

My Christain Faith



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Dear Partners in the Faith,

In **1 Corinthians 1:18** Paul writes, **"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."**

How wonderful and mysterious are the ways in which God has worked and continues to work in the course of human history.

The greatest marvel of all is the manner in which God chose to save fallen humanity, sending His Son to become one of us so that He might live and die in our place. His resurrection from the dead assures us of the completeness of the victory over sin, death, and all that would lead us to lose saving faith.

God has chosen ordinary people—Paul, Augustine, Martin Luther, and contemporary Christians like you and me to be His redeemed people. As the Holy Spirit works through God's Holy Word, He continues to nurture the saving gift of faith in our hearts and empowers us as we bring the message of forgiveness, new life, and salvation to others.

As a teacher of the Christian faith, you have the unique opportunity to share God's Good News with the young people in your class. God has promised to do wonderful things through you as His Word is witnessed and taught.

You are in our prayers. May God bless your ministry to the young people you teach.

Your Partners in Ministry,
The Editors

Introduction

My Christian Faith has been designed to assist pastors and junior high confirmation teachers to meet the goals of an effective Christian education, summarized as follows:

That, through the Word and Spirit of God, people of all ages

- know the one true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and the forgiveness and salvation offered through Jesus’ death and resurrection;
- come to faith and grow into Christian maturity;
- identify ourselves as members of the Body of Christ, the Church;
- live in joy, contentment, and harmony with God, ourselves, and all others;
- express faith in the worship of God and in the service of God and others;
- value all of God’s creation and care for it wisely and well;
- witness faith in Jesus, our personal Savior and the Savior of all people; and
- live in the Christian hope of a new and eternal life in Christ Jesus.

To accomplish these goals, *My Christian Faith* is Christ-centered so that students will have optimal opportunity to grow in their relationship of faith and life with God. **“That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”**

(1 John 1:3)

Teaching the Faith to Seventh and Eighth Grade Students

“What are junior high students like?” is a good question to ask as you begin planning to teach junior high students. Consider some of the common physical, social, psychological, intellectual, and faith development characteristics of young people at the age of 13. Although a junior high student may not exhibit all of the characteristics found in the chart, educators and psychologists agree that these characteristics are common among young people as they begin their teenage years.

Physical/Social/Psychological Characteristics

Your students will

- know a lot about the world;
- feel concerned about what other people think of them—especially peers;
- seek ways to make friends and get along with family and friends;
- desire increasing independence from their family;
- demonstrate interest in the opposite sex;
- have anxiety over their personal appearance;
- be preoccupied with self;
- wonder or worry about their bodies’ physical changes or the lack of physical changes;
- shift moods rapidly;
- be physically awkward at times (especially boys);
- embarrass easily;
- be self-conscious.

Intellectual Characteristics

Your students will

- show concern about complex social issues like world hunger or homelessness;
- imagine themselves in the place or circumstances of others;

- develop problem-solving strategies;
- think through possible solutions to a problem before reaching a conclusion;
- respect a teacher who says, “I don’t know,” more than a teacher who tries to fake an answer;
- commit themselves to a worthwhile cause in order to experience a sense of self worth;
- act indifferent to conversations initiated by a teacher because of fear of peer rejection, although they enjoy the teacher’s attention;
- enjoy working in small groups and have the skills necessary to do so successfully;
- learn best when the teacher uses a variety of methods.

Faith Development Characteristics

Your students will

- think in the present, not the future (How can I apply this biblical information to my life, right now?);
- question their faith;
- make decisions concerning the importance of a faith relationship with God;
- question ideas learned in childhood;
- have difficulty comprehending God’s unchanging love for them, which is not dependent on how good or bad they are;
- enjoy discussing social issues (e.g., drugs, abortion, suicide, etc.);
- recognize and point out inconsistencies in the lifestyles and values of people, especially adults;
- need assurance that they are significant to Christ and His church;
- respond positively to adults who genuinely care for them, try to understand their feelings, and accept them as valuable persons.

My Christian Faith

My Christian Faith consists of 30 Gospel-centered, life-applicable, and activity-focused lessons. Built around active object lessons, group projects, games, roleplays, and simple age-appropriate craft projects, these lessons will

help young people not only learn the basics of Christian doctrine but also apply the doctrines to their lives with activities that are as relevant and thought-provoking as they are enjoyable.

