

LEADER

# My Faith

REVISED EDITION



To Know, To Live,  
To Grow

## Series Overview

# To Know, To Live, To Grow

**To Know, To Live, To Grow** is a holistic approach to confirmation. With Christian education as a key component, this material



helps youth integrate their faith with their families and into their congregational lives.

This curriculum is designed for groups of up to 10 youth participants and one leader. The leader

engages youth in their personal faith searches—walking with them, staying in dialogue with them, and encouraging them to be open about their questions and concerns. Leadership can come from young adults, parents, lay leaders, or clergy.

In addition to serving as confirmation curriculum, this series can be adapted for use with retreats, camp experiences, service opportunities, and other small-group activities.

## Foundations

1. Confirmation is a ministry rather than religious education. This ministry is a joint effort of confirmands, parents, lay leaders, and church staff.
2. Confirmation ministry is Christ-centered, a place for people who need a Savior.
3. Confirmation ministry is not only about gaining knowledge but also about creating experiences in Christian community and serving others.
4. Confirmands exist within a family community. The family bears the primary responsibility for the faith development of the confirmand.
5. It is essential to meet young people's needs for acceptance, self-worth, and community as they prepare for the adult world by testing boundaries and questioning values while learning the message of the gospel.

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### To Know

Confirmands:

- understand how to read and interpret the Bible.
- learn about important people and events in the Bible.
- learn the central teachings of the Lutheran church.
- discuss the Scriptures and faith-related topics in small groups.
- complete in-class and homework assignments.

### To Live

Confirmands:

- see the relevance of biblical events in their lives today.
- understand the church as the body of Christ, which functions by helping people.
- discover appropriate service opportunities in the church and the community.
- accept responsibility for serving God.
- express a willingness to confess the Christian faith.

### To Grow

Confirmands:

- discover that Christian growth is a lifelong process.
- understand that Christian growth takes place through worship, prayer, education, and service.
- integrate the Bible and the Christian traditions into their daily lives.
- see how faith affects personal decision-making and the way we treat others.

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## To the Leader . . .

### Format

The To Know, To Live, To Grow confirmation curriculum is designed for use with up to 10 participants and one adult leader. This material is intended for use over several 60-90 minute sessions. The flexible format allows you to make adjustments to fit your situation.

Many of the activities can work during your time together as a group or as homework assignments. The questions in each session often promote discussion rather than finding a specific answer. Some sessions may require more direction than others. Be prepared to spend extra time on topics of particular interest to your group.

### Materials

Each participant should have a Participant book, writing materials, and a Bible. The Participant books follow the same format as this Leader guide—but with writing space instead of answers and without many of the margin notes that appear here. Some activities suggest additional items (maps, videos, outside reading materials). Review the sessions in advance to see what you will need.

*May God bless you in your ministry!*



**Augsburg Fortress**  
MINNEAPOLIS

## LEADER

## My Faith

REVISED EDITION

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# Session 1

## What Is Faith?

### Scripture Text

#### Hebrews 11

In this session, participants explore the meaning of faith as defined by Scripture and their own experience.

### Objectives

Through *My Faith*, participants will:

- attach meaning to the word *faith*.
- explore the New Testament letters as a Scriptural basis for faith.
- develop personal faith statements for themselves.

### Materials

Photos, magazines, or calendars of famous places.

Begin by sharing your name. Then share the following:

- a high point and a low point of your day.
- your favorite story about your family.

As a group, make a list of things you believe in, but have never actually seen, like gravity, electricity, molecules, atoms, sound waves, and so forth.

#### Open with prayer.

This session's theme is "What Is Faith?" What is it anyway? Faith is an untouchable, sometimes indescribable concept. For the next few sessions, the group will look at faith from many angles. We'll begin by studying Scripture, and then we'll each write our own definition of faith, the first step in building our own faith statements. **See the leader's note on page 3 to share more information about faith statements with participants.**

### Do You Believe?

Look at these pictures and try to identify the location, then reflect on these questions:

- Has anyone been to this place? Do you think it exists? Why or why not? Why might you have doubts that it exists? What would make you believe it exists?
- Go back to the list of things you know exist, but have never seen. Can you add anything else? **Other places exist, other people, other languages, other cultures, and so forth.**
- As a group, discuss the reasons we believe in these things. **Other people have told us about these things, we have seen pictures of these things, everyone else believes these things, and so forth.**

### Scripture Discussion and Reflection

The book of Hebrews, found in the New Testament, is actually a commentary on the Old Testament. Hebrews examines Jewish customs and relates them to the new covenant we have in Jesus Christ. Chapter 11 is an account of many Old Testament heroes. Hebrews describes how these people demonstrated their faith in God. Read aloud and discuss Hebrews 11:1, 3, 6, 13-16, 39-40.

