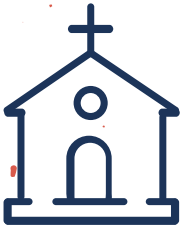
CONFIRM CONFIRM CONFIRM

the story of God



RESURRECTION STUDENTS

MENTOR GUIDE

[Mentor Curriculum Guide]

// DEAR CONFIRMATION MENTOR,

We are so grateful you've agreed to partner with us in ministry as we walk through this important program in the lives of students. It can't be overstated—this is a big step! You've agreed to be a mentor, friend, coach and encourager to each of the students in your group, and we couldn't do it without you.

Contained in these pages are extra strategies and behind the scenes tips that will help you in each Confirmation session. Use the student book for most of what you need like discussion questions and activities. You might find there is insight you need, not included in the student book. This is where you will find those things.

Although Confirmation can be a pivotal moment in a student's life, sometimes a student might decide that they are not yet ready to participate in the Confirmation ceremony—and that's okay. Our job first and foremost is to walk alongside students through this journey whether they get confirmed or not. A win for a you as a mentor is building solid and trustworthy relationships with the students, helping them grow in knowledge and understanding of how their participation in the church can be a reflection of what God intends. The activities we do, the videos we watch, the questions we ask and answer, they are all geared toward that win.

We are here to support and encourage you throughout this journey. If you have questions, need supplies, or just need someone to vent to, please seek out student ministry staff! We want to support you well!

As we all point these students to the ceremony that will culminate this school year, know that you are making an impact. You are helping to lay a vital foundation in the spiritual lives of these students. We are praying for you!

"But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life. All honor and glory to God forever and ever! He is the eternal King, the unseen one who never dies; he alone is God. Amen."
1 Timothy 1:16-17 (NLT)

May God bless you and keep you!

[The Purpose of Resurrection]

The Confirm curriculum is fashioned around the church's purpose. Everything the church does points to some element of this statement.

Our Purpose is to build a Christian community where non-religious and nominally religious people are becoming deeply committed Christians.

The curriculum is meant to be the bridge where students choose to go from non or nominally religious people to committed Christians. While this is sometimes a life-long process, we hope that Confirmation gives students an opportunity to see themselves as firmly in the Story of God.

[Student Ministry Statement]

Students developed a statement that describes how they intend to live into the Resurrection purpose. It says this:

Resurrection Students will create a safe, authentic and inclusive community where everyone belongs and has the opportunity to choose to grow and live out their faith.

Our goal as students, mentors and parents is to continue to work towards creating a place where "students belong so they can choose to grow and live out their faith." It isn't always easy and formulaic. But we believe if we keep the Resurrection purpose and the Student Ministry statement in mind when we are interacting with students, planning programs and lessons, then we will move closer to these ideals.

[Desired Outcomes]

When a student graduates from student ministry and moves out into the world, we want them to understand the complexities of their faith as differentiated from others. We want them to express their faith in meaningful and empathic ways, providing tangible leadership to others. And we want them to be in non-judgmental caring relationships with their peers and mentors. We break this down into specific objectives by age groupings. The Confirmation Discipleship Group will help students grow in the following ways:

In their Expression

- Become confident and comfortable that the church is their space they want to share by inviting their friends and attending worship and programs regularly.
- Extend their student ministry experience to overnight outings like serve trips and retreats.
- Experience regional serve trips and local serve experiences that give them agency.

- Understand the importance of giving to others by using their time, talents, and resources to serve in the church and outside of the church.
- Accept all people including LGBTQ+, not discriminating on the basis of gender, race or sexual orientation.

In Their Faith

- Develop basic biblical literacy (genre and context) and understand the way the Bible narrative flows. This includes knowing Jesus and why his life matters.
- Understand justifying grace, the moment where they declare their faith their own. This extends to appreciating the means by which they experience grace and the Wesleyan edict to do good, cause no harm and love God.
- Learn the rhythm of spiritual practices and develop some as a habit.
- Begin to identify spiritual gifts by becoming comfortable in naming and using them.
- Become comfortable with questions and conversations about faith.
- Understand the church calendar (Lent, Advent, Easter, etc.).
- Apply faith in meaningful ways.
- Understand the responsibility to be stewards of God's creation.

In their Relationships

- Solidly connect with a Discipleship Group, committing to other students and mentors for the balance of high school.
- Invite friends into deeper experiences.
- Connect with a mentor.
- Begin having authentic conversations about hard things around issues of disconcertment and decision making.
- Appreciate mental health issues and strategies for themselves and others.

[How Does Curriculum Do These Things?]

It doesn't. Caring mentors do. The subject isn't math or history or reading or writing. The subject is the student. The curriculum will open doors that will reveal who students are and will allow them to explore who they are becoming. This doesn't mean we don't pay attention to God or Jesus's life, sacrifice and resurrection. In fact, we allow the student to view themselves through all of these lenses.

Confirmation is a school year-long Discipleship Group designed for students entering 8th through 12th grade. Students will be encouraged to understand the role of the church in living out the life and teachings of Jesus and how they might choose to be part of the church in a meaningful way.

When they finish Confirmation, we want to encourage students to put their faith in action in tangible ways. We see students entering high school as primed to begin to take on leadership roles in their schools, the church and their other activities. Our Lead Discipleship Group for High School students prepares them for this next step in their faith journey. Notice leadership potential in your students this year and point them to this next step.

Weekly Session Overview

Each session will have a similar flow and rhythm to what is detailed below.

Session Overview

The session overview is a more detailed explanation for the mentor of the session. This will give background and explain why this session is important.

Main Point

Each session begins with a short overview so students will be able to focus on a singular point.

Prayer

Each time the group meets, open and close in prayer. Along with your opening prayer, recite the Apostles' Creed together. By the time of the Confirmation Ceremony, students should have the Apostles' Creed memorized so that you can say it without prompting during the ceremony.

Review and Connect

This section will have some question prompts that will allow you to review with students what was covered in the previous session.

Video Outline

This section will outline the video provided on YouTube. You can review the video ahead of the session or use the outline to create your own talking points.

Activity

There will be at least one activity and sometimes a choice from two activities at the start of the session. You can substitute another activity, or you can modify one and that's totally fine!

Teaching Topics

This section will explain most of what will be discussed each session. There may background information and other resources to help you lead discussion about the topic.

Bible Connection

Each week, there will be at least one Bible connection that the group will read together. Encourage students to bring their Bible so they can read along, highlight or underline, and take notes!

Discuss

Every session includes discussion questions. Feel free to modify the questions or ask additional follow up questions. The important thing is to have a conversation about the teaching topics section and the Bible connection section. Take notes as students answer questions. You will be able to reference it later, especially if a student is struggling.

Challenge

Every session includes a challenge for the upcoming week. You may be able to complete some challenges as a group if you have time, but most of them are things to do during the upcoming week. Be sure to check the challenge each week beforehand to determine if it can be done together as a group or if it is better suited for being done at home during the week.

Joys, Concerns, and Prayer

Each week, end by sharing joys and concerns as a group, then close with the Lord's Prayer. Share joys first and concerns second. Ask for someone in the group to pray. Rotate it so that everyone gets a turn sometime during the year. This sharing ritual is an important way to bring people together in community and lift prayers up to God together. It invites your students in small group to voice what is happening in their lives and hearts, and helps listeners understand who needs support and also celebrate how God is showing up in each other's lives. Write each student's name and a brief note on what they share. Utilize it as reference during the week as you pray. You can even send messages during the week letting students know you are praying for them and for what they shared.

For Extra Study

Each week, additional scripture relating to the topic of conversation will be here. The verses provide further understanding and may add complexity and clarity to what was discussed.

CLASSROOM Management Tips

RESURRECTION STUDENTS

- Call everyone by their name. Ask when you forget.
  - Know something about everyone – their interests, sports, etc. Take notes if it helps you remember. Refer to what you know about them on occasion in group and personal conversation.
  - Make eye contact. Never turn your back on your students.
- Sit in a circle, if possible. Make sure the adults are evenly distributed.
- Sit close (or next to) students that have the most difficult time behaving. Conversely, always sit across from the best behaved and engaged students.
- Affirm and amplify good behavior and engagement often. Deal with bad behavior and lack of engagement more quietly.
- Use the answers students give in forming your next question to communicate you are hearing what they are saying.
- Keep your questions simple and to the point, attempting to draw on a student's own experience to frame the question.
- Only ask one question at a time.
- Use fidget tools to keep the brains of active students busy. This will help them focus on what you and others are saying.
- Be sure to keep the session moving by using various types of activities and discussion. Don't stay on any one activity or discussion for longer than 15 minutes.
- Always ask for help. Staff and other mentors may have strategies that may address exactly what you need.

CONFIRMATION sessions

Unless otherwise noted, Confirmation classes will meet weekly. The schedule is subject to change. Check with your location or Student Ministries director about Confirmation session times and meeting places.

UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION | PG 11
Session 1: Parent Meeting:
Check Location for Meeting Time and Details
Session 2: Welcome to Confirmation – Intro Apostles' Creed
Session 3: Meet Your Bible

UNIT 2 GOD THE FATHER | PG 39
Session 1: The Old Testament
Session 2: The Story of God
Session 3: Relationship Broken
Session 4: Prayer: Talking with God –Lord's Prayer

UNIT 3 GOD THE SON | PG 73
Session 1: The New Testament
Session 2: Jesus: God With Us
Session 3: Relationship Restored
Session 4: The Promise of the Resurrection

UNIT 4 GOD AS HOLY SPIRIT | PG 103
Session 1: The Holy Trinity – Spiritual Gifts Assessment
Seasonal: Advent and Christmas
Session 2: Partnering with God's Mission
Session 3: What's Yet to Come

UNIT 5 THE CHURCH | PG 135
Session 1: What is the Church?
Session 2: The United Methodist Church
Session 3: What is Resurrection UMC?
Session 4: Visit another Church
Seasonal: Lent and the Church Calendar
Session 5: John Wesley's General Rules and Doctrine
Session 6: John Wesley's Guidance
Session 7: Abrahamic Faiths and Christian Denominations

UNIT 6 THE JOURNEY CONTINUES | PG 193
Session 1: Review and Conversation with Mentors
Session 2: Inviting Others into God's Story
Session 3: What's Next?
Confirmation Weekend

CONFIRMATION expectations

You have made an important commitment to explore Christian faith more intentionally. We want you to get the most out of the experience. In Adam Hamilton's book "The Walk" he notes five essentials in faith: Worship, Study, Serve, Give and Share. Below are our expectations of you as you walk through these five essentials. You will want to keep track of your progress here as well. By the way, Share isn't listed here because it will become a natural result of the culmination of your experience.

Worship **resurrection.church/next**

Attending worship is important. During your time in Confirmation, we expect that you will attend **in-person** worship 12 or more times. Be sure to register when you attend. In addition, write the dates you attend below and list the sermon topic for the week. We also ask that you visit another United Methodist Church at least once during our confirmation season. We encourage confirmation groups to go together if possible.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.
11.
12.

Which other United Methodist Church did you attend? _____ date _____

Baptism **resurrection.church/baptisms**

All confirmation participants must be baptized before they can be confirmed. If you have not been baptized, please arrange your baptism or connect with your Student Ministries Staff or location pastor. Be sure to plan to be baptized no later than one month before the Confirmation ceremony.

When were you or do you plan to be baptized?

_____

Serve in Worship **resurrection.church/confirmationserve**

As an additional way to be a part of the church and participate in worship, we ask all confirmands to serve in worship as a Greeter, Usher, or in another serving capacity at least three times during their time in Confirmation. Sign up a few weeks in advance and show up on time to serve.

What did you do when you served in worship?

Service _____ date _____

Service _____ date _____

Service _____ date _____

Study **resurrection.church/students**

Our weekly confirmation sessions are one of the most important parts of the program! Come prepared to grow alongside your small group as you dig into the Bible and learn more about our Christian faith and the Church. Each week, you will need to bring your Bible, Confirmation Journal, and a pen or pencil.

All absences should be made up on your own time by watching the video and answering the coinciding questions to be sure you understand the conversation you will have missed. We want you there as much as possible. So, you are only allotted six total absences that will need to be made-up.

To be confirmed, you must also participate in one of the retreats either in the Fall or Spring and attend the Confirmation Ceremony. As a Confirmation Student, you will get $10 off your retreat experience.

Which retreat are you attending? _____

Serve **resurrection.church/local**

Serving others in big and small ways is a part of how we can share the love of Jesus with the world. **We ask all Confirmation students to participate in at least one service project** (food pantry, thrift store, etc.) **during their time in confirmation**. You can complete this service project on your own, through a student ministries service project, a church sponsored service project, or with a service project coordinated by your small group. Service projects are often a highlight for confirmation students and their parents too!

What service project did you do? _____ date _____

Give **resurrection.church/give**

One of the five essential practices is to give. Throughout confirmation, consider the ways you will give to the church as a response to your commitment to follow Jesus. Will you give 10% of your income (this is called tithing)? Will you give monthly or weekly? Will you give your time by serving in one of the church ministry areas? Will you give your talent by doing what you love or are good at? Your commitment of your time, talents, and treasure, along with the gifts from many others, allows your church to do incredible work in your community and world.
What, how much, and how often do you plan to give?

OTHER WAYS TO get involved

Youth Group: Wednesday Evenings

Youth Group is a time for faith, fun, friends, and food. Invite a friend and join us for high-energy games, worship, and a message from one of the Student Ministries staff members or a student! Check your location for Youth Group meeting times and details.

Discipleship Groups: Sunday Mornings

You are already in a Discipleship Group. That's what Confirmation is. When you complete this year, the next Discipleship Group is Lead. Enhance your leadership skills by discovering how God made you to lead in all aspects of your life. You may be surprised by what you discover. You will certainly be encouraged! You are a leader whether you know it or not.

Get Ready for High School with these events!

Converge – Our high school conference in February is open to 8th grade students, too! Get a head start on all things high school, have fun and continue growing in your faith!

Lead KC – Join high school students in planning next school year for youth group, retreats and events. Bring all of your good ideas and energy to this one-day March/April event.

Stay Connected to Resurrection Students

- Resurrection Student Ministries
- @rs.leawoodms | @rs.leawoodhs | @rs.overlandpark | @students.west | @rs.bluesprings | @rs.downtown | @rs.leessummit
- Weekly Email Newsletter: resurrection.church/enews

FOR OTHER STUDENT EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES, VISIT RESURRECTION.CHURCH/STUDENTS

UNIT 1

Unit 1: Introduction

Session 1: Parent Meeting
Session 2: Welcome to Confirmation – Intro Apostles' Creed
Session 3: Meet Your Bible

>> UNIT OVERVIEW

These first three weeks will be an opportunity to share the process of confirmation while providing an overview to the curriculum. The first session is one for parents and students to be oriented. The second session will be the first session where mentors will meet their students.

The Apostles' Creed will be the foundation for teaching confirmation. Each unit is organized to follow a part of the creed and expand on the specific statement that will be memorized throughout the year.

THE APOSTLES' Creed

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;
the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of God the
Father Almighty;
from thence, he shall come to judge the
quick 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.

THE LORD'S Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us, not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever.
Amen.

Matthew 6:9-13

THE WESLEY Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed for you or laid aside for you,
exalted for you or brought low for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to
your pleasure and disposal.

And now, glorious and blessed God, Father,
Son, and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours.
So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven.
Amen.

BOOKS OF THE Bible Overview

Finally, it will be important for students to understand the books of the Bible and why they are in the order they appear in our Bible. This overview will be helpful as a reference.

Summaries resourced from Overview Bible (https://overviewbible.com/books-of-the-bible/)

Old Testament

Genesis
Genesis answers two big questions: "How did God's relationship with the world begin?" and "Where did the nation of Israel come from?"

Exodus
God ends Israel's enslavement in Egypt and then enters into a special relationship with them.

Leviticus
God gives Israel instructions for how to worship God.

Numbers
Israel doesn't trust and obey God and wanders in the wilderness for 40 years.

Deuteronomy
Moses gives Israel instructions (in some ways, a recap of the laws in Exodus–Numbers) for how to love and obey God in the Promised Land.

Joshua
Joshua (Israel's new leader) leads Israel to conquer the Promised land, then gives out land as territories to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Judges
Israel experiences times of closeness and distance with God over and over again. This book shares these stories during a time when Israel was led by "Judges."

Ruth
A story of two widows that lose everything but stick together and eventually find hope. Their stories lead to the eventual birth of King David.

1st Samuel
The Nation of Israel demands that God give them a king and it doesn't work out too well.

2nd Samuel
The story of David, a complicated, man who loved and served God and became the king of Israel. He made many harmful choices as king while still trying to be a man after God's own heart,

1st Kings
The kingdom of Israel has a time of peace and prosperity under King Solomon (David's Son), but afterward splits, and the two different lines of kings that follow end up turning away from God.

2nd Kings
Both kingdoms ignore God and the messages from God's prophets, until they both fall captive to other empires in the world.

1st Chronicles
This is a brief history of Israel from Adam to David, culminating with David commissioning the temple of God in Jerusalem.

2nd Chronicles
David's son Solomon builds the temple, but after centuries of rejecting God, the southern Israelites are taken captive by the Babylonians who destroy the Israelite's temple.

Ezra
The Israelites rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, and a scribe named Ezra teaches the people to once again obey God's laws.

Nehemiah
The city of Jerusalem lies in ruins, so Nehemiah helps rebuilds the wall around the city.

Esther
Esther becomes the queen of a foreign nation. Meanwhile, someone hatches a genocidal plot to bring about Israel's extinction, and Esther must face the emperor to ask for help.

Job
Evil and tragedy attack a righteous man named Job, and Job and his friends argue about why terrible things are happening to him.

Psalms
A collection of 150 songs—some that Israel sang to God (and to each other)—kind of like a hymnal for the ancient Israelites. The lyrics tackle topics like gratitude, anger, depression, and prayers to God.

Proverbs
A collection of sayings written to help people make wise decisions that bring about justice.

Ecclesiastes
A philosophical exploration of the meaning of life—with a surprisingly nihilistic tone for the Bible.

Song of Solomon
A collection of love songs celebrating love, desire, and marriage.

Isaiah
God sends the prophet Isaiah with a message to warn Israel of future judgment—but also to tell them about a coming king and servant who will save everyone from that judgment and "bear the sins of many."

Jeremiah
God sends a prophet with a message to warn Israel about the coming Babylonian captivity, but they don't take the news very well.

Lamentations
A collection of songs and sayings expressing grief and sadness, lamenting the fall of Jerusalem after the Babylonian attacks.

Ezekiel
God chooses a man to speak on behalf of God to Israel, to tell them the error of their ways and teach them justice: Ezekiel.

Daniel
Daniel becomes a high-ranking wise man in the Babylonian and Persian empires and has prophetic visions concerning Israel's future.

Hosea
Hosea is told to marry a prostitute who leaves him, and he must bring her back: a picture of God's relationship with Israel.

Joel
God sends a plague of locusts to Judge Israel, but God's judgment on the surrounding nations is also coming,

Amos
A shepherd named Amos preaches against the injustice of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Obadiah
Obadiah warns the neighboring nation of Edom that they will be judged for plundering Jerusalem.

Jonah
A disobedient prophet runs from God, is swallowed by a large fish, and then finally preaches God's message to the city of Nineveh.

Micah
Micah confronts the leaders of Israel and Judah regarding their injustice, and prophesies that one day the Lord will rule in perfect justice.

Nahum
Nahum foretells of God's judgment on Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.

Habakkuk
Habakkuk pleads with God to stop the injustice and violence in Judah but is surprised to find that God will use the even more violent Babylonians to do so.

Zephaniah
God warns that Israel and the surrounding nations will be judged, but also that they will be restored in peace and justice.

Haggai
The people have abandoned the work of restoring God's temple in Jerusalem, and so Haggai gives them a talking to.

Zechariah
The prophet Zechariah calls Israel to return to God, and records prophetic visions that show what's happening behind the scenes.

Malachi
God has been faithful to Israel, but they continue to live disconnected from God—so God sends Malachi to call them out.

