

Kirk's Course of Study

By and Based on the Books of Robert J. Cormier (www.thefaithkit.org)
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To order to be ordained, Kirk had to participate in a four year program of formation. Three of these years, the first three, were spent in a classroom. They were years devoted to “doctrine,” “spirituality,” and “ministry” in that order. The following would have been a fine curriculum for him and his fellow deacon candidates to follow. The material envisions a weekly class and a thirty (30) week year. It was adapted from the table of contents of this author’s “complete course in Christianity,” “spirituality that makes sense,” and “ministry book.”

Doctrine

Level I

Week 1: Basic Doctrine

The Basic Doctrines

The Gifts of Faith

How We Know Our Faith Is True

How We Know There Is a God

Heaven

Love

God's Plan

We Were Made to Be a Family

The Right Reason to Believe in Ourselves

Week 2: Christian Life

Three Points about Love

The Ten Commandments

Forgiveness

Week 3: Christ and the Church

The Role of Christ in Christian Faith

The Life of Christ

The Origin and Organization of the Church

Mary and the Saints

Week 4: The Sacraments (minus the Eucharist)

Baptism

Confirmation

Holy Orders

Matrimony

Confession

How to Make a Confession

The Anointing of the Sick

Week 5: The Eucharist

What Is the Mass?

Five Meanings of Mass

How to Receive Communion

The Liturgical Year

Level II

Week 6: Faith in God

The Existence of God

God as a Person, a Person of Love

God as Father

Prayer

Three Questions about God's Plan

Week 7: Faith in Christ: Jesus' Teachings

Part I: Heaven

Why We Can Imagine Heaven

A Guide for the Imagination

Three Questions about Heaven

Part II: Love

Sin Is Selfishness

Three More Points about Love

Three Thoughts about Right and Wrong

Week 8: Faith in Christ: Jesus' Sonship

Jesus as God's son

The Four Meanings of the Cross

The Resurrection
Comparative Religion

Week 9: Faith in the Church: The Communion of Saints

Understanding Human History

The Trinity

Salvation as a Family

Two Questions about the End

Revelation

Week 10: Faith in the Church: The Church on Earth

More About the Origin of the Church

More About the Organization of the Church

Church and State

The Church in the World

Five Principles of Christian Economics

Four Principles of Christian Environmentalism

Four Principles of Ecumenism

What is Distinctive about Catholic Christianity?

Level III

Week 11: Philosophy

Part I: Metaphysics

Para-psychology?

Part II: Anthropology

Levels of Development

Special Themes in Anthropology

Genes or Environment?

More about Self-Consciousness

The Relation of Knowing and Feeling

Depression

Week 12: God

How We Know that God Exists

Thirteen Reasons to Believe

Knowledge of God

More about Prayer

Week 13: Creation

Six Ideas About Creation
Models of Creation
Extra-terrestrial Life
Understanding Evil: A Deeper Look
Understanding God's Plan: A Review
Three Things We Can Expect
The End of the World
Evolution

Week 14: Scripture, Tradition, and Church Teaching

The Distinction between the Truth and Its Understanding
Three Principles of Theological Method
 The Rule of Reason
 The Rule of Faith
 The Essence Is Determined Only in Retrospect
Special Themes in Scripture, Tradition, and Church Teaching
 The Canon
 Sacred Tradition
 The Distinction between Tradition and Doctrine
 The Distinction between the Ordinary
 and Extraordinary "Magisterium"
Modern Scripture Scholarship

Week 15: The Old Testament

Week 16: The New Testament

A Summary of Findings
Special Principles for the Study of the New Testament
Key Topics in the Gospels

Week 17: Jesus' Passion, Death, and Resurrection

The Story of Jesus' Passion
Jesus' Resurrection
What Actually Happened?

Week 18: Christology

The Incarnation
 Jesus' Sonship

Jesus as God and Man
The Trinity
 The Divinity of the Holy Spirit
 Three Yet One
The Modern Synthesis
 The Essential Truth of the Incarnation
 The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit
 The Essential Truth of the Trinity
A Critical Life of Christ
Jesus' Knowledge and Will

