

Faith Is Easy

(at least in terms of getting started)

By and Based on the Books of Robert J. Cormier (www.thefaithkit.org)
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(at least in terms of getting started)

Faith is easy? How can this be true? Faith *is* easy if one starts at the beginning, by understanding what faith is, and what it wants to do for you. To help you get it, I offer you the following seven simple things to do. Please take a look and consider doing what I ask. There is so much to be gained, a life richer than most people can imagine. And even more than this, you will be ready when hard things happen, and still you will have peace.

This is what I ask:

1) Try to understand that “faith” is about certain things we know that explain life as nothing else can.

This is what I ask: Read “What is Faith” in the back of this book; or you can go to www.thefaithkit.org and click on “Read About the Basics.” In any case, read about the basics, and when you do it, check it off here:

2) Try to understand that faith helps people by giving them certain “gifts”—effects in their spirit—that follow automatically from knowing certain things. For example, if you knew that I was going to give you \$100,000,000 next Christmas, how would your spirit be affected?

This is what I ask: Read “The Gifts of Faith” in the back of this book; or you can go to www.thefaithkit.org and click on “Read About the Basics.” In any case, read about the gifts of faith, and when you do it, check it off here:

3) Try to understand that the best thing that faith can do for you is to teach you to believe in yourself for the right reason—because God has made you who you are.

This is what I ask: Read “Believing in Yourself for the Right Reason” in the back of this book; or you can go to www.thefaithkit.org and click on “Read About the Basics.” Better yet, you can go to www.thefaithkit.org/panorama, click on the “Mini-Books” menu and then download either “Believing in Yourself for the Right Reason” or “Loving Yourself for the Right Reason” or both. In any case, read about believing in yourself for the right reason, and when you do it, check it off here: []

4) Try to understand that God knew that lots of people would talk to us in His name, and that many would contradict each other, so he wrote the truth into all of our hearts. It can be seen by anyone for him- or herself who knows where to look.

This is what I ask: Read “Try” in the back of this book; or you can go to www.thefaithkit.org and click on “Read About the Basics” and then click on either “follow The Five Steps” or “see The Eight Images.” In any case, read about how you can see the truth for yourself, and when you do it, check it off here: []

5) Realize that the only way that faith can help you is if you show yourself that you believe by your actions—by what you do and don’t do, by what you give and give up.

This is what I ask: Ask yourself, besides number 7 below, what else do I need to do and keep doing?

Unless you are uncomfortable with the idea that someone might see it, write it down here: _____

6) Things can be clear when someone is right in front of you explaining them, but you need to do something to keep faith in front of you day after day. This way, not only will your faith stay in front of you, but, thinking about it constantly, your faith is sure to grow.

This is what I ask: At the very least start saying “A Daily Prayer” in the back of this book. Better yet, go to www.thefaithkit.org, click on “Check Out The Faith Kit” and pull down some stuff to put on your wall, put in your book, carry in your pocket, etc. If you go to “Visit Panorama” and then click on “Mini-Books,” you can use “A Weekly Prayer” instead of “A Daily Prayer.”

When finally you decide, write here the name of what will you use for your daily reminder: _____

7) Consider this: Coming to church is the most concrete thing you can do to show yourself that you believe—or that you want to believe. So, come to church on the Sunday of week you do this program.

Check here if you recognize that coming to church is the most concrete thing you can do to show yourself that you believe—or that you want to believe:

Check here if you came to church:

Three more things:

If you are interested in “Phase II” of this program in pursuit of faith, just go to www.thefaithkit.org/panorama and click on the “Mini-Books” menu.

If you do visit Panorama, you will find all sorts of spiritual reading. Listen to the audio tour that is provided. E-mail the author at frbob@verizon.net and ask for suggestions.

You might also e-mail the author if you have questions or doubts. Perhaps you have come up with spiritual discoveries you just want to share. In any case, write down the things you might want to discuss or just remember.