New Testament

Matthew
This is Matthew's account of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, focusing on Jesus' role as the true king of the Jews.

Mark
This is Mark's brief account of Jesus' earthly ministry highlights Jesus' authority and servanthood.

Luke
Luke writes the most thorough account of Jesus' life, pulling together eyewitness testimonies to tell the full story of Jesus.

John
John lists stories of signs and miracles with the hope that readers will believe in Jesus.

Acts
Jesus returns to God the Father, sends the Holy Spirit to come to the church, and the gospel of Jesus spreads throughout the world.

Romans
Paul summarizes how the gospel of Jesus works in a letter to the churches at Rome, where he plans to visit.

1st Corinthians
Paul writes a disciplinary letter to a fractured church in Corinth and answers some questions that they've had about how Christians should behave.

2nd Corinthians
Paul writes a letter of reconciliation to the church at Corinth and clears up some concerns that they have.

Galatians
Paul hears that the Galatian churches have been led to think that salvation comes from the law of Moses and writes a (rather heated) letter telling them where the false teachers have it wrong.

Ephesians
Paul writes to the church at Ephesus about how to walk in grace, peace, and love.

Philippians
An encouraging letter to the church of Philippi from Paul, telling them how to have joy in Christ.

Colossians
Paul writes the church at Colossae a letter about who they are in Christ, and how to walk in Christ.

1st Thessalonians
Paul has heard a good report on the church at Thessalonica and encourages them to keep excelling in faith, hope, and love.

2nd Thessalonians
Paul instructs the Thessalonians on how to stand firm until Jesus returns.

1st Timothy
Paul gives his protégé Timothy instruction on how to lead a church as a godly example.

2nd Timothy
Paul is nearing the end of his life and encourages Timothy to continue preaching God's Word.

Titus
Paul advises Titus on how to lead orderly, counter-cultural churches on the island of Crete.

Philemon
Paul strongly recommends that Philemon accept his runaway slave as a brother, and not as a slave anymore.

Hebrews
A letter encouraging Christians to cling to Christ despite persecution, because Christ is greater.

James
A letter telling Christians to live in ways that demonstrate their faith in action.

1st Peter
Peter writes to Christians who are being persecuted, encouraging them to testify to the truth about Jesus and live accordingly.

2nd Peter
Peter writes a letter reminding Christians about the truth of Jesus and warning them that false teachers will come.

1st John
John writes a letter to Christians about keeping Jesus' commands, loving one another, and important things they should know.

2nd John
A very brief letter about walking in truth, love, and obedience.

3rd John
An even shorter letter about Christian fellowship.

Jude
A letter encouraging Christians to contend for the faith in the face of ungodliness.

Revelation
John sees visions from God of things from the past, present, and future.

Unit 1 // Session 1

Session Overview

Refer to Page 18 in the Student Journal.

Parents/Guardians have many different perspectives regarding confirmation. Some will have grown up in the church, been through confirmation themselves and fully understand why confirmation is important. Some will not have that background. Regardless, every parent/guardian has an important role while walking alongside their student.

Main Point

Orient parents to the confirmation curriculum, process and objectives.

In Confirmation, students learn and ultimately have an opportunity to choose for themselves whether they want to adopt the Christian faith as their own. Parents and guardians have the opportunity to encourage them in this decision and serve as an example of what faith can look like in adulthood. Not perfection, but progress. Students will learn from expert teachers and caring mentors about the tradition of our faith and how it has been passed on over thousands of years. Parents and guardians have the opportunity to partner with mentors throughout the year to help make the Confirmation experience memorable. In small groups with their peers they will ask tough questions, serve others and discover what it means to believe and follow Jesus. But at home and in their everyday lives is where they experience real life and have to apply all the things they learn at church. Confirmation culminates with a ceremony where students will make a public profession of their faith and become a full member of the church. This is a moment where friends and families can celebrate a student who has made this choice and officially welcome students as official members.

Parents and guardians might also consider making sure they are also members of the church as well as the students. For adults, this can be done by talking with a pastor, who can explain the process. At Resurrection it involves attending an event. Find the latest details on this event here: https://resurrection.church/join/

Remember, Confirmation isn't a Christianity checkbox. This is another step in a life-long journey of faith. As a parent encouraging a student to participate, please make sure you don't approach this journey as just something that your student needs to do to be a Christian or have faith. Please also consider all the different aspects of church life, and developmental opportunities the church has to engage with your student regarding their faith. The staff and volunteers of the church are here because they want to point students to Jesus. They are here because even though this *is* a ministry program, they're in it for the ministry part of it, not just the programming.

Unit 1 // Session 2

Session Overview

Refer to Page 20 in the Student Journal.

This is a new group, and you may know one another. This experience is new, and the Confirmation process will be new. Previously you have usually learned in school so that you can be tested. Here, you are learning so you can make a significant life decision. Spend time getting to know one another. Check out what this process will look like from week to week by walking through each part of the session. Ask your mentor any questions and spend some time looking at the Apostles' Creed and Lord's Prayer as a basis for what you'll be learning and talking about for the school year. Join your small group's messaging app. You can use this to share updates, prayer concerns, and ask questions.

Main Point

Today, we want you to get to know your group and gain an understanding of what this year in confirmation will look like.

Activity

CONSTELLATIONS

For the activity this week, you may wish to prepare a list of statements ahead of time, or you may be more of an improviser. Decide with your co-leaders who will take the lead, or you can take turns making statements. If your room allows you to stand in the center and have students circle around you, that's perfect! If not, then you can stand in the corner, and they can step away from the corner—that works just fine, too! In the end, you'll see students scattered about the room at different places, just like the stars in the sky!

Stuck on what to say? Here are some ideas. You can adjust them so they are something that you truly believe, or you can make them completely ridiculous.

- Hot dogs are tacos.
- Pineapple is great on pizza.
- Dogs are better than cats.
- Mountains are better than beaches.
- Coke is better than Pepsi.
- I have broken a bone.
- I would rather be invisible than have superhuman strength.
- I wear shorts in the winter.

- I have a pet that is not a dog or cat.
- I play more than one sport.
- Reading a book is better than going to a concert.
- I really love Marvel movies.
- Popcorn is a type of chip.
- Hot dogs are better than hamburgers.
- I would rather do chores than sit on the beach.
- I know how to ride a horse.
- Donuts are the only breakfast food.
- Rain is better weather than sunshine.
- Long road trips are the best type of vacation.
- Long sleeve T-Shirts are not T-Shirts.
- Cereal is soup.
- SpongeBob is just a bad show.
- I have ChapStick or lip gloss in my pocket or purse right now.
- I would rather write than do math.
- I have been to Alaska.
- If I could afford it, I would go on a trip to Mars.

The mentor stands in the center or corner of the room, and everyone else stands in a circle or semicircle around them.

The mentor will share statements. If you agree with the statement, you will move closer to the mentor (or stay where you are if there isn't more room!). If you disagree, take a step back. By the end, students will be scattered like a constellation!

Prayer

Each time the group meets, open and close in prayer. Along with your opening prayer, recite the Apostles' Creed. By the time of the Confirmation Ceremony, students should have the Apostles' Creed memorized so that they can say it without prompting during the ceremony. To start with, you can read it—it's in the front of this book. Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer and then recite the Apostles' Creed together.

Teaching Topics

Expectations: The expectations to be confirmed are laid out in the front of this journal. Take a look at those with your group today, and ask your mentor any questions that you have. Be sure to use the checklists throughout the year so you can make sure you are keeping up with everything.

The Five Essential Practices. "The Walk" by Adam Hamilton gives a much more detailed explanation of the confirmation expectations. It is important for students to understand why each of these expectations is important to spiritual growth and their understanding of their faith.

In brief, we expect students to attend at least 75% of your group meetings in person (only missing six times). They are expected to make up the times they are not physically present by watching the video for the session they missed and answering associated questions with the video. They can do this on their own time. There is not a video conference meeting or in-person makeup. Students are also expected to attend in-person worship 12 times, serve in worship 3 times and visit another United Methodist Church with the rest of your group. They are also expected to attend a retreat (either in the Fall or Spring). You may want to decide as a group, which retreat you all attend together. Students will receive a $10 discount off of their registration for a retreat. Finally, students are expected to do a service project. This is also something you can do together as a group.

When reciting the Apostles' Creed and The Lord's Prayer, we often say them and forget that students sometimes don't know what words like "art" mean. Take some time to talk through both. They contain extremely powerful words—when you understand those words.

The Apostles' Creed is a statement of what we believe as Christians.
This statement of faith allows Christians worldwide to profess the same faith and set of beliefs as Jesus passed on to the apostles before ascending into heaven, leaving the apostles to continue His mission here on earth through the Church. He gave us all this mission and reciting this creed helps us to live it out in our lives. (Read Matthew 28:19- 21.)

The Creed is divided into three parts. The first part refers to God the Father and His wonderful work of creation. The second part refers to God the Son, His divinity, and His work of redemption. The third part speaks of God the Holy Spirit, His origin, and His relationship with the Father and the Son. This is called the Trinity, God three in one, which you will learn more about in a later session.

Keyword Definitions

Creed: From Latin Credo meaning "I believe"; summary of the Faith, professing our relationship with God as Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit.

Pontius Pilate: was a Roman governor of Judea (26–36 CE) who presided at the final trial of Jesus and gave the order for his crusifixion.

Quick and the dead: original translations Laertes is "quick" (i.e., alive), and Ophelia is dead. This "quick" doesn't refer to someone being "fast" but being "alive". So, the phrase means "alive and dead."

Catholic: The word comes from the Greek meaning "through the whole," that is "universal," "world-wide," "all inclusive." This is the meaning when the word starts with a lower-case c as in "The holy catholic church" or "We need to become more catholic in our attitudes." The term "catholic" in the Apostles' Creed doesn't refer to only the denomination of Catholics but to ALL who believe in Jesus Christ throughout time.

Amen: Comes from a Hebrew word meaning, "believe;" expresses solidity, trustworthiness, and faithfulness.

The Lord's Prayer is an important prayer for our faith. It is something you will want to have memorized, not just for confirmation, but for your life. This prayer is the way Jesus taught us to pray. You may find some of the language hard to understand, because it is old and we don't really talk like that anymore. This should help.

Keyword Definitions

Art: This just means "are" or "is"—so when it says "Our Father, who art in heaven," it just means, "Our Father, who is in heaven."
Hallowed: This means holy, and "thy" is an old way of saying "your." So "Hallowed be thy name" means "Holy is your name."
Thine: This means "yours."
Trespasses: These are the things we do wrong—sins and other offenses.

Bible Connection

Students will use confirmation Bibles to read along, highlight or underline, and take notes! Get comfortable writing in your Bible—it belongs to you, and this is a great way to engage with God's word.

Read together the passage for today, found in **Matthew 11:25-30.**

Discuss

- Why did you decide to go through confirmation this year?
- What is one thing you hope to get out of Confirmation or to learn more about this year?
- What kind of a learner are you? Do you like reading, taking notes, and building projects, or is there another way you think you learn well?
- What is your favorite thing to do in your free time and why?

Challenge

Be sure to review the origins and keyword definitions of the Apostles' Creed found under teaching topics and practice the Apostles' Creed every day this week.

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group.

For Extra Study

Check out these Bible passages to learn more about our topic for the week or to delve deeper into Scripture.

Philippians 4:8-9
Romans 15:4-7
Psalm 32:8

Unit 1 // Session 3

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 24 in the Student Journal.

Throughout their Confirmation journey, students will be encouraged to dive into the Bible as they connect their own stories to the greater Story of God. Reading the Bible is important because it points us to God and gives us guidance on how we should live our lives. However, many students may not know much about the Bible. In fact, their Confirmation Bible may be the first one they have owned! This Confirmation session will give students a chance to "meet their Bibles" and become more familiar with navigating this book—something that can often feel overwhelming or confusing. We want them to become comfortable with their physical Bibles—although they may wish to use an app instead. Please encourage them to keep using the Bible they were gifted. They can write, highlight, and bookmark to make it uniquely their own.

So, what is the Bible? To begin, it's important to know that the Bible isn't just one book: it's a whole collection of 66 books. This library of books contains poetry, wisdom literature, prophecies, letters, historical narratives, genealogies, parables, and even some really weird apocalyptic literature. When you are reading the Bible, it is always good to ask of the text, "What type of writing is this? Why was it written? Who was it written for?"

Second, the Bible was written by at least 40 different human authors over hundreds of years. Each of these authors lived in a particular time and place, had their own perspectives and opinions, and was limited by their context. For this reason, it can be said that the Bible is the Word of God in the words of humans.

Just as important as it is to know what the Bible IS, it is also important to understand what the Bible IS NOT.

First, the Bible is not a science textbook. The creation accounts in Genesis do not give us a comprehensive overview of biology, physics, or geology. Instead, the goal of these creation accounts is to point us to God as the ultimate Creator of the universe.

The Bible is also not a history book. While it contains great stories from history, the point of these stories was to show how God has interacted with humans throughout the ages, not to give specific facts, dates, and locations of certain events.

Finally, the Bible is not a comprehensive text on theology. As Pastor Adam Hamilton writes in Making Sense of the Bible, "Some expect the Bible to be a book of systematic

theology, carefully laying out doctrine and dogma in each verse. But while Christian systematic theology is grounded in the Bible, you'll seldom find doctrine carefully spelled out in the biblical text."

We hope you enjoy diving into the Bible this week with your students! Have some fun with it and give them plenty of time to explore the features in their new CEB (Common English) Bible.

For further reading, check out Making Sense of the Bible by Adam Hamilton.

Main Point

The Bible is God's inspired Word written in the words of humans. It points us to God and gives us guidance on how to live our lives.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Review and Connect

Last week we got to know each other.

1. Can you remember your group members' names?
2. What are some facts you remembered about others that you didn't know before last week?

It's okay if you can't remember all the names, but look around, and if you don't know someone today, try to get to know them over the next couple of weeks.

This week we will explore your Bible and get familiar with it.

Video Outline

Understanding Why the Bible Matters

1. Introduction to the Bible
   - People have different experiences with the Bible—from never opening it to reading it often.
   - It may feel like an old book or a handy app, but it's meaningful to many people.
   - Shares a personal experience growing up with the Bible.
2. Why the Bible Is Important
   - The Bible is more than just an old book—it's considered God's word to us.
   - It's been written by people who experienced God's work firsthand.
   - Church leaders collected and organized these writings into what we now call the Bible.
3. Who Wrote the Bible
   - Old Testament authors include Moses, King David, Solomon, Isaiah, and Josiah.
   - New Testament authors include James (Jesus's brother), Peter (a disciple), and

Paul (a former enemy of Christians turned believer).
    - Paul wrote letters, including one to Timothy explaining how Scripture helps guide our lives.
4. What the Bible Says About Itself
    - 2 Timothy 3:14–17 teaches that Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for:
        - Teaching truth
        - Pointing out mistakes
        - Correcting behavior
        - Training in doing what's right
    - The Bible prepares us to do good.
5. How the Bible Works in Our Lives
    - Hebrews says God's Word is "living and active," meaning it still speaks to us today.
    - Reading the Bible can reveal different lessons at different times because it's dynamic.
    - It shapes who we are by showing us who God is.
6. What to Do With the Bible
    - Start reading it—begin with small group verses.
    - Use tools like a confirmation journal to go deeper.
    - Make reading the Bible a habit, like checking messages from someone who loves you.
7. Jesus as the Word
    - John's Gospel says Jesus is "the Word made flesh"—God's Word in human form.
    - Learning about Jesus helps us understand God's message better.
    - The Bible matters because it helps us grow and know God.

Activity (pick one)

OPTION 1: WHO CAN FIND IT FIRST?

This is a fun way to get more familiar with the Bible. Race against each other to look up the assigned Bible reference in your physical Bibles, and the first one to find it stands up and reads it out loud. For today's activity, we are using friendly competition to help students engage with their Bibles. The game is to discover "who can find it first" using the following Bible references:

- John 11:35 (note: the shortest verse in the Bible, when it is translated as "Jesus wept.") ("Jesus began to cry.")
- Psalm 117:1-2 (note: the shortest chapter in the Bible) ("Praise the Lord, all you nations! Worship him, all you peoples! Because God's faithful love toward us is strong, the Lord's faithfulness lasts forever! Praise the Lord!")
- Psalm 23:1 ("The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing.")
- John 3:16 ("God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life.")
- Jeremiah 29:11 ("I know the plans I have in mind for you, declares the Lord; they are plans for peace, not disaster, to give you a future filled with hope.")
- Hebrews 11:1 ("Faith is the reality of what we hope for, the proof of what we don't see.")
- 1 Corinthians 13:4 ("Love is patient, love is kind, it isn't jealous, it doesn't brag, it isn't arrogant.")
- Proverbs 3:5 ("Trust in the Lord with all your heart; don't rely on your own intelligence.")

- Philippians 4:13 ("I can endure all these things through the power of the one who gives me strength.")

After each reference is found and read aloud, ask the group, "Have you heard that verse before? If so, where?"

NOTE: Since many students are new to the Bible, this activity might be hard or even embarrassing for them. You may want to take some time before starting the Activity to review the Table of Contents at the beginning of the Bible. If students are struggling to find the references, have them team up or help each other out. Do more or fewer rounds depending on time and on their ability to find the references.

OPTION 2: OLD OR NEW?

Before class, use notecards or scraps of paper to create small slips of paper, enough for everyone in the group to have 2-3 slips each.

Give everyone 2-3 slips of paper and have them turn to the Table of Contents in their Bibles. Have them write the name of one book of the Bible on each piece of paper. Challenge them to write books they don't think others will write.

Put the small sheets of paper into a bag or bowl. Divide the class into two teams. One a time, students from each team will come up and pull a paper from the bowl. They will then have to guess whether that book of the Bible comes from the Old or New Testament. If they guess incorrectly, no points are awarded. After all of the sheets have been drawn, the team with the most points wins.

For an added challenge, students can try to locate the book in their Bible within 10 seconds without checking the Table of Contents!

Teaching Topics

A few notes for you as you guide students this week:

1. We really want to make sure students know what resources are available for them in their journal to help them understand the Bible, so take a peek at those if your group has not yet done so.
2. We also really want students to get familiar with their Bible. In previous years, many students have connected to their Bibles through highlighting, underlining, and writing in them. Encourage them to do so! If they are uncomfortable marking in the book directly, sticky notes are also an amazing option. Challenge them to do as much noting as possible so they can look back at the end of the year at how transformed their Bible has become! (We hope that they, too, will be so transformed by this journey!)
3. There are resources in the back of this book that are meant to help. Please reference them today and in the future. There are lists of the books in the Bible, and they are briefly summarized and categorized. There's also a glossary back there. Take a look!

BIBLE STRUCTURE

The Bible is a collective library of ancient books (66 in total) that were written and compiled over hundreds of years.

To help us navigate the Bible more easily, each book has been divided into chapters and verses. When you read a scripture reference (such as John 3:16) the number before the colon ("3") is the chapter, and the number after the colon ("16") is the verse. These reference numbers work regardless of the version you have, so they allow a group of people with different Bibles to find the same verses quickly (unlike page numbers, which are usually different).

Anytime you see a number in front of a book name (such as 1 John or 2 Samuel), it is referring to the first, second, or third book in a series, so you would say "First John," not "One John."

WHAT THE BIBLE IS

The Bible is God's revelation to us. We consider the Bible to be holy because God "breathed life" into it, causing it to have more meaning or value than other books or writings. Over many years, God inspired human authors to record and write down their interactions with God.

As Methodists, we do not believe that God literally dictated every word of the Bible to human authors. The Biblical authors wrote in their own voices, and they incorporated their own perspectives, cultures, and contexts into Scripture. We might say that the Bible is the Word of God in the words of humans. So, the answer to the question, "Who wrote the Bible, God or humans?" is BOTH!

We believe the Bible includes all the instructions and guidance necessary for us to have a relationship with God. It also shows us how we should be in relationship with other humans and with the world around us. Ultimately, the Bible points us toward God and shows us how God is present and active in our lives and in the world.