Week 19: Ancient and Medieval Church History

Part I: 27 to 476

Part II: 476 to 1500

Week 20: The Reformation

The Origins of the Protestant Reformation

Later Protestantism

Zwingli

Calvin

England

Evangelicals

The Council of Trent

Retrospective

Week 21: Modern Church History

The Decline of Christianity in Europe

Social Developments

But Things Were Not All Bad

The Church's Response to Modernity

Vatican II

Post-Vatican II

Analysis

Recent Developments

Week 22: Ecclesiology

The Doctrine of the Church

Various Questions in Ecclesiology

Various Positions in the Church

Religious Life

Various Themes in Ecclesiology

Week 23: Sacramental Theology

Sacraments in General

Baptism

Confirmation

Holy Orders

Confession

Various Themes in Reconciliation

The Anointing of the Sick

Christian Funerals

Week 24: The Eucharist II: The Theology of the Eucharist

How We Know the Eucharist Comes from God

Other Observations About the Eucharist

Inter-Communion

Week 25: All about Mass

The Places and Things in Church

The Special Clothing Used at Mass

The Four Liturgical Colors

Other Objects Used at Mass

The Structure of the Mass

The Ministries

Week 26: Marriage

The Concept of Christian Marriage

Special Questions Concerning Marriage

Ten Thoughts About Sex

The Question of Family Planning

Natural Family Planning

Pre-requisites and Preparation

Divorce and Re-marriage

Week 27: Moral Theology I: Issues for All

An Overview of Issues Already Addressed

Telling the Truth

Sex

Substance Abuse

Other Important Issues

Television
 Gambling
 Greed

Week 28: Moral Theology II: Issues for Some

An Overview of Issues Already Addressed

Abortion

Euthanasia and Capital Punishment

Assisted Suicide

Medical Moral Issues

Homosexuality

Week 29: Mary and the Saints

The Historical Role of Mary

The Marian Doctrines

The Rosary

Praying to the Saints?

The Church's Calendar

Week 30: Ten Things About Faith

How to Recognize the Truth: Consider the Alternative

God Wrote the Truth into All of Our Hearts

To Get Faith: Decide

To Choose Something Is to Reject What Contradicts It

Faith Is Its Own Reward—Immediately

Faith Doesn't Change Things;

It Changes How We See Things

Faith Is Not About Believing God Will Do It;

Faith Is About Believing in God

Why Do We Pray: To Feel Heard

Faith Never Inspires Complacency: It Inspires Both

Passion and Peace in Equal Measure

How to Make Faith Grow:

Bring It into Your Decisions and Experiences

Spirituality

Having Faith

Week 1: God

Creation Was Signed

From Nothing Nothing Comes

$2 + 2 = 4$

He Always Was

We Are Made of the Love of God

The Utter Unselfishness of God's Love

Stars and Sand

Why We Look Up

Week 2: Faith

What Is Faith?

The Gifts of Faith

The Gifts of Faith Are Immediate

Faith Doesn't Change Things, It Changes How We See Things

Faith Fulfills Our Human Nature

Faith Is a Better Choice

Faith Requires No Compromise

Faith Is the Testimony of Humanity's Best

Faith Is No Fad

The Sounds and Smells of Faith

“The Good News”: A Summary

Week 3: Five Steps to Faith

Try

Decide

Trust

Jump

Now

Week 4: Prayer

What Is Prayer?

“Ask and You Shall Receive”

One Prayer That Is Sure to Be Answered

We Want What We Pray For

Why We Ask for Prayers

The Best Reason to Pray

Don't Forget to Listen

The Story of a Conversation with God

What Is a Personal Relationship with God?

Higher Spirituality

Really Higher Spirituality

Adoration

Week 5: Us as God Sees Us

We Judge Ourselves Backwards

We Judge God Backwards

He Loves Us for Who He Made Us
We Cannot Lose God's Love

He Couldn't Love You More

We Don't Know Why God Loves Us

Why Do Some Grow So Much More Than Others?

A Way to Understand How Everyone Is Special

Why Self-Acceptance Isn't Easy

How Love Grows

Baby

Week 6: Love of Self

What Is the Love of Self?

The Good You *Can* See

A Million Pilots

Keep Track

The Difference Between Love of Self and Conceit

“There but by the Grace of God...” Works Both Ways

The Difference Between Conceit and Joy

Your Story Is History

To Have a Living Past

Care of Self Counts Too

Who Am I?

Week 7: Joy

Thy Kingdom Come

The Joy Is Just Knowing

If the Worst Thing That Can Happen
Is the Best Thing That Can Happen, What's the Problem?

How to Imagine Heaven

Rest in Peace?

On the Things We Don't Have

The Myth “If Only”

The Secret of Happiness: Knowing What We Have When We Have It

The Bad Things That Didn't Happen

Accentuate the Positive

Look. See!

Life Is Better When We Look Forward

Losing Life Before You Die

Faith Allows Us to Face Life—and Not Despair

Week 8: Peace

Thy Will Be Done

What Having Faith Is All About

Why Hard Things Happen

The Greater the Burden, the Greater the Opportunity

The Opportunities in Disaster

Why Good Things Happen

Don't Let Life Seduce You

God Frees Us from Having to Do Everything
So We Can Do Something

You Only Need to Do Your Best

When There Is Only One Thing to Do

When You Are Doing a Hard Thing for a Good Reason,
Watch What You Expect

Not Accepting Doesn't Change a Thing
Give It Back to God

You Need a Sense of Humor

Things Never Happen the Way We Expect

God's Plan Is Like a Painting

A Tree Falls in the Forest...

