



# CONFIRMATION COURSE

## Leaders Guide

Session 1: **Preamble** - The Promises of Baptism

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Appendix: The Confirmation Service

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## Introduction

Welcome to Confirmation preparation. How thrilling it is when a person takes steps to consider confirmation.

This significance of confirmation will be discussed in the sessions that make up the content of this course. The aim is to help you think through what you are 'confirming' as you decide to put yourself forward for confirmation.

### The Catechism

*Instruction in christian faith and conduct  
for those who are to be confirmed  
and for those who are to answer for themselves in baptism.*

In preparation we will work through a 'catechism'. For hundreds of years Catechisms have helped the process of teaching the Christian Faith by providing a brief and accurate introduction to fundamental Christian doctrines. By following the structure of the catechism from *The Australian Prayer Book* (AAPB 1978, pages 541-47), we will consider some of those key areas of Christian tradition namely: the Covenant promises, the Trinity, the Law, Prayer and Scripture, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

If you choose to be confirmed, then the confirmation service (in Appendix 1) that we use is adapted from *An Australian Prayer Book* (AAPB 1978, Second Form, 534-40).

Our prayer for you, is that this course will help to strengthen your Christian faith and unite us further in a common commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; 2 Thess 1:2; Phm 1:3)



## Session 1: Preamble - The Promises of Baptism

*[Welcome, pray, and then ensure everyone knows one another. Given those presenting should be Christian, it may be helpful to ask each person to share how they become a Christian – note: don't expect a refined or well-articulated testimony]*

First things first.

### **What is confirmation?**

Confirmation is an opportunity for members of our church to publicly 'confirm' the baptismal promises previously made either by their parents (in the case of their infant baptism) or themselves (in the case of those baptised as adults).

We 'confirm', to encourage one another in faith, not faith in the 'sacrament', but faith in Jesus Christ. As such, confirmation is only for those who profess an active and living faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and who want to publicly declare that they are intending to live their lives for him and take part in his body (the church).

In *baptism*, faith in Jesus is a key factor – either of the person getting baptised or of the parents/guardians (in the case of a child). In *confirmation*, faith in Jesus remains fundamental. Given the confirming nature, it is also helpful for the confirmer to know how to declare their faith in Christ.

Consider the preamble to the Catechism below.

- What three promises were made on behalf of the child being baptised.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What is the confirmer asked to declare?

# The Catechism

*Instruction in christian faith and conduct  
for those who are to be confirmed  
and for those who are to answer for themselves in baptism.*

## THE COVENANT OF BAPTISM

This section is for those who were baptized as infants.

### Question

What is your christian name?

### Answer

My name is . . .

### Question

Who called you by this name?

### Answer

My godparents, at my baptism in which I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

### Question

What did your godparents do for you at your baptism?

### Answer

They promised and vowed three things in my name: first, that I would renounce the devil and all his works, the empty display and false values of the world, and the sinful desires of the flesh;

secondly, that I would believe the christian faith as set out in the Apostles' Creed;

and thirdly, that I would keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in them all the days of my life.

### Question

Do you agree that you are bound to believe and to do as they have promised for you?

### Answer

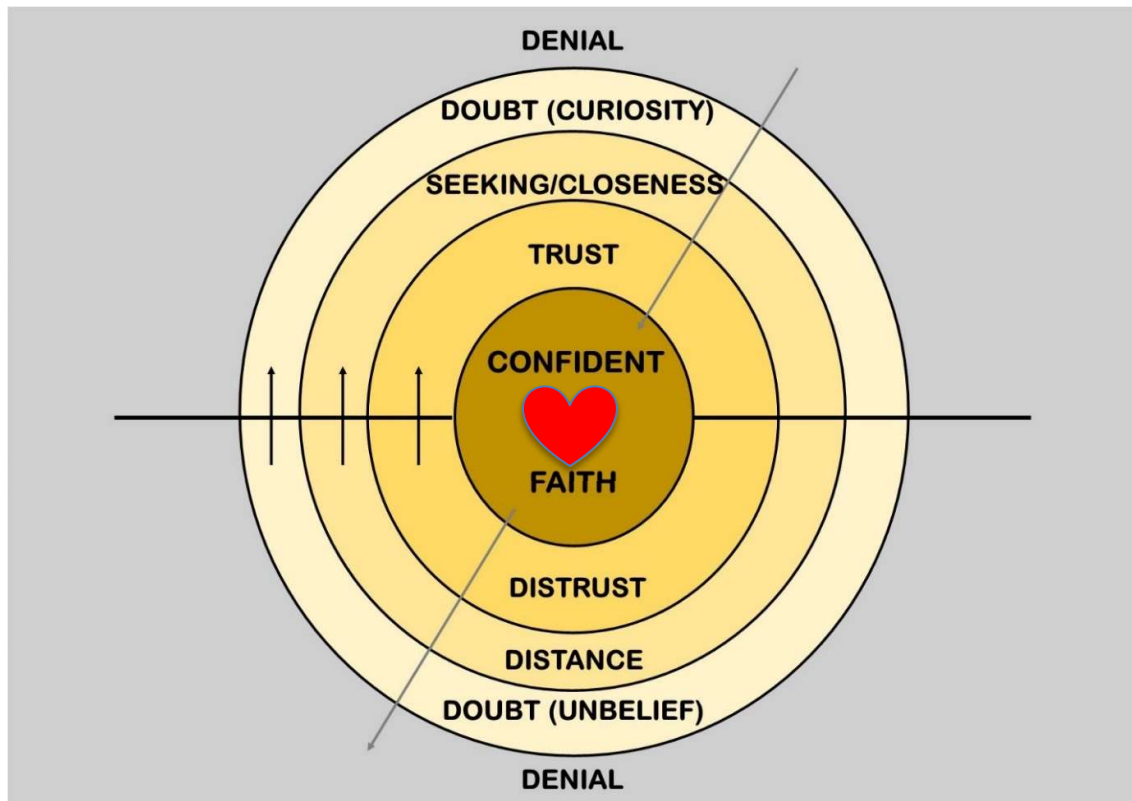
Yes, certainly; and by God's help I will. And I heartily thank our heavenly Father that he has called me to this state of salvation through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I pray to God to give me his grace, that I may continue in this state to the end of my life.

When you get confirmed, you take for yourself what was promised at your baptism – that is:

- **Renouncing the devil and all his works, the empty and false values of the world, and the sinful desires of the flesh.** This means that you have *doubted* the devil's lies and the false promises of the world (and so you should!). You *know* there is something more, and that this something more is found in Jesus.
- **Stating your belief in the Christian faith as set out in the Apostles' Creed.** Your doubting of the devil has led to *belief* in Jesus. You are growing in *closeness* to him as your belief deepens.
- **Promising to obey God's commands and will.** You *trust* God and so you trust that his commands are good. You put his will before your own – you not only know and believe, but trust and obey.
- **Living a confident faith.** When we doubt the devils lies and know there is something more, when we believe in Jesus and grow in closeness to him, and when we trust God and obey, putting his will before our own – we are living a confident faith.