Recognizing that an increasing number of congregations are conducting junior high confirmation programs using retreats and workshops in addition to traditional approaches, *My Christian Faith* has been designed to accommodate those desiring flexibility and versatility. The course provides learning experiences that allow students to be involved actively in learning about God and the place He desires to occupy in their lives, while building positive relationships with each other and the instructor.

Teachers Guide

All lessons in *My Christian Faith* follow the same, easy-to-teach pattern. The beginning of each lesson provides the lesson title including the portion of the Small Catechism to be covered, the lesson theme, and the objectives to be addressed. The balance of the lesson consists of a series of *options* in each section. Each section of the lesson is explained in the “Sample Lesson” section that follows. Choose activities appropriate according to the needs of the students in your confirmation class, your objectives for the type of confirmation instructional experience you desire for your students, and the setting in which the confirmation experience is taking place. **YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO DO ALL THE SUGGESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES PROVIDED.** Activity headings give time estimates for each option. The appendix includes reproducible activity sheets that may be used in conjunction with one or more of the lesson options.

Additionally, you may want to subscribe to Concordia Publishing House’s *Confirmation Builder* tool. This web-based subscription provides teaching resources organized under the Six Chief Parts of Luther’s Small Catechism, including lesson preparation resources, devotions, activities, videos, and assessments. Find out more at www.confirmationbuilder.com. You will find an index at the back of this book to guide you in using Confirmation Builder.

Response Book

The hardbound student book, entitled *My Christian Faith*, will help students personalize their Christian faith as they reflect upon and apply the concepts taught in each session. Each lesson includes the following components in an attractive four-color, magazine-style design: a portion of God's Word, a section of the catechism, a section to help students apply Christian doctrine to issues and events in the world today, and an individual student response section. The Response Book is designed as a *keepsake* for students to refer to as they continue their personal journey of faith. Portions of the Response Book will correlate with the "Lesson Builders" section of the teachers guide. Recognizing the important role of parents and other adults in faith development, family time and mentoring suggestions also are included in each lesson.

Sample Lesson

Theme: This brief statement provides a focus for each lesson.

Objectives: Each lesson includes three to five developmentally and age-appropriate objectives addressed by the activity options included in each lesson.

Attention Please: Options in this section focus and engage participants on the theme of the lesson.

Together in His Name: This section provides options for opening worship.

Lesson Builders: This phase of the lesson has been designed to get students into the heart of the content portion of the lesson, emphasizing the "What does this mean?" in addition to the "What?" aspect of the portion of the catechism covered.

Here and Now: This part of the lesson will help students apply God's Word to the challenges they face in their daily lives. By God's grace, through the use of one or more of the *options* used in this phase of the lesson, a portion of Christian doctrine studies will come to life for the students.

Side by Side: Options in this section will help build a community around activities designed for an extended application of the theme of the lesson.

The Growing Family: Included in the Response Book, these options are provided for use by pastors and/or other leaders to involve parents in their young adult's Christian education as the theme of the lesson extends into the student's home.

With My Mentor: Also included the Response Book are these suggested activities for pastors or other leaders to use to facilitate an ongoing faith-growth experience between students and mentors to underscore, review, or enrich the theme of the lesson.

Closing Response: Lessons conclude with these worship options. By God's grace, the conclusion of each lesson will provide students with the peace that comes from knowing they are God's forgiven children, confident in the relationships they enjoy with God and with those others who belong to Him, and bold in the strength that comes in the assurance that Jesus, their best and most faithful friend, will go with them, to understand and strengthen and guide them in their lives.

Primary Resources

Pastors and teachers will draw upon the following resources to supplement My Christian Faith:

- *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (1991 Edition).
- *Faith Alive Bible.* Designed especially for young people, this ESV Bible is full of features to help readers discover the wonderful messages and promises in God's Word.
- Every word in the Bible is loaded with meaning for everyone, but these "4U" boxes will help students understand what certain passages mean for you personally. Check out the "4U" sections and discover God's Word "for you!"
- Cross Connection icons mark verses that point the reader to Jesus' death on the cross and to the forgiveness, life, and salvation Jesus earned for us there.
- Boxes containing Who, What, Where, When, and Why facts about God's Word and the story of our salvation from sin, death, and the devil can be found

throughout this Bible to help readers understand and appreciate the real people, places, and life in Bible times!