This Page

Detachment from History

Week 9: Thoughts for the Struggle

Life Was Meant to Be a Struggle

Why Suffering?

Suffering Implies Faith

Two Truths

$f=0$

This Too Shall Pass

One Day at a Time

We Are Never Alone

A Letter from God to You

Someone Has It Worse

People Are Actors

Face Your Farewells

When Someone We Love Dies...

The Author's Commentary on When Someone We Love Dies

A Letter from Heaven to You

Week 10: Faith Is Its Own Reward

Faith Is Its Own Reward

Love Is Its Own Reward

We Have Control

Do Not Seek What Needs to Be Granted

The Exercise of Faith Strengthens It

Our Spirit Moves in the Direction of Its Interest

No Good Work Is Ever Wasted

You Never Know

A Preamble to the Life of Faith

Excuses Hide Us from Our Lack of Faith

Hypocrisy

The Evil of Envy

Warning!

What Is Self-Righteousness?

Don't Hide Your Light Under a Basket

Faith Is Its Own Evangelist

How We Know Our Faith Is Real

A Simple Guide to Spiritual Life

The More...

Extrapolation

The Faith Prayers

Living Faith

Week 11: The Life of Faith

The Life of Faith Is Love

What Is Love?

Sin Is Selfishness

Two Conversions

The Difference Between Childish and Childlike

Faith Doesn't Always Look Like Love

The Only Sure Sign of Love

There Are Many Ways to Give Up Your Life

So What if I'm the Only One?

You Don't Need to Justify Love

Love Surpasses Justice

God Does Not Keep Score

How We Will See Our Sins

Should We Ever Feel Guilty?

There Is No Such Thing as Bad Faith

We Can Please God

Week 12: Forgiveness

Forgiveness Is Understanding

People Do the Best They Can with What They Are Given

Explanation Is No Excuse

Everything Is Forgivable

Forgiveness Is the Decision Not to Hate

To Love Is to Forgive

See the Sin Apart from the Hurt

Forgiveness Is a Vote of Confidence in Self

How to Love Your Enemy

Those Who Cause Trouble for Us
Almost Always Cause More Trouble for Themselves

See the Good that Comes with the Bad

If It Has to Be Too Much or Too Little

Who Is Perfect?

We Are All Far from the Kingdom of God

You Never Know II

The Wisdom of Giving the Benefit of the Doubt

Removing the Plank from Our Own Eyes First

What Would You Have Done?

How “Judge Not, or You Will Be Judged” Really Works

Week 13: Love of Neighbor

The Golden Rule: Why It Works and How to Make It Work for You

Most People Get It Backwards

When Not to Turn the Other Cheek

Try to See Things from Others' Point of View

First, Acknowledge the Truth in Others' Point of View

Ask, Don't Accuse

How to Correct Fraternaly

How to Do a Favor

Give the Gift of Giving

Give the Gift of Forgiving

Apologizing, Who Looks Bad?

Apologizing, We Have Nothing to Lose

How to Accept an Apology

We Cannot Love Everyone Equally

Week 14: Friendship

The Charity of Friendship and Love of Family

Why We Are Tough On the Ones We Love

Do You Really Want Them to Be Perfect?

Friendship, the Primary Relationship of Choice

The Keys to Friendship

Life Takes Place in Conversation

Don't Be Too Important to Sit

Ask Questions

The Importance of Prudent Companions

The Importance of People to Impress

Gravy

How Many People Can Hold Your Hand?

Week 15: Matters of the Heart

The Religion in Romance

The Four Phases of Falling (In Love)

The Tendency to Take for Granted

Dealing with a Loved One's "Past"

The Origin of Jealousy

We Want Our Feelings to Be Returned

Your Rejection Is Their Fault

It Is Better to Have Loved and Lost...

Recovering From a Broken Heart

He Who Loves Only God Does Not

He Who Loves Only You Does Not

The Tests of Love

Infatuation

How You Know You Are “In” Love

Life Is One Half Relationships

How Marriage is a High Road to Heaven

How Is Marriage a Vocation?

How Is the Act of Love Love?

A Spiritual Guide to Being Single

Week 16: Greatness

If It Were Easy, Everyone Would Do It

The More You Put Into It, the More You Appreciate It

Perseverance

Failure

No Great Person Was Not the Product of Pain

No Great Person Was Not the Product of Change

Greatness Has a Lack of Precedent

Greatness Is Risk

Nothing Worth Dying For, Nothing Worth Living For

You Need to Do Something

Life Is a Balancing Act

The Dichotomies of Faith

What Is a Calling?