WHAT THE BIBLE IS NOT

Unfortunately, because the Bible was written by human authors living in a particular place at a certain time, it doesn't answer *all* of our questions. While it does give us very important information on how to live our lives, it is not a comprehensive manual to all of life's problems.

It is also important to know that while the Bible contains history, it is not primarily a history book. While the Bible contains passages that talk about creation and nature, it is not a science textbook either.

USING YOUR BIBLE

As a Confirmation student, you received a Bible. We encourage you to use that specific Bible as you attend Confirmation sessions so that you and your fellow confirmands will be literally on the same page! Bring it every week—you'll be using it in class.

We encourage you to *write*, underline, and highlight in your Bible. This practice can be very meaningful, and when you turn back to a passage you have read before, you'll see what stood out to you last time, which may or may not be what stands out to you the next time. Marking in your Bible can be a meaningful way to better understand God's word, and we urge you to give it a try.

Sticky notes can also be a great way to mark important passages and indicate where you last left off reading. Tabs for each book of the Bible can be helpful when you need to flip quickly to a verse.

Bible Connection

Read together our passage for today, found in **2 Timothy 3:14-17**.

Discuss

- Does your family have a Bible at home? How often does your family read the Bible? (It's okay if you haven't done so before. Now is a fantastic time to start!)
- Do you have a favorite Bible story or Bible verse?
- How does the Bible connect us to God and point us toward God?
- According to 2 Timothy, in what ways does the Bible help us? Because of this, why is it important for us to read and study the Bible?
- Do you think the people who wrote the books in the Bible knew their writings would be considered "holy" and "inspired?" Why or why not?
- Can you read the Bible in a wrong way? How?
- What other questions do you have about the Bible?

Challenge

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient way of reading the Bible and meditating on Scripture. The words *lectio divina* are Latin for "divine reading." It can be a great way to learn something new from Scripture as we open up our hearts and minds to hear from God. Use your journal pages to complete the following Lectio Divina activity this week.

Lectio Divina on Psalm 119:9-16

1. Start by silently praying, "God, show me what you would like me to hear from you today."
2. Find the passage Psalm 119:9-16 in your Bible and read it out loud slowly and carefully. Underline or write down what words or phrases are speaking to you. (Yes, write in your Bible!)

3. Read the passage out loud a second time. This time, write down the answer to this question: "What does my underlined word or phrase mean to me?"
4. Read the passage a third time. Now write down the answer to the question, "How is God calling me to respond to this passage?"
5. Read the passage a fourth and final time. Silently reflect on the words for a few minutes before ending your time in prayer to God.

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina again. Write in your Bible!

Psalm 19:7-11
Psalm 119:105-106
Hebrews 4:12

UNIT 2

Unit 2: God the Father

Session 1: The Old Testament
Session 2: The Story of God
Session 3: Relationship Broken
Session 4: Prayer: Talking with God –Lord's Prayer

>> UNIT OVERVIEW

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

God is introduced in the beginning of the Bible. The question that this unit will answer is, "What kind of God do we believe in?" The idea of one god was a radical concept 4000 years ago. Prior to this people believed in many gods and each god had a distinct personality. Some were benevolent and some were not. Gods were used to explain how the natural world operated.

The monotheistic (single) God was a new concept. A God that was like a loving parent was not aligned with, what appeared to be, selfish deities of the Romans and Greeks.

In this unit we will explore, first, how the Old Testament (the Hebrew Bible) is organized. Then we will move into the story arc of the entire Bible and how this explains who God is and our relationship to God. This will include understanding that God intends to be in relationship with people. The Bible records how people have symbolically and actually broken that relationship time and time again. God, however, continues to pursue us and love us unconditionally. We wrap up this unit with the Lord's Prayer (taught by Jesus to his disciples). This embodies our continuing relationship with God the Father (our parent) and reminds us of what we aspire that relationship to be like.

Unit 2 // Session 1

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 32 in the Student Journal.

This week's session takes us into the Old Testament. Students may have some confusion about the differences between the Old and New Testament, and of course this journal is not a comprehensive guide! If they have questions, encourage them to write them down and ask a pastor when they have a chance. They (and you!) can also feel free to reach out to your Student Ministries or Confirmation director.

Remember as you teach about the Old Testament that it is the Bible for our Jewish friends. It was also the Bible for Jesus during his lifetime! Sometimes it can be difficult to understand the Old Testament due to its context being so different than present day, but it is worth diving into as a way to connect with Jesus and the history of our faith. Remind students that because the historical context of the Old Testament is so different from our present-day reality, many passages can be difficult to understand. Remind them that if they run across something on their own that is upsetting, confusing, or concerning, they should talk to a trusted adult about it. There is a lot of unhelpful and even unhealthy "Biblical" information on the internet!

Main Point

The Old Testament tells the story of God and his followers. Reading it can bring us closer to God and help us to understand the people who followed him before Jesus.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Review and Connect

Last week we discussed the Bible.

1. What is the structure of the Bible?
2. How do you write out where to find a verse in the Bible? Why?
3. How can you use your Bible?

This week we will dive into the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible. We will discover what was a brand-new idea in the time it was written, one God who loved and cared for people like a parent.

Video Outline

Exploring the Old Testament

1. A Personal Faith Journey
   - Describe when you first learned about an Old Testament story.
   - These early stories help form an understanding of God and creation.
   - At first, the importance of the Old Testament might not seem clear.
2. Discovering the Importance of the Old Testament
   - Many people only know a few Bible stories and may not understand the difference between the Old and New Testaments.
   - The Old Testament prepares the way for Jesus and introduces God's love for all people.
   - It tells one long story of God's relationship with humanity.
3. Understanding the Bible's Background
   - The Bible is inspired by God but written by humans with specific worldviews and historical contexts.
   - This can make it harder to understand but also shows relatable human experiences.
   - The stories show real people who make mistakes, experience hardships, and encounter God.
4. The Old Testament and the Jewish Faith
   - The Old Testament is also known as the Hebrew Bible or Tanakh in Judaism.
   - It has three main sections: Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim.
   - These scriptures are shared in Jewish communities.
5. The Three Parts of the Old Testament
   - Torah (Law): First five books (Genesis through Deuteronomy); shows God's justice, love, and desire for connection.
   - Nevi'im (Prophets): Books like Isaiah and Jeremiah; prophets revealed God's character and called out injustice.
   - Ketuvim (Writings): Books like Psalms and Proverbs; express human emotions, struggles, and how God shows up in daily life.
6. Applying the Old Testament Today
   - Think of the Old Testament like a bookshelf filled with stories about God and God's people.
   - Each book reveals more about who God is and how much God loves us.
7. Final Encouragement and Challenge
   - Choose an unfamiliar Old Testament book to explore as part of God's big story.
   - Remember that God's promises in the Bible are still true for you today.
   - Ask questions, share thoughts, and grow together with others in group discussions.

Activity

Scattegories: Old Testament Edition

Split your class into groups of 3-5 and give each group a sheet of paper. Setting a timer for 5 minutes, invite students to write down everything their group knows about the Old Testament onto their sheet. When the timer ends, have a group read their answer. Every group that has the same answer, should cross it off. Anyone who wrote a (valid) answer, different from all other groups, gets a point. Have each group total up their points, and the group with the most points, wins!

Teaching Topics

This week's challenge is "old-school"—memorizing a Bible verse! Remember that many students are not often asked to memorize text, so they may find this challenging. Help them find a verse that speaks to them and one they feel they could memorize. They may have something in mind already based on our previous Confirmation scripture or something they heard or saw elsewhere. They can use their birth month and day to find a scripture that speaks to them. For instance, if they were born on February 8th, they would look up every chapter 2, verse 8 in every book of the Bible to find their "birthday verse."

They may wish to use smartphones to look up verses about particular topics—that is fine! Just make sure they then take the time to find their verse in their actual physical Bible, and then they can underline, highlight, or use a sticky note. Make sure they write it out so they can find it later.

You may also want to come up with some suggestions of your favorite verses from the New Testament.

Try to write down the book, chapter, and verse number for each student's pick—then you can ask them about it first thing next week!

One final challenge: It may be fun for their leaders to memorize verses, too!

What Christians call "The Old Testament" is called "The Hebrew Bible" or Tanakh by Jewish folks. For Christians, it's the first of two parts of our Bible, and though the Old Testament is larger than the New, we tend to place more emphasis on the New Testament because that's where Jesus is! However, there is much to be learned from the Old Testament.

THE OLD TESTAMENT is comprised of 3 parts in Jewish tradition. We, too, can use these divisions to better understand the purpose of these books:

TORAH

- The First 5 books
- Torah means "law."
- This section is also called the Pentateuch, or the Five Books of Moses.
- Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- These books contain laws and guidance, telling the story of God's people up to the arrival of the Israelites in the Promised Land (Creation, Abraham and Sarah, Exile, Moses).
- They teach us about the human condition and share laws that were given to the Israelites to help them become better people.

NEVI'IM

- The Prophets
- These books can be further divided into two sections chronologically: the "former" and the "latter" prophets.

- The Former Prophets are the narrative books of Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings.
- The Latter prophets include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.
- Prophets aren't fortune tellers. Rather, they are social critics who speak the truth to powerful people. They are advocates for marginalized people and sound the alarm about consequences for people's actions. They also talk about hope for a future Messiah. (Hint: that's Jesus!)
  - These books do not appear in chronological order.

KETUVIM

- Writings
- These are books of wisdom, poetry, history, and stories. These are very literary and considered the "heart" of the Old Testament.
- They aren't necessarily chronological, either.
- Ruth, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon (also called Song of Songs), Lamentations, Daniel.
- These books offer poems, songs, and wise sayings paired with stories of individual human struggles over the course of the Old Testament.

NOTES ON THE OLD TESTAMENT:

- The Hebrew Bible tells the story of Israel and its people. They are in close relationship with God, then turn away, then find their way back, and this cycle repeats throughout history. Nonetheless, God is always with them, wanting to be in relationship with his people.
- We understand the Bible is inspired by God but written by humans.
- Each book of the Old Testament was written in a very specific time and place for a specific culture. That culture is different than our culture today, so you may see some things in the Old Testament that are hard to relate to, or even shocking, for us in the present day.
- Because much of the Old Testament is stories about people, we see the characters making good, bad, or complicated choices.
- The characters are complex, just like real people today: Sometimes good people make mistakes. Sometimes bad or unfair things happen to good people.
- Ultimately, this is what makes these stories relatable. Living in a completely different time and place, we still understand that people make mistakes, and that bad things can happen to people who are good—and that God is there with us throughout it all.

WHY STUDY THE OLD TESTAMENT?

- The Old Testament teaches us about God and humanity's relationship with God. Reading it connects us to God and to people who followed God long ago. We see people who love God and people who turn away from God. We see people who get it right and people who get it very wrong. No matter what, God is there for God's people through all of it.

- It also brings us closer to Jesus. Remember, the New Testament was written after Jesus's death and resurrection. What did Jesus's Bible look like? It looked like the Old Testament! He preached about and prayed from The Old Testament.
- Studying the Old Testament is best when you do it with others. You can ask your questions and work through the hard parts together.

Bible Connection

Read together our passage for today, found in Joshua 1:5-9.

Discuss

- What do you think God means by saying "I won't desert you or leave you" in today's Bible passage?
- God says things like "Don't be alarmed or terrified" throughout the Old and New Testament, so it seems like God definitely means it! What makes this difficult?
- What is something you struggle with regarding the Old Testament?
- What is something that surprised you from what you learned today?
- What is something you would like to know more about regarding the Old Testament?
- Do you have a favorite story or verse from the Old Testament?

Challenge

MEMORY VERSE: OLD TESTAMENT CHALLENGE

- This week, students will choose a verse from the Old Testament to commit to memory. Encourage them to choose a verse they have not already memorized.
- There are many good options; encourage them to use the internet (search "verses about _____," or "verses for when you feel _____," etc.). They can also flip through their Bible and see what stands out to them or pull a verse from some of the passages we have read so far this year.
- Have them write the full verse in their journal so they can share it with the group next week!

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. We learned it last week. Write notes in your Bible so you can be reminded of your thoughts.

Psalm 23
Psalm 119:105-110
Proverbs 3:1-6
Deuteronomy 11:18-21

Unit 2 // Session 2

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 38 in the Student Journal.

Now that we have looked at the components of the Bible, we are considering it as one big story—the story of God, which continues to the present day. But what exactly is this story? And where do we fit into it? Students will begin to see themselves in these archetypical stories that represent the human story in relation to God. This is a big concept and may need to be simplified by using other familiar stories that use the same archetype, like Harry Potter or Star Wars.

Main Point

The Story of God is one of God constantly reaching out to humans. Much of the Story of God is recorded in the Bible, but this Story is still being written as God continues to reach out to us.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Review and Connect

Last week students chose a verse to memorize. Give them a couple of minutes to do a quick review with a partner, then ask them to share with the class if they can. Based on last week, you may wish to tackle this challenge differently; use your judgment. Just make sure if they spent time memorizing, they have an opportunity to share with someone!

Over the past few weeks, we've taken a close look at the Bible.

1. What is the Old Testament?
2. What are some significant character traits of God, as portrayed in the Old Testament?
3. What was your memory verse for last week's challenge?

Video Outline

The Big Picture: God's Story of Love and Relationship

1. Introduction
   - Share a situation or instance where you can only see part of the picture or situation and not the whole thing.
   - The point: it's hard to see the whole picture when focusing only on the small parts.
   - This connects to how we often read the Bible—focusing on pieces without understanding the whole story.

2. The Bible as One Big Story
   - The Bible tells the story of God's love and desire for relationship with humans.
   - It's a connected narrative from beginning to end, not just isolated verses or confusing moments.
   - Today's focus: a quick overview of this story.
3. Creation (Genesis 1)
   - God created everything and called it good.
   - Humans were created in God's image, with purpose and love.
   - Humans were meant to be in relationship with God and each other.
4. The Fall (Genesis 2–3)
   - Adam and Eve disobeyed God, breaking the perfect relationship.
   - Sin entered the world, creating a barrier between humanity and God.
   - God still loved them and continued reaching out to humanity.
5. God's People and the Covenant
   - God formed a special relationship with Abraham and the Israelites.
   - They were meant to be a blessing to others.
   - Even though they struggled and made mistakes, God remained faithful.
6. Jesus Restores the Relationship
   - In the New Testament, Jesus came to Earth to show God's love.
   - Jesus taught, prayed, healed, and lived as an example.
   - His death removed the barrier caused by sin, restoring the connection with God.
7. The Mission Continues
   - After Jesus' resurrection, he gave the mission to share God's love with the world.
   - This mission includes us today—we're part of the ongoing story.
   - One day, Jesus will return and restore everything fully.
8. Recap and Encouragement
   - The Bible's story: Creation → Fall → Chosen People → Jesus → Mission → Restoration.
   - God's love is the constant theme throughout the story.
   - Even when Scripture is confusing, remember the big picture of God's love and relationship with us.

Activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: ONE WORD STORY

As a group stand or sit in a circle facing one another. Go around the circle and tell a story. The catch? You can only tell the story one word at a time! Each person can only add one word to the story before it moves on to the next person in the circle. Go until your story has ended, someone gets stuck, or your mentor calls time.

OPTION 2: FAVORITE STORIES

What is your favorite story? Go around the circle and allow everyone to briefly name their favorite story. This might be a book, a movie, a video game, a legend, or parable, or even a comic series. Then, as a group, answer the questions, "Why do we like these stories? What makes them so great?"

OVERVIEW OF THE STORY OF GOD

CREATION - Christians sometimes disagree about the details of Creation: when it happened, how it happened, or how long it took. We can get hung up on these questions, but the two main points of Creation are that God is the ultimate Creator, and humans were created to be in relationship with God and with one another. God created the world and everything in it, including us and all the laws of the universe. God called creation "very good." Humans are created in God's image to be God's representatives in the world. We were made to be in relationship with God and with one another.

FALL - Although God created humans and loves them very much, since the beginning of human history, people have chosen to reject God and follow their own ways. This causes us to have broken relationships with God, fellow humans, and even creation itself. God gave humans free will: the ability to choose to follow after God or to follow after their own selfish desires. (Sometimes people refer to these selfish human desires as "original sin.") But since the time of Adam and Eve, humans have chosen to follow their own paths instead of God's, and this breaks God's heart. Thus, we have "fallen away" from God's original desires and hopes for humanity.

CHOSEN PEOPLE - God chose a certain group of people to be in direct relationship with - the descendants of Abraham, also known as the Israelites. They were God's representatives on earth, and they were blessed by God so they could be a blessing to others. Unfortunately, they didn't always get it right.

JESUS/KINGDOM OF GOD - Because humans on their own couldn't fix the broken relationships we have with God and others; God the Father sent his Son Jesus to show us how to be in true relationship with God. Jesus showed us how to live and provided the way to fix our broken relationships with God and others through his life, death, and resurrection. Jesus also came to usher in the Kingdom of God here on earth.

CHURCH/MISSION - Jesus gave his followers a mission: to continue building the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. As Christians, we are now the ones invited to act as God's representatives in the world and we are called to invite others into this beautiful story.

NEW CREATION/RESTORATION - This is the part of the Story that is "yet to come." We are promised that one day, Jesus will come again to restore everything back to the way it was at the time of Creation, when everything was "very good." This is the part of the story that you might get a lot of questions about. While we don't know exactly what it will look like, we do know that Jesus will restore our world where humans lived in perfect harmony with God and each other.

When we read the Bible, sometimes we look at individual or isolated verses, separate from their larger context. When we step back and look at the broad overview of the Story of God found in scripture, we find a grand, beautiful narrative of God continually

reaching out toward humans. We also find that we too are invited into this narrative. We find that the stories of Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, David, Esther, Peter, and Paul are our stories too! The outline for this week's session, "The Story of God," will guide much of the Confirmation year. As you go through the weekly sessions, you might ask your students, "Where does this story or Scripture passage fit into the larger Story of God?" and "How does this story from the Bible sound like our stories or experiences?" Invite students to find their story within the Story of God.

Although the stories in the Bible took place a long time ago, we still find ourselves within the Story of God. Humans that lived then weren't all that different from us today, and there is much we can learn from their stories and from how they interacted with God in the past. The story isn't over yet! Even though the Bible is no longer being written, the Story of God continues today! We get to be a part of the Story of God when we choose to follow Jesus and be God's representatives in the world today. Even though the Bible contains 66 individual books, there is a single grand narrative throughout: God longs to be in relationship with each and every one of us. This is the Story of God.

For further reading, check out Shaped by the Story: Helping Students Encounter God in a New Way by Michael Novelli.

Bible Connection

Because the Story of God takes place throughout all of Scripture (and beyond!), today we have one verse for each section in God's Story. Read together the following passages. Be sure to use your Confirmation Bible!

CREATION - Genesis 1:1-4

FALL - Romans 3:23

CHOSEN PEOPLE - Genesis 12:1-2

JESUS/KINGDOM OF GOD - John 3:16

CHURCH/ MISSION - Ephesians 1:22-23

NEW CREATION/RESTORATION - Isaiah 65:17-18

Discuss

- Who are the main characters in the Story of God?
- Do you have a favorite Bible character, or one you remember learning about as a little kid? It's okay if you don't—maybe you'll discover one during Confirmation!
- What do you think the Story of God is ultimately about?
- What "genre" would you use to classify the Story of God (comedy, horror, drama, romance, tragedy, fantasy, etc.)? Why?
- How would you tell someone else about the Story of God?
- Which (if any) of these verses had you heard before? In what context?
- Why do we sometimes think that the Bible doesn't apply to us today?
- How does reading the stories of people in the Bible help us live our lives today?

Challenge

FAMILY STORIES

Take sometime this week to talk to your parents or family members about stories that have shaped and defined your family. Interview them and ask these questions:
What are your favorite stories of me as a little kid?
Are there any funny or embarrassing stories about our family?
What stories about our family got passed down from older generations?
How has God or the church been a part of our family's story?