- What definition of *faith* is given in Hebrews? **Faith is when we are sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.**
- What happens if we fail to have faith? **It is impossible to please God.**
- What happens if we do have faith? **It is a gift; we are reconciled with God.**

God does not promise us an easy life if we have faith. In fact, the result of faith is often something we will not experience here on earth. Reread Hebrews 11. **Leader's Note: Split up these stories among the participants, then discuss as a group.**

Hebrews 11:4	Cain and Abel (Genesis 4)
Hebrews 11:7	Noah (Genesis 6–9)
Hebrews 11:8-12	Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 12–15)
Hebrews 11:17-19	Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22:1-18)
Hebrews 11:20-22	Isaac, Jacob, Joseph (Genesis 25:19-26; 27:1-29; 37)
Hebrews 11:23-29	Moses (Exodus 3–34)
Hebrews 11:30-31	Rahab/Jericho (Joshua 2, 6)

- Describe the story. (See the references in parentheses above.)
- Name some of the obstacles these people had to overcome. **Cain killed Abel; Noah faced the flood; Abraham and Sarah moved when God told them to move; Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac; Isaac was tricked by one of his sons, Jacob; Jacob almost lost his favorite son, Joseph; Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt; Moses took the Israelites out of captivity and into the promised land; Rahab welcomed the Israelite spies; Joshua overtook the city of Jericho by walking around the walls seven times.**
- How did their faith help them overcome obstacles? **They trusted in God, and God rewarded them. Abel was rewarded by life with God; Abraham and Sarah became the founders of the Israelite nation; Isaac did not die as a sacrifice; Jacob's family was brought back together; Joseph saved his family from famine; Moses rescued his people from slavery and spoke to God; Rahab and her family were not killed; the city of Jericho was taken without a war.**
- List people you know who have faith in God. How have these people demonstrated their faith to you? **Individual answers.**

## Trust Falls

**Leader's Note: Supervise this activity for safety. Some groups may not be able to handle this type of activity.** Form pairs. Position one person in front of the other, facing the same direction. When you are both ready, the front person says, "Ready." The back person responds, "Ready." The front person says, "Falling," and falls backward into the waiting hands of the back person. Now move a little farther apart. Once more, signal ready, and the front person falls backward into the waiting hands of the back person. Experience both positions. Discuss the following questions:

- What role does faith have in this activity?
- How well did you know your partner? How did your prior relationship affect your ability to trust?
- After a few catches, did your faith in your partner grow?

## Leader's Note

Here is an example of the way you might describe faith statements to the participants in your group:

Faith statements come in many forms. Be creative. Think about one of the these options as you prepare your faith statements: photos, slides, a journal, drawings, collage, poetry, songs, video, writing, computer software.

Faith is very personal. Each of us is at our own place in our faith development. There are no right or wrong answers.

This group should be a place where you can talk about things you feel strongly about, as well as your doubts and questions. God loves each of us and will guide us through this process.

Now, let's take some time to discuss any questions you have regarding the faith statements you will create.

- How is this exercise similar to having faith in God?
- Whom do you trust? Your family? Your friends? Why? Is there someone you would trust with your life?
- Do we trust God with our lives?
- How do we build our trust in God?

Sometimes faith is like losing control and falling into someone else's arms (God's arms). Faith is letting go and believing God will carry us. Just as it is with people, faith in God is built over time. Building faith requires that we get to know God and let God know who we are, too.

### Faith in Film (Optional)

View the scene leading up to the opening of the ark in the movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Paramount Studios, 1981).

- What's the faith message?

### Assignment

Make a promise to do one thing in the next week to get to know God better. Write your promise in the space below:

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Ask three people for a definition of faith: a parent or caregiver, a friend, and another adult. Then, write your own personal definition of faith.

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Close with the Lord's Prayer.

# Session 2

## So What?

Share one or more of the following:

- a high point and a low point of your day.
- your written definition of faith assigned in the last session.
- one thing you did to get to know about God this past week.
- three qualities you look for in a friend.

### The Heart

One heart is available for a heart transplant and ten heart patients match the donor. Each of you represents one of these patients. Read the description for your character, then tell the rest of us why you are the most qualified to receive the heart. At the end, have the group vote for who should get the heart.