Please take your spiritual life seriously. You will gain a peace, purpose, and joy almost too wonderful for words.

What Is Faith?

What is faith? In its most developed form, faith is a deeply personal relationship with God. In its simplest form, however, faith is knowledge. It is knowledge that makes sense of life. This knowledge can be expressed most simply in terms of the following three basic doctrines:

Heaven: We exist because God, who does not need to be explained, decided to share His life.

Love: We are here, in this world, to participate in our own creation. God is giving each of us the opportunity to become our own person. This is the reason that we are born unformed, unknowing, and utterly self-centered, and we are called to grow. We are called to grow in the faith that inspires the love which makes us more like God, and prepares us to share God's life as richly as we might.

God's plan: In the act of creation, God put into action a plan for everything that would ever happen, including all the events of all of our lives. He did this knowing how we would respond to these events. In this way, we become the people God wants us to be, while, in the process, each of us still becomes our own person.

The Gifts of Faith

Faith gives gifts. It is a way of understanding things that changes the lives of those who possess it.

To believe in heaven frees us from the dread of death, or the need to keep ourselves distracted—never really living—because we cannot face the facts of life.

To believe in heaven frees us from anguish at the death of those we love. Though we may miss them, we know that they have gone to God and are more alive than we are. We also know that one day we will be reunited with them. Knowing that we are not going to lose them, we feel freer to love them while they are here.

To believe in heaven lets us dream. Though all of us have our dreams, the day comes when most people have to admit, if only to themselves, that their dreams are not going to come true. This never happens to people of faith. We know that our dreams are going to come true, the only place they ever could.

Knowing that we were made for divine life, we understand that we were made to want divine life. Presumably, we also understand that no worldly thing could ever fill us. This is the reason that to get one thing is to want another. Therefore, though we can and we should work to make our lives and our world better, we need not suffer over any one thing we do not yet have. We need not anguish over any one problem we have not yet solved. We need not suffer envy.

Not seeking more from things than they can give, we can enjoy the things we do have. Our house does not have to be a heavenly mansion. Our house is not in heaven. But, if we find love there, it can still be a home. The people in our lives do not need to be perfect. No one is perfect. Nonetheless, if the people in our lives are trying, they can still be our companions.

To believe in heaven gives us joy. At the very least, it gives us hope.

To believe in love gives us purpose. We know why we are here. We know what we should do. We know that what we do will make an eternal difference.

If we believe that we are here to grow in love, we love. We are free—free from the fear that we are giving more than others—to live the only kind of life that could ever satisfy us. God would not have made us so that we could ever be happy doing what is wrong. Rather He made us so that we can be happy only when we are doing what is right. This is the reason that if we live selfishly we are never satisfied, no matter how much we have, whereas if we live a life of love we are always satisfied, no matter how little we have.

If to grow in faith and love is our goal, we gain control over our lives. We are always in a position to do what we want most of all. This is not true if fame or fortune is our goal. If something worldly is our goal, we have to hope that the world will cooperate. (Probably it will not.) If, instead, to grow in faith and love is our goal, we can always do what we want, no matter what the world may do. If something goes wrong, we can accept it, and thus

our faith will grow. If people offend or disappoint us, we can forgive them, and thus our love will grow.

If we believe in God's plan, we have the best possible reason to accept ourselves for who we are. After all, God's plan for everything is also His plan for each of us. Yes, our life is a struggle, but it is a special struggle that God has given us to form each of us into a special person who will have a place in heaven no one else can fill. Understanding this, we can forgive ourselves for what we cannot yet do or have done and cannot change. No longer do we compare ourselves to others. Indeed, once we recognize that God has put all His love into our making, we can love ourselves for who He made us. This makes possible the sincere love of others.

To believe in God's plan allows us to accept whatever has happened and cannot be changed. We may not yet know why something hard has happened, but we can know that it needed to happen, for the best possible reason. Likewise, to believe in God's plan allows us to accept whatever is happening now and cannot yet be changed.