- Colorful pages throughout the Bible, between Testaments, and between books or chapters will help and encourage Bible students in their application of God's Word in their lives.
- Information is provided about the books in each section of the Bible. Each Bible book also has an introduction page to give readers the "big picture" on the contents of that book: author, date, main themes, and events.
- The Faith Alive Bible also includes a handy glossary to help readers learn the meanings of words in the Bible they may not know.
- Timelines and maps will enrich and inform students' study. The events recorded in God's Word are real. Timelines provide a visual history of God's unfolding plan of salvation. Colorful maps help readers pinpoint where these events took place and where those locations are found in the world today.

Auxiliary Materials

The following resources are also available from Concordia Publishing House:

- *Concordia's Complete Bible Handbook for Students* presents a survey of all 66 books of the Bible and the time between the Old and New Testaments. In addition to sum-

maries of major topics of the Bible, the handbook also includes articles, charts, diagrams, genealogies, illustrations, maps, outlines, overviews and timelines that provide additional detail for personal, group or class study.

- *God's Action Plan* is a one-year Bible survey that leads student to understand God's unfolding plan of salvation as revealed in Holy Scripture. The 30-session course includes Old Testament and New Testament stories.
- *Christian Character Connection* presents Bible-based principles and suggestions for dealing with conflict as God's forgiven people in Christ.
- *Confirmation Builder* is a web-based tool available via yearly subscription that provides a variety of teaching resources to help the Confirmation instructor prepare the lesson, present activities and devotions, and showcase videos that spark discussion. You can view more information at www.confirmationbuilder.com. The lessons contained in *My Christian Faith* reference corresponding lessons available in *Confirmation Builder* (see index at the back of this book).

1 The Christian Faith

Introduction

Theme

Forgiveness, salvation, and life with God now and forever are the gifts of God's grace given through Jesus Christ who is the only way to God.

Objectives

That by the power of the Spirit through the Word, students will

1. recognize that the object of the Christian faith is Jesus Christ who shows us truth and light and is the only way to life with God;
2. acknowledge that Christians view their world in a different way than the non-Christians around them because of their faith;
3. explain that God empowers His people with a faith that can impact every area of life including decision-making.

Attention Please

(Choose one)

The Name Game (10 minutes)

Materials: None

Don't assume that all the students know each other's names, especially if more than one school is represented in your class. This game helps break the self-consciousness that is a big part of "junior higher" emotional makeup. It might be good to use this activity at the beginning of your time together. Explain how people who believe in Jesus are united in their faith and are dependent on each other. The better we know one another, the more able we

are to learn, grow, and serve together.

Sit in a circle and designate one person to start the game. The first person shares their name by stating their name preceded by an adjective with the same initial that tells something about them, like "Smiling Sarah," or "Diligent Dave." The next person repeats the first name and adds their own: "Smiling Sarah and Tall Tim." The next person repeats all preceding names and adds their own until the last person says the names of everyone in the circle. Once you have completed the circle, ask for volunteers who think they can repeat the names and adjectives of everyone in the circle. Have a race and see who can do it the fastest, or try going around the circle in reverse order or with a different starting point. If your group is very large, divide into two or more circles.

People in the Darkness (5 minutes)

Materials: Bibles; flashlight or candle and match

Gather the group in a room that can be completely darkened, or dark enough that reading will not be possible. Announce the assignment: **Open your Bibles and read John 8:12.** After a short time of trying the impossible, flip on the flashlight or light the candle and find and read the passage together. Ask, **Can anyone find God without the help of the Savior Jesus, the Light of the world?**

Charting the Course (7 minutes)

Materials: Paper; pencils; a copy of directions to a local landmark or attraction in your region that is well known, but difficult to get to; Bibles

Divide the group into smaller groups of three. Ask the groups to write a set of direc-

tions from the church to the landmark or attraction that you have selected, without using GPS. Make sure it is a difficult enough spot to find that the youth will have at least a very difficult (if not impossible) time explaining how to get there. After about three minutes, ask the groups to share their directions.

When groups have shared their attempts, affirm what a great effort they gave, but that most or all of the groups are hopelessly lost. Read together John 14:6. Ask, **What would happen to a person who tried to find God without the help of Jesus?** Accept student responses affirming that Jesus did not merely show us the way to God, He Himself is the way—the only way to God.

Together in His Name

(Choose one or more)

Light and Salvation (5 minutes)

Materials: Bibles

Ask two volunteers to read Psalm 27, each taking one phrase or verse at a time. After each verse have the class respond with verse 1, "The Lord is my light and my salvation." Consider using a modern translation like *Psalms Now*. Make any comments on the passage you feel might be appropriate.