**To be confirmed is to declare a confident faith.**

We see this in the 'faith target' below:



Here is how it works. The 'faith target' is attempting to capture a process in which people move towards a confident faith (from top to centre) and sadly the way that people might leave the faith (from centre to the bottom). Under God, we should want to see more and more people living out a confident faith (as indicated at the center of the target).

Let's look in more detail.

- Outside the target is a state of 'denial'. It is as far away as a person can be from a saving faith in Jesus. The person who rejects Jesus would sit outside that ring.

For **the person moving toward a confident faith**, these stages often accompany that movement:

- First, there is ***Doubt*** – a good doubt. The kind of doubt that drives the person to ask questions, check out details and confirm aspects that need to be considered. We do this when we make a large purchase – at some point, we gain enough information to make a decision to purchase or not. When it comes to faith, it is not about a purchase, but a decision to commit to Jesus.
  - The key question for a person at this stage is to ask: 'What do I need to know about faith in Jesus?'
- Next, the person starts to *grow in* ***closeness*** to God. This happens as a person gets to know God better by reading his word, meeting with his people, praying etc. Consider the way you get to know another person better – as you spend time with them, understanding increases, affection grows and as/if that continues you quite naturally grow closer to them.
  - The key question for a person at this stage is to ask: 'Do I believe this faith in Jesus?'
- Over time, ***trust*** deepens. The person starts to increasingly make decisions that puts God's will before their own. Jesus says that if you want to be his disciple you 'must deny yourself, take up your cross and follow him' (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:24; Luke 9:23). This is all about trusting Jesus with your life.
  - The key question for a person at this stage is to ask: 'Do I obey this faith in Jesus?'



- And naturally, **confidence in faith** grows. In living as a Christian person - knowing, believing, obeying Jesus should lead to loving what it means to be a child of God. Praise God.
  - As such, a key question for a person who is confident in faith is to ask: 'Do I love living in the faith of Jesus?'

Yet, sometimes in life things happen which challenge faith – sickness, loss, disappointments, loneliness, difficulties, grief, unreleased expectations – the list is almost endless. How the Christian person responds when faith is challenged comes down to who they choose to listen to and be influenced by: God or the World/Flesh/Devil. To live in faith (through good and bad) is to keep listening to God and to push forward, reading and obeying his word, meeting with his people (even if they let you down), praying, examining any doubts – all the while trusting that God has you safe in his keeping at every step (c.f. Romans 8:28-30; 28-39).

For **the person moving away from a confident faith**, these stages often accompany that movement:

- First, the person starts to **distrust** God. They stop making decisions that put his will before their own.
- That leads to **distance**. They separate themselves from God – which might mean that they stop reading his word, avoid meeting with his people, cease praying, and get distracted by other things.
- Which in turn leads to **doubts** - but this time to bad doubt. This kind of doubt is really just unbelief in disguise. It is the kind of doubt that occurs, when a person says 'I have my doubts', and yet has no interest in checking them out. They let those doubts grow and fester until they convince themselves that there is no merit in listening to God or having faith.
- And sadly, that just leads to **denial**. The person has been more willing to listen or be influenced by the World or the Flesh or the Devil (or all three).

Where would you place yourself on the 'faith target'?

**To be confirmed is to declare a confident faith.**

Can you declare a confident faith?

*If you can't declare a confident faith* – if you find yourself somewhere on the bottom half of the target – then use this course as an opportunity to grow a confident faith. To explore concepts deeply and ask hard questions.

Under God, the way to grow in a confident faith – to turn things around and to move from the bottom half to the top half of the target, is to reverse the process by following the ring:

- If you are starting to *distrust*, then call on God to help you *trust*.
- If you are *distancing* yourself, then draw *close* – read your Bible, make sure you meet with God's people, pray.
- If you are *doubting* – don't run away, check out the facts, look for answers, reengage your curiosity.

It may be helpful to talk with the person leading this course – they might be able to help.

*If you can declare a confident faith* (use this course as a means to grow a confident faith).

There are a few things it might be good to know before we dive into future weeks.

## Why this Confirmation Course?

Hopefully, in the first instance, an encouragement to your faith. Yet also to ensure that each confirmer understands what they are declaring in confirmation.

This course will cover a range of topics:

- **The Promises made in Baptism** (which gives shape to the Confirmation Service)
- **the Trinity** and how the Trinity shapes our Christian faith. The Apostles Creed will help shape that discussion.
- **The Law.** The Ten Commandments will help shape that discussion.
- **Prayer and Scripture.** The Lord's Prayer will help shape that discussion.
- **The Sacraments.** The Service of Baptism and the Lord's Supper will shape that discussion.

And so, when you stand before your church family, you will know what you are declaring and can do so boldly and confidently.

## Why is the Bishop involved in Confirmation?

The context for baptism is the local church family – such that the person being baptised is welcomed into a community of faith. Confirmation equally occurs within a local church family, but by inviting the Bishop, he represents the larger Anglican community into which a person is being confirmed.

## Things you should know about this Confirmation Course:

- There will be five sessions (including this first one) – all of which are compulsory. If circumstances prevent you attending, then other arrangements should be made with the person running the course.
- You must be in Senior High or older (we recommend aged 15+).
- The Confirmation Service is a guest service so you should feel free to invite family and friends to come and witness the declarations that you make.
- Immediately before the Confirmation Service, the Bishop will meet with you (and the other confirmers) – he will be eager to know that you have a living and active faith in Jesus Christ and are willing to declare that faith willingly and publically.

## Are you ready and willing?

- Do you have any questions or concerns?
- Given this overview, what most interests you in the confirmation course?
- Given this overview, what will be most helpful for your Christian growth?

Pray

## Session 2: The Christian Faith - The Trinity

Read the catechism statement on the Christian Faith:

### THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

**Catechist**

Recite the articles of your belief, the Apostles' Creed.

**Answer**

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth;  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried.  
He descended into hell.  
The third day he rose again from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father  
almighty;  
from there he shall come 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.

**Question**

What do you chiefly learn from this creed?

**Answer**

First I learn to believe in God the Father, who has made me  
and all the world;  
secondly, in God the Son, who has redeemed me and all  
mankind;  
thirdly, in God the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies me and all  
the elect people of God.

Is this creed and its contents familiar?

