chapter three and come prepared to discuss.

V. Closing prayer:
   Petitions: Review and add to list of petitions.

   Refer to the Litany of Humility for Parents and pray it as a group.
I. Review small-group rules. (See end of document for guidelines.)

II. Opening Prayer
Leader: We have gathered today to pray together, so that we may grow in our understanding of the mystery of faith and follow God’s path ever more closely.

Moment of silence.

Leader: Lord, pour out on us the spirit of understanding, truth, and peace. Help us to strive with all our hearts to know what is pleasing to you and when we know your will, make us determined to do it. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Response: Amen.

III. Gospel Reflection: Mark 8:1-9
In those days when there again was a great crowd without anything to eat, he summoned the disciples and said, “My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will collapse on the way, and some of them have come a great distance.” His disciples answered him, “Where can anyone get enough bread to satisfy them here in this deserted place?” Still he asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” “Seven,” they replied. He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then, taking the seven loaves he gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to his disciples to distribute, and they distributed them to the crowd. They also had a few fish. He said the blessing over them and ordered them distributed also. They ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over—seven baskets. There were about four thousand people.

Please take a moment to silently reflect on the passage. When you are finished, feel free to share any insights you had with the group. Some questions to ponder: What is Jesus saying to us in this passage? Do his words reveal any particular strength or weakness within us? How are his words applicable to our daily life? What is one concrete thing we can implement to try to address his challenge to us in daily life?

IV. Discussion Questions:
1. Are you and your spouse on the same page when it comes to raising Catholic kids? Do you work with or against your spouse? How could you support your spouse more in his or her efforts to form your children? Where should you back off?
2. Did you have preconceived notions about what it would be like to raise Catholic kids? Were your ideas accurate or not?
3. What is the biggest challenge you face as a Catholic parent?
4. Are you tempted to manage your spouse’s or your children’s spiritual life? Why or why not?
5. How is your prayer life? What is one Catholic practice or devotion you love? Does your family know you love it? When, where, or how do you practice that devotion in everyday life?

Homework for next time: Please read chapter four and come prepared to discuss.

V. Closing prayer:
Petitions: Review and add to list of petitions.
Refer to the Litany of Humility for Parents and pray it as a group.
I. Review small-group rules. (See end of document for guidelines.)

II. Opening Prayer

Leader: We have gathered today to pray together, so that we may grow in our understanding of the mystery of faith and follow God’s path ever more closely.

Moment of silence.

Leader: Lord, pour out on us the spirit of understanding, truth, and peace. Help us to strive with all our hearts to know what is pleasing to you and when we know your will, make us determined to do it. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Response: Amen.


And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”), and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, “Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace,

According to Your word;

For my eyes have seen Your salvation,
Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
A Light of revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel.”

And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

Please take a moment to silently reflect on the passage. When you are finished, feel free to share any insights you had with the group. Some questions to ponder: What is Jesus saying to us in this passage? Do his words reveal any particular strength or weakness within us? How are his words applicable to our daily life? What is one concrete thing we can implement to try to address his challenge to us in daily life?
IV. Discussion Questions:

1. What is the greatest suffering you’ve experienced as a parent? Was God able to draw good from this suffering? If so, how and in what ways?
2. Do you try to avoid suffering? Why?
3. When you experience your child’s suffering, how do you react? What are some healthy ways you could detach yet still show love and compassion to your suffering child?
4. Do you believe suffering can be redemptive? How have you suffered as parent? What can Mother Mary teach us?
5. Romans 8:28 states, “We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” Do you believe God is in charge and directing things according to his plan?

Homework for next time: Please read chapter five and the conclusion and come prepared to discuss.

V. Closing prayer:

Petitions: Review and add to list of petitions.
Refer to the Litany of Humility for Parents and pray it as a group.
I. Review small-group rules. (See end of document for guidelines.)

II. Opening Prayer

Leader: We have gathered today to pray together, so that we may grow in our understanding of the mystery of faith and follow God’s path ever more closely.

Moment of silence.

Leader: Lord, pour out on us the spirit of understanding, truth, and peace. Help us to strive with all our hearts to know what is pleasing to you and when we know your will, make us determined to do it. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Response: Amen.

III. Gospel Reflection: John 21:18-23

"Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.” Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me!”

Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, “Lord, and what about this man?” Jesus said to him, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!” Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?”

Please take a moment to silently reflect on the passage. When you are finished, feel free to share any insights you had with the group. Some questions to ponder: What is Jesus saying to us in this passage? Do his words reveal any particular strength or weakness within us? How are his words applicable to our daily life? What is one concrete thing we can implement to try to address his challenge to us in daily life?

IV. Discussion Questions:

1. How do you handle children’s extracurricular activities? Is your family life balanced or not?
2. Do you have a tendency to moralize certain parenting practices? Why or why not? What parenting practices do your friends make into moral issues? Why is the practice a moral issue, or why is it not?
3. Do you compare yourself against the activities and efforts of other parents? Are these comparisons generally helpful or unhelpful?
4. Have you ever had to abandon a “perfect” parenting practice in favor of a “lesser” one? Why? What did you learn?
5. Knowing that you can’t force your kids to be or remain Catholic, how can you show them why the faith is so important?

V. Closing prayer:

Petitions: Review and add to list of petitions.

Refer to the Litany of Humility for Parents and pray it as a group.
Small Group Guidelines

1. Listen
   We encourage members to actively listen when someone is sharing thoughts and feelings.

2. Practice Silence
   Provide an opportunity for new people to share. Provide quiet discernment and reflection on other members’s comments before responding.

3. Avoid Cross-talk
   Cross-talk is when two individuals engage in conversation excluding all others or when another offers unsolicited comments after someone has shared. Each person is free to express her feelings without being interrupted and side conversations are to be avoided.

4. Respect Boundaries
   We are here to support one another, not “fix” or “rescue” one another. We encourage listening, support, and try to refrain from advice giving.

5. Safe Place and Privacy
   We will strive to create an environment where everyone can be open and honest and maintain confidentiality at the end of the session.

6. The First Shall Be Last
   If you were the first to speak, allow someone else the opportunity to begin the next conversation.

7. Respect the Individual
   We encourage the use of I statements rather than using “you, them, the Church, us, we, etc.”