After you have talked to your family members about their defining stories, journal your answers to the following questions:
Why are stories so important to families and individuals?
What stories do I want to pass on to my future family? How has God been a part of my own life's story so far?

Note:
Looking ahead: the Fall Retreat is coming soon! Remind your students to sign up. Remind their parents, too!

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, re-read the passages from the Bible Connection section and check out these additional Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Galatians 3:23-24
Ephesians 1:9-12

Unit 2 // Session 3

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 44 in the Student Journal.

Today's session focuses on the brokenness of humanity. In church we call this sin. To some sin means our bad acts that don't align with what God would hope for us. Sin is literally separation from God. It is not caused by God. In fact, God always remains with us. We tend to separate ourselves as illustrated in most of the stories in the Bible. Some students will find it hard to grasp this concept since they still respond to a rewards-based morality.

All of us have a favorite story—maybe it's a movie, book, or video game. We love stories. And no matter what story you love, there are certain elements that most stories share:
1. Introduction. 2. Rising action. 3. Climax. 4. Falling Action. 5. Resolution.
Some students may have learned this structure in their English classes—for others, it may be a new concept that you can share with them! But what's interesting about this structure is that we see these elements even in the Story of God.

Today we're covering the part of the story called the "rising action." The is the point when the problem or conflict central to the plot is introduced. For the Story of God, this begins with Adam and Eve and their choice to disobey God. They had the opportunity to live in harmony with God, but instead they chose a different way. (Their God-given ability to make this choice is called free will.) A key part of this story is knowing that we are never forced to be in relationship with God. But consequences still happen, so Adam and Eve are asked to leave the harmony of Eden. They adapt and survive, but their descendants make some...interesting choices.

These early years of God's Story are the years when God lets humanity do whatever they want. There is no defined religion. There is no defined relationship. There is only humanity deciding what to do for themselves. And it goes poorly. Cain kills his brother Abel almost right away, and within a few generations, the world becomes so wicked and cruel that the Bible actually says this: "The Lord saw that humanity had become thoroughly evil on the earth and that every idea their minds thought up was always completely evil. The Lord regretted making human beings on the earth, and he was heartbroken" (Genesis 6:5-6).

One way to think about this part of the Bible is to imagine God essentially saying, "All right, you think you know best? Please, go ahead. I'll wait." If you have your own kids, this may be a tactic you have used before. Sometimes, before someone listens to you,

they need to make a mess first.
But there's one thing we need to emphasize: God at no point hates humanity. You don't get "heartbroken" if you hate someone. Heartbreak comes from a place of love and concern. This is the big tension in the story of God: God loves us, yet we've often chosen to ignore that love. When we ignore that love, it can result in sin.
Every human sins. It's not just Adam and Eve or "bad people." We all use our free will to hurt God, others, and ourselves. This is a hard concept for some students to grapple with because they're at an age when it's hard to confess when they are at fault. A middle school principal once told this story: "90% of students who come to my office lie about why they were sent to me. So, I figured out how to get them to be honest. I give them two options: A) You can say, 'I'm sorry I did this, and I would like to make it right,' or B) You can deny it and face harsher consequences when we find out the truth."

After learning this technique, she said most students chose the first option. The issue wasn't that they wanted to lie. It was that they didn't really know how to admit fault. By giving them language to use, she helped them realize that confession is not about blame; it's about resolution. This is the same concept behind Christian "confession." We need language to talk about the ways in which we make mistakes. We name sin for what it is because at the end of the day, we know God loves us and wants the best for us, even when we mess up.

Main Point

When we choose to reject God and follow our own path, we break God's heart, and we cause a broken relationship between ourselves and God; ourselves and others; and even between ourselves and creation.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Review and Connect

Last week, we learned about The Story of God.

1. Can you summarize the big ideas or main points of The Story of God?
2. What do you think is the most important thing we discussed last time?
3. Share some stories you discovered as a result of last week's challenge.

This week we will learn about how God pursues a relationship with people even when people break the relationship with God.

Video Outline

Understanding Broken Relationship and Sin

1. Introduction to Confirmation and Personal Faith
   - Reflect on your own experience of coming to faith and the church.
   - Emphasize the importance of making faith personal, not just inherited from family or pressure from someone else.
   - Encourages students to absorb and claim their faith.

2. Introduction to the Topic of Sin
   - Sin and brokenness are not always emphasized in the Methodist tradition, which often focuses more on grace, God's love for us.
   - Recognizing sin is necessary to fully appreciate the grace and love of God.
3. Personal Story
   - Share a story when you broke a rule and didn't think it was a big deal.
   - People often justify small rule-breaking.
   - Rules and boundaries are meant to protect relationships—with others, ourselves, and God.
4. Sin Defined and Its Effects
   - Sin means "missing the mark" of how God calls us to live.
   - Introduce the story of Adam and Eve and how disobedience broke their perfect relationship with God.
   - God gave humans free will, which includes the ability to make wrong choices.
5. Broken Relationship with God
   - When Adam and Eve sinned, the connection with God was damaged.
   - Described like a bad phone connection—God is still there, but the relationship is strained.
6. Personal Story: Reading a Private Journal
   - Share a story where you broke someone's trust in you.
   - Emphasizes the guilt and broken trust that can come from our actions, even if the relationship can be repaired later.
7. Types of Sin
   - Intentional Sin: Choosing to do the wrong thing knowingly.
   - Unintentional Sin: Caused by carelessness, distraction, or lack of attention.
   - Systematic Sin: Participating in or accepting unfair systems
8. Final Encouragement
   - Everyone messes up—none of the faith heroes (except Jesus) were perfect.
   - God still loves us and wants a relationship with us.
   - We're not alone in our brokenness. God's grace is still given to us.

Activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: HUMAN KNOT

Sometimes our sins create knots or tangles that are hard to undo. This activity shows us what that looks like.

1. As a group, stand in a circle, facing inward.
2. Everyone should reach their right arm towards the center and grab someone else's hand. Make sure you don't grab the hand of the person right next to you!
3. Next, everyone should reach their left arm in and grab someone else's hand. Again, make sure it's not the person right next to you.
4. Now, the fun begins! You'll need to work together to untangle the human knot without letting go of any hands. The goal is to end up in a perfect circle again. You can go over or under each other's arms, or through legs if needed! Do whatever you need to do to untangle the knot, as long as you don't break the chain in the process.

The "human knot" can also describe what free will does to humanity and to our own lives. We can easily make decisions that get us all knotted up—and takes a lot of time and effort to undo.

OPTION 2: THE SIN CHASM
Give everyone in the group a blank sheet of paper. Go around the group and have everyone name a different sin (either a Personal Sin or a Systemic Sin) and write it on a piece of paper in large letters.

Have two people from the group volunteer to stand up in front of the group. One by one, everyone should bring their Sin Paper to the front and share how that sin causes a "break" or a "chasm" in the relationship between people. For example: "If Joey lies to Ben, then Ben no longer trusts Joey." Then, they should place that Sin Paper ("Lying") on the ground between the two up-front volunteers, moving them farther apart from each other.

As each person comes up front and shares their Sin Paper, the gap or "chasm" between the two up-front volunteers will grow larger and larger showing how sin divides and causes a separation from the people around us.

Teaching Topics

Every human sins. We use our free will to hurt God, others, and ourselves.

God gives each of us free will, which is the ability to make our own choices in our thoughts and actions. Free will is important because it allows us to truly love God on our own, not because we are forced to do so. Unfortunately, many people use their free will to do harm instead of good. The wrong things that people choose to do create a ripple effect that moves throughout the rest of the world.

The word "sin" comes from a Hebrew phrase that means "to miss the mark." Like an archer shooting an arrow but failing to hit the target, often our actions fall short of the ideals God has for us. If the bullseye is what God wants for us, when we do things that hurt ourselves or others, it's like we're shooting our arrows into the ground or into the air behind the target.

There are two kinds of sins in the world: Personal and Systemic.

PERSONAL SINS are the decisions we make that go against God's will for us and hurt those around us. It's the kind of mistakes we make that involve ourselves and those immediately connected to the situation.

SYSTEMIC SINS are sins we make as organizations, societies, countries, or any group of people. An obvious example would be slavery. A large group of people thought it was acceptable to own other human beings and treat them like objects. While personal sins were involved, the cultural acceptance that existed for hundreds of years would be considered a systemic sin. Even when we sin, God doesn't give up on us. God is heartbroken because God loves us so deeply. This is why the Story of God continues for thousands of years. God continues to invite us to be in relationship.

Sin causes a separation between us and God. Sin breaks apart the relationship between us and God, or even between us and other people. Sin creates a divide or "chasm" that we cannot cross without God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness. (Don't worry, we'll get back to God's grace in the "Relationship: Restored" session!)

Bible Connection

Read together our passage for today, found in Genesis 3:1-13.

Discuss

- How would you describe free will? Why do you think God gave us free will? Why did Adam and Eve go against God's will?
- How did they feel after they disobeyed God? What are examples of personal sins?
- What are examples of systemic sins?
- How does God feel when we sin? How do you feel when you sin? Does God give up on people who sin?

Challenge

OFFER AN APOLOGY

We all make mistakes. We all sin. But the key is to admit our mistakes and try to do better next time. Your challenge this week is to apologize to someone. All of us have said or done something that's hurt someone in our lives. Maybe it was a friend or one of your parents, or maybe it was someone you don't even know that well! Take a moment and think of who you need to apologize to. Then write their name in the space below.

This week I will apologize to:

After you have had a chance to apologize to that person,
reflect on these questions in your journal space:
Why did I do that in the first place?
What was the hardest part about apologizing? How did the person respond?
How did I feel after?

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

Note: Before dismissing encourage students to register for a retreat. Suggest your group go together. Use the next four weeks to encourage registration.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Proverbs 6:16-19 (Seven Deadly Sins) Isaiah 59:1-2
Romans 5:12-14
1 John 1:8-9

Unit 2 // Session 4

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 50 in the Student Journal.

Prayer is the best way we can communicate with God. It involves talking, as we present God with our needs and thank God for all the blessings that we have been given. But prayer also involves listening, as we seek to hear God's voice and follow the nudging of the Holy Spirit. Students live in a noisy society filled with stimulated moments. It is difficult for students to quiet their minds in a prayerful manner. This session will offer strategies they can use to pray.

Prayer has been practiced by God's people all the way back to Abraham and the Israelites. Prayer is a core practice of the church even today. Throughout the Bible, we are repeatedly instructed to pray. We are to come to God in prayer in all situations and circumstances. Is there something you need from God? Then you should pray and ask God to meet your need (1 John 5:1415). Are you sick or suffering? Are you happy or have you done something wrong? Then you should pray (James 5:13-16). Are you being hurt or persecuted by others? We are to even pray for them, too! (Matthew 5:44)

God loves nothing more than to hear from us. Just as most parents love getting phone calls or letters from their adult children who are no longer living at home, God the Father loves to hear from His children too. Jesus himself even spent much time in prayer and solitude. From Jesus, we have some of the most famous prayers, including the Lord's Prayer (found in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4) and his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Not my will but your will must be done" (Luke 22:41-42).

Besides prayer, there are other ways that we can grow deeper in our relationship with God. These are called Spiritual Disciplines or Spiritual Practices. Challenge your students to try out a Spiritual Practice that may be new to them, such as turning off their phones, finding a quiet place, and spending time in Solitude and Silence.

Main Point

In order to grow closer in our relationship with God, we should spend time with God through prayer and other spiritual disciplines.

Review and Connect

Last week we discussed how sin can lead us to break our relationships with God, others, and creation.

1. What is the difference between personal and systemic sin?
2. Why do people sin?
3. What does archery (bow and arrows) have to do with sinning?
4. Does God give up on us when we sin?

Video Outline

Understanding and Practicing Prayer

1. **Introduction to Prayer**
   - Share your early experiences with prayer.
   - Prayer needs to shift from being a checklist to understanding it as a relationship with a loving God.
2. **What Prayer Is**
   - Prayer is about building a relationship with God, like developing a friendship.
   - Relationships grow through time, trust, and honest conversation.
   - God wants to know every part of us—the good, the bad, and the uncertain.
3. **Scripture Guidance on Prayer (Matthew 6)**
   - Pray privately and sincerely, not for show.
   - God values authenticity over fancy words or perfect phrases.
   - God already knows our needs before we ask.
4. **How to Start Praying – ACTS Method**
   - A – Adoration: Praising God for who He is.
   - C – Confession: Admitting mistakes and seeking forgiveness.
   - T – Thanksgiving: Expressing gratitude.
   - S – Supplication: Asking for help for yourself and others.
5. **Listening in Prayer**
   - Prayer is a two-way conversation, including listening to God.
   - God may speak through stillness, peace, or gentle nudges.
   - Silence and reflection can be spiritually powerful.
6. **Prayer Changes Us**
   - Scientific research shows prayer can make us more compassionate and calmer.
   - Regular prayer helps us grow closer to both God and others.
7. **Example of Answered Prayer**
   - Share a story of a bold prayer and how it was answered clearly.
   - Emphasizes that while not all prayers are answered the same way, God listens and responds.
8. **Final Invitation**
   - Encourage students to begin or deepen their relationship with God through prayer.
   - Offer a closing prayer, inviting God to open students' hearts and lives.

Activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: INTERRUPTING PARTNER

Everyone finds a partner. At the same time, tell each other about your favorite holiday. Why is it your favorite holiday? What season is your favorite holiday in? What traditions does your family celebrate this holiday? Do you travel anywhere or get time off school as a part of this holiday? Take 2-3 minutes to talk at your partner about holidays, while they also talk at you about holidays, before coming back as a group and answering the following questions:

What happened when you both tried talking at the same time? Were you able to really listen to each other?

What was the problem with your conversation?

How is this sometimes like our prayers when we talk to God?

When you pray, do you spend more time listening or talking? How does God "talk back" to us?

OPTION 2: TELEPHONE PRAYERS

Sit in circle. Someone will start out the Telephone Prayer by whispering a phrase or sentence into the next person's ear. Pass along the phrase or sentence to by whispering it to the next person until it goes all around the circle. See if the phrase ends the same way it started! Then, discuss the following questions as a group:

What happened to our Telephone Prayer along the way as it got passed around the circle?

Does it ever feel like our prayers get jumbled or mixed up before they get to God?

Do you believe that God knows what we need, even when our prayers seem to come out wrong?

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Teaching Topics

Prayer is how we communicate with God. It should involve both talking to God as we lift up our prayers and thanks, as well as listening to God and seeking to hear God's voice. We are promised in 1 John 5:14-15 that God always hears our prayers.

ACTS is a format that is a useful way of structuring prayer:

> **Adoration:** This means praising God. For example, "God, you are an amazing and powerful God. You are awesome!"
>
> **Confession:** This is simply saying "I'm sorry." Confession is when we acknowledge that we have done things to hurt God and those around us. It may be, "Please forgive me for...." or "I'm sorry I...."
>
> **Thanksgiving:** This is saying "Thank you!" to God and naming all the things that you are grateful for.
>
> **Supplication:** This is asking God to supply all your needs. Lift up any requests and concerns that are on your mind.

Intercessory Prayer is praying on behalf of others (to "intercede" means to act for someone else). This means lifting someone else up to God when they are sick or going through a difficult situation. It is why we share joys and concerns with one another each week, so we can lift one another up in prayer!

Sometimes we don't know what to say when we pray. Sometimes our prayers sound more like sighs of disappointment or groans of frustration. We are promised in Romans 8:26 that the Holy Spirit intervenes on our behalf when we don't have the words to say to God: "In the same way, the Spirit comes to help our weakness. We don't know what we should pray, but the Spirit himself pleads our case with unexpressed groans."

Understandably, Jesus' disciples struggled with the idea of how to pray as well. They asked Jesus how they should try talking with God and Jesus' answer to them was an example we now know as The Lord's Prayer. In this prayer, we see Jesus practice the elements of prayer we've been talking about adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, and even intercession. Studying this prayer and praying this prayer whether out loud or in your head is a great way to communicate with God and learn how to continue talking with God.

Spiritual Disciplines (or Spiritual Practices) are other ways we can connect with God. Just like athletes work to discipline and train their physical bodies, Spiritual Disciplines help strengthen your spiritual life and bring you closer to God. Besides prayer, other spiritual disciplines include:

> **Solitude and Silence:** Solitude means spending time alone so that you can be with God without distraction. This may look like turning off our phones, spending time in nature, or going to a quiet place in your house. Practicing silence helps us to better listen to God's voice.
>
> **Sabbath:** Sabbath is actually a commandment from God where we are to stop working and take time to rest in God's presence. It could include setting aside time where you refrain from doing homework or chores to spend time with God.
>
> **Fasting:** To fast means to go without something for a set period of time. Fasting takes our focus off of material things and helps us rely fully on God. You can fast from certain foods (like chocolate) or from certain habits (like logging on to social media).
>
> **Worship:** This is the practice of taking time to go to church and worship God alongside other Christians.
>
> **Study:** This means spending time studying the Bible or reading other Christian books to help you grow in your knowledge and faith.
>
> **Meditation:** Focusing on a certain passage of Scripture (like in Lectio Divina) or silently repeating a certain prayer over and over again are both forms of meditation.

Accountability: Meeting with other Christians one-on-one or in a small group and challenging each other to become more like Christ in your words, thoughts, and actions.

Bible Connection

Read together our passage for today, found in Matthew 6:5-13.

Discuss

- How often do you speak (or text) with your best friend? Why do you spend so much time talking with your friends?
- How often do you set aside time to talk with God? Why do you think prayer is important?
- In the Scripture passage from today, what things does Jesus say NOT to do when we pray? What things should we do when we pray?
- Do you think God knows what we need before we even ask it? If so, then why should we pray?
- What are some potential challenges or roadblocks to prayer?
- Look at the list of spiritual disciplines. Have you ever engaged in any of these spiritual disciplines? How do they help us grow closer to God? Which one(s) could you try out?

Challenge

ANCIENT PRAYERS

Sometimes praying to God can be hard because we don't know what to say or which words to use. Throughout the history of Christianity, many others have written prayers that we can use to talk to God. For example, the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer found in the front of your journal was written by John Wesley (the founder of Methodism). During this week, use the Wesley Covenant Prayer or pick one or two other famous prayers of the church listed below and offer them up as your own prayer to God.

A PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me bring love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

ST. PATRICK'S BREASTPLATE PRAYER

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me,
Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ where I lie, Christ where I sit, Christ where I arise,

Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks to me, Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.
Salvation is of the Lord.
Salvation is of the Christ.
May your salvation, Lord, be ever with us.

A PRAYER BY ST. TERESA OF AVILA
Govern everything by your wisdom, O Lord, so that my soul may always be serving you in the way you will and not as I choose. Let me die to myself so that I may serve you; let me live to you who are life itself. Amen.

SERENITY PRAYER BY REINHOLD NIEBUHR
God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardship as a pathway to peace; taking, as Jesus did,
this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it;
trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to Your will;
so that I may be reasonable happy in this life
and supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen.

A PRAYER BY THOMAS MERTON
My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see
the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Mark 6:31-32
Luke 11:1-13
Romans 8:26-28
James 5:13-18

UNIT 3

Unit 3 God the Son

Session 1: The New Testament
Session 2: Jesus: God With Us
Session 3: Relationship Restored
Session 4: The Promise of the Resurrection

>> UNIT OVERVIEW

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;
the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence, he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

In this unit we will explore God's choice to come to the world in human form and the significance of this choice as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. It will be important to note that God has not changed in continuing to pursue a relationship with people. In fact, God continues to amp up the pursuit. In Jesus, God is not only with us, but God has restored the relationship. Because of the resurrection, the relationship cannot be broken by people. This is significant in how we continue to understand how God relates to the entire world and to us individually.

Unit 3 // Session 1

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 58 in the Student Journal.

This week we are exploring the New Testament! Most students will be more familiar with the message of the New Testament than the Old. Students may also appreciate that or question why it is so much shorter than the Old Testament!