Since we know that everything that is going to happen—once it has happened and cannot be changed—will also follow God's plan, we can live our lives without fear. If we know that a year from now we are going to be where God wants us to be, what's to fear? If we think the same about our family and friends, we can live without the impossible burden of thinking that everything depends on us. Everything does not depend on us. Everything depends on God. Our job is to do our best, the best we can right now. The rest is up to God and His plan.

To believe in God's plan gives us peace.

**Believing in yourself for the right reason:
because God has made you who you are**

Faith in God's plan allows us to believe in ourselves for the right reason:
because God has made us who we are.

If we do not believe in ourselves because we believe that God has made us who we are, we are bound to get our idea of ourselves in two wrong ways:

- 1) From the opinions of others.
- 2) Comparing ourselves to others.

Either of these ways will lead us into trouble.

If we get our idea of ourselves from the opinions of others, we live at the mercy of their opinions right *or wrong*. We will be getting our idea of ourselves from people who do not see our soul, do not understand our part in God's plan, do not see the person we are going to be in heaven, and often have their own self-centered reasons to like someone or not. Even if they seem to like us—and, of course, we never know—we will still feel insecure. After all, they like us only while we please them.

If we get our idea of ourselves by comparing ourselves to others, we are sure to put us down. This happens for one or more of the following four reasons:

First of all, we compare our insides with other people's outsides. In other words, we are all too aware of our own imperfection. What we do not see is the inner struggle of others.

Secondly, we compare our-selves to other people's *things*. We think of ourselves as less if someone else has more things, money, talent at something, fame, or power. It does not occur to us that nothing is more important than who we are in terms of our hearts.

Thirdly, we compare ourselves with the people we see on television. It does not occur to us that what we see has been carefully staged to make the people we see look good. We even compare ourselves with fictional characters whose abilities or adventures are really had by no one. (Who has a new adventure every week?)

Finally, we make no allowances. We rarely take into consideration differences in ability or opportunity which no one brought upon themselves.

(When you consider how little some people were given, it's amazing how far they've come.)

God, however, always makes allowances. He judges us rightly because everything that has ever happened to us has followed His plan. It was He who gave us our starting point in life, and the struggles which have made us who we are so far.

As we have seen, through these struggles He is making us into the seed of the person that we will be in heaven.

What is more, into the making of this seed, God has put just as much love as He has put into the making of the seed of anyone else.

This has to be true because God is not like us. We are only human, limited in every way. We have only so much time, energy, and money. If we give, we have less to give to someone else. Therefore, we must divide up what we give, and frequently we give more to one than to another. God, however, is not like us. God is infinite. He could put His whole self into the making of each and every one of us. We know that He did so because He is God, because He is good, and because He had no reason not to.

God has put His whole self into the making of each and every one of us. He has made each of us absolutely and no less special than anyone else. He loves each of us with all His heart. Indeed, *God could not love you more if you were the only person He ever made.*

If we believe this, that we are so loved, that God sees goodness within us, our goodness comes out.

If we believe that we are good, we feel good. If we feel good, we do good; we love. This is how our goodness resembles God's. His goodness had to be expressed; He made us. If we feel good, we too will care about more than just ourselves.

If we care about others, we will feel better; we will do better, and we will feel better still. This is how love grows.

If we do not see the goodness in ourselves, however, we cannot afford to see the goodness in others. The goodness in others will make us feel bad

about who we are. We cannot love. (We can be nice to those from whom we want something, but this is not love and it does not last. We can do good in order to feel that we are good—that we are not bad—but we will not feel good doing it.) Not loving, we will feel worse about who we are, and so it goes.

To sum it up:

Faith makes possible the love of self.

The love of self makes possible the love of others.

The love of others makes love grow.

Try

To get faith, first we need to try it. We need to ask ourselves the questions that faith answers, and see how we feel about the answers.