1. **15-year-old soccer player:** Good student; popular; participates in school activities; student council officer.
2. **35-year-old mother:** Two kids; single parent; nurse; volunteer at the women's shelter.
3. **80-year-old grandfather:** Married; retired; volunteer at the nursing home; has four grandchildren.
4. **10-year-old girl:** On welfare; only child; loves animals and wants to be a veterinarian.
5. **50-year-old accountant:** Divorced; father of two children; leader in his church.
6. **30-year-old teacher:** Newlywed; works in special education; leader in environmental clean-up efforts.
7. **18-year-old musician:** Senior in high school; member of church singing group; works with SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions).
8. **22-year-old college graduate:** Youth leader; single; wants to be a missionary.
9. **55-year-old pastor:** Married; world traveler; is starting a new church in the inner-city of Chicago.
10. **40-year-old recovering alcoholic:** Divorced; is creating a new drug prevention program for youth.

Who should get the heart? How did you decide?

- Name some of the important factors that led you to this decision.
- Write down ten things you value in life in the column to the right.
- What does God value in your life?
- What value does faith give your life?

Open with prayer.

### Scripture Text

1 Timothy 1:12, 14, 16

2 Corinthians 4:15-18

In this session, participants will explore the relevance of faith in their lives.

### Leader's Note

This works well if you write down each of the descriptions on separate pieces of paper. If participants need help, have them work in pairs. After the group has made its decision, discuss the questions as a large group.

### Ten Things I Value in Life

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2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

This session deals with why we should have faith. If faith is unseen and untouchable, how can it be relevant? With so many options open to us, why should we believe in God? Why should we have faith? One thing faith offers us is a reason to live. This will be our focus.

## Scripture Discussion and Reflection

### This Is Your Time (Optional)

Read the words or listen to the song “This is Your Time” performed by Michael W. Smith (“This is Your Time,” written by Smith and Wes King in memory of Cassie Bernall, who died at Columbine High School, ©1999 Reunion Records).

- How would God respond to this song?
- How does faith give us a reason for living?
- How does having faith impact your choices?
- Why should we have faith in God?

The apostle Paul helped start many of the early Christian churches. He wrote letters to these churches as well as to people working in these churches. The book of Timothy is a letter from Paul to his companion and loyal friend. As Paul was getting older, he began sending Timothy to many of the churches he had started, to act as a kind of pastor. Paul was preparing Timothy to help these churches get back on the right track. These churches needed help getting organized and in addressing their society’s problems. Read aloud and discuss 1 Timothy 1:12, 14, 16; and 2 Corinthians 4:15-18.

- Based on these verses, who do you think God would have chosen to receive the heart from the opening activity? **There is no right or wrong answer. God’s grace is not extended to us based on earthly factors. Grace is often extended to those who seem to be the least deserving by our earthly standards.**
- What do these verses say we must do in order to receive our “heart”? **We must have faith in the grace of God. We can ask God for grace, and believe that our prayer is heard.**
- What reason do these verses give us to believe in God? **Because God has shared Christ with us; because God is eternal.**
- How is faith relevant in our lives today? **The things of this world are temporary. God is not temporary.**

God offers the gift of grace to everyone. Belief in God includes the gift of eternal life with God. God knows the things of this world are tempting to us. We tend to put our time, money, and effort into achieving success in this world. As we continue to devote ourselves to the world, it tends to become more and more important to us. Our beliefs and values become based on our experience in the world, rather than on our relationship with God.

But God gives us free will in the matters of the world. We can choose to invest in the world, and make our choices based on worldly values. Or, we can choose to invest in God, and make choices based on our Christian values. Share with one another:

- a time when you made choices based on worldly values: success, ambition, good looks, and so forth.
- a time when you made choices based on Christian values: faith, servanthood, and so forth.

## Assignment

Make a promise to take 15 minutes in the next week to invest in God. This may be a time of prayer, service, devotion, praise, or worship. Write your promise here:

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Write a description of yourself in the space below (for example, the descriptions of the heart patients). For what do you want to be remembered? What are the important pieces of your life? Keep in mind the things that God values in your life.

## My Description of Me

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Close with the Lord's Prayer.

## Leader's Note

**You may choose to do this as a group. You could meet for worship on Sunday or plan a group service project.**

## Optional Activities

- **Invite someone to visit the group to share his or her definition of faith and the ways he or she invests in God.**
- **Use the scene "What does the world expect from you?" from the movie *Pay It Forward* (Warner Studios, 2000). What's the faith message in this movie?**

# Session 3

## The Gift: Life!

### Scripture Text

Romans 6:22-23  
Ephesians 2:8-10

In this session, participants will learn what it means to live faithfully as followers of God.