Once again, there is a lot of information in the teaching topics section, so be sure to take a look at that before class so you are ready to go over it with your students.

Students often have questions about Revelation—for such a small part of the Bible, it sure creates a lot of controversy. Please encourage them to write those questions down if there is no time to discuss them now. Be sure to read the information shared in the teaching topics about Revelation with the students, as it may answer a few of those questions.

Main Point

The New Testament explores Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, and then provides many accounts of the early Christian church.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Review and Connect

Last week, we discussed prayer and talking with God.

1. What is the ACTS format for prayer? Or what is another useful guide for praying that you have learned?
2. Why is it important to pray, even if God knows everything?
3. How can prayer be helpful when we sin or "miss the mark"?

This week we will be diving into the New Testament to understand how it is organized and when it was written.

Video Outline

Exploring the New Testament and Abundant Life in Jesus

1. Personal Story and Introduction
   - Share a personal story that prompted deep reflection on what it means to live a meaningful life.

- Share discoveries you made about faith, values, and relationships were central to that meaning.

2. Invitation to Reflect During Confirmation
   - Confirmation is a time to reflect on personal beliefs.
   - Whether faith is new or lifelong, it's a chance to ask big questions.
3. The New Testament and the Life of Jesus
   - John 10:10 – Jesus came so we can have life abundantly.
   - The Gospels show Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.
   - Jesus is God in human form who brings hope, joy, and love.
4. Key Themes in the New Testament
   - Love for God and others, human suffering, and belonging in God's kingdom.
   - Acts and letters show the early church's experiences and struggles.
   - These themes continue from the Old Testament and remain relevant today.
5. Revelation and the Hope of What's to Come
   - Revelation points to the fulfillment of God's promises.
   - It connects the story from the Garden of Eden to future restoration.
   - Jesus' resurrection brings meaning now and hope for the future.
6. Invitation to Engage with the Bible
   - Read the New Testament, especially the Gospels, to discover more about Jesus.
   - Ask questions, notice patterns, and be open to learning and growth.
   - The early church's struggles can help us understand our own faith challenges.
7. Living Out Faith Daily
   - Practice faith by loving God and others, making mistakes, and seeking forgiveness.
   - Faith grows and changes with life seasons and new perspectives.
   - Struggles and questions are part of the journey.
8. Healing, Wholeness, and Choosing Abundant Life
   - John 5: Jesus asks, "Do you want to be made well?"
   - We are invited to choose Jesus and the life He offers.
9. Final Encouragement
   - Keep reflecting, learning, and sharing God's love.
   - You are loved and supported on this confirmation journey.
   - Your presence and faith bless the community.

Activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: New Testament Scramble

Prep: Write the books of the New Testament on index cards, one book/card.

Split your class into groups of 3-5 and give each group a set of index cards. Give students 3 minutes to try and put the index cards in order without using their Bible. After the 3-minute timer goes off, you can have students check their work against the Table of Contents in their Bible or give them a bonus minute where they can use any resource to get them in order. The group with the most correct at the end wins.

You'll be split into groups of 3-5, and each group is given a set of index cards. You'll have 3 minutes to try and put the index cards in order without using your Bible. After the 3-minute timer goes off, you can check your work against the Table of Contents in your Bible. The group with the most correct at the end, wins.

OPTION 2: TRUE or FALSE: New Testament Facts
Prep: Assign one wall as true and one wall as false. You may wish to label them.
As you read each statement, students should stand up and move to the wall that they believe aligns with the statement you read.

- The New Testament talks about the birth of the church as we know it (TRUE – the birth of the church is called Pentecost, and we read about that in Acts)
- Every gospel tells the same stories (FALSE – while there are similarities in the Gospels, some characters, stories, and details are different)
- Jesus spends time in prayer (TRUE – Throughout the gospels, we see Jesus taking time to pray)
- Jesus wrote the New Testament as an autobiography (FALSE – the New Testament is written by many different people who had encounters with Jesus.)
- The New Testament was written originally in Greek (TRUE – Greek was the common language at the time).
- There are 5 Gospels (This one is a little tricky, but we would probably say FALSE – there are 4, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; or TRUE – Some scholars count "Acts" as a Gospel, or as the "sequel" to Luke. You can talk about this with your students!)

One wall is true, and one wall is false. As you hear each statement, you should stand up and move to the wall that you believe aligns with the statement you heard.

1. There are 5 Gospels.
2. The New Testament talks about the birth of the church as we know it.
3. Every gospel tells the same stories.
4. Jesus spends time in prayer.
5. Jesus wrote the New Testament as an autobiography.
6. The New Testament was written originally in Greek.

Teaching Topics

NEW TESTAMENT – Hundreds of years after the last part of the Old Testament was written, Jesus was born. The New Testament begins with the stories of his birth, ministry, death, and resurrection (the Gospels), which are followed by stories of the early Christian church.

4 Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. These books each tell the Good News: the story of Jesus's life and resurrection.

1 Early Church Account – Acts. This book tells the story of the early Christian church. Because Acts was written by Luke, it is sometimes included in "The Gospels." It's essentially the sequel to the Gospel of Luke.

21 Letters or Epistles - Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude. These books consist of letters written to and from ancient Christians containing advice and explanations regarding the Christian faith and its implications for our lives. Many of these were written by Paul.

1 Apocalyptic Book – Revelation. This book, written by a man called John, describes a series of visions he had. It follows the conventions of apocalyptic literature of its time and can be difficult for modern readers to comprehend without an understanding of its context.

NOTES ON THE GOSPELS

The stories of Jesus's life were written down decades after they happened. They were passed down by word of mouth before that. Because they started as stories the early Christians told each other out loud (rather than in writing), some details of the stories can be a little different from gospel to gospel. The writers of each Gospel also had different intended audiences and emphasized different parts of Jesus's life. However, the big parts line up, which is how we know we can trust the big message: Jesus lived, died, and was resurrected, and because of him we know the worst thing is never the last thing.

Jesus was the son of God. He was also a Rabbi, or a Jewish teacher. He was also a prophet who led by example. He showed God's radical love for all people and all types of people, regardless of their status in society, and ultimately, that's why he was put to death. But he rose again in victory over the grave as the Messiah, showing us that not even death can stop God's love for us.

NOTES ON THE EARLY CHURCH

- Jesus instructed followers to go live out his teachings and spread the Good News about God's love.
- These early Christians were originally a sect of Judaism, but they welcomed non-Jews, too, and eventually became a separate religion: Christianity.
- To understand the letters to and from early church leaders, it can be helpful to know the historical context. What was going on in the church, and the world, that can help us to understand each book? A study Bible will often provide that context for us.

NOTES ON REVELATION

- Revelation stands out, as it is very different from the other books in the New Testament. There was a genre (a category) of writing at the time called Apocalyptic Literature, and Revelation is an example of that genre. Apocalyptic literature was often a written account of someone's wild dream or vision.
- The authors and readers of Apocalyptic Literature do not necessarily believe everything in each vision is 100% going to happen but instead are trying to figure out what it means. What's the truth underneath a vision, and what can we learn from it?
- It's helpful to keep all this in mind when we read Revelation. The book is meant to be wild to catch people's attention. Then it encourages believers to hold onto their belief even when it's difficult, because in the end, Jesus wins. Revelation ends in hope: Jesus comes back and restores things to the way they should be.

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in Luke 24:44-49 and 1 Corinthians 15:55-58.

Discuss

- Imagine the lives of those who followed God in the time between the Old and New Testaments. For four hundred years, God seemed silent and far away. Then suddenly, a savior was born. How would that be? Would it have been hard to believe? Why or why not?
- What do you think life was like for Jesus's followers during his life?
- What do you think life was like for the early Christians?
- How does the New Testament fit with the Old Testament?
- Do you have a favorite story about Jesus?
- Do you have a favorite Bible verse in the New Testament?
- What surprised you from what you learned today?
- What is something you would like to know more about regarding the New Testament?

Challenge

MEMORY VERSE: NEW TESTAMENT CHALLENGE

- This week, students will choose a verse from the New Testament to commit to memory. Encourage them to choose a verse they have not already memorized.
- There are many good options; encourage them to use the internet (search "verses about ____," or "verses for when you feel ____," etc.). They can also flip through their Bible and see what stands out to them or pull a verse from some of the passages we have read so far this year.
- Have them write the full verse in their journal so they can share it with the group next week!

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Romans 1:16-17
Philippians 1:9-11
Colossians 3:16-17
2 Timothy 4:17-18

Unit 3 // Session 2

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 64 in the Student Journal.

In the Story of God, after our perfect relationship with God was broken, God tried telling humans how to once again live in a restored relationship with one another and with the created world. God even entered into a special covenant relationship with a certain group of humans, the Israelites, and out of that relationship the Law was formed. However, humans continued to falter and stumble.

Often, it's more effective to show someone how to live than just tell them. So, God chose to be born as a human baby. As Eugene Peterson writes in The Message paraphrase of the Bible, "The Word [Jesus] became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood" (John 1:14). We call this concept the incarnation, and it means that God came into the world as the person of Jesus.

The incarnation is also one of the most confusing beliefs in the Christian faith. Christian tradition holds the belief that Jesus is fully human AND fully divine. He is 100% of both. This "God math" doesn't really make sense to us as linear, logical, and binary thinkers. We tend to think in "either/or" compartments, but God helps us think in "both/and" ways. Like the Trinity, it is something of a mystery that we cannot fully understand or explain, and it takes faith to hold on to this concept.

Adults even have a hard time understanding that Jesus is both fully human and fully God, so be gracious with your students. Treat their questions as if they are giving you an opportunity to explore these concepts alongside them. Take a moment to ask them what they think before you give an answer. As always, it's also okay to say, "I don't know either! But that's a great question, and I'm glad you asked it. It really gives us something to think about."

For more information on the incarnation, check out the video on YouTube, "The Incarnation" by 3 Minute Theology (www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6XMn-yH71E).

Main Point

Jesus came to earth to remind us that God deeply desires to be in relationship with us, to give us new life, to show us how to live, and to invite us into an exciting purpose.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Review and Connect

Last week, students chose a verse to memorize. Give them a couple of minutes to do a quick review with a partner, then ask them to share with the class if they can. If they are uncomfortable, you be the judge: do they want you to try to coach them through it, or would they prefer to be skipped? Either way, check in with them at the end of class to make sure they are comfortable with the challenge for this upcoming week.

Knowing your students, you may decide they would do better in smaller groups sharing their verses or perhaps doing a quick recitation just for one of the mentors. Every student is different and has a different level of comfort and confidence. We want to make sure they don't stay home because they are afraid of a memory verse—use your best judgment here and let the student ministry staff know if you have questions or concerns.

Last week, we discussed the New Testament.

1. What is the New Testament trying to communicate?
2. How does the Old Testament and New Testament work together?
3. What was your memory verse for last week's challenge?

This week, we will explore how God through Jesus continues to express God's desire for a relationship and how Jesus gives us guidance on how to also be in relationship with one another.

Video Outline

Understanding Who Jesus Is

1. Introduction to the Session
   - Session focuses on Jesus, often the go-to answer in Sunday school.
2. Household Rules and Strange Biblical Rules
   - Shares common household rules to relate to students.
   - Introduces unusual Old Testament rules (e.g., clothing laws, not eating owls).
   - Explain that these rules were part of a covenant between God and the Jewish people.
3. Jesus as the New Covenant
   - Old rules were hard to follow, so God made a new covenant through Jesus.
   - John 3:16 explains God's love and the gift of eternal life through Jesus.
   - Jesus is God with us—this is called "incarnation" (fully human and fully divine).
   - Unique Christian belief that God came to live among us.
4. Who Jesus Was (According to Scripture)
   - Jesus wasn't a warrior like Thor but a healer and teacher.
   - He performed miracles: healed diseases, raised the dead, calmed storms.
   - He chose compassion and love over power and destruction.
   - Jesus experienced life as a human—including being a teenager.
5. Jesus as Our Example
   - Jesus treated others with kindness and love.
   - His life shows us how to handle hard things and love people well.
   - Matthew 22: Greatest commandments are to love God and love others.
6. Jesus as the Light of the World
   - In worship, lighting candles symbolizes Jesus' presence.
   - Especially meaningful at Christmas with candlelight services.
   - Lighting a candle at home can reminds us we're never alone—Jesus is with us.

7. Final Encouragement
   - Jesus came for each of us and loves us deeply.
   - We can look to Jesus' life and teachings to guide how we live.

Activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: SIGNS

Stand in a circle as a group with one person in the middle. Each person should come up with their own "sign," such as tugging their ear, waving a hand, showing the peace sign, giving a thumbs up, or scratching their cheek. These should be physical movements that don't make noise. Go around the circle and demonstrate your sign to the group so everyone knows what each other's sign is.

The person in the middle will close their eyes while the rest of the group decides who will start the game by showing their sign first. The goal of game is to silently pass their signs along without the person in the middle "catching" the sign. You pass a sign by doing your sign first and then the sign of the player you are passing to. Pay attention because the signs move quickly!

The game continues until someone is caught passing the sign by the player in the middle, and then the person caught becomes the guesser in the middle.

Just like we copy one another's "signs" in this game, we are to model our lives after Jesus and how he taught us how to live!

OPTION 2: DIVINE AND HUMAN

To prep for today's activity, "Divine and Human," create two signs: one that says, "Jesus as Human" and one that says, "Jesus as God." Place them on opposite sides of the room. Use the following Bible verses from Luke for the activity. Feel free to use them all or to do as many as time allows. Let the students choose whether the verse better represents "Jesus as Human" or "Jesus as God" before telling them the answer. Encourage them to explain why they answered the way that they did. Call on specific students to say why they answered the way they did for optimal learning!

VERSES FOR THE ACTIVITY, "DIVINE AND HUMAN"

Luke 1:32-33 - "He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom." [Jesus as God - "Son of the Most High" refers to God's Son, and this kingdom he will be given is infinite, unlike every kingdom on earth that has boundaries]

Luke 2:7 - "She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger." [Jesus as Human - he was born, as all humans are]

Luke 3:23 - "Jesus was about 30 years old when he began his ministry. People supposed that he was the son of Joseph son of Heli." [Jesus as Human - he had parents and aged]

Luke 4:2 - "There he was tempted for forty days by the devil. He ate nothing during those days and afterward Jesus was starving." [Jesus as Human - human bodies require nourishment and experience hunger and thirst]

Luke 4:34-35 - "Hey! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the holy one from God." "Silence!" Jesus said, speaking harshly to the demon. "Come out of him!" The demon threw the man down before them, then came out of him without harming him." [Jesus as God - he had power over the demon]

Luke 5:13 - "Jesus reached out his hand, touched him, and said, "Be clean." Instantly, the skin disease left him." [Jesus as God - God heals]

Luke 7:36 - "One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to eat with him. After he entered the Pharisee's home, he took his place at the table." [Jesus as Human - humans eat!]

Luke 8:24 - "So they went and woke Jesus, shouting, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" But he got up and gave orders to the wind and the violent waves. The storm died down and it was calm." [Jesus as God - he commanded creation]

Luke 9:29 - As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes flashed white like lightning. [Jesus as God - unexplainable events]

Luke 19:41 - As Jesus came to the city and observed it, he wept over it. [Jesus as Human - he experienced human emotions and responses to those emotions]

Luke 22:14 - When the time came, Jesus took his place at the table, and the apostles joined him. [Jesus as Human - humans eat!]

Luke 24:51-52 - As he blessed them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. They worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem overwhelmed with joy. [Jesus as God - unexplainable events, joined God the Creator in heaven]

Jesus is described in scripture as both "The Son of God" and "The Son of Man." This activity shows both his humanity and his divinity through several passages from the Gospel of Luke.

To start, everyone should stand in line (shoulder to shoulder) in the center of the room. One side of the room will be labeled "Jesus as Human" and the other side of the room will be labeled "Jesus as God." When the teacher reads each passage from Luke (found in the TEACHER'S GUIDE), students will have to decide whether that verse better represents Jesus' humanity or Jesus' divinity, and then walk to that side of the room.

Once you complete the activity, discuss the following questions as a group:

- In what ways does the Bible show us Jesus Christ as a true human being?
- In what ways does the Bible show us Jesus Christ as divine, as the Son of God, or God in the flesh?
- Which verses did you have the hardest time choosing one over the other? (Remember, although we played it this way, Jesus is BOTH human and God all of the time.)

Teaching Topics

Often, it's easier to show someone something than to tell them. Because of this, God came to us, as one of us, to show us these things:

- God is real and active among us: Many people in the Bible were able to see, hear, and touch God. For us, God is often unseen, and because of that, hard for us to understand. By looking at the life of Jesus, it is easier for us to see and understand what God is like.
- God madly and deeply loves each one of us: God came in human form as Jesus to live among us. It would have been easier to stay distant and removed, but by coming to earth, God showed just how much we are loved.
- We can live a life for more than ourselves: Jesus gave his life to serve and care for others. He demonstrated compassion and helped those who were in need. He spoke up for those who did not have a voice in society and challenged those who were in power. He suffered rejection and death at the hands of people, but he still loved them.
- We can bring God to earth through our everyday words and actions: We are invited to continue the work that Jesus started while he lived and walked on the earth. With our very lives, we can help make the earth look a little bit more like God intended it.

Jesus is "The Incarnation," meaning "God in the flesh." God came into our world through the human person of Jesus. Because of this, Jesus is the perfect image of the unseen God.

Jesus is both fully God and fully human. Jesus is not 50% God and 50% human. He is 100% of both. So, perhaps you could say that he is 200% altogether: 100% God, 100% Human.

Bible Connection

Read together our passage for today, found in John 1:1-18.

Discuss

- Does this passage remind you of anything or spark any memories for you?
- What specific parts from this passage help you see God as human and God as divine?
- What questions do you still have about Jesus being both human and God?
- We believe that Jesus is BOTH fully God AND fully human, not "either/ or." Is there anything else you can think of that is also "both" rather than "either/or"?
- How does knowing that Jesus was a human like us encourage you?

Challenge

GOD SIGHTINGS

God is still showing up for us in human and divine ways. Jesus came as God in the flesh, but since we continue Jesus' work on earth, we can see God working through other humans too. God can even work through us to speak to or help other people!

Choose three days this week to watch out for "God Sightings." Make sure to pick one of your favorite days and one of your least favorite days. On those days, keep an eye out for where God is at work. Look for God at work while you're at home, at school, at practice, on social media... wherever! Look for God when you wake up, when you go to sleep, and everywhere in between.

In your journal make three columns. In the first column, note where you saw God at work. In the second, note what God was doing. In the third, decide whether that reminded you more of God at work through humans or God doing something more divine.

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages:

Hebrews 4:14-15
1 John 4:10
1 John 5:11-13
Colossians 1:15-19

Unit 3 // Session 3

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 70 in the Student Journal.

When it comes to talking about salvation, a lot of "Christianese" gets thrown around in the conversation. You may have heard big words like "atonement," "conversion," "justification," or "sanctification" used to explain God's plan of salvation for humanity. Over the years, Christian scholars have even come up with various models or theories to explain how Jesus' death on the cross made a way for humans to be saved. We call these explanations "atonement theories," and they are metaphors we use to better understand Christ's actions on the cross. These metaphors include comparisons such as the Jewish sacrificial system, deliverance from slavery, a courtroom scene, a ransom exchanged for our lives, and ultimate victory over death.

While these analogies are sometimes useful, the main point of salvation is this: Jesus provided a way for us to be in right relationship with God. This week, when teaching your students about forgiveness and grace, try not to just focus on the "churchy words," and instead invite them to accept Jesus' invitation to be in relationship with God. Remind them that we don't need to do anything to earn God's love, and there's nothing we can do that will take God's love away.

Main Point

Through Jesus, we can be in right relationship with God. This happens because we are given God's forgiveness and grace.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group. Try to do it from memory! You'll want to have it memorized before the confirmation ceremony.

Review and Connect

Last week we talked about God being with us in the form of Jesus.

1. How is Jesus 100% divine and 100% human?
2. What does "the Incarnation" mean?"
3. In what ways does the Bible show Jesus as being divine?
4. In what ways does the Bible show Jesus as human?

