

RETURN

HOW TO DRAW YOUR CHILD BACK TO THE CHURCH

Individual Reflection

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Profile of Your Child

Chapters 1-3

Complete these questions BEFORE you read chapters 1-3.

Child's name and age: _____

Child identifies religious affiliation as _____

Why is your child not a practicing Catholic?

(Check as many as apply. Then circle your child's key objection.)

- _____ Gradually drifted away
- _____ Spiritual needs not met
- _____ Stopped believing in some or all of the Church's teaching
- _____ Unhappy with teachings about the Bible
- _____ Unhappy about moral teachings
- _____ Dissatisfied with atmosphere at Mass/liturgies
- _____ Music at liturgies not enjoyable
- _____ Dissatisfied with clergy
- _____ Found another religion
- _____ Lack of community
- _____ Too many money requests
- _____ Too ritualistic
- _____ Too formal
- _____ Other: _____

Agree or disagree with each statement ("Child" refers to what you think your child believes, or what he has revealed to you):

	Child	You	Other Parent
God created and ordered the world and watches over it from a distance.	_____	_____	_____
I have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.	_____	_____	_____
Religion is primarily about becoming a good person.	_____	_____	_____

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	Child	You	Other Parent
The central goal in life is to feel happy and to feel good about oneself.	_____	_____	_____
God does not need to be particularly involved in my life except when I need him to solve a problem.	_____	_____	_____
Good people go to heaven when they die because they earned their salvation with good moral behavior.	_____	_____	_____
I believe in God.	_____	_____	_____
I pray daily.	_____	_____	_____
Religion is very important in my life.	_____	_____	_____
I have encountered Jesus through the Catholic Church.	_____	_____	_____

How would you best identify your child?

- _____ Cultural Catholic (refer to page 17)
- _____ Shrugger (page 18)
- _____ Spiritual but not religious (page 20)
- _____ Moral mover (page 20)
- _____ Religious switcher (page 21)
- _____ Skeptic: atheist or agnostic (page 22)

Please write “agree” or “disagree” for each statement about *your own* beliefs:

- He'll come back eventually once he marries or has kids. _____
- I took him to Mass and sent him to Catholic schools—that should have been enough. _____
- He left because of me. It's all my fault! _____
- He won't listen to me; it's just impossible to have a discussion about faith. _____

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It's hopeless. No matter what happens, my child is never coming back to the Church. _____

How, specifically, would you define success with respect to the return of your child?

Equip Yourself Chapters 4–6

What is your “house rule” about Mass attendance for your older teen or young adult children who live with you or visit?

Do you have to force or nag your child to comply with this house rule?

What specific conflicts have you had with your child over religion or morals?

Which threshold best describes where you are and where your child is on the “thresholds of conversion”? (see pgs. 43–45)

	Me	My child
1) Initial trust	_____	_____
2) Spiritual curiosity	_____	_____
3) Spiritual openness	_____	_____
4) Spiritual seeking	_____	_____
5) Intentional disciple	_____	_____

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What is your prayer commitment regarding your child's return?

Which fruits of the Holy Spirit do you need most on this journey: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control?

When will you ask for them?

What is your fasting and/or sacrificial commitment regarding your child's return?

How well do you know your faith? Are you able to explain it?

What can you do to enhance your knowledge of the Catholic Faith?

- _____ Read the Bible or join a Bible study. When? _____
- _____ Read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, especially about teachings that you are unsure of or that your child questions. When? _____
- _____ Other spiritual reading. Name it _____
- _____ Catholic videos or podcasts. From whom? _____
- _____ Other ideas: _____

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Why are you Catholic?

**Outline your story of conversion and/or why the Catholic faith is important to you?
(see pgs. 75–77)**

Plant the Seeds and Start Conversation Chapters 7–8

Is your child absolutely sure of your unconditional love for him? _____

What will you say or do to make sure he knows the nature of your love or to reinforce your unconditional love? How and when will you do this?

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What in your attitudes or behavior regarding being Catholic upsets your child?

Which of your child's interests or hobbies can you participate in? How will you do it?

"Seed gift" ideas: _____

If you could ask your child three questions about the faith and be sure he would answer them honestly, what would you ask?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Move Forward and Close the Loop
Chapters 9–11

As you dialogue with your child, what does he say are his objections to being a practicing Catholic?

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What “positive intentions” can you find in these objections?

What are some “shoe pebble” questions you can ask your child when the time is right?

What Catholic community opportunities can you recommend to your child in the area where he lives?

Who can you recommend to talk with your child about the faith (e.g., priest, deacon, teacher, spiritual director)?

What are “close the loop” questions that would be authentic for you to ask and that your child would take seriously? (These should tie back to your definition of success in the first section.)

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Personal and Moral Objections

Chapters 12–13

What are your child's objections to attending Mass? Does he understand and believe in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist? If not, how can you share that truth with him?

Are there particular Church practices or "rules" to which your child objects? If so, how will you explain the reasons for these practices or "rules"?

Does your child believe God will forgive him for *any* sin he has committed? What resources about reconciliation and forgiveness can you provide for him?

Does your child have any special circumstances to consider in his return to the Church, such as cohabitation, contraception, past abortion, same-sex attraction or homosexual activity, divorce, or divorce/remarriage? Where will you go to research the Church's position on these special circumstances? How will you communicate with him about his behavior or beliefs in these areas?

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Theological Objections and Conclusion

Chapter 14

Are you struggling to refute any of these beliefs expressed by your child:

1. "I'm an atheist or agnostic."

Where can you find resources to help you argue that God exists?

2. "Faith is not compatible with science."

What is your child's evidence that this belief is true?

If evolution is one of his arguments, what is your response?

If how the Church treated Galileo is one of his arguments, what is your response?

If there is another scientific objection, how will you explore this argument so that you can have an educated discussion with your child?

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3. *"I can't have a personal relationship with Jesus in the Catholic Church."*

How can one encounter Jesus in the Catholic Church?

What examples of encounter from your own life can you share with your child?

4. *"Catholics don't value the Bible."*

What is your response and what evidence will you use to form your response?

5. *"I don't get anything out of Mass."*

Does he understand and believe in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist?

If not, how can you help him accept this belief?

6. *"Since evil and suffering exist, there can't be a good and loving God."*

How can you shed light on the mystery that evil and suffering exist even though God is all-loving and all-good?

What will you do differently in your faith life and family relationships now that you have gone through this book?

What is your first step *this week*?