### Materials

A copy of the book *Ragman and Other Cries of Faith* by Walter Wangerin Jr. (Harper and Row, 1984).

Share one or more of the following:

- a high point and a low point of your day.
- how you described yourself in the assignment from the last session.
- how you invested in God last week.

As a group, describe the “ideal” life.

### Open with prayer.

This session’s theme centers on the gift of life. Having faith in God really does make a difference. Faith in God brings with it the gift of life with God, both here on earth and eternally in heaven.

### Ragman

Read the story “Ragman” in the book *Ragman and Other Cries of Faith* by Walter Wangerin Jr. As a group, discuss the following questions:

- What role did the Ragman play? **The Ragman is a Christ figure.**
- What did the Ragman offer people? **The Ragman offered the chance of new life.**
- What did the people have to do to receive the Ragman’s gift? **They had to accept the gift.**
- Did the Ragman treat these people equally? **Yes.**
- How were these people’s lives changed by the Ragman? **They were healed and set free.**
- Put yourself in the place of one of the characters in this story. Describe what your life would be like after the Ragman made you whole. **Individual answers.**

### Scripture Discussion and Reflection

The books of Romans and Ephesians were both written by the apostle Paul to the early Christian churches in Rome and Ephesus. Although they were written quite a long time ago, they are still relevant in our lives and for our present-day churches. Read aloud and discuss Romans 6:22-23 and Ephesians 2:8-10.

- From what has God set us free? **We are set free from sin.**
- What is the result of sin? **Sin is death.**
- God gives us the gift of grace. Define *grace*. **Individual answers.**
- How do we receive this gift? **We simply receive, no questions asked, no strings attached. It's faith.**
- Can we be saved without the gift of grace? **No.**
- If we receive God's gift of grace, how will we live? **We will behave like Christ.**

## A New Point of View

Rewrite Romans 6:22-23 and Ephesians 2:8-10 in your own words in the space below. Describe the gift God gives us.

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How does the gift of eternal life change the focus of our lives today on earth?  
**We become less attached to the temporary things of this world, such as personal possessions and desires.**

## Jesus Is Life (Optional)

Read the words or listen to the song "Jesus Is Life" performed by Steven Curtis Chapman on *Declaration* (© 2001 Sparrow Records).

- Why is Jesus *life*?  
 (Because God created us and gives us purpose.)
- Why is it important to have a life with its foundation on God?  
 (Individual answers; it allows us the freedom not to let what the world says about us get us down and lets us love as God loves.)

## Assignment

Look up Ephesians 2:8. Write the verse in the space below, and memorize it during the next week.

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### Optional Activity

**Invite someone to the group to share how she or he has received and enjoyed God's gift of grace.**

Pick one of the following options to describe how you imagine life with God. Use the space below if you want to.

- Rewrite the words to a song.
- Make a drawing or painting.
- Make a collage of pictures.
- Write a story.
- Other? (Be creative!)

**Close using Psalm 67 as your prayer.**

## Session 4

# I Doubt It! I'm in the Dark!

### Open with prayer.

This session focuses on the times in life when we doubt. Our doubts may be about God's existence, God's presence in our world, or times when we are not sure our faith is strong enough. Faith and doubt, like light and darkness, often parallel each other. While doubt might be a risky thing to talk about with others, especially in a church, you are challenged to let down your guard and talk about times of doubt in your life. Remember, sin is separation from God (or God's will). We are all born into sin; therefore, all of us struggle with the idea of being separated from God.

### Make a Match!

**Blindfold each person in the group. Each person will receive a bolt or a nut, one half of a pair. No two pairs (nut and bolt) are alike. The task is to find the other half of the matching pair, the nut that fits the correct bolt or the bolt that fits the correct nut. After locating the matching half of the pair, remove the blindfolds.**

- Did you have a tough time finding your matching piece?
- Did some people have an easier time than others?
- If you were the last pair to remove your blindfolds, how did you feel?
- Name some times when you've felt doubtful. How did you feel about yourself?

### Scripture Discussion and Reflection

First Corinthians is a letter from the apostle Paul to the church at Corinth. Paul was troubled by the problems this church was experiencing, and this letter is his direct response to these issues. Read aloud and discuss 1 Corinthians 13:12.

### Scripture Text

**1 Corinthians 13:12**

**John 1:1-5**

**In this session, participants will come to understand that doubt can be a gift to our faith.**

### Materials

**Bring blindfolds and a nut or a bolt for each participant. The extra large nuts and bolts found at most hardware stores work well. Make sure the bolts fit into the nuts, and that the activity area is relatively obstacle-free.**

## Leader's Note

Do as many activities as your time allows.