*[Note: discussion/explanation may be needed regarding the 'holy catholic church' – 'holy' = set apart; 'catholic' = universal (not Roman Catholic); 'church' = gathering of believers (not denomination)]*

In this session we are going to spend some time thinking about the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Looking at the creed:

- Which part concentrates on God the Father? What is the chief work that this creed recognises? *[Creating]*
- Which part talks about God the Son? How could you summarise all that the creed says he does? *[Redeeming]*
- Which part talks about God the Spirit? What kinds of works are attributed to the Holy Spirit? *[Sanctifying – and it may be helpful to look at how the Spirit helps believers to be set apart, a communion, forgiven, resurrected and eternal people]*

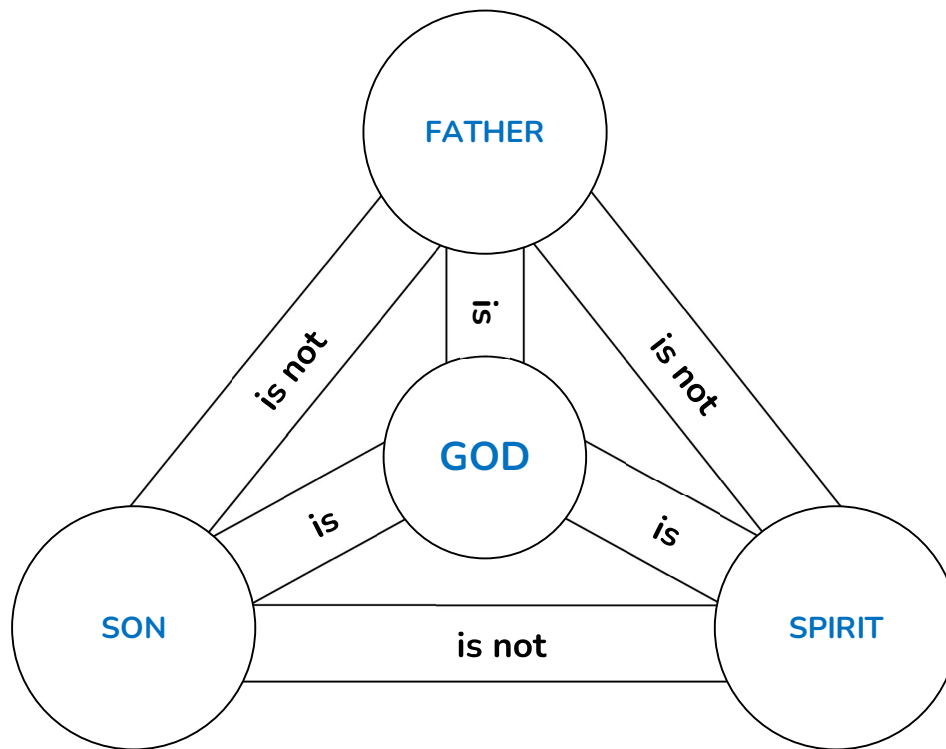
Notice that the creed not only moves from Father to Son to Holy Spirit, but also moves in accord with the way that Scripture unfolds – from creation, through the redeeming work of God ultimately in Christ (from incarnation, suffering, crucifixion, resurrection, to ascension), to the present age with the Spirit (set apart, communion, forgiven) waiting for the new creation (resurrection of our bodies and life everlasting).

How would you explain the Trinity to a friend who doesn't know Jesus?

The Trinity refers to the nature of God - three persons in one God. Distinct, yet not separated. Tri – unity. Three in one - Trinity.

Three in person (whom they are), one in being (what they are).

The three persons of God are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, each a distinct person, yet all one God, having the one being.



Read John 17:1-26 – In this prayer, look for how the Father and the Son are distinct, yet united.

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:

“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. **2** For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. **3** Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. **4** I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. **5** And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

**6** “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. **7** Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. **8** For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. **9** I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. **10** All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. **11** I will remain in the world no

longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. **12** While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

**13** “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. **14** I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. **15** My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. **16** They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. **17** Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. **18** As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. **19** For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

**20** “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, **21** that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. **22** I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— **23** I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

**24** “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

**25** “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. **26** I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

[What in this prayer shows the Father and Son as distinct? And what in this prayer shows them to be united?](#)

Did you notice in the prayer how the disciples were included into the relationship of the Father and Son?





The life of the Trinity is characterized not by self-centeredness but by mutually self-giving love. When we delight and serve someone else, we enter into a dynamic orbit around him or her, we center on the interests and desires of the other. That creates a dance, particularly if there are three persons, each of whom moves around the other two. So it is, the Bible tells us. Each of the divine persons centers upon the others. None demands that the others revolve around him. Each voluntarily circles the other two, pouring love, delight, and adoration into them. Each person of the Trinity loves, adores, defers to, and rejoices in the others. That creates a dynamic pulsating dance of joy and love. The early leaders of the Greek church had a word for this—perichoresis. Notice the root of our word ‘choreography’ is within it. It means literally to “dance or flow around.”

(Tim Keller, *Reason for God*, pp214-215)

[Read Ephesians 1:3-17 – This passage helps us to see the way Father, Son and Spirit play a role in our salvation.](#)

**3** Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. **4** For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love **5** he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— **6** to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. **7** In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace **8** that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, **9** he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, **10** to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

**11** In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, **12** in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. **13** And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal,

the promised Holy Spirit, **14** who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

**15** For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, **16** I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. **17** I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

What role/s does God the Father play in our salvation?

What role/s does God the Son play in our salvation? [Note: the recurring 'in Christ' language]

What role/s does God the Spirit play in the way we live out our salvation?

The Father... gives glory, words and love to the Son, who gives glory, words and love to us.

We are marked with the Spirit, who reminds us of Jesus words, love, and glory, so that we may know the Father's words, love and glory.

The Father makes himself known through the Son, the Spirit makes the Son known so we can know the Father.

**Summary:** The Catechism asks the question, 'what do you chiefly learn from this creed?' Using the answer provided, summarise in one word the work of the Father, Son, and Spirit:

The Father **makes (creates)**

The Son **redeems**

The Spirit **sanctifies (makes clean)**

### **Memorisation:**

#### **How many persons are there in God?**

There are three persons in one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

#### **How does the Holy Spirit help us?**

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, and he enables us to pray and to understand God's word.

**Prayer:** Eternal God and Father, by whose power we are created and by whose love we are redeemed: guide and strengthen us by your Spirit, that we may give ourselves to your service, and live this day in love to one another and to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Australian Prayer Book, Daily Service*)

**The Grace:** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen. (*Australian Prayer Book, The Litany*)

## Session 3: The Law – The Ten Commandments

Read the catechism statement on the commandments:

### THE COMMANDMENTS

#### Question

When we speak of keeping God's commandments, which commandments do we specially refer to?

#### Answer

Those which God spoke in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, saying: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage;

- 1 You shall have no other gods but me.
- 2 You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them. For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.
- 3 You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. For the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.
- 4 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.
- 5 Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.
- 6 You shall do no murder.
- 7 You shall not commit adultery.
- 8 You shall not steal.
- 9 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
- 10 You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his servant, or his maid, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is his.

The Catechism on the Commandments starts with the words of Exodus 20.

Before God gives his people the specific commandments, what does he say to them?

