

## WHAT A DIFFERENCE SEVEN WEEKS MAKES

I grew up in an Italian Catholic family. I made all my sacraments, as a typical young Catholic should, and our family went to weekly Mass. From the ages of 11 to 14, I was an altar boy in our home parish. Like many teenagers, I started to rebel. I never stopped believing in Jesus—I just became less of a fan of the Catholic Church. Although I believed in Christ, I can't say I had a relationship with Him. For the next 30 years, I would wander aimlessly in the desert of my faith.

I stopped attending Mass and did not return until Christmas of 2013. I remember asking God to crack me open—cut my heart open if He needed. I knew I was lost. However, after Mass ended, life seemed to just go on as usual for almost another two years and I continued to feel homeless.

The world began to change for me on November 29, 2015. It was the first week of Advent. I had an unexplained feeling that I should go to Mass. I went, but thought that day was like any other ordinary day. As I was exiting, none too inspired, a gentleman handed me a postcard that asked a simple question:  
**Too Busy? 7 weeks could change your life.**  
This was an invitation to the Discovering Christ program.

I still can't pinpoint why I felt such a strong pull in the direction to participate. I knew with a complex schedule I wasn't sure if I could commit to 7 weeks, but I registered. I completed the entire program and Thank God I did.

Discovering Christ was helpful for me mainly in its approach. The lessons offered me some answers to my questions. Two very important components for me were: "Why Do I Need A Savior?" and "The Holy Spirit Retreat." I learned that I can't fix the breach that sin created between man and God on my own. Christ died for our sins. He took the whole burden on Himself to save us! God loves us! He sent His Son to save us! Once we truly understand this, we must respond to God's call. On March 13, 2016, I did just that on the night of the Holy Spirit Retreat, I committed my life to

Jesus and went to confession after 30 years.

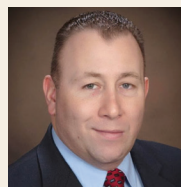
That night I heard words spoken to me, but not by a human voice. They were, "Welcome home my boy. I missed you, my son."

Discovering Christ gave me a way to reconnect with my faith, my parish, and my Catholic-Christian community. I didn't feel like I was being judged by the people running the program or by the participants. This program transformed me—a very skeptical fallen-away Catholic—and allowed for me to take a fresh look at what Jesus said and did, and what it meant for me. It showed me the importance of having a personal relationship with Him. It opened a new world in which I thirst for knowledge. I seek Sunday Mass no matter where I travel. My prayer life has become robust. I have an unquenchable desire to learn more and go deeper with Christ every day.



And as I strive to be the best of version of myself daily, I know I am not perfect. But I'm better. My marriage is better. I am becoming a better example for my children. I am in love with my faith, my Church, and my relationship with Jesus Christ. I look at my church, which I used to view as brick and mortar structure, as one of the most beautiful places on

this planet. Our parish is another part of my family. I feel so strongly about the importance of this program that I was compelled to join the Discovering Christ Team because I think this message needs to be told to anyone the Lord leads me to. He has done so several times already. Through Discovering Christ I know undeniably that I am the son of a King, the ever-living God and I am one who has been saved by the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



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