## Materials

Small hand mirrors.

## Reflections in a Mirror

One at a time, have participants look at themselves in a small hand mirror, then discuss the following questions. The goal is to realize that we accept many things on faith about our own bodies. We cannot see the inner workings of ourselves, and we cannot see our souls.

- Is this all of you? What's missing? What if you had a bigger mirror? Could you see everything?
- How does this activity relate to our image of God?
- As humans, can we truly understand all of God's nature? Reread 1 Corinthians 13:12.

## In the Dark

Lead participants into a darkened room. Turn on a flashlight and illuminate part of a large object you have placed somewhere in the room. Describe the object as you quickly move the flashlight over it. (It's a good idea to use something out of the ordinary here, something participants won't expect to find in this place.) The goal is to work as a group to overcome the darkness and discover what the object is.

- How did you work together to identify the object?
- How can we, as a group, help each other in times of darkness?
- How can we overcome the darkness?
- How does God help us when we are in the dark? Read John 1:1-5.

## Materials

A flashlight and a large unusual object.

## Mystery Moment

Read the following to the participants: Someone is found dead in a cabin in a remote section of a mountain. The snow is very deep around the cabin and there are no footprints leading to or from the cabin. How did the person die? Participants may ask up to 20 yes or no questions to come to a conclusion. For instance, they could ask if the person died before the snowfall. They could not ask when the snow fell. The answer to this mystery is the cabin is an airplane and the person died in a plane crash. The goal is to work together to solve the mystery. Feel free to substitute another mystery as appropriate.

- How did you feel as the questioner?
- How did you feel as the solution was explained to you?
- How is this exercise similar to 1 Corinthians 13:12?

Some things about God we can understand, but some things of God are a mystery. For instance, we can relate to God's loving us because we are capable of loving one another. However, we don't physically experience God through touches or hugs. It is hard to live with this mystery. We prefer the sense of security found in explainable, knowable terms. We want to see all of God.

We are often frustrated by trying to attach human reasoning to godly actions. God does not give us specific reasons for certain events. If we are hurt, we wonder why. But God holds us in love. We can also welcome times of doubt, rather than fearing them. God is so awesome, so huge, so overwhelming, we cannot possibly completely understand God.

We cannot put God in a box. God is open to everyone, all denominations and churches.

- Why is it hard to accept doubt? **Doubt often makes us feel inadequate, because we may be able to accept things on one level but not on another. Faith is overly simple.**
- Is it normal to doubt? **Everyone has doubts. Even Jesus talked to God about his doubts in the Garden of Gethsemane.**
- What is good about your ability to doubt? **We are able to doubt because God gives us choices in our life; we are not puppets.**
- How do you think God responds when we doubt? **Individual answers.**
- How does doubting affect our faith? **Doubting can be used to increase our faith or it can cause us to lose faith.**

Think of a time in which you doubted. Form pairs and talk to your partner about how that felt for you.

- Do you still have doubts? Explain.
- How can we help each other in times of doubt?
- What does God promise us when we experience times of doubt?

## Assignment

Write about a time you experienced doubt.

How did it feel? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Could you talk with other people? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Did you get over it? If so, how? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What part did God play in your doubt? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Close using Psalm 139:7-12 as your prayer.

### This Day (Optional)

Read the words or listen to the song "This Day" performed by Steve Curtis Chapman on *Declaration* (© 2001 Sparrow Records).

- What does this song say about faith and doubt?

## Session 5

# Confession: I'm a Sinner

Share one or more of the following:

- a high point and a low point of your day.
- what you wrote last session about doubt.
- a time you made a fool of yourself.

### **Open with prayer.**

Each of us is a sinner. God calls us to confess our sins and to ask for forgiveness. Through the gift of forgiveness, God wipes away the hurtful things we do and say. At times, we do not love our neighbors or ourselves, and we walk away from God. Confession helps us to admit this to God, and so we are freed from these sins. Through God's forgiveness, we are allowed to leave those sins behind, believing our sins are indeed forgiven. Faith is asking for forgiveness, receiving forgiveness, and living as forgiven people.

## Scripture Discussion and Reflection

The book of 1 Peter may have been written by Peter, another one of the early church leaders. Peter was writing to people facing severe dangers. He writes about the meaning of Christ's suffering for us. Read and discuss Romans 5:1-8; 1 Peter 5:6, 10; and 1 John 1:8-10.

