

OVERVIEW

This is the first in a two part 14 week course covering the basics of the Catholic Faith and all of Mark's gospel. The plan is to create a three year course with 4 blocks of 7 weeks each year.

We will follow Mark's Gospel as a backbone to this course, but branch off to highlight many essential topics. There are three main strands that have been woven together to form this course

1) Content. This course will definitely have an academic edge to it. It is meant to challenge, and to base itself on primary sources. To expose the reader to these sources, and explain them sufficiently, so the reader can access them directly. The reader is encouraged to go on and read as many of the primary sources in their entirety as much as possible.

2) Spirituality. This course is about personal relationship with Jesus. This is the source and summit of life itself. It is my great joy to facilitate this meeting and nurture it so the reader can continue this incredible life for ever. There are readings for each day of the course. An overview sheet covers this 7 week course. The structure of Mark's gospel is formatted into the sheet with the daily readings listed. Day 1 represents the day the course is started.

3) Leadership. Anyone that truly follows Jesus is already a leader, but there are some lessons to be learnt and mistakes to be avoided. We will be amplifying Jesus teaching on leadership in this course.

WEEKLY MEETING

This course is designed to be taken in weekly installments. It is best read through and reflected upon in one's own time. It can be taken online - reflections can be left online for others to see. Or individually, by printing off this course and writing reflections into the spaces provided. It is best then discussed in a small group with a leader. This will allow for fresh insights and others to help along the journey. It is also a way to practice leadership and reflect on the way we and others interact with each other. But most importantly, it is to make true friends with others. When we share our Christian journey with others, we are sharing something very special. We start to share our true selves, and accept others just as they are. This is very healing and intimate. These friendships become lasting, because Jesus becomes the foundation for them. We will talk more about this later in the course.

GROUP METHOD

The following is a suggested method of what to do when you meet. The following times are for a 50 minute meeting. Extend times if you have a longer time when you meet. Each member should have already read the week's materials before coming to the group. If it is the first group meeting, then it should be a time to get to know each other and explain what is going to happen. Booklets should be given out for the course. Contact details should be exchanged so members can communicate with each other.

1) (5 min) There should be a set start time. Allow sometime for late comers. Find out how each other is going while waiting.

2) (5min) Begin with a prayer. Call to mind that Jesus is present. Have a few moments of silence allowing each person to become aware of Jesus' presence and love. Pray the Our Father or Hail Mary together.

3) (25 min) The leader invites anyone to make comment on the content for the week. This then should lead to discussion about the points made. The leader should be aware to encourage quiet ones to comment. Maybe each person can be invited to comment if need be. Each person should say during the time what was the most important part of the content for them.

4) (10 min) From these points, members should be invited to 'work' on something in their life. To make a resolution to grow in some particular virtue or habit. Or overcome a bad habit. Comment can also be made on the progress of past resolutions. The first habit to work on is always prayer.

5) (5 min) Prayer. Finish with a short time of intercession, where each person can pray for a particular need they have, or for someone else. Finish with the Our Father.

GROUP SIZE

Groups should be about 6 people. They can be as small as 2, but larger than 8 they can be split. Definitely once a group reaches 13 it should be split into two, with a new leader designated.

Generally new members should always be welcome. If there is an influx of new members, then they may like to start the content from the start and a member from the original group will become the leader. Depending on the situation, the new group might like to meet at a different time and the new leader can be part of both groups still.

GROUP FOCUS

Groups should be focussed on the content and not so much on personal issues. Of course out of love, these can be discussed, but should never become dominant over the group. The leader and others should help the person or if needed refer the person on to professional help.

The leader should have someone to mentor their leadership. This could be another group focussed on this purpose, or a mentor.

PRIVACY

Generally, 'what is said in the group, stays in the group'. Professionally, leaders can never promise secrecy, since they may be bound to pass on information to professional authorities. This should be the case with all leaders. Never promise secrecy. Always say that some information may need to be shared. This doesn't deny friendship, but in fact, asserts it. If you find you are in a dilemma, then it is better to pass on information to someone trusted preferably with professional status.

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Sharebook resource from: <http://opencatechesis.org/courses/mark1/intro>