This week we will discuss how our understanding of Jesus's divinity and humanity allows us to experience God's love in our lives through forgiveness and grace.

Video Outline

Understanding God's Grace and a Restored Relationship

1. Introduction to Grace
   - God's grace restores our relationship with God—past, present, and future.
   - Isaiah 53:6 compares us to sheep who wander and need a shepherd.
   - Sin is the separation from God caused by selfish choices.
2. Jesus, the Good Shepherd
   - Jesus lays down His life for us, like a shepherd caring for sheep.
   - Jesus seeks the lost and rejoices when they are found.
   - We are valuable to God, and He pursues us with love.
3. The Gift of Grace
   - Grace is God's love and forgiveness given freely, not something we earn.
   - It is the foundation of our restored relationship with God.
4. Three Types of Grace in the Methodist Tradition
   - *Prevenient Grace*:
     - Comes before we accept God's invitation.
     - God is always reaching out to us, wanting relationship.
   - *Justifying Grace*:
     - Happens when we accept God's love and ask for forgiveness.
     - Like the Prodigal Son, we are welcomed back with celebration.
     - Restores us to right relationship with God.
   - *Sanctifying Grace*:
     - Helps us grow more like Jesus daily.
     - Guides us through life's highs and lows (Psalm 23).
     - Continues shaping our hearts in love and faithfulness.
5. Living in Grace
   - Grace means we are always pursued by God's love.
   - We are not just forgiven—we are celebrated.
   - As we grow in grace, we experience peace, joy, and deeper connection with God.
   - God's grace is a free gift—we only need to accept it.

Activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: LOST SHEEP

Have someone in your group volunteer to be the "Lost Sheep." This person will be blindfolded. Pick someone else in your group to be the "Shepherd."

After you blindfold the "Lost Sheep," quickly set up a short obstacle course in your meeting space using chairs, books, coats, or anything else available.

The Shepherd has to safely guide the Lost Sheep around and through the obstacle course using only their voice to lead them. The Shepherd cannot touch the Lost Sheep, and no other members of the group can help out. Will the Lost Sheep be able to follow the instructions of the Shepherd and make their way back home?

OPTION :2 WOULD YOU RATHER?
Discuss the following "Would You Rather?" questions before you dig into today's session:

Would you rather have cake at every meal or never have to eat vegetables again?
Would you rather keep your siblings or be an only child?
Would you rather have hair that always smelled like manure or always have dirty, messy clothes?
Would you rather have to share a room with your sibling for the rest of your life or never have to do chores around the house again?
Would you rather be rich with no friends, or be poor but have friends?
Would you rather throw a party for someone else or have a surprise party thrown for you?
Would you rather be a sheep or be a pig? OR, Would you rather be a shepherd or a pig farmer?
Would you rather lose something valuable to you or be lost in the wilderness?

Teaching Topics

Although our human inclination may be to choose selfishness and to follow our own paths; through Jesus, God forgives our self-centered actions and shows us how to follow in Christ's footsteps, leaving behind our self-centered ways. Through Jesus, our broken relationship with God can be restored and made whole once again. We didn't do anything to earn or deserve this invitation to be reunited with God. Instead, God freely gives us this extraordinary love. We call this undeserved or unconditional love or favor grace.

SALVATION is how God forgives our sins and delivers us from our sinful desires. Just as God delivered Israelites from slavery in Egypt, God offers us this same deliverance from our sins through salvation.

ATONEMENT ("At-One-Ment") means that we can be "at one" with God again. Even though our sins have caused a break in our relationship with God, through God's love and Christ's atonement, we can be in harmony with God once again.

GRACE is the undeserved kindness and love that God gives all of us. We didn't do anything to earn God's grace, and there is nothing we can do that will take it away. Grace allows us to be in relationship with God. It is a free gift from God that we can choose to accept or reject.
In Methodism, we recognize that there are three different forms of grace:

1. **Prevenient Grace** comes to us before we are even aware of God. Before we have accepted the invitation to be in relationship with God, prevenient grace is how God calls out to each and every one of us, inviting us to join God's family.
2. **Justifying Grace** is the grace that comes when we choose to be in relationship with God. It makes it "Just as If I'd" never sinned or had a broken relationship with God.
3. **Sanctifying Grace** is the grace that draws us deeper into a relationship with God. Salvation is not meant to be a one-time thing. Through sanctifying grace, we become more and more like Christ each day as we choose to follow God's will for our lives. Another word for Sanctifying Grace is "holiness," because we have been set apart by God and made whole and complete once again.

Remember our session on sin called "Relationship: Broken"? Grace provides the path to closing the chasm or separation that sin had caused between us and God. Through Jesus, we can be in right relationship with God, and the divide between us and God is overcome.

Bible Connection

Read together our passage for today, found in Luke 15:11-32.

Discuss

- Which of the two sons in the story do you relate to more: the younger son who went away or the older son who stayed behind?
- How did the younger son sin against his father and cause a break in their relationship?
- In what ways did the father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son show grace to his two sons?
- Do you think the father in the story was fair? Is grace fair?
- Is asking for God's forgiveness a one-time thing or an ongoing process? Do you ever feel like you are not worthy of God's love?

Challenge

Supplies Needed: Rubber Band or Wristband
For the "Wristband Challenge" this week, you might want to provide some cheap bracelets or rubber bands for the students. You may even choose to ask next week how many of them kept up with the Wristband Challenge.

WRISTBAND CHALLENGE
Throughout the Bible, we are told to show grace and extend forgiveness to others since God forgave us. Colossians 3:13 says, "Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other."

But sometimes it is hard to give grace to those around us. Who are the people who get on your nerves most? Maybe a sibling? Maybe an annoying classmate or teacher? Make an effort this week to extend grace to those people, even when they don't deserve it!

To help you do this, wear a rubber band or wristband on your wrist, and every time you choose grace, even though it is easier to choose annoyance or anger, switch the band to the other arm. Count how many times you switch the band during the week. At the end of the week, take some time to reflect on this question: How did showing grace to others teach you more about God's grace for us?

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Psalm 103:8-13
Luke 15:1-10
James 1:2-3
Psalm 1:1-3

Unit 3 // Session 4

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 76 in the Student Journal.

Can you imagine the pain, desperation, and hopelessness that the disciples felt after Jesus was crucified and buried? They had left their homes, their jobs, their families, and their lives to follow after Jesus. But now he was dead, and they didn't know where to go or what to do. John 20:11 tells us that Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus' friends and followers, stood outside his tomb and wept.

But, as those early disciples learned, Jesus always keeps his promises. While he was still alive, Jesus declared, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though they die. Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25-26). So even though he was dead and buried, on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead and came back to life! Jesus fulfilled his promise that he would be resurrected, and that gives us hope today.

Because of Jesus' resurrection, death has ultimately been conquered. 1 Corinthians 15:54-55 says this, "Death has been swallowed up by a victory. Where is your victory, Death? Where is your sting, Death?" And because we believe in Jesus, we have been invited into his resurrection. Jesus conquered the grave and promises that we can follow in his footsteps. Just like death was not the end for Jesus, death is not the end for those who believe in him.

You may have heard Pastor Adam Hamilton, or another pastor say, "The worst thing is never the last thing." (This quote is attributed to Frederich Buechner.) What that means is that because of God's promises and Jesus' resurrection, death is not the end. Death does not have the final word. Because of this truth, we can have hope even in the face of death and pain and sorrow.

This session will be one of hope for your students, but it could possibly be a painful one for them too. For those students that have lost a loved one or are going through a difficult time, it may be hard to believe in the promise of the resurrection. Be sensitive to the struggles they may be going through and invite them to lean into the promises of God, even when it is difficult to do so.

Main Point

Because Jesus rose from the dead, we believe that death is not the end. Christ defeated death once and for all through his resurrection.

Review and Connect

Previously, we discussed God's forgiveness and grace.

1. What do we have to do to earn God's forgiveness? (A trick question!)
2. What are the three forms of grace recognized in Methodism?
3. What is Jesus's role in forgiveness? (We'll learn more in a few weeks!)

Video Outline

The Promise of the Resurrection

1. Introduction
   - The journey of confirmation is important for exploring questions about identity and God
   - This is a safe space to express doubts and learn from others
   - Everyone's faith journey matters
2. Trust and Broken Promises
   - People sometimes break promises, which can make us question trust
   - God, however, always keeps promises
   - Scripture reassures us that God will be with us in hard times
3. Hope and Purpose
   - Everyone hopes for something; to make the world better
   - Daily actions should reflect creating good in the world
   - Hope shows up in both joyful and difficult life moments
4. The Promise of the Resurrection
   - At every funeral, pastors declare Jesus's promise of eternal life
   - Jesus's resurrection means death is not the end—life with God continues
   - This promise brings hope even on the hardest days
5. The Story of Jesus's Resurrection (John 20)
   - Mary Magdalene and the disciples discover the empty tomb
   - Their emotions range from fear and confusion to belief and joy
   - Jesus appears to Mary, bringing her hope and purpose
6. The Power of Emotions in the Resurrection Story
   - Identifying emotions helps us relate to the story
   - What began as a dark day ended with the best news: Jesus is alive
   - This shift shows the worst thing is never the last thing
7. Personal Story of Loss and Hope
   - Share a story of loss
   - Through grief, the hope of resurrection and eternal life is experienced
   - Hope helps support others through similar pain
8. Living the Resurrection Now
   - The resurrection isn't just a future hope—it changes us now
   - God brings life to dead parts of our story
   - Brokenness can be transformed into something good
9. Final Encouragement
   - God always keeps promises
   - The worst things in life don't get the final word
   - The promise of resurrection brings hope today and forever
   - This hope is not just for others—it's true for you too

Activity

RESURRECTION TAG

This game is a modified version of "Freeze Tag." One person will be "It." If you are tagged by the player who is "It," then you must fall down on the ground as if you are dead. But if someone else who is not dead touches you, then you are "resurrected," and can continue playing until you are tagged out again.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Teaching Topics

Sometimes, Christians spend a lot more time talking more about Jesus' death on the cross than they do about his resurrection. But at the same time, we sometimes want to skip past Jesus' death and jump ahead to the resurrection. While our faith is founded on Jesus' resurrection, we do not want to forget that Jesus also died for us on the cross. Without the crucifixion on Friday night, we wouldn't have the resurrection on Sunday morning.

Because of Jesus' resurrection, we know these things:

- Death is not the end. We don't have to fear death, because we know that Jesus has conquered death once and for all. As the Apostle Paul states, "Death has been swallowed up in victory!" (1 Corinthians 15:54)
- We can trust that God will keep God's promises. The greatest promise in the Bible is that Jesus would be resurrected from the dead, and we believe that promise has already come true. While he was still alive, Jesus promised: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though they die. Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25-26)." This promise was fulfilled when Jesus rose from the dead back to life.
- Resurrection is the ultimate destination for Christians. Like Jesus, one day we too will be raised from the dead—being brought back the way Jesus was brought back into a similar but different body. We too get to experience the awesome resurrection of Christ!
- We are told in the gospels that Jesus appeared to multiple people after he was raised to life again; Paul writes that he appeared to 500 people! (1 Corinthians 15:5). We also know that Jesus talked with people, ate, and drank, and allowed others to touch him, proving that he was not just a ghost (Luke 24:30, 37-43; John 20:27). But even some of his own disciples still had trouble accepting that the unbelievable had happened and that Jesus had come back to life.

The belief in Jesus' resurrection is often a hard one for people to understand. Like many aspects of our Christian faith, the Resurrection of Jesus is something that takes faith to believe in, and we may never fully understand it in this lifetime.

Bible Connection

Read together our passage for today, found in John 20:1-18.

Discuss

- How do you imagine Mary felt when she first arrived at the tomb? How did her feelings change when she saw Jesus?
- Why do you think Mary didn't recognize Jesus at first? What caused Mary to eventually realize the "gardener" was actually Jesus?
- Have you had a friend or family member die? What sort of feelings or emotions did you have after their death?
- How does Jesus' resurrection give us hope even after the deaths of people we love?
- Does knowing Jesus was raised back to life change the way you think of your own life?
- Besides the promise of the resurrection, what are other promises God has made to us?

Challenge

GOD'S PROMISES

Over and over in the Bible, God made promises. The good news for us is that God always keeps God's promises, and God's promises are still true for us today! 2 Corinthians 1:20 says, "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ" (NIV).

Take a few minutes to read through these promises from God in the Bible:

Deuteronomy 31:8
Psalm 34:17
Isaiah 40:28-29
Isaiah 41:13
Matthew 11:28
1 John 1:9

In your journal, write your answers to the questions below:

- Which of these promises from God is most helpful for you today?
- Which of these promises do you have a hard time believing today?
- How have you seen God's promises come true in your own life?

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Luke 24:1-35
1 Corinthians 15:3-7, 20-22
1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

UNIT 4

Unit 4 God as Holy Spirit

Session 1: The Holy Trinity – Spiritual Gifts Assessment
Seasonal: Advent and Christmas
Session 2: Partnering with God's Mission
Session 3: What's Yet to Come

>> UNIT OVERVIEW

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.

Well, here we are at the most difficult concept (other than the resurrection) to fully understand, the Holy Spirit. While the Apostles' Creed is pretty clear about God the Father and God the Son, the Holy Spirit gets lumped in with the catholic (universal) church, saints, forgiveness and the resurrection, some of which we have already covered in previous units. That is to say, there is some overlap when considering the Holy Spirit and the other parts of the Trinity. While Jesus is resurrected, and God forgives our sins, the Holy Spirit is also at work within us for us to be able to forgive others and to experience resurrection as well. The Holy Spirit is that part of the Trinity within us. It is how we express our Christian conviction to the world through the spiritual gifts we are given. It is how we carry out our mission. It is how we look for hope in the future. The Holy Spirit is a motivator, an encourager and an inner voice that counsels us when we are searching for answers. In this unit, we will explore these concepts and, quite possibly more as it relates to how God moves in us and through us in this world.

Included in this unit is a session on Advent and Christmas and how we are reminded annually of Jesus being born into our lives. Even though the resurrection is celebrated at Easter, Christmas can also be a time when we can fully appreciate the newness of the gift of the baby Jesus and how the freshness of God's love can continue to shine in our lives.

Unit 4 // Session 1

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 84 in the Student Journal.

One of the unique characteristics of Christianity that sets us apart from other monotheistic religions (religions that worship one God, such as Islam and Judaism) is our belief in a Triune God. We believe that our God is a Trinity—Three in One.

Teaching the Trinity is difficult. We use metaphors and analogies to talk about it, but our human explanations fall short. It doesn't make logical sense that something can be three AND one! This can be exceptionally hard for younger students who are transitioning from concrete to abstract thinking.

The most common way we understand God as a Trinity is by the three different Persons of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. There is no hierarchy in the Trinity—no one Person of the Trinity is higher or greater than the others. Each member of the Trinity submits to the two others. Think of it as a dance, where each Person of the Trinity is continually acting as both the lead and the follower.

We need to embrace the mystery of the Trinity and accept that God's ways are higher than our own understanding. As you teach this week, it is okay to tell students, "I don't fully understand this either, but I believe it to be true." Don't be afraid to lean into the mystery and tension of the Trinity!

For more information about the Holy Trinity, check out the videos on YouTube, "Christian Trinity Explained in 3 Minutes (Father, Spirit, Son)," Part 1 and Part 2 (youtu.be/AQkFlzFJ3kA and youtu.be/mvj87QCF0lg)

Important note!
Everyone will need to take the spiritual gifts assessment in order to participate in next week's session. The assessment can be taken online at umc.org/what-we-believe/spiritual-gifts-online-assessment.

Main Point

As Christians, we believe that our God is a Triune God: A God that is Three-Beings-in-One. We call this the "Trinity."

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Review and Connect

Last week we discussed the Resurrection.

1. What promise(s) did God make to us with Jesus's resurrection?
2. What does Jesus's resurrection mean to you?
3. What does it mean for all people?
4. Where does the Resurrection appear in the Apostles' Creed?

This week we will be discussing the Holy Spirit, the third part of the Trinity and how God works in and through us.

Video Outline

Understanding the Holy Trinity

1. **Introduction to the Trinity**
   - The Trinity is central and unique to the Christian faith.
   - Christians believe in one God in three forms: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
   - Not like a trilogy (three separate stories), but a Trinity: one united God in three persons.
2. **What "Trinity" Means**
   - The word "Trinity" isn't found in the Bible, but the concept is seen throughout Scripture.
   - Theologians used the Bible to describe God as one being with three distinct roles.
   - Similar to how teams or groups have shared traits, the Trinity has a shared divine nature.
3. **The Three Persons of the Trinity**
   - God the Father: Creator of the world. Described in Scripture as shaping us like a potter with clay.
   - God the Son (Jesus): Redeemer who came to earth, lived among us, died for our sins, and restored our relationship with God.
   - God the Holy Spirit: Sustainer who guides and strengthens us, helping us feel God's presence today.
4. **One God, Three Forms**
   - Each part of the Trinity is fully God, but they are not the same as each other.
   - The Father is not the Son; the Son is not the Spirit; but all are God.
   - Deuteronomy 6:4 reminds us there is one God—Father, Son, and Spirit united.
5. **Living the Trinity in Daily Life**
   - We interact with the Father when we recognize how we were uniquely created.
   - We connect with the Son through forgiveness, grace, and learning how to live in love.
   - We rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance, courage, and direction in our daily decisions.
6. **The Trinity and Community**
   - God is a relationship within God's self—a perfect community of three parts.
   - Humans are made in God's image, which means we're made for relationships and community too.
   - Genesis 1:26 uses "us" and "our," showing we were created by a relational God for relationships.

7. **Challenge and Encouragement**
   - The Trinity reminds us that we are not alone and are created for connection.
   - This week, reach out and connect with someone—community is part of who we are.
   - The Trinity shows us we are better together and made to live in love and unity.

Activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: TRINITY SIT

The goal of this activity is to get into a sitting position, using each other as chairs! Here's how you do it:

1. Get into groups of three and stand with your backs facing inward. Link elbows together.
2. Bend your knees and try to sit down together at the same time, using each other's backs as support. Don't fall over!
3. For added challenge, try to move around while sitting, or stand back up.

After completing the Trinity Sit, discuss the following questions:

- In this activity, did your group have the same goal? What was that goal? How did you accomplish your goal?
- When you were sitting together, did one person bear all the weight? Or did you hold it up equally?
- What were the struggles of working together as a group? How did you overcome these challenges?

OPTION 2: TRINITY DANCE

Many of you probably played the game "Ring Around the Rosie" as little kids. Join hands in the circle and play a few rounds. This may seem childish or awkward but try to embrace the silliness!

As a refresher, here's how you play "Ring Around the Rosie":

1. Form a circle and join hands facing inward.
2. Walk in a circle while singing together this song: "Ring around the Rosie." A pocket full of posies. Ashes, Ashes, we all fall down!"
3. When you get to the end of the song, everyone needs to quickly sit down on the ground. The last one to sit down is out of the game and has to leave the circle.

After playing "Ring Around the Rosie" for a few rounds, discuss the following questions:
In the game, did we all have the same goal? What was that goal?

- When we were dancing in the circle, was there someone leading the dance? Or were we all equal partners?
- Can you play the game "Ring Around the Rosie" by yourself? Why or why not?
- Do most dances happen individually, or with other partners?

In both of these activities, we were all equal partners and equal participants. Similarly, in the Trinity, God is three equal Persons. No part of the Trinity is greater than the others. Additionally, just as these activities could not be done with one person, God could not exist in isolation or as only one part.

It takes all three Persons of the Trinity to make God whole and complete!