First God saves his people, then he gives them the law. This shows us that the law is not a set of rules people follow to **become** God's people, it is a set of rules they follow **because** they are God's people.

**The law was not a way for people to be saved.** Over time, Israel (and the generations which follow) twisted the covenant and the law by saying that if they obeyed the covenant and the law they would go to heaven - but that is not true. The law was not a way for God's people to **earn** their salvation, it was a way for them to **show** their salvation.

Earn / Show / Become / Because
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In the Old Testament the people of God are the people of the nation of Israel (descendants of Abraham). God's people were not saved by following God's law or doing good things. Just like us today, **they were saved by the future redeemer who paid the penalty for the sin of everyone who trusts in Him** - past sin, present sin, and future sin.

[Read Genesis 12:1-3 \(c.f. Gen 15:6\)](#)

The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

<sup>2</sup> "I will make you into a great nation,  
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.

<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you,

and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you.”

God makes some promises (a covenant) to Abram – what?

Following these promises, and with the establishment of Israel as a nation, the law was given in Exodus 20. Consider what Galatians teaches us about the promises and the place of the law.

Read Galatians 3:16-18

“The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ. **17** What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. **18** For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.”

If the law is not a way to be saved, and was never a way to be saved, why did God give his people the law?

God gave his people the law so that they would:

1. Know who God is and how to love him (Commandments 1-4)
2. Act like him by loving others (Commandments 5-10)

If they did this, they would show God’s goodness to the nations around them.

We see this reflected in the catechism:

Question

What do you chiefly learn from God’s commandments?

Answer

I learn two things: my duty towards God, and my duty towards my neighbour.

... and we see it reflected in the teachings of Jesus.

Read Matthew 22:36-40,

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

**37** Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ **38** This is the first and greatest commandment. **39** And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ **40** All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

The catechism explains how we love God and love others in more depth:

**Question**

What is your duty towards God?

**Answer**

My duty towards God is,  
to believe in him, to fear him, and to love him, with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength;  
to worship him, to give him thanks, to put my whole trust in him, to pray to him;  
to honour his holy name and his word;  
and to serve him truly all the days of my life.

**Question**

What is your duty towards your neighbour?

**Answer**

My duty towards my neighbour is,  
to love him as myself, and to do to others whatever I wish they would do to me;  
to love, honour, and care for my parents; to honour and obey the Queen and all who are in authority under her; to submit myself to my teachers and spiritual pastors; to be respectful and courteous to all;  
to hurt no one by word or deed; to bear no malice or hatred in my heart;  
to keep my body in temperance, soberness, and chastity; to be true and just in all my dealings;  
to keep my hands from pilfering and stealing, and my tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering;  
not to covet or desire things that belong to other people but to learn to work honestly for my own living, and to do my duty in that state of life to which it shall please God to call me.

Yet if we are honest, we know we don't love God and others like we should. When we start to believe the lie that it is our obedience to the law that means we get to heaven or makes God love us, it is important to remember what Jesus has done for us.



Jesus perfectly fulfills the law as he lives the perfect life. And he gives this perfect life to us.

[Read Matthew 5:17-28](#)

**17** “Do not think that I [Jesus] have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. **18** For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. **19** Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. **20** For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

**21** “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ **22** But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment ... **27** “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ **28** But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

[Jesus doesn't abolish the law but fulfills it. In talking about the law, does he reduce or increase its importance? Discuss.](#)

The law was given to help people *love* God and *love* others, yet the religious leaders perverted it so they didn't love God or others! Jesus shows that he cares about the motivation. He cares about the heart.

[Read Romans 13:8-13](#)

...“whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. **9** The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” **10** Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

[How does Paul say we fulfill the law?](#)



Christ has fulfilled the law for us, so even though we don't get it right all the time, we can continue to fulfill the law as we love God and others.

As people who have already been saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus, Christians are given the Spirit so that they can love others. And as they love their neighbour as themselves, they fulfill the law.

### Memorisation:

**Since no one can keep the law, what is its purpose?**

That we may know the holy nature of God, and the sinful nature of our hearts, and thus our need for a Saviour. The law also teaches us and exhorts us to live a life worthy of our Saviour.

### Summary:

The law was not a way to **earn** salvation but to **show** salvation.

God's people did not follow the law to **become** God's people, but **because** they were God's people.

The law points us **towards God** and to our need for a Saviour.

As we love **God** and **others** we fulfill the law, knowing that Jesus fulfilled the law for us.

Become / Towards God / Earn / God / Show / Others / Because
---

**Prayer:** Almighty Lord, and everlasting God, we pray that you will direct, sanctify, and govern our hearts and bodies in the ways of your laws and the works of your commandments; that through your mighty protection, here and ever, we may be kept safe in body and soul to give glory to your holy Name; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen (Australian Prayer Book, A Prayer for God's Guidance.)

**Reflection:** God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 1 John 4:16

### At Home Reading: Do Christians have to follow the law today?

Echoing the teachings of Jesus, Paul says that we fulfil the law by loving others (Rom 13:8). It is a radically different view of the law to the religious leaders who replaced the heart of love that was at the centre of the law, with a commitment to introducing more and more detailed rules. But it begs the question, if we fulfil the law by loving others, what do we do with the 613 specific Old Testament laws that we may not even have thought about? How do Christians, saved by Jesus and given His Spirit to obey the law and love others, relate to the details of the law today?

Israel were God's chosen people, His special nation, and so the laws governed how they were to live as members of God's special nation. Laws are necessary for a nation to function well, especially one that is meant to show everyone how good God is.

When Jesus arrived he introduced a new covenant, and so the nature of the law changed. The old covenant was about establishing and maintaining a nation, which is why laws were appropriate, but this is very different to the situation of Christians today. Jesus has established a new covenant where Christians don't relate to God as a head of state, or form a physical nation, but where they call God their heavenly Father, and form a spiritual family.

A family is not healthy if it needs laws to work well, a healthy family works well when everyone shares an identity that brings them together in love. Love, not duty or rule following, is what makes a family work.

So the law was given for a specific time period, but now Christians relate to each other and to God not as a nation ruled by laws, but as a family ruled by love. In Galatians chapter 4 verses 1-7 Paul describes the law as the guardian of God's people. It was there to look after them until they 'grew up'. Paul says that God's people 'grew up' when Jesus made a way for anyone to come into God's family. Because Jesus introduced the new covenant and made a way for everyone to come into God's family, the guardian and teacher was no longer needed.

This means that every detail of the law is not binding on Christians today. For example, we do not need to obey the school teacher once we have finished school, but what they taught should continue to be helpful. The law still has value. The law still has authority because it is God's word.

George Athas writes, "The Law remains the word of God as it ever was ... But it speaks to us today as prophecy and wisdom, rather than as Law. It testifies to the God whom we know today as our Father. It testifies to his righteousness, justice, and

love. It provides us with the framework for understanding God's dealings with his people in ages past, and in so doing, still provides us with wisdom on what is pleasing to God." (*Christians and the Law*. Newtown: MTC, 2016).

