



EMMAUS 90

FAMILY GUIDE



ARCHDIOCESE *of* MILWAUKEE

WELCOME TO THE EMMAUS 90 FAMILY GUIDE!

As you considered the invitation to join this pilgrimage, you may have seen that the Emmaus 90 journey and practices are designed primarily for adults meeting with their peers. But what if you want to journey with your spouse? Some Scripture scholars hold that the pair of disciples in the Emmaus story were indeed a married couple. Or what about bringing your children on your pilgrimage? *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* holds that parents are the first teachers, evangelists, and catechists of their children (CCC 2221-2231). If you desire to journey with your family towards Christ, Emmaus 90 is a great way to begin or deepen that journey together.

At the same time, if you've ever gone for a hike, a bike ride, or really, anything with children, you know expectations management is key and that plans must be adjusted if we are to keep peace in our own hearts and within our family.

Emmaus 90 is no different. This guide was created for *you* and *your family*, to give tips and suggestions on how to moderate and adjust the Emmaus 90 practices in the context of family life. We'll point out which practices should not be adjusted (for parents and adults), along with how to include younger children in the practices (and which ones you might consider dropping for them).

Read this guide along with the Emmaus 90 pilgrim book. In particular, we will be looking at the Practices and Pilgrim Group guidance found on pages 8-12.

May God bless your pilgrimage and journey as a family!



General Tips

Keep these in mind in general as you adjust Emmaus 90 for your family:

- There is a fine line between invitation and imposition. Each member of the family should be invited to Emmaus 90; it should never be imposed or forced upon someone. Make sure you have a conversation with your spouse and each adult/older child in your family and get their buy-in before beginning.
- For adults and teens (8th/9th grade and up): aim to keep the individual daily and weekly practices as firmly as possible. This means everyone should still aim to pray for 15 minutes per day, do a daily examen, etc. For younger kids, look for ways to keep the practices as a family (more below), or even take a tiered approach (very young kids do one thing, older kids do a few more things, etc.)
- We'll give you many ideas in this guide – it doesn't mean you need to do them all! One or two habits sustained over time is much better than trying to do everything sporadically. Aim to be faithful to a smaller amount of family habits (even if it's just one!), then when you master it, add more.

- Be real about sacrifice. Our lives are full, so adding Emmaus 90 practices (both individually and as a family) will require you to remove something else. Maybe that's an episode of TV each night, or maybe it's something bigger. Discuss how you will make time as a family for this!
- Be careful about "earthly rewards." It can be tempting to hold out sweets, screen time, or other treats as a reward for children doing "spiritual things." While the intention is good (building a habit), doing this consistently can lead to a servile attitude towards spiritual habits (i.e., only doing them to "earn" a reward). So make Sunday a big feast! – *just don't hold the doughnuts hostage in exchange for good Mass behavior or daily prayer.* 😊



Time for God

Reminder: adults and teens should keep their individual Time for God practices from Emmaus 90! These are suggestions for navigating that as well as incorporating some practices for families and younger kids.

Daily Prayer (15 minutes/day with Emmaus 90 Scriptures)

- For Couples: Be on the same page – it's hard to find silence in our homes! Talk about how you can protect each other's prayer time for each other. Maybe that means Mom prays early in the morning while Dad keeps the kids engaged, then Dad stops by church on the way to work. Get creative, and help your spouse find the time to pray in silence.
- For Families: pick a time of the day (at the breakfast table, or before bed) and read the daily Scripture passage out loud to them. Help them think about the passage through conversation. You can ask questions like:
 - Where is God in the passage?
 - What do you think God is telling us here?

Daily Examen (5 minutes/day, ideally at the end of the day)

- For Couples: Make this a little ritual before bed or before leaving for work. Use the *Becoming One in God* prayer template at the end of this guide.
- For Families: Establish a nightly prayer ritual as a family. Gather around a prayer space (if you have one; if you don't, perhaps in your living room or by a crucifix). Try this:
 - Begin with the Sign of the Cross
 - Go around the room, having each member of family say one thing they are thankful for that day.