Beginning with Prayer (3 minutes)

Materials: Hymnals or songbooks

Sing a song about light and darkness, such as "Blindman" or a hymn like "'Come Follow Me,' Said Christ, the Lord" (*LSB*, 688). Pray, thanking God for sending Jesus to bring us forgiveness, new life, and salvation. Ask the Spirit's blessing upon your study. Conclude in Jesus' name.

Lesson Builders

(Do each of the following)

Lost and Found: Luke 15:8–10 (7 minutes)

Materials: Response Books; pencils

Gather the group into smaller groups of three. Initially, groups of two can be too uncomfortable for young teens because they

are too personal. Put extras into groups of four, but monitor them closely to be sure all four have a chance to share. Read the Scripture portion from Luke 15 printed in the Response Book and invite the groups to complete the exercise together. Monitor the discussion groups by walking quietly among them. Briefly recap the discussion in the large group. Affirm that Jesus always searches for the lost. His goal is to bring everyone into His kingdom by faith (1 Timothy 2:4).

The Shepherd and His Sheep

(10 minutes)

Materials: Response Books; poster paper or newsprint sheets at least 11" x 17"; pencils; markers (If you choose to do so, adapt the following, allowing students to use electronic media.)

Read the Scripture verses from John 10 together. Briefly discuss Jesus' description of Himself as the Shepherd and emphasize the cost of our salvation, the offering of His life for the sheep.

The poster process gives the opportunity to discuss the meaning of the Gospel message among themselves and to express its meaning visually. Distribute poster-making materials to the groups of three and have the groups complete the exercise as described. Remind groups that the posters will not be judged for their artistic quality. The poster making process is just another way to explain our understanding of the message. Allow time for each group or a few representative groups to share their posters with the whole class, or post them on the walls for the class to view for the next few weeks.

God's People Make Choices

(12 minutes)

Materials: Response Books; Bibles; pencils

Have students select a situation to study or assign one to each group. This exercise is again done best in small groups. If more than one group is working on a passage, have them give their reports together. Possible responses are as follows:

Joseph (Genesis 39:5–10) faced the choice of whether to sin sexually with his master's wife, named the suggested activity as a sin against God, refused, and although the immediate

consequence was imprisonment for a crime he didn't commit, Joseph's imprisonment ultimately put him in position to save his people.

Rahab (Joshua 2:1–7; Hebrews 11:31) had the choice of whether to turn the Israelite spies over to the king. By faith she hid the spies instead and was not killed along with the unbelievers of her city.

Daniel (Daniel 6:6–10) had the choice of whether to obey the king's edict not to worship the true God. Because of his faith, Daniel disobeyed the king's order, was arrested and thrown into a den of hungry lions. But the angel of God protected Daniel, and he was saved.

Andrew, Peter, James, and John (Matthew 4:18–22) faced the decision of whether to leave their fishing and follow Jesus. They showed their faith in Jesus and followed Him. As Jesus promised, He made them fishers of men.

Paul and Silas (Acts 16:22–28, 29–34) were imprisoned while preaching the Gospel. When God sent an earthquake they might perhaps have escaped, but they remained, shared the Good News with the jailer who believed and was baptized together with his whole family.

Touching Every Part (5 minutes)

Materials: Bibles; white "fun dough"; food coloring; (optional for retreat setting—ingredients for making bread)

Fun Dough can be prepared in advance using the following recipe:

- 2 cups flour
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup salt
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar

Combine ingredients in a saucepan, and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly. As dough heats, it will begin to stick together and form a ball (takes about three minutes). Cool. Store in a covered container.

Have a volunteer read the parable of the yeast found in Matthew 13:33. Explain how faith in Christ touches every part of a Christian's life, just as yeast impacts every part of a loaf of bread. Pass a small piece of fun dough, about the size of a golf ball, to each student. Scooping with a teaspoon works nicely. Have students roll their dough into a ball, and then shape it into a small cup using a thumb. Drop

one drop of food coloring into the dough and invite the students to work it through the dough until it is all evenly colored. Allow students to shape their dough into some shape that reminds them of the new life that is theirs in Christ.

Discuss briefly how faith touches every aspect of our life: our relationships, our careers, our citizenship, our finances. Close this portion of your session by previewing the rest of the course, *My Christian Faith*, and how it will help students apply their faith to every situation in life. If time permits in a retreat setting, bake bread using real yeast and watch the dough rise! Have a living parable based on the Matthew 13 passage.