The law does not apply to Christians in the same way it did to God's people in the Old Testament, but it is still of great value. As Paul writes in 2 Timothy Chapter 3 verse 16, *"Everything in the Scriptures is God's Word. All of it is useful for teaching and helping people and for correcting them and showing them how to live."*

The law is still helpful and valuable because even though Christians today relate to God as a heavenly father and to each other as a family, not as a nation state, there are still many similarities. People are still sinful. God is still good. These things never change because God never changes, and the law shows us both these things loud and clear. Even if every law is not binding in the same way that it was, we can still learn from the law as it helps us:

1. Know who God is and how to love him.
2. Act like God by loving others.
3. Show other people how good God is.
4. Know our sin and our need for a Saviour.

This is why we fulfil the law not by obeying every single detail, but by loving others. We are not a nation state, but a family. Many of the rules about how to function as a nation won't apply, but we can still see what it teaches us about who we are and who God is. It is still helpful for teaching and showing people how to live.

The law is now our friend. No longer a school teacher who will discipline us, instead a friend that we can talk to over coffee. A trusted advisor and confidante. That is why the powerful words of Psalm 1 are still true for us today, *"Blessed is the one ... whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night."*

## Session 4: Prayer & Scripture – The Lord's Prayer

In this session we'll start by looking at prayer and then consider scripture.

[Read the catechism statement on prayer:](#)

### PRAYER

#### Catechist

You know that you are not able to do these things by yourself, or to walk in the commandments of God, or to serve him, without his special grace, which you must learn at all times to ask for by diligent prayer. Let me hear therefore if you can say the Lord's Prayer.

#### Answer

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.

#### Question

What do you ask of God in this prayer?

#### Answer

I ask my Lord God our heavenly Father, who is the giver of all goodness, to send his grace to me, and to all people, that we may worship him, serve him, and obey him, as we ought to do. And I pray to God that he will send us all that we need both for our souls and bodies; and that he will be merciful to us and forgive us our sins; and that it will please him to save and defend us in all dangers to body and spirit; and that he will keep us from all sin and wickedness, and from our spiritual enemy, and from everlasting death. And this I trust he will do, of his mercy and goodness, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore I say, 'Amen', 'So be it'.

Look through the prayer. Is there any part you don't understand? What stands out to you?

*[It may be helpful to draw out the collective ('us' rather than the individual 'I'). See the structure of the prayer: praise (of God) then petition (for us and others)]*

Jesus models prayer when he teaches his disciples to pray. The Lord's Prayer establishes two important aspects of prayer – **relationship** and **response**.

Jesus models the Father-Son *relationship* that is the basis of prayer saying, "Our Father". In the Old Testament, Israel and her leaders addressed God as 'The LORD' or 'God', but not as 'Father'. It is with Jesus that the people of God (his disciples) were given the direction/permission to call God 'Father'. Consider the significance of this honour. Abraham, Moses and David (those Old Testament champions) did not address God as personally as disciples today can when they pray: 'Our Father'. Prayer expresses our intimate relationship with God as Father.

Jesus also models the *responsive* nature of prayer by focusing on the fulfilling of God's purposes, "hallowed be your name ... your will be done".

In the Lord's Prayer Jesus shows that he is the true son of God who receives and responds to God's word.

Read 1 John 5:14-15

**13** I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. **14** This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. **15** And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

For those who believe in Jesus – what does this teach about prayer? Does this mean that if Christians pray 'in the name' of Jesus they will receive whatever they ask for? Why/Why not?

When we pray in Jesus' name, we are sons of God coming to the Father in the name of the true son. We are enjoying the sonship **relationship** - that is given to both men and women.

But when we pray in Jesus' name, we are also praying according to the will of God - we are **responding** to his purposes.

“Praying in Jesus' name is praying for things that will honor and glorify Jesus. Saying “in Jesus' name” at the end of a prayer is not a magic formula. If what we ask for or say in prayer is not for God's glory and according to His will, saying “in Jesus' name” is meaningless. Genuinely praying in Jesus' name and for His glory is what is important, not attaching certain words to the end of a prayer. It is not the words in the prayer that matter, but the purpose behind the prayer. Praying for things that are in agreement with God's will is the essence of praying in Jesus' name.

*(Got Questions - What does it mean to pray in Jesus' name?)*

We get to joyfully live in dependence on God in prayer as we live out our relationship with him and respond to his purposes. We can pray biblical prayers, because when we pray biblical prayers, we are claiming a promise God has already made.

C.S Lewis paints a beautiful picture of prayer in *Mere Christianity*,

“An ordinary Christian kneels down to say his prayers. He is trying to get in touch with God. But if he is a Christian he knows that what is prompting him to pray is also God: God, so to speak, inside him. But he also knows that all his real knowledge of God comes through Christ, the Man who was God - that Christ is standing beside him, helping him to pray, praying for him. You see what is happening. God is the thing to which he is praying - the goal he is trying to reach. God is also the thing inside him pushing him on - the motive power. God is also the bridge or road along which he is being pushed to that goal. So that the whole threefold life of the three-personal Being is actually going on in that ordinary little bedroom where an ordinary man is saying his prayers.”

*(C.S Lewis, Mere Christianity)*

How do you pray? When and what pattern do you have for prayer?

*[Use this question to discuss/suggest some healthy patterns in personal prayer]*

**We can live out our relationship with God in prayer as we speak to him, we can also hear him speak to us from his word.** Let's turn our attention to the nature of scripture in the life of the believer.

[Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17](#)

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, **15** and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **17** so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

[This is such a key passage in understanding the nature of Scripture \(the Bible\).](#)  
[What do we learn about the nature of Scripture? How can it be helpful?](#)

[Read 2 Peter 1:19-21](#)

<sup>19</sup>We [Christians] also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. <sup>20</sup>Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. <sup>21</sup>For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

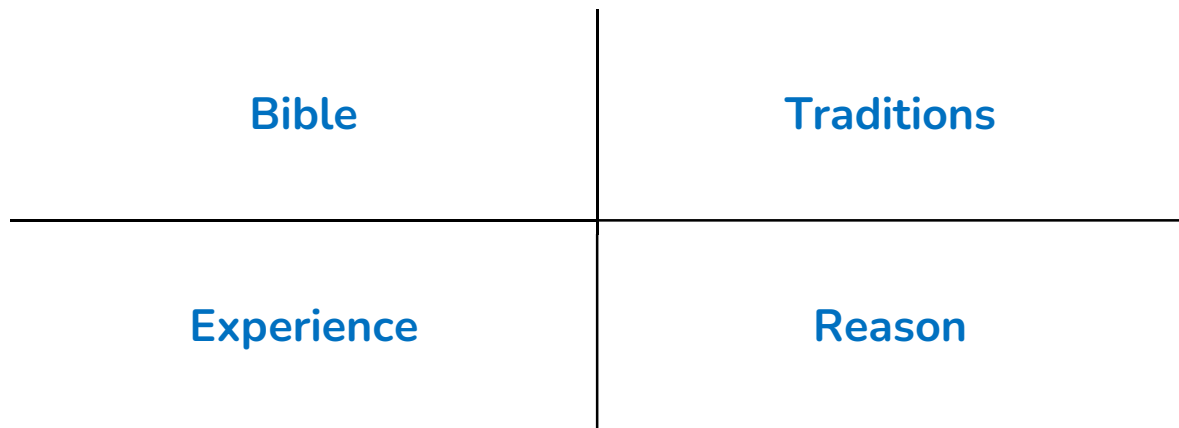
[How is scripture ultimately able to be understood?](#)