Does God Have a Plan for My Life?

Does God Really Have a Plan for My Life?

Three Things to Think When Something Seems Beyond You

Week 17: Love of Things

The Difference Between Enjoyment and Idolatry

Idolatry Is the Root of Suffering

The Difference Between Health Consciousness and Idolatry

The Right Attitude Toward Aging

A Letter to a Westerner in Advance of Retirement

The Difference Between Needs and Desires

It Is Balance that Gives Joy

Waste Not Want Not

The Best Things in Life *Are* Free

Happiness Comes Only from Within

What's the Point?

You Can't Take It with You

A Perspective on Pets

How to Make Your House Like Heaven

Week 18-20: Moral Matters

Making Moral Decisions

Telling the Truth

Exaggeration

Dirty Mouth, Dirty Mind

Scandal

Sex Was Made for Marriage

Self-Abuse

Avoiding the Obscene

Sinful Thoughts?

Sober Thoughts About Drinking

The Real Problem of Television

The Ingredients of a Great Life

The Goal of a Great Life

Boredom Is *Your* Problem

The Difference Between Routines and Ruts

The Difference Between Fans and Fanatics

Gambling

Greed

The Occult

Interest in the Awful

How to Live Well in the Modern World

How to Survive in a Sea of News

Week 21: The Public Forum

Be Yourself, People Can Spot a Phony

If You Want to Be Happy, Smile

Courtesy Counts

Watch What You Say

The Power of a Good Word

The Three “R”s of Gossip

Watch What You Hear

To Gain or to Share

Watch What You Wear

Beware of the Whirldys

How to Be Gracious to Your Whirldy Friends

Week 22-24: Self-Knowledge (and Practical Points)

Self-Knowledge Equals Self-Control

Face Your Feelings

Physician Heal Thyself!

Self-Serving?

The Tendencies

Watch Out for the Word “Normal”

Craziness Is Contagious

Don’t Stare

If...

Coping with the Problem of Parental Rejection

Beware of Blame and of Being a Victim

Why It Is True: There Is Nothing Worse Than a Good Man Gone Bad

The Origin of Anger

The Origin of Insecurity

People Have the Power Over You You Give Them

Consider the Source

Pride Is Tiring

What Is “Proper Pride”?

Consider the Consequences

Some Judgments Take Time

The First Thing that Goes Is Your Judgment

Avoiding Infidelity

How Wrong Gets Righter

Rationalization

“Oh come on”: A Conversation with Myself

There Is No Such Thing as Will Power

Goals Are Great to Keep Us Going

Energy Is Everything

Do Not Let Your Days Connect

Depression

You Are Who You See on a Good Day

Be Patient

Talk It Out

Take a Walk

Write It Down

Spiritual Reading

Make a Plan

A Homiletic Guide to the Scriptures

Weeks 25-27: Comments on the Gospels

Week 28: Comments on the rest of the New Testament

Week 29: Preaching the Old Testament

Week 30: Preaching the Rosary and the Way of the Cross

Ministry

Week 1: Overview: The One Pre-Requisite of Ministerial Life

Week 2: The First of the Seventeen Points of Preaching

Week 3: The Rest of the Seventeen Points of Preaching

Week 4: Sixteen Points of Teaching

Week 5: Teaching Religion to Kids

Week 6: Teaching Religion to Adolescents and Adults

Week 7 : Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers

Week 8: Pastoral Care of the Sick

Week 9: Twenty-Four Rules of Counseling

Week 10: Sacred Psychology

Week 11: Rules for the Counselors of Couples and Families

Week 12: Eleven Rules of Spiritual Direction

Week 13: The Baptism of Infants and the Teaching of Parenting

Week 14: The Rite of Baptism

Week 15: Confirmation and Other Ministry to Youth

Week 16: Thoughts to Share with Youth

Week 17: The Instruction of Adults: Theory

Week 18: The Instruction of Adults: Rules and Rites

Week 19: Ten Thoughts about Marriage

Week 20: The Laws Concerning Marriage

Week 21: The Celebration of Marriage

Week 22: Seven Rules for Dealing with Death

Week 23: Christian Funerals

Week 24: Special Ministries I: Ordinary Special Ministries

Week 25: Special Ministries II: Extraordinary Special Ministries

Week 26: A Service Manual

Week 27: Seven Points of Liturgical Planning

Week 28: Presiding and Assisting at Services

Week 29: Twenty-Four Points of Leadership

Week 30: Seventeen Points Concerning Lifestyle