Here and Now

(Choose one or more)

The Grace Game (5 minutes)

Materials: A list of extremely difficult Bible trivia questions; a small prize for each student, such as pencils or mints or stickers

Announce a contest based on the students' knowledge of the Bible. Let them know that, "The winner will receive a prize." Tell the students to raise their hand when they know the correct answer and ask some of the questions from this list or some of your own.

Who was the first convert on Cyprus? (Sergius Paulus, Acts 13:7, 12)

Name Moza's father. (Zimri, 1 Chronicles 8:36)

How many Reubenites were in the Exodus? (43,730, Numbers 26:7)

Junior high students will quickly become frustrated when it becomes clear that no one will be able to win the prize "by (their) own reason or strength." As soon as the class revolts and calls the game "unfair," end the game by giving a prize to everyone and announcing that everyone is a winner. Look up and read Ephesians 2:8–9 together and discuss the meaning of being saved by grace through faith. Draw the analogy between the game and God's free gift of heaven that is neither earned or deserved but which is given by grace.

How Different Can You Get?

(7 minutes)

Materials: Newsprint and markers or board and markers/chalk; or use your computer projection system; Response Books; Activity Sheets (one copy for each student)

Have students brainstorm a list of ways that a Christian's faith might show through in some real life situations and post your list on the newsprint. It may be necessary to get the discussion started by laying out some situations the students might face such as:

"How might a Christian's faith show ..."

"When you sit down with your friends for lunch at school?"

"When shopping with friends at the mall?"

"If a group of kids are thinking of going to a movie your parents have forbidden you to attend?"

"At Christmas time?"

"The first day at a new school?"

Allow time for students to complete the section of the Response Book titled, "Time for Reflection." Encourage them to record their sincere thoughts about the meaning of the Christian faith for their lives. Allow time for them to follow up writing a prayer in the space provided. Then distribute copies of the Activity Sheet. Encourage students to interview their parents using the questions on the sheet and to return the sheet complete with their parents' signatures at the next class session.

How Are We Doing, Class? (3 minutes)

Materials: None

If your group is ready for a bigger challenge, ask them to continue the discussion started above in "How Different Can You Get?" by looking in the mirror. Ask, "What evidence have you seen here in our first session together that there are Christians among us?" Try to draw out comments on behaviors like obedience, respect for others, gentleness, kindness, joy, and love. You might take this opportunity as instructor to affirm the behaviors that you are pleased with so far in your first session together.

Side by Side

(Choose one or more)

Lost Sheep (6 minutes)

Materials: None

Have a member of the class or another helper hide in a place that you have designated in your building or retreat area. Be sure to give the "lost sheep" enough of a head start before explaining any boundaries to the class and sending them on a mission to find the lost sheep. When the lost one is found and the group is reassembled, reflect again on the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 10:4–7 or Jesus' description of the Good Shepherd in John 10:1–18 and God's great gift of salvation.

Lost Treasures (10 minutes)

Materials: "Treasures" to hide—bookmarks, plastic Easter eggs, candies, hymnals, pennies or any items that work for your setting

This variation of the above activity will take more time. Send the class out to the area where you have hidden your "treasures" in advance. Tell them how many "treasures" are lost and encourage them to work together as a group to find as many as they can in the allotted time. When the group reassembles, discuss again the love of the Savior as revealed in the parable of the Lost Coin in Luke 15:8–10.

Closing Response

(Choose one)

I'm glad ... (3 minutes)

Materials: Bible

Read once again the parable of the Lost Coin in Luke 15:8–10. Ask the students to complete the following sentence: "I'm glad that God found me because ..." Close with a prayer that summarizes student responses.

"I Have Been Bought" (3 minutes)

Materials: Songbooks or hymnals

Close by singing, "I Have Been Bought," or "Amazing Grace" (LSB, 744).

2 Priority One

The First Commandment (Catechism Questions 19–23)

Theme

The triune God is the one true God. He is our loving Father, the giver of all we are and have. Working through God's Word, His Spirit enables us to dedicate our lives to Him who died for us and rose again.

Objectives

That by the power of the Spirit through the Word, students will

1. recognize the privilege we have to love and serve God above all else in gratitude for all He has given us through Christ Jesus;
2. briefly explain what Lutheran Christians believe and teach;
3. demonstrate an ongoing desire to fear, love, and trust in God above all things in spite of the opposition they may face.