[Read Hebrews 4:12](#)

"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

[What can we expect to happen as we interact with God's word?](#)

Spiritually each decision that we make is motivated by some kind of authority (that which we ultimately base our decision). The table below suggests four main 'authorities' which could drive decisions. All have value. And each may play a role in influencing the (spiritual) decisions we make.



For the Christian person, which of these should be the authoritative voice of truth about God, humanity, and salvation? Why?

Let's consider each element of this 'authority quadrilateral':

**Bible** – 'God says', where decisions are primarily directed under the final and comprehensive authority of the Bible in all matters of faith and conduct (c.f. 2 Timothy 3:15-16 – scriptures 'make you wise for salvation through Jesus Christ').

**Experience** – 'I feel', where decisions are primarily directed by a person's experience of God and as such, they may choose to live their lives following the promptings of the Spirit (c.f. John 9:25: 'I was blind but now I see!').

**Traditions** – 'I do', where decisions are primarily directed by the teachings of the institution or tradition to which the person belongs. As such, weight is given to what their church or priest or bishop or pastor directs concerning their understanding or behaviour (c.f. 2 Timothy 4:6-8: referring to the good teaching on the truths of the faith by a good minister of Christ Jesus).

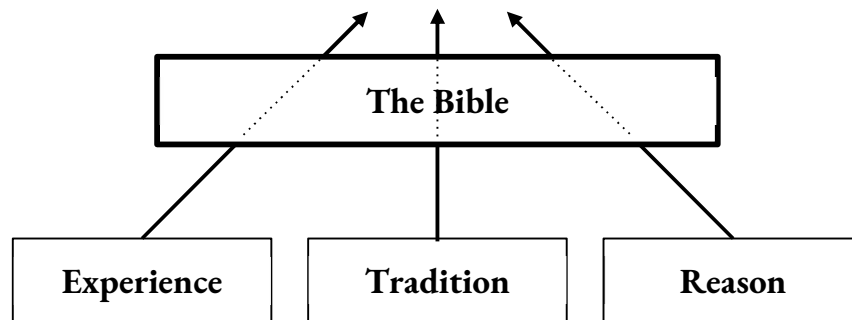


**Reason** – ‘I think’, where decisions are primarily based on what a person’s knowledge or reason may inform. As such they will accept and practice whatever can be demonstrated as logical, rational, intelligent and will reject that which appears irrational or primitive or dated (c.f. James 1:5: wisdom from God)

Each of these ‘authorities’ spring from an understanding of what God is like. *The Bible*, based on a God who speaks and who is known most clearly through his word. *Experience* based on the way God moves and acts in our life experience. *Tradition* based on a God of order who calls people to be united together as ‘his church’. And *Reason* based on God being reasonable, rational and true.

We should find ourselves giving some assent to each of these understandings of God. Each person’s theological position has a measure of Bible, Experience, Tradition and Reason mixed in.

Not surprisingly, it is the Bible which Christians should refer to as the foundational and final authority, which means that all of our feelings, traditions or reason should be examined through the lens of scripture. We don’t ignore all the sources, they are very helpful as God wants us to feel, to use our experience and tradition, and to think - whilst recognizing that these authorities sit under the authority of what he says in scripture.



What would happen if our experiences, traditions, or reason were to become our authority?

## Memorisation:

### With what attitude should we pray?

With love, perseverance, and gratefulness; in humble submission to God's will, knowing that, for the sake of Christ, he always hears our prayers.

**How is the word of God to be read and heard?** With diligence, preparation, and prayer; so that we might accept it with faith and practice it in our lives.

## Summary:

Two important aspects of prayer are **Relationship** and **Response**.

When we pray, we respond to God's **goodness** and demonstrating our **dependence** on him.

The Bible is **God-breathed** and is useful for **teaching**, **rebuking**, **correcting** and **training** in righteousness. For what aim? So that the **servant** of God may be thoroughly **equipped** for every good work.

equipped / God-breathed / relationship / dependence / teaching / response / training /  
goodness / correcting / servant / rebuking

**Prayer:** Lord, we thank you for your holy Word, and for the fellowship of your Church; may your Word live in us and bear much fruit to your glory and the salvation of our fellow-men; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen. (*An Australian Prayer Book*)

**Encouragement:** The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be amongst you and remain with you always. Amen.

## At Home Reading: What use is the Bible?

2 Timothy 3:15 says scripture makes us *wise for salvation*. The Bible is not a scientific textbook - and it doesn't claim to be. It is not a recipe book - although less people read it like that. And it's not fiction. It is a theological book, and so it should be read and understood that way. This means it teaches us about God, humanity, sin, salvation, and the world through lots of different writing styles and lots of different people.

The Bible doesn't have the answer to every question about everything, but it never claims to! The Bible gives us the answers it claims to give because the Bible is sufficient for our salvation. In it we find the answer to the most important question, 'how can we be saved?', and God has generously given us a blueprint for Godly living as well. This allows us to have confidence that we are saved, and a desire to live holy lives in a thankful response.

Sometimes it can be hard to understand everything the Bible says, but the good news is that God doesn't leave us alone. He has given us the church community to help us understand it, and by his Spirit, he helps us understand it.



“A Christian sits down to read her Bible. She is trying to get in touch with God. But if she is a Christian she knows that what is prompting her to hear from God is also God: God, so to speak, inside her. But she also knows that all her real knowledge of God comes through Christ, the Man who was God - that Christ is standing beside her, helping her to read, opening her mind to the understanding of scripture. You see what is happening. God's word is the thing she is reading - the goal she is trying to reach. God is also the thing inside her pushing her on - the motive power. God is also the bridge or road along which she is being pushed to that goal. So that the whole threefold life of the three-personal Being is actually going on in that ordinary little bedroom where an ordinary woman is reading the Bible ... she is being pulled into God, by God, while remaining herself.” (adapted from C.S Lewis, *Mere Christianity*)

It is Jesus who opens our minds to understand Scripture (Luke 24:44-45). It is God who shines supernatural light into our hearts so that we can see his glory (2 Corinthians 4:6). It is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation that enlightens the eyes of our hearts (Ephesians 1:17-18). Reading the Bible is a supernatural act. An otherworldly connection with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

## Session 5: The Sacraments - Baptism and the Lord's Supper

In this session we look at the Sacraments (from a Latin word (sacrare) meaning 'holy').