- What does God promise to those experiencing hurt? **God promises the restoration of strength. We will be lifted up.**
- Who is a sinner? **We are all sinners.**
- What are we to do with our sin? **We are to confess our sin and receive God's forgiveness.**
- What did Christ do for us? **Christ gave his life for us.**
- Why did Christ do this? **This was a way for God to reconnect with us. God loves us, and gave us Christ as a form of reconnection.**

### Scripture Text

Romans 5:1-8

1 Peter 5:6, 10

1 John 1:8-10

**In this session, participants will recognize that we are all sinners and that through faith we are able to confess our sins to God and receive absolution or forgiveness.**

## Confession in Worship

### Confession

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Read the following confession from *Lutheran Book of Worship*, page 56.

“Most merciful God, we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen”<sup>1</sup>

- Why is it important to begin worship with a time of confession? **We begin with clean hearts, allowing God to enter more fully into our lives.**
- How often do we need to confess our sins? **We need to confess as often as we wish to receive the assurance of God’s forgiveness. Ideally, we would be in constant dialogue with God.**
- How often do you sin? **Individual answers.**

Read the following absolution from *Lutheran Book of Worship*, page 56.

“In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for you, and for his sake God forgives you all your sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ he gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

- Think of a time when you were forgiven. What was it like? How did it feel? **Individual answers.**

### Absolution

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## I Confess

As a group, rewrite the confession and absolution in your own words. Copy this in the space to the left.

1. *Lutheran Book of Worship*, copyright © 1978.

## Sin Bucket

Dip your hands, one at a time, into the flour/dirt bucket. After all hands are dirty, spend time in silence thinking of sins you may want to confess. Then, one at a time, dip dirty hands into the water bucket, symbolizing the washing away of your sins.

- How is this like confession and absolution?

## Assignment

Choose one verse you read earlier from Romans, 1 Peter, or 1 John. Write the verse in the space below, and memorize it in the coming week.

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Describe a time when you have sinned (a time you're not proud of or a time you are sorry for). Did you tell someone about your sin? Were you forgiven for the sin? Describe your feelings. Use the space below for your answers.

**Close with prayer:** Use the prayers found on pages 42-53 in *Lutheran Book of Worship*. Each person may choose one prayer to read aloud.

## Materials and Preparation

**Bring two buckets, one filled with water, and one filled with a flour and dirt mixture. Also bring some towels for clean-up and copies of *Lutheran Book of Worship* for the closing prayer.**

# Session 6

# Forgiveness

## Scripture Text

Romans 7:15-20; 8:1-2

Colossians 2:13-15

Psalm 51:10-12

**In this session, participants will experience the gift of God's forgiveness by celebrating Holy Communion.**

Share one or more of the following:

- a high point and a low point of your day.
- what you wrote in the last session about sin.
- a time you forgave someone else.

### Open with prayer.

This session focuses on the gift of forgiveness and on living as forgiven people. God offers the gift of forgiveness to each of us every day. God's forgiveness has no strings attached.

Choose your favorite Bible verse. Write it in the space below, along with a brief comment about why this verse has special meaning for you.

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Share your verse with others in the class. Write down references of the verses that others have chosen.

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## Sin and Forgiveness

As we discussed in the last session, we are people who sin. As we focus now on forgiveness, let's hear once again what the Bible says about sin and forgiveness.

- **Read Romans 7:15-20.** What do these verses say about our sin? **As much as we try, sin will always be with us. It is our nature.**
- **Read Romans 8:1-2.** What do these verses say about God's love active in our lives? **With the Spirit living in us, we have a second chance, a chance at living as God would have us live.**
- **Read Colossians 2:13-15.** What do these verses say about how forgiveness changes our life? **It allows us to move on without worrying about the past.**
- **Read Psalm 51:10-12.** These words were written by King David pleading to God to forgive him of his sin. What do they say to us today? **God has the ability to create new hearts in us and wipe away all the bad things in our lives.**

## Savior (Optional)

**Read the words or listen to the song "Savior" performed by Steven Curtis Chapman on *Declaration* (© 2001 Sparrow Records).**

- **Why do we need a savior, someone to save us from our sins? (Because we are sinful by nature and we need to let go of our sins and move on as renewed people.)**

## Leader's Note

You will need to bring the elements of communion and prepare a brief service. Be creative about your worship service. If appropriate, you may want to invite a pastor to speak or share a short message yourself. You'll need *Lutheran Book of Worship*, small pieces of paper, and a basket.

