

Testimonies from some of the students from the Samuel Group



What Is Samuel Group?

Samuel Group is a discernment group for young adults, ages 19-30, who meet together once a month from September through April in order to study, pray, and discover their individual vocations or lifetime call from God. The purpose of the program is to equip young adults with the tools they need to approach vocational discernment with peace, joy and confidence.

What Is the History of Samuel Group?

The program began in 1987, when **Cardinal Martini of Milan** led a group of 100 young men and women on a spiritual journey to discover their call in life. Cardinal Martini's talks and spiritual direction were based on the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola, a master in the Discernment of Spirits. Cardinal Martini gave the Apostles of the Interior Life his blessing and encouraged them to teach discernment as part of their apostolate. Samuel Group was then brought to the United States in 2001 and has since been offered on different university campuses.

The commitment to the program lasts one year and helps give direction to a student's freedom and creativity so that he/she may discover his/her role in the Church and in the world.

The program has a three-fold goal for each candidate:

- to know oneself
- to know Jesus
- to know one's role in the Church and in the world

The means by which to reach this goal are: prayer, spiritual direction, and interior discernment. They involve three main aspects:

Meditation involves daily reflection on the Word of God and spiritual writings.

Purification is the process of detachment from sin, wrongful inclinations, selfish affections, and illusions.

Scrutiny involves spiritual direction and self-reflection on the interior movements of the soul, where Jesus speaks to us.

Testimonies

Here we have included testimonies from some of the students (with their permission) who have completed Samuel Group.

This has been a year of immense growth for me spiritually; during one Samuel Group I was very struck by the fact that God was not only calling me to become Catholic, he was calling me to a way of life in the church. This was a completely new thought. Samuel Group was essential to showing I was attached to many ideas I had about what my future was supposed to entail and what I would do in my life. **There were many times of frustration because I felt like I had no idea what I was doing. I realize now that I was struggling because I wasn't trusting God, I was trusting the world.**

Sara Davis, Nurse Practitioner – Nashville, TN

Samuel Group challenged me to probe the deepest questions that arose in my heart. Questions of great significance that shaped my life even as much as they plagued me with doubt: my identity, my value, my baggage, and my future. I think without this structured program, probing these tender areas would've been a frightening, even dangerous, enterprise. But with the guidance of the sisters, Jesus' presence in daily prayer and Adoration, and the wisdom of the saints, I've seen myself grow substantially. **I now know what it is to have a confident faith, and that is true freedom.**

James Halpin, Texas A&M

I just thought discernment was for people that thought about becoming nuns and priests. After recognizing what was in me the whole time, my spiritual director suggested that I participate in Samuel Group to support and cement the steps I had taken and to help relieve myself of any doubt. Abandonment to God's will, which was possibly my hardest obstacle to learn to overcome, seemed easier to me now than ever before. **In a short time, my call to the marriage vocation became clearer and clearer,** like finding the hidden island in the fog; you knew it was there the whole time, but didn't quite know how to get to it or what it looked like. Marriage has somehow become more beautiful to me.

Anonymous

The biggest takeaway from Samuel Group was learning that I am not in control – and this is good. I felt an incredible sense of peace when I realized that God already has things all figured out. My job is simply to ask what His plans are, listen for His response, and then do my best to put that plan into action. For me, asking God to guide me was easy. What challenged me most was learning to give up my attachment to what I thought the answer should be. I have learned to accept the uncertainty

for the future, trusting Him to guide me along the narrow path. Samuel Group taught me to listen to God speaking both in the silence of my heart and in the thoughtful questions and advice of a trusted mentor.

Emily Trader, University of Kansas

Samuel Group gave me the grace to see a greater reality: the desires that I have are the very things God uses to speak to me. What He wants truly is what I want! Samuel Group gave me ways to understand those desires more clearly when I encounter them. For example, I realized how my life experiences shape my perceptions and tendencies. This helps me recognize when God is and isn't working in my heart. My prayer and knowledge of self in the sight of God grew tremendously. Perhaps the greatest grace was granted when I acknowledged and begged for the grace to relinquish my inordinate attachments. Though I am still on my spiritual journey (welcome to planet Earth), I now desire God's will with more freedom from my attachments. I'm no longer attached to any one particular plan because God gave me greater trust and freedom in Him through Samuel Group. I have no idea what my adventure to Sainthood will be like, but I AM PUMPED!!!

Rhett Jones, Texas A&M

Upon entering Samuel Group, I was confident that I wanted God to be **calling me to the priesthood**. However, I was not entirely clear if God was pulling the strings or if my will was in control. The Samuel Group provided the techniques and motivation I needed to let go. I had not realized how much my attachments were keeping me from truly opening myself up to God's grace in a fuller way. Also, placing the focus on the condition of my interior life was crucial. By taking seriously my spiritual needs from the inside out, I'm more docile in the Spirit and aware of my life in the Body of Christ."

Fr. Andrew Strobl, Archdiocese of Kansas City, KS

Samuel Group **gave me the tools that have helped me know myself better**, what I truly desire and what God desires for me. These tools helped me navigate through tough future choices with confidence! **Knowing God's will for you is the best adventure! Samuel Group gives you knowledge that equips you for the ride!**

Sam White, Texas A&M

I had experienced a deep encounter with Jesus throughout my freshman and sophomore years of college. I was so incredibly grateful and touched by how Christ was moving in my heart in radical ways through those years. When junior year came around, I had a desire to pursue Christ in a deeper way, particularly in my daily discernment of where He was taking me. It was through the Samuel Group program that I was able to explore this deeper understanding of God's will in my life and how to follow it. Samuel Group also gave me the courage and openness to start discerning my Vocation while I was in college...something I had never been encouraged to do in the lukewarm Catholic environment I grew up in. Now, I am serving as a FOCUS missionary, and I can truly say that Samuel

Group has allowed me to be much more aware of how the Holy Spirit is guiding and calling me in my life, as well as a deeper love and conviction of being a disciple of Jesus through this journey of discernment with Him. I am so grateful for the Apostles of the Interior Life and for the program they provided me with in these formative years of my life! It will help launch me even more into lifelong Catholic mission and an awareness of God's will for me.

Fallon Scanlon, University of Kansas