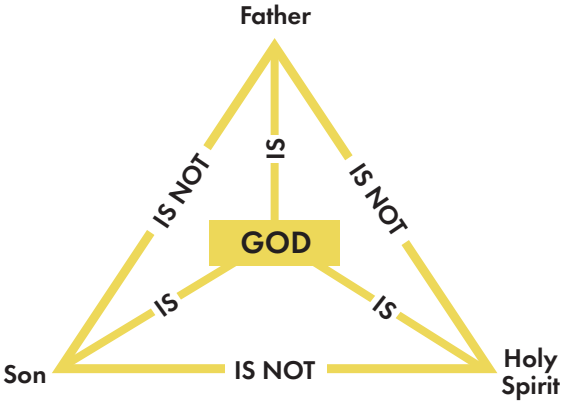
Teaching Topics

GOD CAN BE DEFINED BY THE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY
God the Father
God the Son (Jesus)
God the Holy Spirit

One illustration that helps us better understand the Holy Trinity is the Shield of the Trinity. It shows how each Person of the Trinity is related and connected to one another, while still maintaining their unique identity:

FATHER
SON
HOLY SPIRIT

GOD CAN ALSO BE DEFINED BY THE ROLES OF THE TRINITY
God the Father acts as Creator of the world by bringing everything into being in partnership with the Son and Holy Spirit.



God the Son (Jesus) acts as Redeemer of the world by making a way for us to be in relationship with God.

God the Holy Spirit acts as Sustainer of the world by holding everything together until Jesus comes again.

Because God is a Triune God, and because we are created in God's image, we were made for relationships. We were designed to be in community with God and with one another.

God the Father sent us Jesus the Son, and Jesus the Son gave us the Holy Spirit, and The Holy Spirit gives each of us gifts, talents, and skills that help us to be in community with God and one another in the way we were designed to do so. Those gifts, talents, and skills are known collectively as Spiritual Gifts. We will talk more about Spiritual Gifts in the next session, but first, it's important to take a Spiritual Gifts Assessment so that you know what your gifts are during next session's discussion.

You can find the assessment here: https://www.umc.org/en/content/exploring-your-spiritual-gifts or search "spiritual gifts" at UMC.org.

THE TRINITY AND THE BIBLE
The word "Trinity" is never used in the Bible, but we can clearly see how God is viewed as a Trinity by various Biblical authors:

Matthew 28:19 - Jesus instructed his followers to baptize new believers "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

2 Corinthians 13:13 - Paul closed his letter to the church in Corinth by saying, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

1 Peter 1:2 - Peter wrote, "God the Father chose you because of what he knew beforehand. He chose you through the Holy Spirit's work of making you holy and because of the faithful obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ."

METAPHORS OR ANALOGIES FOR THE TRINITY*
H2O: water can be found in three states: as a solid (ice), as a liquid (water), or as a gas (steam). However, all three states have the same chemical makeup: two hydrogen molecules and one oxygen molecule.

The Sun: there are three aspects to the sun: the fire is made of the heat it emits, and the rays of its light. No part of the sun can be separated from the others; fire doesn't exist without heat or light. No one component is entirely the sun, but they all work together.

Logos: Logos is Greek for "Word" and a common name for God (see John 1:1). In this metaphor, God the Father is the Speaker of the Word, Jesus the Son is the sound of the Word, and the Holy Spirit is the breath of the Word.

*It is important to note that all metaphors or analogies for the Trinity are imperfect and incomplete. Ultimately, the belief that God is a Three-in- One God is a mystery that cannot be fully understood or explained!

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in Genesis 1:26-31 and Matthew 28:19-20

Discuss

- On a scale of 1-10, how confident do you feel in understanding the Trinity? Why did you pick that number? Don't worry if it's low—this is a difficult concept for people who have spent lifetimes studying!
- How would you explain in your own words what the Trinity is? How do you understand God as Father?

- How do you understand God as the Son (Jesus)? How do you understand God as the Holy Spirit?
- Why do we use the phrase, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" at baptisms?
- How does the Trinity show us the importance of community and relationships?
- What are some other ways that you might describe God as a Trinity?

Challenge

ACCEPTING IN FAITH

There are a lot of things in life that we don't fully understand, but we accept them to be true. For example, most of us wouldn't be able to explain how gravity works, but we know that gravity exists because we aren't floating off into space! We can also see the effects of gravity by how it influences the tides of the ocean and pushes and pulls planets in space.

Take some time this week to journal on the following questions:
What are two or three things that you don't fully understand, but you accept anyway?
Read Hebrews 11:1. What does this verse say about faith? Why do we need faith to believe in the Trinity?
What other areas of our life or Christian walk require faith and trust in God?
What questions do you still have about the Holy Trinity?

Remember to take the Spiritual Gifts assessment before next week at:
https://www.umc.org/en/content/spiritual-gifts

Joys, Concerns & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group, then pray the Lord's Prayer together.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, re-read the passages from the Bible Connection section and check out these additional Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Genesis 1:1-31
Matthew 28:16-20
2 Corinthians 1:21-22
Ephesians 4:2-6

Seasonal Session

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 90 in the Student Journal.

This week we have an opportunity to learn a little bit more about our traditions around Christmas time. Students will know parts of the Christmas story—they may even know all of it—but we are hopeful that this week's session will fill in some additional details that are new.

Before diving into today's session, it may be fun to ask students what they already know: ask, "What is Advent?" and see how much they know! Then, use the teaching topics section to fill in the gaps and correct misinformation.

Our church often provides Advent Wreaths to families, and sometimes Kids or Student Ministry will also do some sort of Advent Calendar or series of activities. See what our church is doing this year (ask staff if you are unsure) and encourage your students to participate if they are not already doing so.

Main Point

During the season of Advent, we look forward to the coming of Christ.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Review and Connect

Last week, we discussed The Holy Trinity.

1. What are the three parts of the Trinity?
2. What's one metaphor to help us understand the Trinity?
3. Why does it matter that God is three-in-one?

Video Outline

Looking Forward to Christmas and Advent

1. **Personal Christmas Traditions**
   - Christmas is a time of meaningful traditions, not just gifts.
   - Share some personal examples like reading Luke 2, spending time with family, eating Chinese food, and singing together.
   - Everyone experiences the season differently—some with joy, some with difficulty, some hoping to create better traditions.

2. **The Purpose of Advent**
   - Advent is the season leading up to Christmas focused on looking forward to something greater.
   - It prepares us to celebrate the arrival of someone special—Jesus, the Messiah.
3. **The Prophecy of the Messiah**
   - Long ago, the prophet Isaiah spoke of a savior filled with God's spirit.
   - This savior would bring good news, heal the brokenhearted, free captives, and end sadness.
4. **Jesus Fulfills the Prophecy**
   - Jesus read Isaiah's prophecy aloud in his home church and declared that he was the one it spoke of.
   - His arrival brought hope to the poor, oppressed, sick, and hopeless.
5. **Advent and It's Meaning Today**
   - Advent is a time to reflect on what Jesus brought: hope, love, joy, and peace.
   - It's not only about Jesus' birth but also about his presence with us now and his return in the future.
6. **Our Response to Advent**
   - Each week, we focus on one of the four themes: hope, love, joy, peace.
   - We remember that Jesus still brings these gifts to us today.
7. **Looking Forward with Hope**
   - Jesus' future return will bring a new creation, free from sin and death.
   - Advent helps us pause, reflect, and look forward to this promise.
8. **Final Encouragement**
   - The season is an invitation to experience and share hope, love, joy, and peace with others.
   - Wishing everyone a meaningful Advent and a Merry Christmas.

Activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: Christmas Spoons

Supplies: 1 Card Deck, 1 Candy Cane/Person, 1 sheet of paper/person

- Use one fewer candy cane than the number of people playing.
- Pass out four cards to each player, then place the remaining deck face down and have the first player draw a card off the top of the deck (giving them five cards).
- The dealer will then discard one card face down to the person to their left.
- This process will continue around the table, with each person picking up the card passed to them and then discarding a card to their left. The very last person will create a "garbage pile."
- If the dealer goes through the whole deck, then the "garbage pile" will be used as the deck.
- The first person to get four of a kind will take a candy cane.
- Once the first candy cane is taken, everyone must scramble to grab a candy cane.
- The person left without a candy cane gets an elimination letter, "C." Once the word C-A-N-D-Y (Shorter Version) or C-A-N-D-Y C-A-N-E-S is spelled out, that person is out of the game. You may also play it like traditional spoons where the person not getting a candy cane is just "out."
- At the end, let them eat the candy canes!

Each player gets four cards: the remaining deck gets placed face down. The first player will draw a card off the top of the deck (giving them five cards). The dealer will then discard one card face down to the person to their left. This will continue around the table with each person picking up the card passed to them and then discarding a card to their left. The very last person will create a "garbage pile." In the event that the dealer goes through the whole deck, then the "garbage pile," will be used to draw from. The first person to get four of a kind will take a candy cane. Once the first candy cane is taken, everyone must scramble to grab a candy cane. The person left without a candy cane gets an elimination letter, "C." Once the word C-A-N-D-Y (Shorter Version) or C-A-N-D-Y C-A-N-E-S is spelled out that person is out of the game.

OPTION 2: Christmas Art
Supplies: Paper Plates, Pen

Have each student put their paper plate on their head. The host will give a series of instructions for the players to draw on their paper plates (while on their heads) without looking.

1. Draw a line for a floor.
2. Draw a Christmas Tree. Add decorations if you feel so inclined.
3. Draw a star on top of your tree.
4. Draw a fireplace with a mantel next to the tree.
5. Draw a stocking hanging from the mantel of your fireplace.
6. Draw a present below the tree.

You'll be given a paper plate to put on your head. The host will give out a series of instructions for the group to draw on your paper plates (that are on their heads) without looking.

Teaching Topics

ADVENT
For the four Sundays (and the weekdays between them) before Christmas, we celebrate the season of Advent. Advent comes from the Latin word for "arrival." During this time, we reflect and prepare for the arrival of Christ.

Because Advent is before Christmas, we often think of it as a season of looking forward to Christmas, but that is only partly true. Advent is also when we look forward to Christ's second coming, which will bring about a renewed creation with freedom from sin and death. Advent is marked by the hope of what's yet to come. We look forward to that in addition to the annual celebration of Christ's birth.

An Advent Wreath can mark the progression from week to week using Advent candles. A new candle is lit each week until they are all burning. The wreath has four candles around the outside and one in the center. (In some traditions, the candles are in a row instead.) Each outer candle represents something different: hope, love, joy, and peace. The center candle, lit to mark the celebration of Christ's birth, is called the Christ candle.

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

Even many non-Christians are familiar with the nativity story. ("Nativity" means birth, and in this case, the birth of Jesus.) However, only two of the gospels narrate the story of Jesus's birth: Matthew and Luke. Both gospels tell the nativity story as a continuation of Israel's story, framing Christ as the Messiah, born in Bethlehem during King Herod's reign. He was the divinely conceived son of Mary, who was married to Joseph, and Joseph was descended from King David. Matthew's telling focuses more on Joseph, and Luke focuses more on Mary.

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

A piece of Jesus's early life as detailed only in Matthew involves King Herod of Judea. Herod met with the Magi while they looked for the child born King of the Jews. Herod asked the Magi to report back to him once they had found the child, but instead they returned home by a different route. When Herod couldn't find Jesus, he ordered the death of all children in and around Bethlehem under two years old. Joseph was warned in a dream to flee to Egypt, so the baby Jesus avoided this terrible fate.

GOOD TO KNOW

December 25? Jesus's actual birthday is unknown. Scholars think he was born between 6 and 4 BC and probably not on December 25, but the culturally convenient date was chosen in the 4th century and has been celebrated ever since.

The Christmas Season is officially the thirteen days from sunset on Christmas Eve through Epiphany on January 6.

Epiphany is when we commemorate the visiting of the Christ Child by the Magi with their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. We don't truly know how many wise men there were.

The people of Bethlehem in Jesus's day would keep their sheep and other animals in caves next to their homes. While many retellings of Jesus's birth involve the family being told there is "no room at the inn," the likely scenario is that Mary and Joseph stayed with extended family, but it was very crowded, so the baby had to be laid in a manger instead of in the guest room of the house.

Although most Nativity scenes are not historically accurate, they are filled with symbols that tell the tale of Jesus's birth visually, in a way that is condensed, yet effective, and often quite pretty.

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in Luke 1:26-45, Matthew 1:18-24, Luke 2:1-20, and Matthew 2:1-12.

Discuss

- What similarities and differences did you see jumping from Luke to Matthew and back again?
- God could have come into the world as a powerful king, forcing everyone to worship and love him the way he wanted, but instead, God sent Jesus as a baby, reliant on other humans, who would spend his life teaching. Why do you think God did it that way?
- Why do you think the authors of Luke and Matthew wanted readers to know who was part of Jesus's community before and after his birth?

- Think about the people closest to you and your family. What kind of impact have the people around you had on you in your life?
- With what communities do you celebrate Christmas (and/or Advent)? What sort of Advent and Christmas traditions do you have?

Challenge

Talk to your parents/guardians about serving together for one of a Christmas Eve Service!

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages.

Luke 1:46-55
Luke 2:25-38
Matthew 2:13-23
Isaiah 9:6-7

Unit 4 // Session 2

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 96 in the Student Journal.

Today we are going to explore how God uniquely created each of us to participate in bringing the Kingdom of God to earth as it is in heaven. Through the Holy Spirit, God gave everyone different Spiritual Gifts. Students at this age are still learning who they are, and they discover their identity mostly on exterior feedback rather than interior knowledge or sense of self. The results of their Spiritual Gifts Assessment will give them positive exterior feedback. It will tell them that God made them intentionally. It will tell them about who God made them to be, including that God has given them specific gifts! This affirmation of students' self-worth is a huge deal in a culture of bullying and in a society where everyone projects perfect lives on social media.

Before today's activity, it will be helpful to do a quick check-in: who completed the challenge and knows their spiritual gifts? If they don't, please encourage them to complete it as soon as possible (maybe during your group time), and then they can share those gifts with the group after they do. The assessment can be taken online at umc.org/what-we-believe/spiritual-gifts-online-assessment.

Look back at your notes to see which gifts *you* have!); these include gifts such as having a heart for helping or encouraging others or being passionate about teaching and preaching. No two gifts are exactly alike, but all are equally important!

Expect your students to want to explore these gifts, ask questions about them, and claim them based on how they see them at work in their lives. Part of your job this week is to create a safe space for them to name and claim their spiritual gifts.

Students will also need to understand that they are only one person among all of us who show the image of God through our unique gifts. They should see that they have one part, but that it is an important part that combines with all others to create the whole picture. In other words, this is a Captain Planet "with all our powers combined" type of mission that God is inviting us into—to close the gap of how the world is and how it should be, through our God-given gifts.

Refer students to the list of Spiritual Gifts and their meanings under the TEACHING TOPICS section. You will want to have this list handy as you help your students understand their gifts and answer any questions they might have about them.

Main Point

When we were created, God gave us each unique gifts so that we can contribute to closing the gap between how the world is and how God wants the world to be.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Review and Connect

In last week's session we talked about Advent and Christmas.

1. What is the difference between the Luke and Matthew's account of Jesus's birth?
2. What does each candle in the Advent wreath represent?
3. What does Advent mean?

This week we will explore how the Holy Spirit operates through spiritual gifts.

Video Outline

Discovering and Using Your Spiritual Gifts

1. Introduction with Escape Room Analogy
   - Escape rooms reveal how different people bring unique strengths to solve a shared challenge.
   - Each person can bring a different problem-solving skills and personality.
   - The success of the team came from combining individual strengths toward a common goal.
2. Spiritual Gifts and Christian Calling
   - Christians believe God gives each person unique spiritual gifts for ministry.
   - Ephesians 4:12 reminds us of these gifts help build up the body of Christ.
   - Romans 12:4-8 explains that all gifts are different but equally valuable.
   - Like body parts working together, all believers' gifts are necessary in the Church.
3. Personal Journey of Discovery
   - Describe a time when you discovered something about yourself that was unique.
   - Spiritual gifts are unique and can lead to a better understanding of yourself.
   - Being obedient to your spiritual gifts can lead to new opportunities.
4. The Process of Being Equipped
   - God often stretches us in uncomfortable ways as gifts develop.
   - Some opportunities are only recognized in hindsight.
   - Just like breaking in new shoes, using spiritual gifts takes time and adjustment.
   - Eventually, Pastor Penny followed her call into full-time ministry.
5. Everyone's Gifts Are Different and Important
   - Not everyone is called to be a pastor, but every spiritual gift matters.
   - Visible gifts like preaching are no more important than behind-the-scenes gifts like service.
   - Each person's gift contributes to building God's kingdom in a unique way.
6. How to Discover Your Spiritual Gifts
   - Learn about spiritual gifts and see what resonates with you.
   - Let others help identify your gifts: they often see what you can't.
   - Pray and ask God to reveal your gifts.

- Take a spiritual gifts class or test.
- You'll likely feel energized and joyful when using your true gifts.

7. Using Your Gifts for God's Kingdom
   - Your gifts may change as you grow and experience life.
   - Start using your gifts by serving in your church or community.
   - Examples: teaching, hospitality, missions, administration.
   - God often works through people—you may be the answer to someone's prayer.
   - When your service brings joy, it's a sign you've found your gift and purpose.
8. Final Encouragement
   - Pay attention to the Holy Spirit's leading.
   - Step out in faith and serve with your unique gifts.
   - Trust that your contribution, no matter how small, is valuable to God's work.

Activity (pick one!)

Option 1: SPIRITUAL GIFTS SCRAMBLE

We learned about the Holy Spirit last week and how we receive gifts from the Holy Spirit. Since then, you have taken a Spiritual Gift assessment. Now, let's talk about the results of your assessment. Give everyone in the group a blank piece of paper and have them write their name and then list their top six Spiritual Gifts on it.

Have everyone stand up with their piece of paper held out in front of them.

When the teacher says, "Go!" you have to find a partner as quickly as possible based on the topic of each round.

Round 1: Find someone who has at least one spiritual gift in common with you.

Round 2: Find someone else that has a gift with the same first letter of any spiritual gift of yours.

Round 3: Find someone with spiritual gifts completely different than yours.

Round 4: Find someone with a spiritual gift that you would want to have.

Option 2: WEIRD GIFTS

Go around the circle and have each person talk about the strangest or weirdest gift they have received, maybe for their birthday or Christmas.

Next, go around and share about a favorite gift that you have received. As a group, discuss these questions:

- Do some of the Spiritual Gifts in the list under the "Teaching Topics" seem weird or strange? If so, which ones?
- What was so meaningful or special about the favorite gift you received? Did you say thanks to the person who gave you that gift?
- Do you trust God to give you good, meaningful spiritual gifts?
- Is there a gift from the spiritual gifts list you wished you had?

Teaching Topics

Spiritual Gifts are the ways the Holy Spirit (a part of the Trinity discussed about last session) empowers us to serve God and serve others in the world. No two gifts are exactly alike, but all are equally important! Not everyone has the same spiritual gifts, but we all have the same challenge: to use our spiritual gifts to serve God and bring God's kingdom to earth as it is in heaven.

Here are the full list of spiritual gifts and their meanings (as found at https://www.umc.org/en/content/exploring-your-spiritual-gifts):

ADMINISTRATION: The gift of administration allows a person to organize people and resources for greater efficiency, effectiveness, and success.

APOSTLESHIP: The gift of apostleship compels people to reach out to new and unfamiliar groups and individuals to invite them into relationship with God and community.

COMPASSION: The gift of compassion moves people to action on behalf of those in need or who are hurt or rejected.

DISCERNMENT: Discernment is a gift of deep intuition and insight.

EVANGELISM: Those with the gift of evangelism are comfortable speaking about their faith and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ to everyone they meet.

EXHORTATION/ENCOURAGEMENT: The gift of exhortation is present in people who offer encouragement, wise counsel, unflagging support, and empowerment.

FAITH: The gift of faith is more than belief in Jesus Christ, but an abiding confidence that God works all things together for good, and that the people of God can rise above any obstacle.

GIVING: The gift of giving is the deep commitment to provide whatever resources are needed to support God's will and plan.

HEALING: The gift of healing is not about transferring spiritual power to eliminate suffering and disease, but the ability to channel God's grace and healing love to those who suffer physical, emotional, or spiritual pain.