Attention Please

(Choose one)

Coming Together (7 minutes)

Materials: Markers; pieces of paper (one for each group)

Invite students to raise their hands to indicate whether they were born in the community in which they now live; have brown eyes; like pizza; have a dog for a pet; know more than three telephone numbers by memory; have first cousins living in another state; (choose other items to fit the group).

Comment on the number of things the class members have in common. Divide the

class into groups of three or four. Provide each group with a piece of paper and a marker. Ask each group to list three additional things they have in common. After several minutes call everyone back together. Invite groups to share the things they listed. Point out that each of us has the same Savior who died to earn forgiveness, life, and salvation for us. We are members of the same church.

Circling Together (5 minutes)

Materials: None

As a variation of the previous activity, have students sit on their chairs in a circle. Ask them to follow directions similar to those following. Point out that if a student is already occupying the seat he or she is asked to sit in, they should sit on that student's lap. **Move one seat to the right if you have a brother. Move one seat to the left if you have brown eyes. Move two seats to the right if you have moved to a different house since you were in the first grade.** Process as with the preceding activity.

How Do You Spell "Lutheran"? (7 minutes)

Materials: Two index cards, each containing the word "Lutheran" printed vertically on the left side—one letter to each line; two pens or pencils

Divide the class into two groups. Ask each group to appoint a recorder. Tell students that each group will have three minutes to list as many things as they can find in the church that begin with each letter of the word *Lutheran*. After three minutes, collect the cards and proclaim the group with the most items listed as

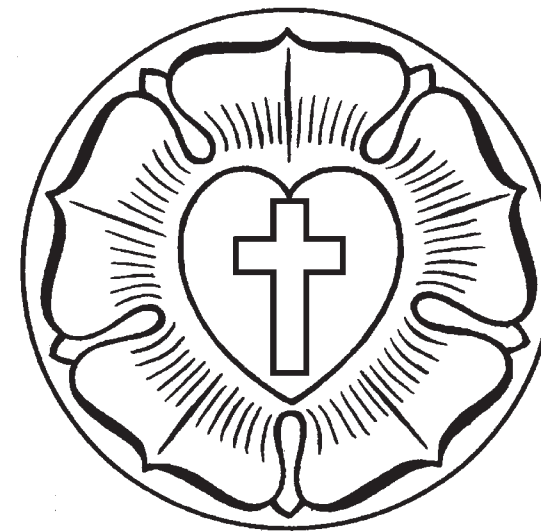
the winner. Use the items they listed to initiate a brief reflection on the blessings of belonging to your church. Mention that the true church is invisible—all who trust in Jesus as their Savior are members of it.

Together in His Name

(Choose one)

A Symbol of the Christian Faith (7 minutes)

Materials: A black cross, a red heart, a white rose, a sky-blue circle, a gold circle—(each cut from paper of a size so as to fit one on top of the other); a 8½" × 11" piece of transparent contact paper; hymnals



To each of five volunteers, hand one of the listed items, which in combination form Luther's Coat of Arms. Tell volunteers that the cross of Christ is the center of the Christian religion, the red heart stands for the love of God, the white rose stands for the holiness that is ours in Christ, the sky-blue background represents the joy of our salvation and the new life in Christ that began when we came to faith, the gold symbolizes our heavenly home where by faith we will enjoy perfect happiness in the presence of our Savior. Invite volunteers who have the parts to the coat of arms—beginning with the cross and continuing to the gold circle—to come to the front of the class and place their part of the coat of arms onto the sticky side of the contact paper. As they do,

have them tell what each part (and the aspect of the Christian faith it represents) means to them. Sing all or a portion of "Abide with Me" and with a short prayer invite God's blessing upon your lesson.

Centered in Jesus (7 minutes)

Materials: Bibles

Mention to the group that God's Word is centered in Jesus. Invite volunteers to read Luke 24:13–27 aloud to the class, taking turns. Ask students, **What does God's Word tell us about Jesus?** Affirm answers that identify Jesus as the Son of God born in human form who lived a perfect life and died an atoning death and rose again for all people. **What do each of these messages about Jesus mean for your life?** Accept student responses. Lead the group in a prayer asking the Spirit's blessing upon the lesson.

Lesson Builders

(Do each of the following)

By Faith We Belong to God (10 minutes)

Materials: Catechisms; pencils; Response Books; paper

Write the following words on the board, computer screen, or on a large sheet of newsprint; or use your computer projection system: Old Testament, New Testament, verbal inspiration, inerrancy, Hebrew and Aramaic, Greek, Law, Gospel, Martin Luther, 1529, catechism, Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, Confession, and the Sacrament of the Altar. Divide your class into three or four groups. Then divide the above terms among the groups. Allow several minutes for the groups to study pages 47–52 of the catechism to learn the relevance of each for our study of Christian doctrine. Then invite each group to present what they have learned about the terms to the whole class.