## Materials

Ice cream, bowls, spoons, and toppings for sundaes. Before serving any food, always check with caregivers for participants who have food allergies. Provide an alternative if necessary.

## Communion Worship Service

Celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion as you worship the God of forgiveness. During Communion we offer our sins to God, and we remember the death and resurrection of Christ. We come together with other sinners in this time, and leave celebrating life with God. Faith is celebrating forgiveness.

- *Confession and Absolution:* Give participants time to read the Confession and Absolution they wrote last week. Begin worship by reading one of the Confessions and Absolutions from the last session.
- *Bible readings:* Assign participants to read the following Scripture verses: Hebrews 11:1, 6; 2 Corinthians 4:18; Ephesians 2:8; 1 Corinthians 13:12; Romans 5:8; Romans 8:35-39; 1 Peter 2:9-10.
- *Sermon:* Share a message of forgiveness or ask a pastor to do so.
- *Song:* Sing, play, or listen to an appropriate communion song.
- *Words of Institution:* Read the Words of Institution and Lord's Prayer from *Lutheran Book of Worship*, pages 70-71.
- *Activity:* Ask participants to write one of their sins on a small piece of paper. Spend time in silence reflecting on this sin.
- *Communion:* Ask participants to bring that sin to the communion table and leave it in the basket, then receive Holy Communion.
- *Prayers:* Pray together, from *Lutheran Book of Worship*, page 74.
- *Song:* Sing, play, or listen to an appropriate communion song.

## Celebration!

Celebrate the freedom of forgiveness by sharing ice cream sundaes.

Close with prayer.

# Session 7

## What Do I Believe?

Share one or more of the following:

- a high point and a low point of your day.
- your favorite Bible verse. Read it. Why did you choose this verse?
- one thing in which your mother or father believes.

### Open with prayer.

In this session we're going to begin talking about what we personally believe. As a church, we have statements of faith. We call these statements *creeds*. A creed is a statement of belief or opinion.

- What do you believe in other areas of your life? For instance, how do you feel about freedom of speech? Education? Gay rights? Abortion? Racism? Family values?
- Name some of the things you believe as a citizen of your country: democracy, freedom of speech, right to a fair trial, and so forth.

Your challenge today is to begin creating your own statement of faith. The following creed describes the faith of the church, and is a good place to start looking for ideas. So, what do you believe about God?

### The Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.<sup>1</sup>**

- What are the themes in this creed? **Triune God; God is creator; Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection; the fellowship of the church, and so forth.**
- Which of these themes do you believe? **Individual answers.**

### Text

#### Apostles' Creed

**In this session, participants will begin to create their own faith statement.**

### Leader's Note

**Be prepared for serious discussion. Some participants may have strong beliefs they would like to share. Feel free to add other categories.**

### What Do I Believe

about God?

about family?

about friendship?

about school?

about politics?

about my country?

about marriage?

about peace?

about war?

about children?

about adults?

about drugs?

about the future?

about me?

1. The English translation of the Apostles' Creed is prepared by the International Consultation on English Texts (ICET), copyright © 1970, 1971, and 1975.



## Session 8

# What Do I Have to Offer?

Share one or more of the following:

- a high point and a low point of your day.
- the name of the person with whom you shared your faith statement. What was his or her reaction?
- one thing you do well.

### Open with prayer.

In this session, instead of focusing on what we believe, we're going to talk about how we act out our faith in the world. Read James 2:14-18. What do these verses challenge us to do? **Faith moves us into action.**

What is it that I have to offer others? What kind of an influence can I be among my friends and family? These questions ask us to begin using our gifts and living what we believe.

- Name some gifts you can offer to others. **Time, money, clothing, food, and so forth.**
- How can you act out your faith by sharing these gifts? **Stewardship, service, sharing, and so forth.**
- Name three service projects you've completed. Think about volunteer time, mission trips, school programs, church projects, and so forth. **Individual answers.**
- How do you live out your faith through these projects? **Individual answers.**

### Scripture Text

James 2:14-18

Philippians 2:6-11

1 Peter 4:10-11

**In this session, participants will focus on how they can live their faith in the world.**

### Optional Activities

- **Invite someone to visit the group to share how she or he lives out her or his own faith.**
- **Have participants complete a gifts inventory.**

## Live Out Loud (Optional)

Read the words or listen to the song “Live Out Loud” performed by Steven Curtis Chapman, written by Chapman and Geoff Moore, on *Declaration* (© 2001, Sparrow Records).