Read the catechism statement on the sacraments:

### THE SACRAMENTS

#### Question

How many sacraments has Christ ordained in his Church?

#### Answer

Two only, as generally necessary to salvation; that is to say, baptism and the Lord's Supper (which is the Holy Communion).

#### Question

What do you mean by the word 'sacrament'?

#### Answer

I mean an outward and visual sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given to us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means by which we receive that grace, and a pledge to assure us of it.

#### Question

How many parts are there in a sacrament?

#### Answer

Two: the outward visible sign, and the inward spiritual grace.

The Anglican Church recognises these two sacraments of Baptism and Lord's Supper (Communion) as commanded by Jesus<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>11</sup> The Catholic Church recognises seven sacraments – each binding you to the church: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion, Confession, Marriage, Holy Orders (Ordination), and the Anointing of the Sick.

### Read Matthew 28:16-20 (concerning baptism)

**16** Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. **17** When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. **18** Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

### Read Luke 22:19-20 (concerning the Lord's Supper)

He [Jesus] took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” **20** In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Both Baptism and the Passover Meal (later to be celebrated as the Lord's Supper) were practiced before Jesus' death and resurrection. In these sacraments there are two parts – the **outward visible** sign and the **inward spiritual** reality.

### Concerning Baptism...

#### Read Romans 6:1-11

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? **2** By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? **3** Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

**5** For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. **6** For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— **7** because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

**8** Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. **9** For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. **10** The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. **11** In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

What does this passage mean when it says: 'all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death'? What does it say about life?

**Question**

What is the outward visible sign, or form, in baptism?

**Answer**

Water, in which the person is baptized 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'.

**Question**

What is the inward and spiritual grace?

**Answer**

A death to sin and a new birth to righteousness; for, being born with a sinful nature, we are by this new birth made the children of grace.

**Question**

What is required of persons to be baptized?

**Answer**

Repentance, by which they forsake sin; and faith, by which they firmly believe the promises of God made to them in this sacrament.

As a catechism is used to prepare those who can answer for themselves in Baptism or Confirmation – what should their spiritual state be? What is 'required' to indicate this?

Baptism is a sign of our forgiveness, of our participation in Christ's death and resurrection. It is outward visible sign of an inward spiritual reality of the person being baptised. Further it is a sign of acceptance into the community of believers – both the local church family and the worldwide body of Christ (his church). It shows our faith before God and is a clear confession before others.

If someone asked you why Christians get baptised (or confirmed) - how could you explain the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection?

## Concerning the Lord's Supper...

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

**23** For I [the Apostle Paul] received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. **27** So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. **28** Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. **29** For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

Here Paul uses the imagery (i.e. the bread >body and the wine>blood) of the Lord's Supper to explain what Jesus did when he died on the cross. To whom is the Lord's Supper most significant – the not-yet-believer or the believer? Why?

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in the first instance, reminds those who partake of the sacrifice Jesus made:

**Question**

Why was the sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained?

**Answer**

For the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits we receive by it.

**Question**

What is the outward part, or sign, of the Lord's Supper?

**Answer**

Bread and wine, which the Lord has commanded to be received.

**Question**

What is the inward part, or thing signified?

**Answer**

The body and blood of Christ, which are truly and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.

**Question**

What benefits do we partake of by this?

**Answer**

We are strengthened and inwardly refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine.

**Question**

What is required of those who come to the Lord's Supper?

**Answer**

It is required that they examine themselves to see if they truly repent of their sins, and that they firmly intend to lead a new life. They must have a living faith in God's mercy through Christ with a thankful remembrance of his death and resurrection, and they must be in charity with all men.

What is 'required' of the Christian person?



If someone asked you why Christians share in the Lord's Supper - how could you use the imagery (i.e. the bread and the wine) of the Lord's Supper, to explain the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection?

Notice, in both Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the significance of repentance on the part of the person receiving the sacrament.

What is 'repentance'? Why is repentance so important?

Do you repent? (you might note you will be asked to answer this questions publicly in the confirmation service)

### Summary:

Baptism is a sign of our **forgiveness** and of our participation in Christ's **death** and **resurrection**. It is the sign of **acceptance** into the community of believers – both the **local** church family and the **worldwide** body of Christ (his church).

The Lord's Supper is a repeated reminder of the **sacrifice** of Jesus and the **benefit** the believer receives from his death and resurrection.

acceptance / local / death / worldwide / sacrifice / forgiveness / resurrection / benefit

**Prayer:** God of mercy, you wash away our sins, you give us new birth in the Spirit, and you redeem us in the blood of Christ. As we celebrate Christ's resurrection, increase our awareness of these blessings, and renew your gift of life within us. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Encouragement:** We praise you through Jesus Christ our Lord, the true high priest who has cleansed us from sin and made us a royal priesthood called to serve you forever.

We praise you for the example and encouragement of your saints; for their witness to the truth of your gospel; and for the hope of glory which we share with them in Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with the whole company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, evermore praising you, and saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Glory to you, O Lord most high.

*(An Australian Prayer Book, Holy Communion First Order service, p125)*

## At home reading: Infant Baptism (sometimes called Paedobaptism)

### Question

Why then are infants baptized, when by reason of their age they can neither repent nor believe?

### Answer

Because they promise them both by their sponsors, and they must take this responsibility upon themselves when they are old enough to do so.

Some background may be helpful. Circumcision was a kind of forerunner to Baptism. An external mark, which marked out God's people (Israel), and reminded them of their place before God, and the great promises God had given them. Every male, from the eighth day of their life, was to be circumcised (Genesis 17:10-12). And for those of other nations, to be accepted into the people of God and be allowed to partake in the Passover celebrations, males needed first to be circumcised (Exodus 12:43-49; Joshua 5:3). This custom continued until the time of the New Testament where one who was born a Jew (a descendant of Israel) would be circumcised on the eighth day (Acts 7:8).

For as important as the mark of circumcision was, it was only a physical outward mark of the flesh which showed obedience to the law and it would be replaced by an spiritual inward condition of the heart to come (c.f. Jeremiah 9:25-26; Romans 2:25-29). In fact, to Jesus, circumcision did not matter – what mattered was faith (exercised in love – Galatians 5:6)

The New Testament ushers in a change which saw Baptism replace circumcision, though the underlying principle was the same. John the Baptist preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3). Jesus commissioned his disciples to 'go, make disciples of all nations, baptising them...' (Matt 28:19). And the apostles, in establishing the Christian church baptised those whom they called to faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 8:38; 10:44-48) and that included both adults and children (c.f. Acts 16:14-15; 31-34).