Direct students to this section in their Response Books. Invite a student to read the verses from John 20 aloud to the class. Review with the group the account of Thomas' doubting of the Savior's resurrection and his subse-

quent confession of faith. Affirm Jesus as the central figure of the Bible and that the Bible was written so that through it the Holy Spirit might bring people to faith.

What Do We Believe? (7 minutes)

Materials: Response Books; pencils

Invite students to read this article and to write their individual responses in the space provided. Invite volunteers to share their responses with the whole group. Affirm those identifying Lutherans as those who believe, as Luther did, that according to the teachings of God's Word, we are saved solely by God's grace, through faith in Christ Jesus and that God's Holy Spirit brings us to—and sustains us in—the saving faith as He works through the means of grace—God's Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

Ask students to share examples of when they may have found themselves in a situation similar to that of these two boys.

Putting God First (5 minutes)

Materials: Response Books; pencils; catechisms; copies of the Activity Sheet (one for each student)

Refer students to the First Commandment printed in the margin of the Response Book. Distribute copies of the Activity Sheet to each student. Ask students to work in pairs or triads to complete the activity. Allow the groups to share their examples. Encourage students to provide not only biblical examples, such as those included in the catechism, but also contemporary examples. Point out that God works in us the desire to put God first in our lives as a grateful response to Him for His goodness in sending Jesus to be our Savior.

Two Young Lives (10 minutes)

Materials: Response Books; pencils

Invite one volunteer to read aloud the story of Ama and another volunteer to read the story of Brian. Continue by allowing several minutes for the students to respond to the questions in the "For Reflection" section. Briefly discuss their responses as a whole group. The following comments may be helpful.

1. Ama's life evidences a confident, vibrant reliance on Jesus and fellowship with others

who love and trust in Him. Brian's life has little evidence of faith, despite the freedoms and other privileges he enjoys.

2. During times of persecution, Christians band together to support and encourage one another with God's Word and promises. God sometimes works mightily in people's lives during times of persecution to help them identify and value those things of eternal value and worth.

3. Invite but do not force anyone to share.

God Helps Us to Put Him First (10 minutes)

Materials: Response Books; pencils; appliance that receives power through an electric cord

Invite a volunteer to read the article about Martin Luther aloud to the group.

Ask students to recall an occasion when they were forced to take an unpopular stand. Allow time for students to share. Follow up with, **How did you handle the situation?** Affirm student responses.

Hold up the electric appliance you have brought to class. Say, **Let this appliance represent you. Let the cord through which the appliance receives electrical power represent the means through which God empowers you to live a faith-filled life dedicated to Him. Through what means does God empower you?** Help students discover through a discussion of their answers that God strengthens us—as He did Martin Luther—to be bold and courageous in our faith through the Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper (the means of grace).

Allow time for students to write their responses in the journal, or encourage them to complete their journal entries before the next session.

Here and Now

(Choose one or more)

Acting It Out (10 minutes)

Materials: None

Allow students to work in groups to develop and act out short skits illustrating "keeping and disobeying the First Commandment" as con-

temporary versions or takeoffs of the following biblical examples:

1. David trusted in the Lord when he fought against Goliath (1 Samuel 17:37, 46–47).

2. The rich man thought more of costly clothes and good food than of God (Luke 16:19–31).

3. Abram left his country and relatives to go where the Lord sent him, trusting in the Lord to take care of him (Genesis 12:1–8).

4. The people building the Tower of Babel considered their achievements more important than God (Genesis 11:1–9).

5. Goliath trusted in his size and physical strength (1 Samuel 17).

6. The three men in the fiery furnace glorified God rather than the king (Daniel 3).

7. Eli honored his sons more than God (1 Samuel 2:12–34).

8. Daniel trusted God and refused to obey the king's edict (Daniel 6).

9. Peter feared punishment more than God (Matthew 26:69–75).

Whom Do You Serve? (10 minutes)

Materials: Newsprint; pictures from magazines or downloaded from the web; scissors; glue; markers

Allow students to work in groups to cut pictures from old magazines to make posters illustrating ways in which we, as God's people, put Him first in our lives. For example, a poster showing pictures of cars, sporting events, etc., could bear the message, "I thank God for His goodness to me! or a nature scene could carry the caption, "Wherever I am, I see God's the greatest!" Point out that the motivation to fear, love, and trust in God above all else comes only as the Holy Spirit works in our hearts the saving faith in Him who lived, died, and rose again for us.