- What does the message say about a living faith? What does this song stress? (We are to live our faith.)
- Name some of the ways this song represents the beliefs of the singer. (Individual answers; our faith is public and we should want to share it with others.)
- Give three examples of acting out your faith in your family, with your friends, and at school.
- Name some of the world’s needs.
- How can we help?
- In one sentence, summarize God’s goal for your life.

## Leader’s Note

Stress the need for faith statements to be completed for the next session. Consequences for non-completion need to be made clear in advance.

## Scripture Discussion and Reflection

Philippians is a simple, straightforward letter written by the apostle Paul to the church at Philippi. Although Paul himself endured a great deal of hardship at this time, he chose to focus on joy and rejoicing in this letter. He wrote with a great deal of compassion, as if talking to his closest friends. Read aloud and discuss Philippians 2:6-11 and 1 Peter 4:10-11.

- What do Peter and Paul say we are to do with our gifts? **Use them for the glory of God.**
- Who are we to recognize first in our lives? **God first, before ourselves or others.**
- Who is to be the model for our behavior? **Jesus Christ.**
- How does faith transform our lives? **Our faith will lead to the desire to share our gifts. Faith leads into good works.**
- How does living in grace affect our lives? **A grace-filled life is a life of servanthood.**

## Faith Statement

Add another component to your faith statement, reflecting the way you live out your faith. It may be demonstrated through service projects, or in the way you treat your friends. It may be a cheerful smile or a listening ear.

**How I live out my faith:**

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**Close with prayer:** Each person in the group should say a one-sentence prayer, thanking God for his or her gifts.

# Session 9

## I Believe

Share one or more of the following:

- a high point and a low point of your day.
- a service project you would enjoy working on.
- a time when your faith in God was particularly meaningful.

### Open with prayer.

This session briefly reviews the past eight sessions. Spend most of the time sharing your favorite Bible verses and your faith statements.

### Review

Each session has been based on a theme. Look back in your book and write down one important point from each session. As you do, take note of the various New Testament books you have studied. On page 26, make note of one or two things you have learned from those books.

#### Sessions:

- What Is Faith? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- So What? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- The Gift: Life! \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- I Doubt It! I'm in the Dark! \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Confession: I'm a Sinner \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Forgiveness \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What Do I Believe? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What Do I Have to Offer? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Scripture Text

Review texts from the previous sessions.

In this session, participants will share their faith statements.

### Books of the New Testament:

- Romans: **The gift of faith brings new life with God, both in this world and eternally.**
- 1 Corinthians: **There will be an end to our doubt. We will see God clearly.**
- 2 Corinthians: **This world (earth) is temporary. God's world is eternal.**
- Ephesians: **We are saved by grace, not through good works.**
- Philippians: **Our attitude should be like that of Jesus, who became a servant.**
- 1 Timothy: **The grace of God is extended even to the worst of sinners.**
- Hebrews: **Hebrews talks a great deal about faith. It gives examples of Old Testament heroes.**
- 1 Peter: **God will lift us up, even after we sin.**
- 1 John: **God will forgive us if we confess our sin.**

## Scripture Discussion and Reflection

Share the Bible verses you have chosen as your favorites. Explain to the group why these verses have special meaning for you. Listen respectfully to others.

## Affirmations

Write one-sentence notes to each person in your group, describing one thing you appreciate about that person.

## Faith Statements

Keep a copy of your faith statement for yourself and turn in one copy to the group leader. Now that the faith statements are completed, think about ways you can share your faith with the world around you. Brainstorm ideas together.

We are called to be Christ at all times. How can we share our faith in different situations: at home, at school, at church?

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We are called to share our faith personally. Name some people or groups you would feel comfortable sharing your faith with.

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Name some people you might feel uncomfortable sharing your faith with.

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How can you overcome or get beyond this discomfort?

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**Close with the following prayer.**

*God, thank you for each one of us here.*

*You have blessed us with the opportunity to choose what we believe.*

*Let us look to you for guidance.*

*God, you promise us life filled with forgiveness.*

*You offer us hope, when the world does not.*

*You love us as no one else can.*

*You have given us this time to learn more about you  
and where you fit in our lives.*

*Now, as we profess our own personal belief in you  
and move on to the responsibility for living faith,*

*we ask for your comfort,*

*your strength, and your hope*

*to be made real in our lives.*

*Thank you, Lord, for your gift. Amen*





To Know, To Live,  
To Grow

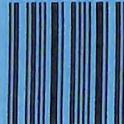
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Jesus of Nazareth  
Lord's Prayer  
Meaning of Service: Living in Love  
My Faith  
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Old Testament  
Ten Commandments  
What Is a Lutheran?

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