Pro tip: encourage them to address God during this part – God, thank you for ____ OR God, I am thankful that ____

- Go around the room again, sharing something they could have done better that day (If this is new for your family, consider focusing on thanksgiving and leave this out).

Pro tip: again, this can be addressed to God: God, I'm sorry that I ____ OR God, please forgive me for ____
Level up: ask God for help to do better tomorrow: God, tomorrow, please help me to ____

- Close with a short prayer, asking for good sleep and thanking Him once more.

- Finish up with a rote Catholic prayer, a hymn, or something else.
 - This is a great way to help kids (or adults!) learn some of the great treasury of Catholic prayers. Depending on what your kids know already, start with the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and Guardian Angel prayers. From there, move on to the Hail Holy Queen, Memorare, and St. Michael prayers. You could also use Mass parts (the Gloria, Confiteor, or Creed) or a favorite hymn. *All these prayers are readily available online or in many prayer apps. Try Laudate or Hallow for Catholic prayer apps!*

Pro tip: say the same prayer for about a month before changing. You'll be amazed at how quickly you and your kids will have them memorized (even toddlers!)

Daily Journal

- For Families: If they're not into writing, don't force it. At the same time, journaling can be a great way for anyone to start putting their prayers into words. Young kids may enjoy drawing pictures for God to reflect their thoughts on a reading.

Full, Active, Conscious Participation in Sunday Mass

- Make a plan before the weekend of when you'll go to Mass. Prioritize going together.
- Don't skip Saturday's prayer time (it's the Gospel for the upcoming Sunday Mass)! Praying with the readings ahead of time can allow us to still pray when we are distracted by our kids during Mass.
- If your kids are still learning how to be still during Mass, make sure you take some extra time to prepare on Saturday or early Sunday morning.

Pro Tip: consider bringing your kids to your church outside of Mass to pray for a few minutes. The pressure will be much lower when the church is empty – this will help your kids learn to get comfortable there!

More Time in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament

- For Couples: Plan when you'll each take this time. Help each other make the time!
- For Families: Bring your kids for a visit to the Tabernacle or Eucharistic Adoration each week. It does not need to be long (5 minutes, even!). Say a few prayers together, then leave.

Pro tip: If bringing young children, don't anticipate being able to do your daily 15-minute prayer time.

Frequent Confession

- For Families: If possible, go as a family. Even if your children are not old enough to go to Confession or they choose not to go, going as a family allows your children to see you go, which models for them this essential habit of disciples.

Pro tip: It's not a bad idea to stop for ice cream or doughnuts to celebrate God's mercy afterwards (as long as everyone gets to participate, not just those who went to Confession).



Time for Connection

Weekly Pilgrim Group

- No matter how you do your pilgrim groups, make time to ask each other how things are going on a daily basis. Ask what you thought of the readings for the day and where you can help each other be more faithful to the Emmaus 90 practices.
 - Look for ways to compliment each other on the positive changes and consistency you see in each other. If you have agreed to hold each other accountable for Emmaus 90 practices, do so privately and not in front of others.
- **For Couples:** Talk about how to navigate this. Participating in a pilgrim group together may be beneficial for you. It might also be better if each of you joins your own pilgrim group to receive encouragement, etc. from the wider community. In that case, help each other with scheduling and making time for it.
 - If you have friends who are couples, consider forming spouse groups, with the wives in one group and husbands in another group.
 - **For Families:** This will be one of the more unique parts of Emmaus 90 for families. Overall, the daily check-ins above and the daily examen outline above will be the best way to journey together. Most kids will not be ready for a deep, 30-minute discussion as a family.
 - If you have older kids participating, use the standard Emmaus 90 Pilgrim Group Meeting Itinerary as your aid. If you sense kids are getting overwhelmed by adding a deeper discussion, stick to just the prayer prompts and pray together.