Baptism then was a mark of faith – if you believe in Jesus Christ, then that inward spiritual reality can be demonstrated by the outward sign of baptism which made it clear to all that you were 'Christian' – and if you have children, that you intend to raise those children as Christians answering for them until they were of an age to confirm that faith for themselves.

For Christians today, there is room to decide when/if to baptise their children. It will be an opportunity to declare faith in Jesus Christ.

## Confirmation Decision

Before making a decision to be confirmed, consider the questions you will be asked and the affirmation that you will declare. The Appendix gives you the Confirmation Service.

### The Questions

The Bishop will ask you about your commitment in faith to Jesus Christ. You will be asked five questions:

Do you turn to Christ?

Your answer: **I turn to Christ.**

Do you repent of your sins?

Your answer: **I repent of my sins.**

Do you reject selfish living, and all that is false and unjust?

Your answer: **I reject them all.**

Do you renounce Satan and all evil?

Your answer: **I renounce all that is evil.**

Will you [each] by God's grace, strive to live as a disciple of Christ, loving God with your whole heart, and your neighbour as yourself, until your life's end?

Your answer: **I will, with God's help.**

Take a moment to think through each of these questions. Are you willing and able to answer as instructed?

## **The Affirmation**

The Bishop will also ask you to affirm your faith by declaring the Apostles Creed:

Do you believe in God the Father?

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

Do you believe in God the Son?

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

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy apostolic<sup>2</sup> church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Take a moment to think through this creed (we looked at this in session 2). Are you willing and able to declare this creed as a statement of what you believe?

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<sup>2</sup> At LMAP we have used the line 'holy apostolic church' to avoid confusion (given we are an Anglican Church and not a Catholic church) and to indicate the set apart and sent nature of Christ's church. Traditionally this line would read either 'holy catholic church' or 'holy universal church' (meaning set apart worldwide church).

## Your Confirmation Decision

- *If you are willing and able to both answer the questions as instructed and declare the creed as a statement of belief - then you are **ready** to be confirmed.* Praise God.
- *If you are not sure – then you are **not ready** to be confirmed.* Please raise your doubts with the person leading this course. It is good to discuss and think more.
- *If you are not willing or able to answer the questions as instructed or declare the creed as a statement of belief - then you are **not ready** to be confirmed.* That is okay and honourable to make this decision. Keep talking and exploring.

[This is a good time to pray about your decision.](#)

## What to do from here:

- Indication your intention (to be confirmed or to hold off confirmation) to the person leading this course.
- If choosing to get confirmed. Invite family and friends to your confirmation. This is a good opportunity to invite folk to hear the gospel declared.
- Ensure you are in some form of group that will help nurture you where you are in faith (e.g. JesusWORKS Group, Friday Youth, Young Adult Hub Growth Group, Growth Group etc.)
- Keep growing yourself in faith. A suggestion to help is to work through *Christian Essentials – 9 key characteristics of every follower of Jesus* (Matthias Media, 2022)

## Conclusion

Congratulations. You have completed this Confirmation Course.

Our prayer for you has been that this course will have helped to strengthen your Christian faith as you worked through the Catechism and applied it to your life. And further that you will now see more clearly the commitment and value that comes with being united together with others in Christ Jesus.

<sup>24</sup>To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—<sup>25</sup>to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore!     **Amen.**

(Jude 24-25)



## Appendix: The Confirmation Service

(At Lower Mountains Anglican, this service would be part of one of our Sunday Gatherings and would not include the Lord's Supper)

### A SERVICE FOR CONFIRMATION (adapted from the AAPB 1978, Second Form, 534-40)

The service takes place within a Service of the Word and Prayer or the Lord's Supper.

#### 1. The candidates are presented to the bishop.

#### 2. The bishop says

Let us pray Almighty God, our heavenly Father, by your Holy Spirit you have called *these* your *servants* and made *them* your *children* by adoption and grace; mercifully grant that, being strengthened by the same Spirit, *they* may continue your *servants* and receive your promises; through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

#### THE COMMITMENT

#### 3. The bishop says to the candidates

Those who are to be confirmed are first invited to reaffirm the promises made at their baptism [or to reaffirm the promises they have made in their own name]. You must therefore declare again your allegiance to Christ and your rejection of all that is evil: the devil and all his works, the empty display and false values of the world, and the sinful desires of the flesh.

#### The bishop may address each candidate individually

Therefore I ask you

Do you turn to Christ?

**I turn to Christ.**

Do you repent of your sins?

**I repent of my sins.**

Do you reject selfish living, and all that is false and unjust?

**I reject them all.**

Do you renounce Satan and all evil?

**I renounce all that is evil.**

#### The bishop says to the candidates as a group

Will you each, by God's grace, strive to live as a disciple of Christ, loving God with your whole heart, and your neighbour as yourself, until your life's end?

**I will, with God's help.**

#### 4. The bishop says to the congregation

You have heard *these* our *brothers* and *sisters* respond to God's call to love and serve him throughout their lives. Will you support *them* in this high calling?

**We will do so.**

## 5. The bishop says to the candidates

You who are to be confirmed must now yourselves affirm before God and his church the Christian faith into which you were baptised.

Do you believe in God the Father?

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

Do you believe in God the Son?

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

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy apostolic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

## The bishop says to the congregation

This is the faith of the Church.

The congregation responds:

**This is our faith: We believe in one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

## THE CONFIRMATION

## 6. The bishop says

We come now to confirm *those* who have been baptised and instructed in the Christian faith, laying hands on *them* and praying that God's indwelling Spirit will strengthen and guide *them* throughout *their* lives. Let us pray that God who has begun a good work in *these* our *brothers* and *sisters* will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ. .

Almighty and everliving God, you have been pleased to grant to your *servants* new birth by water and the Holy Spirit and have given *them* forgiveness of *their* sins; strengthen *them*, we pray, with the Holy Spirit; grant that *they* may grow in grace; and give *them* the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of discernment and inner strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and fill *them*, Father, with wonder and awe in your presence, now and for ever. **Amen.**

## 7. The bishop lays his hand on each of the candidates individually.

Defend, O Lord, this your servant *[N]* with your heavenly grace, that *he/she* may continue yours for ever, and daily increase in your Holy Spirit more and more until *he/she* comes to your everlasting kingdom. **Amen.**

or

Strengthen Lord your servant *[N]* with your Holy Spirit. Empower and sustain *him/her* for your service.  
**Amen**

8. The bishop prays.

Let us pray.

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.**

Almighty and everliving God, we pray for *these* your servants upon whom we have now laid our hands, following the apostles' example, to assure *them* of your love for *them*. May your fatherly hand ever protect *them*. Let your Holy Spirit ever be with *them* to uphold *them* in the love of Christ and to lead *them* in obedience to your word. Strengthen *them* with your heavenly grace and keep *them* in eternal life; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

9. Other prayers follow

10. The bishop concludes the service with these words

Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; give honour to all; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