We begin with the most basic question of all:

Where do we come from? Is it possible that everything—the universe out there and also the universe within us—is just here, from nothing, for nothing, and is on its way *to* nothing? Or does it make more sense to us that the world and we were made, made by God?

So why did God make us? Is it possible that we were made for death? Is it possible that we who were made to want life so desperately were given life so that life could be taken away? Or is it not evident that we were made for life, life with God who made us?

Why then are we here, in *this* world? Is it possible that we are here merely to kill time before we go to heaven? Or is it not obvious that we are here for something important? And what is more important than love? And by loving don't we grow in love, and in our likeness to God? And by becoming more like God, aren't we growing in our ability to share His life when finally we see Him face to face? And by this process, isn't God giving

us some responsibility for who we are, the chance to become our own person?

So if what we do is so important, why do our lives depend on so much we cannot control? After all, we do not choose our parents, or where we are born, or when, or countless other events that form us as the people we are. Is it possible that God just lets these things happen—that He has left us here at the mercy of luck, or other people's badness, or even our own created weakness? Is it possible that God left us here at the mercy of events that even He does not control? Or rather, when God made the world, isn't it obvious that He knew what was going to happen? Isn't it clear He had a plan? And if He did plan the events of our lives knowing how we would respond to them, wouldn't this make us the people He wants us to be while at the same time giving us a role in our own creation?

What do you think?

A Daily Prayer

Dear God,

Help me to remember that I was made for heaven
so I can live with what I do not have
and dream my dreams in joy.

Help me to remember that the way to heaven
is a life of faith and love
so I will know what I should do and do it.

Help me to remember that You are guiding me
in everything that happens to me
so I can love myself as You love me
and live my life in peace.

Amen.

The Church's Prayer for You

We, God's people, make this prayer for you our brother (sister).

We pray that from the moment you wake up, every single day, you feel the attention and love from God that have also been yours all night long.

We pray that you know that your life matters, and that as you go forward and help others to do the same, you are making daily an eternal difference. We pray that you understand that you are playing an irreplaceable part in God's plan for us all, and that you are preparing to see God as no one else will see Him, except through you forever.

We pray that you often get a glimpse of heaven in the things that God has made—especially in nature, the seasons, and the weather—and in many moments when things are fun, funny, or interesting.

We pray that you have a dream that is also for you a glimpse of heaven, and that you are happy for the hope, grateful for the opportunity, and peaceful with the struggle. We pray that you see your work as love, because this is what it is if this is how you see it.

We pray that you are happy to be tired at the end of the day, and that you love yourself enough to rest, to enjoy your evening meal, and to share your life with others you also love.

We pray that you do share your life with others you love, and that you share your life in conversations that are sometimes endless, just like the life that we will share with God.

And we pray that with time you are only more amazed—that God made *you*, that you will see God, and that God is excited that He will see you.

Another Prayer of the Church for You

We, God's people, make this prayer for you our brother (sister).

We pray that you don't wake up, every single day, tired and angry—tired because you didn't have peace enough to rest, and angry because your life is so far from what you want it to be.

We pray that you don't despise your life because you don't see how it will ever give you the things your heart has always hoped for, and because you don't see life's purpose, or yours.

We pray that you don't despise yourself because you are not all that you wanted to be, and because you don't see how you will ever get there.

We pray that yours is not a day embattled—with your family because you don't have the spirit for forgiveness, with your co-workers because you show no charity to them, and with society because you are often offended and easily feel put down.

We pray that you don't spend half your day half-dead—because you don't do an honest day's work, and don't have the faith to see your work as love.

We pray that you don't spend the little free time you have being absorbed and manipulated by electronics, and made to feel like just another anonymous watcher or listener.

We pray that you don't eat just to fill your stomach, you don't drink to escape, and you don't go to bed disgusted.

And we pray that you don't waste your life in worship of this world, never satisfied, always frustrated, and that you are not among the number whose future is despair.