To the Glory of God (7 minutes)

Materials: Paper; pens or pencils

Point out that God has given us Christian friends to support and encourage us in our Christian life. Tell participants that this activity will provide an opportunity for them to encourage one another. Ask students to work in pairs. Tell students to each list five activities they may do on a given day. Then ask students

to trade lists with their partners. The partner's task will be to note beside each item on the list how that activity could be done to the glory of God. Suggest that students add a word of encouragement at the end, such as, "May God bless you as He leads you in your Christian life." After this portion of the activity is complete, sheets may be returned to their owners.

Side by Side

(Choose one)

We, Contrary (5 minutes)

Materials: None

Tell the class that in order to play this game, they will need to do the opposite of whatever you tell them. Anyone caught not doing the opposite must sit down. Call out five or so commands. Use opposites such as up-down, right-left in your instructions. Count as winners all who did the opposite of what they were told.

Mention that sometimes in our Spirit-motivated dedication to following God we may feel like we are thinking, talking, and acting the opposite of those around us. Encourage the students during times such as these to thank God for the courage and strength He provides them to live their lives for Him who died for them and rose again.

That Perfect Score (10 minutes)

Materials: Soccer, rubber playground, or tennis balls; chairs; wastebaskets

Set up one or several stations where students will have five attempts to stand at a distance of 10 feet and bounce the ball over the chair and into the basket. (Make the task difficult enough that no one will be able to score a perfect 5.) When everyone has had a chance, ask how many achieved a perfect score.

Mention that if we could keep the First Commandment perfectly, in so doing, we would keep them all. But because of our sinful nature, none of us is able to keep this or any commandment perfectly. Loving us in spite of our sinfulness, God sent Jesus. He kept the First and all others commandments perfectly in our place. Not only that, He died in our place and rose again to live forever as our helper and friend.

Closing Response

(Choose one)

Together in Prayer (4 minutes)

Materials: Paper; pencils

Invite participants to write a short prayer telling God whatever is on their minds. Collect papers. Then lead the group in prayer, reading what students have written. Add words of praise and petitions of your own. Close the prayer in Jesus' name.

God Is Our Refuge and Strength

(4 minutes)

Materials: Hymnals

Close this session with the reading or singing of Luther's great hymn of the Reformation, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (LSB, 656).

3 A Name and Time for God

The Second Commandment The Third Commandment

(Catechism Questions 24–47)

Theme

God commands, invites, and equips His people to respect His Name and Word.

Objectives

That by the power of the Spirit through the Word, students will

1. acknowledge God's goodness and love in calling His people to a proper regard for His name and to true worship;
2. recognize their failures to use God's name reverently and worship God "in Spirit and in truth;"
3. rejoice in the forgiveness offered and bestowed in Jesus' death and resurrection, and the strength He gives to love and worship God.

Attention Please

(Choose one or more)

My Name Is (5 minutes)

Materials: Note cards (medium or large); pens/pencils

Distribute note cards and pens/pencils. Ask students to write down their full, given name (James Charles Smith), to share aloud their names, and if possible, to tell why they were given their first and middle names. (Reasons may include the name was popular when they were born, someone else in the family has the same name, a middle name may be a last name from some other part of the family tree, etc.).

Invite the students to reflect upon their names for a minute. Ask, **How does a name set you apart? Does your name fit your personality and identity? Why or why not?**

On the back side of the note card, ask students to write a new name that seems appropriate for their personality, background, interests, etc. (Names could range from Gaming Guru to Soccer Sam). Ask, **Why did you choose this name to represent yourself? What significance do you want to communicate with your new name?** After each student has shared, ask the class, **Are you surprised at any of the new names given by students? Why or why not?**

God has revealed His name in the Bible, and all the titles and descriptions in the Bible help us to understand God's nature and will. As part of today's session, students will explore the Second Commandment as God's invitation to call upon His name and to rejoice in His saving purpose in Christ.

The Name Game: An Acrostic (5 minutes)

Materials: Note cards; markers

Have each student write his or her full first name vertically on the left side of a note card (no abbreviations or nicknames). Then have each person write an appropriate word, for each letter on the note card, to reveal something about his or her personality and interests. After students have completed the acronym, invite everyone to share their word choices and to explain the significance of each word.