Weekly 30-minute Formation Session

- **For Couples:** Consider watching together, especially if your pilgrim groups are not watching together. You could even consider hosting a watch party for both of your pilgrim groups with dinner or dessert before/after. This builds community naturally.
- **For Families:** Typically, the formation talks will be addressed to adults. Unless you have teens who are able to participate fully in Emmaus 90, our suggestion is to have kids skip this portion.



Time for Excellence

Live Sundays Well

- Prioritize time together as a family after Mass. Learn a new board game, have family or friends over for brunch, or go for a hike.

Pro tip: clear your to-do list on Saturday so that you are not trying to catch up on chores on Sunday.

Pro tip: start your "Sunday Rest" at 4 p.m. on Saturday and end it after Sunday dinner, allowing you time to do preparatory chores for the week ahead.

- For Families: look beyond Sunday at different feast days and celebrate those with a special treat or activity. See the resources at the end of this guide for suggested books and websites to help with this.

Fast from Meat on Fridays

- Plan some meals ahead of time that are meatless so you have some variety.
 - Pre-Lent: If giving up meat is difficult logistically, consider a different sacrifice you can make (no coffee, no sweets, no TV?).
- Communicate: if you're getting together with friends, communicate your needs ahead of time. If you're not close enough to ask for meatless meals, be a good guest and look for something else to give up that day (again, Pre-Lent only!)
- For Families: talk to your kids about why we abstain from meat on Fridays
 - Younger Kids: Jesus gave us all of Himself on Good Friday when He died on the Cross. We make a little sacrifice on the same day, both to remind ourselves of what Christ did for us and to show Him that we are thankful for His sacrifice.
 - Older Kids: we give up meat, specifically, because it is the flesh of an animal, and Christ gave up His flesh for us. (Cold-blooded animals have traditionally been considered a different category of animal, hence why we can eat fish on Fridays)

Do Small Things with Great Love

- For Couples: In addition to doing small things at work or for strangers, look for hidden ways to serve your spouse without their knowledge.
- For Families: challenge your kids (and yourselves) to do hidden acts of love throughout the day. During your nightly prayer time or over dinner, share about where you saw your children acting well.

Choose one Virtue to Practice

- For Couples: Share with your spouse which virtue you are working on and why.

Pro tip: if you're struggling to identify a virtue you need to work on, ask your spouse!
They'll know 😊

- For Families: Choose one virtue as a family, talk about ways to act on it, then check in on it at the dinner table or during nightly prayers.



BECOMING ONE IN GOD

PRAYING TOGETHER AS A COUPLE

Find a quiet place for the two of you to sit together.

Begin by making the sign of the cross.

Say together:

Father, help us get to know you during this time of prayer.

Take a moment to be still and rest in God's love for you and your spouse.

Turn towards each other, and holding hands, take turns praying the following out loud to your spouse:

Father, thank you for _____ (name of spouse) and the blessings you have given us, especially _____.

Jesus, I am sorry for the ways I have not loved you or _____ (name of spouse), especially _____.

Holy Spirit, come bless and guide our marriage, particularly give us _____ (ask for specific gifts or virtues that you need). Please help us to glorify you through our marriage.

Take turns praying out loud by saying the following words:

*Blessed are you, Lord,
For by your goodness I took _____ (name of spouse) as my wife/husband.*

Together Pray out loud:

*Blessed are you, Lord,
For in the good and the bad times of our life you have stood lovingly by our side.
Help us, we pray, to remain faithful in our love for one another, so that we may be true witnesses to the covenant you have made with humankind.*

End by making the sign of the cross.

RESOURCES FOR FAMILY LITURGICAL LIVING:

Books

- *Living the Seasons* – Ave Maria Press
- *The Catholic All Year Compendium* – Ignatius Press
- *The Year and Our Children* – Sophia Institute Press

Websites

- CatholicAllYear.com
- CatholicCing.com
- 52Sundays.com