HELPING: Helping is a gift of support and behind-the-scenes effort that makes groups, families, and congregations more effective.

INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES: Those who are gifted to interpret tongues help build bridges across cultural, generational, and language divides.

KNOWLEDGE: The gift of knowledge allows people to automatically convert facts, data, and information into useful and important knowledge.

LEADERSHIP: The gift of leadership is a visionary, and forward- looking gift that enables people to stay focused on where God might be leading us as individuals, congregations, and communities at any given time.

MIRACLES: Those gifted with miracles never doubt the power and presence of God in creation and are able to help others see and believe in God's power.

PROPHECY: The gift of prophecy is the ability to speak God's word to others, or more appropriately to be open for God to speak God's word through us.

SERVANTHOOD: Servanthood is the gift of doing for others, sometimes to the exclusion of meeting personal needs.

SHEPHERDING/PASTORING: The gift of shepherding is the gift of mentoring and providing spiritual guidance to others to help them develop in discipleship and faith formation.

TEACHING: The gift of teaching allows people to transform data and information into life-changing knowledge.

TONGUES: The gift of tongues is a communication gift that allows people to speak foreign languages and convey concepts they never formally studied.

WISDOM: The gift of wisdom allows people to understand deeper meaning and apply knowledge, beliefs, and experience to everyday situations.

Missio Dei is a Latin phrase that means "the Mission of God." In simpler terms, this mission is the challenge or charge that God has given each of us to help bring the Kingdom of God to earth as it is in heaven.

When we participate in God's mission (using our unique spiritual gifts), we help close the gap between the way the world is now and the way that God wants the world to be.

Bible Connection #1

Read together the first passage for today, found in Romans 12:4-8.

Discuss

- What are your top spiritual gifts?
- What do you think of the gifts the assessment revealed about you?
- What inspires you from Romans 12:4-8? What stands out as good news to you?
- Where do you see your own spiritual gifts in this passage?
- Where do you see the gifts that others have in this passage?
- Based on the verses, what are you supposed to do with your gifts?

Bible Connection #2

Read together the second passage for today, found in Matthew 25:34-40.

Discuss

- What questions do you have about this passage? What do you think it means?
- We don't just have spiritual gifts for our own use. We have them for a larger purpose, to change the world! What does this scripture tell us about loving and serving Jesus in our world?
- What is this scripture asking YOU to do?

Challenge

CLAIM YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

In your journal, create a column for each of your top 3 spiritual gifts. At the top of each column, write the name of your gift. Then, write down words or phrases from the description of it that you strongly connect with. Then write down ways you have seen that gift show up in your life.

Once you have completed your three columns, answer the following questions in your journal:
When have your gifts helped you in the past?
What is one way you could start using your spiritual gifts more intentionally tomorrow?

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina!

John 21:15-17
1 Corinthians 12:4-11
Ephesians 4:11-13
1 Peter 4:10-11

Unit 4 // Session 3

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 102 in the Student Journal.

Okay mentors, quick pep talk: You're doing awesome. Yes, your students might have some weird questions. No, you don't have to have this all figured out. Especially this session! Not all Christians hold the same beliefs about what happens after death... and that's okay. At the end of the day, this is one of those beliefs that is still a mystery, even though we have the Bible and Christian tradition to help guide us with our questions.

Typically, when it comes to the afterlife, people believe something along the lines of this:

- You die.
- You go to heaven or hell.
- The earth stops existing at some point.

But the Bible doesn't really talk about it in those terms. In his book Surprised by Hope, N.T. Wright puts it this way: "Heaven is not an escape pod. It says that Christ is coming here, to join together the heavens and the earth in an act of new creation."

Another verse that applies to today's session is Revelation 21:1: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away." What the author of Revelation is telling us is that someday God is going to do something entirely new. We actually pray this every week in church when we say, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We are literally praying for God's kingdom to come to earth! That's a little different than what most people understand.

You will likely face a lot of questions about this topic from your students—they are usually very curious about it. But you don't need to have all the answers! Ultimately, what we believe as Methodists is that it is up to God who gets to participate in the new world, and it is not our job to judge who "gets in" and who doesn't.

Just remember that the main point of today's session isn't necessarily to answer the question, "Where do we go when we die?" (Although that question will certainly come up!) Instead, help students explore the question, "How can we live our lives for Christ today, in the here and now?" Our belief in Jesus isn't about "going to heaven when we die" or having "fire insurance" to keep us out of hell. It's about living in such a way that the world today looks a little more like the New Heaven found in the fully revealed Kingdom of God.

Main Point

Christians don't just believe in heaven. We also believe in heaven coming to earth when we live out the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group. Try it from memory!

Review and Connect

Last week we discussed spiritual gifts and service.

1. What is your favorite spiritual gift that you have and why?
2. How can your spiritual gifts help you to partner with God's mission for the world?
3. Why is it important for us as Christians to serve others?

This week we will discuss how the Holy Spirit is involved in the resurrection and what's yet to come.

Video Outline

What Comes Next? – Understanding the Story of God

1. **Introduction and Personal Story**
   - Share a personal story about preparation.
2. **The Big Question: What Comes Next?**
   - Everyone seeks certainty about the future—faith is no exception.
   - Common questions: What happens when we die? What is heaven or hell like? When will Jesus return?
   - Encouragement to focus on how we live now, not just what happens later.
3. **Eschatology: The Study of Last Things**
   - Introduce the Greek word "eschatology."
   - Eschatology covers death, resurrection, heaven, hell, judgment, and eternal life.
   - Explains it's not just about fear or the end, but how to live our faith now.
4. **Hope Through Revelation**
   - Shares Scripture from Revelation 21—John's vision of a new heaven and earth.
   - Describes God's promise to be with us, wipe away tears, and make all things new.
   - Emphasizes that death is not the end—Jesus brings hope and life.
5. **Understanding Hell**
   - Jesus describes hell as a hopeless place, like a garbage dump.
   - Hell can feel real even on Earth through suffering, hate, and injustice.
   - Jesus invites us to bring change and hope instead.
6. **The Kingdom of God: Not Just Someday, But Today**
   - We are called to build God's Kingdom here and now.
   - The Lord's Prayer reminds us to seek God's will on earth as in heaven.
   - Jesus taught that the Kingdom is already among us—it's mysterious, but real.
7. **Our Role in What Comes Next**
   - Preparation includes scripture, prayer, following Jesus, and learning together.
   - We are equipped now to live like Jesus and bring heaven to others.
   - Acts of love, justice, and compassion are how we build God's Kingdom.

8. **Conclusion and Challenge**
   - It's good to wonder about the future, but real change starts with first steps.
   - Just like training or practicing for a goal, following Jesus takes daily effort.
   - Ask, "Jesus, what do you want me to do today?"—and live it out.
   - Final encouragement: You matter, you're loved, and you can make a difference—today and for eternity.

Activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: DESCRIBING WITHOUT WORDS

Each of you will get three small pieces of paper. Write a person, place, and thing (one on each piece of paper) that everyone would know. (For example: Abraham Lincoln, Chicago, and basketball.) They'll all go in a bowl, then you'll be split into two teams. Each person has one turn where they pull out a piece of paper and try to get their team to guess the word without saying the word on the paper. (This game is played like "Charades"!) Go through as many slips of paper as you can in 1 minute, then switch to the other team. After you have emptied the slips in the bowl, end the game and count which team had more correct answers. They are the winners!

The point of this game is to show how words can fail sometimes. When it comes to the afterlife, we do our best to explain something that hasn't yet been revealed to us.

OPTION 2: DANCE OFF

Some people imagine heaven to be like a giant dance party! Divide your group into two "Dance Crews." They get five minutes to prepare a choreographed dance. After the time is up, bring the two groups back together to dance. The mentors can judge which Dance wins, or they may declare that everyone is a winner in the Kingdom of God!

Teaching Topics

What is heaven like? A lot of people think of heaven as a cartoon: harps and halos and floating on clouds. But the Bible doesn't describe it like this. The Bible doesn't actually say a lot about heaven at all! Instead, most of the references to heaven talk about being with God, but not much about what that will be like. The closest hint we have is that Jesus calls this place "paradise" when he is dying on the cross (Luke 23:43).

The Bible spends a lot of time talking about the Kingdom of Heaven (or the Kingdom of God), which is different than "heaven." The Kingdom of Heaven is one of the main things that Jesus talked about.

"Kingdom of Heaven" is a way of describing the world as God desires it to be. It is a perfect world where everything broken is fixed, and everything is as it should be. Through the Kingdom, God will bring together heaven and earth and unite them as one.

Our job as followers of Jesus is to help bring the Kingdom of Heaven to earth even now! In fact, we pray this each week during the Lord's Prayer when we say, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

The Bible also talks about a New Heaven and a New Earth.

Ultimately, God will re-create our world and make everything whole and beautiful and perfect again—just like it was back in the Garden of Eden.

Isaiah 65:17-18 says, "Look! I'm creating a new heaven and a new earth: past events won't be remembered; they won't come to mind. Be glad and rejoice forever in what I'm creating."

So, what about hell? We don't know who will be invited into this new, perfect heavenly world, but most Christians believe God will draw the line somewhere. Belief in hell has a complicated history but is traditionally understood as an afterlife separated from God. For God, what's yet to come isn't about winners and losers, it's about unity between God and humanity.

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in Luke 23:39-43 and 1 Corinthians 13:12.

Discuss

- What do you think heaven is like? What have you been taught about heaven before?
- What's the difference between "going to heaven" and "bringing heaven to earth?"
- If heaven is ultimately coming to earth, what do you think God thinks about the earth?
- Why did Jesus spend so much time talking about the Kingdom of Heaven? How is the Kingdom of Heaven different than what we normally think about heaven?

Challenge

HEAVEN VS. KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Think about the different ways that heaven is shown or talked about in books, on television or movies, in art, or even among your friends. Then, journal your answers to these questions:

How is heaven usually pictured in movies or tv shows ? What words or images are usually used to describe heaven ? Is this the kind of heaven you would want to go to?

Then, look up and read the following passages on how Jesus describes the Kingdom of Heaven:

Matthew 5:3
Matthew 5:10
Mark 10:14-15
Luke 13:18-21
Luke 17:20-21

Journal your answers to these questions:

- How is the "heaven" of pop culture different from Jesus' Kingdom of Heaven?
- Would you want to be a part of the Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus describes?
- What is still confusing to you about the Kingdom of Heaven?
- How can you work now to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to earth?

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Isaiah 65:17-18
Luke 13:29-30
John 14:1-7, 28
Philippians 3:20-21

UNIT 5

Unit 5 The Church

Session 1: What is the Church?
Session 2: The United Methodist Church
Session 3: What is Resurrection UMC?
Session 4: Visit another Church
Seasonal: Lent and the Church Calendar
Session 5: John Wesley's General Rules and Doctrine
Session 6: John Wesley's Guidance
Session 7: Abrahamic Faiths and Christian Denominations

>> UNIT OVERVIEW

the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,

While a belief in Jesus represents the entry point to becoming Christian. And following Jesus defines our discipleship. The church represents the full communal expression of what it means to be Christian. The community of believers and followers of Jesus continue to interpret and reinterpret what it means to be the church. In fact, we can look to the original Abrahamic faiths to begin to get the full picture of what it means for groups of people to follow God.

This unit will cover the spectrum from our origins as the church to the present time. Through it all, we believe that the church, even though there are many parts, is holy. We strive to be a community that does our best to follow Jesus.

Developing High School Leaders
As you discuss the sessions in this unit there will be opportunities outside of Confirmation for 8th grade students to register for high school events. This is a great opportunity for these students to begin to see themselves as becoming high school students. These events will give them an opportunity to transition into the next step of their faith development. In addition, it is also a time when we see students begin to consider themselves as leaders. Encourage the leadership you see in them and suggest they attend the events in the winter and spring that will help them maximize what is already beginning to happen in them.

Unit 5 // Session 1

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 110 in the Student Journal.

Today, we are going to talk about what it means to be a part of the Church and the Body of Christ. After all, once these students "confirm" their baptismal vows at the Confirmation Ceremony, they become a member not only of our local church congregation, but also a part of the larger, universal Church. So, what does that mean? What exactly does the Church do?

Big "C" Church and Little "c" church: When we talk about the church, it can mean one of two things. First, the word "Church" might refer to the entire collection of Christians that we call "the Body of Christ." When we talk about the Church this way, we often use a capital "C" at the beginning of the word. This is the Church we are referring to in the Apostles' Creed, "the holy catholic Church." ("Catholic" in this context is just another way to say "universal.") On the other hand, when we say "church," we might be talking about a local church or a particular representation of the greater Church (like a denomination or faith group). In this context, we use a lowercase "c" at the beginning of the word.

Early Church and Sacraments: The earliest Christians gathered together in each other's homes or public spaces to pray, eat together, read Scriptures, share their resources, and hear someone teach or preach. Following Christ's example, the early church also established Sacraments, or practices that give us physical reminders of God's presence in our lives and in our world. The two Sacraments that Methodists practice are Communion and Baptism. Other churches might acknowledge other practices as sacred. For example, the Catholic church has seven sacraments.

Church today: The Church is more than fancy buildings and different denominations. Ultimately, the Church is the people of God, those acting as Jesus' hands and feet in the world today.

Our hope is that your students will find this church and their small group to be a place of true community: one where they feel safe and loved, one where people care for them and lift them up. May your students come to know that the church is more than just a building, but as a collection of people doing life together in the name of Jesus.

Note:
Discuss and decide by next week where your group will be going for your visit to another United Methodist Church. If you need recommendations, ask your Student Ministries staff and/or look at the list in this leader guide (see the page in this guide that corresponds with the church visit weekend).

Main Point

Jesus gave us the Church so we could be in community with other believers as we grow deeper in our faith and serve the world.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group. Memorized yet?

Review and Connect

Last week, we discussed "what's yet to come."

1. What is the difference between Heaven and the Kingdom of God?
2. What is our job, as Christians, regarding the Kingdom of God?
3. What is the relationship between grace, atonement, and the Kingdom of God?

This week we are discussing how the church is meant to be authentic community and what that means.

Video Outline

The Story and Mission of the Church

1. **The Early Church (Acts 2)**
   - Scripture from Acts 2 describes the earliest Christian community.
   - Believers devoted themselves to teaching, community, shared meals, and prayer.
   - They shared possessions, supported those in need, and worshipped daily.
   - This is considered the birth of the Church, known as Pentecost.
2. **The Spread of Christianity**
   - Early disciples traveled to spread the Gospel (e.g., Thomas to India, Paul to Rome).
   - As Christianity spread, local practices and languages shaped worship styles.
   - Despite differences, believers shared a common love and mission.
3. **Church Unity and Division**
   - The Church held ecumenical councils to decide core beliefs (e.g., Apostles' Creed, Bible canon).
   - Major splits occurred:
     - The Great Schism (1054) between Eastern and Western Church.
     - The Protestant Reformation (1500s) led by Martin Luther.
4. **The Birth of Methodism**
   - John Wesley, an Oxford scholar, struggled to feel his faith deeply.
   - After a failed mission trip to America, he experienced spiritual renewal at a Bible Study on Aldersgate Street.
   - He formed a group focused on Scripture, worship, and service—Others called them "Methodists" as an insult.
5. **Growth of the Methodist Church**
   - Wesley preached to overlooked workers, spreading God's love.
   - Circuit riders traveled across England and America, planting churches wherever they could.
   - The Methodist movement grew rapidly through passionate evangelism and outreach.

6. **Core Beliefs and Practices**
   - Wesley emphasized heart-felt faith and tangible expressions of grace (sacraments).
   - Two main sacraments: Baptism (initiation) and Communion (ongoing grace).
   - Encouraged frequent participation and inclusion of all.
7. **The Wesleyan Quadrilateral**
   - Methodists use four tools to understand and grow in faith:
     - Scripture: The Bible.
     - Tradition: Church history and teachings.
     - Experience: Personal encounters with God.
     - Reason: Using intellect and logic.
8. **The Church's Ongoing Mission**
   - The Church serves and loves in both joyful and hard times (e.g., Christmas Eve services, disaster relief).
   - It continues the mission from Acts 2—welcoming all and spreading God's love.
   - The challenge: not just to know the story, but to live it daily.

Activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: HANDS AND FEET

This activity will challenge you to work together as a team! Divide into groups of three or four students. Set up a "starting line" and a "finish line" about 10 feet apart.

Have a race to see which group of 3-4 students can cross the finish line first, with only the following body parts touching the ground each round (Hint: groups may have to lift one another up or support each other!):

Round 1: 6 feet only
Round 2: 5 feet and 2 elbows
Round 3: 5 feet and 1 hand
Round 4: 5 feet and 2 hands and 1 elbow
Round 4: 4 feet and 3 hands
Round 5: 3 feet and 1 nose
Round 6: 2 feet and 4 hands and 1 nose
Round 7: Mentor's Choice!

The Church is sometimes called the "Hands and Feet of Jesus" in the world as we do God's work and serve those around us. As brothers in sisters in Christ, we lift one another up in the Church just like we did in this activity!

OPTION 2: CHURCH MEMORIES

Supplies Needed: Paper and Writing Utensils

Pass out blank pieces of paper and writing utensils (crayons, colored pencils, or markers). Everyone should think back to their earliest memory of church. On your paper, either draw what that memory looks like or write down words about what that memory feels like.

After a few minutes, come back together as a group and answer the following questions: Does anyone want to share their earliest memory of church? Do you remember being baptized? (Or, if you were baptized as a baby, have you watched a video or seen pictures of your baptism?)

Do you remember the first time you participated in communion? What was that experience like?
NOTE: If you do not have many church memories, that's okay! Confirmation can be the start of a strong life in the church. This is only the beginning!

Teaching Topics

After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, the earliest Christians continued to meet together for prayer, fellowship, teaching, preaching, sharing, and growing. These first believers established the Church, which we still participate in today!

Pentecost marks the day that followers of Jesus were called by the Holy Spirit to speak God's word to others, described in Acts 2. We mark this occasion yearly on the seventh Sunday after Easter. We think of this as the birthday of the Christian church.

The early church established Sacraments: outward practices that point us toward God's presence in our lives and the world. The two sacraments we practice as Methodists are Baptism and Communion.

> **Baptism** marks the moment we become a part of God's family, the Church. The water represents God's saving grace that cleanses us from our sins. As Methodists, we believe people can be baptized as a baby, as a child or teenager, or as an adult. Even if you don't remember your baptism, God remembers the moment you were born into new life in Jesus.
>
> **Communion** (also called the Lord's Supper) is a way for us to remember Christ's death and resurrection. When we participate in communion by eating the bread (which represents Jesus's body) and drinking the juice or wine (which represents Jesus's blood), we are sharing in a feast with other believers all over the world. As Methodists, we believe that anybody who wants to be united with Christ can share in the Communion table.

The Apostles' Creed is a statement of faith for the Christian church. It is meant to serve as a brief summary of the teachings of the apostles and is recited by Christians worldwide.

Bible Connection

Read together our passage for today, found in Acts 2:42-47.

Discuss

- What do you think is the purpose of the Church?
- What did the early church look like? Is it the same or different from church today?

- In what ways did the members of the early church help one another? In what ways did they help those who were not a part of the church?
- In what ways does our own church help its members? How does our church help those in our greater community?
- How has the church been a place of community for you personally?
- When you are an adult, do you think you will be a part of a church?

Challenge

BE THE CHURCH

As we learned in our session, the Church is more than a building or a denomination. The Church is the people of God, made up of anyone who chooses to be in relationship with Jesus. We as the Church are now the ones who act as Jesus' hands and feet in the world today.

This week, take some time to write a note or send a text message to 3 people in the Church who have made an impact on your life. Think of those people that have been the hands and feet of Jesus to you! They could be your small group mentors, Sunday school teachers, Confirmation mentors, or even other students. In your note or message, thank them for making a difference in your life by being like Jesus.

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

Acts 2:1-4 (Birth of the Church at Pentecost)
1 Corinthians 12:24-27 (The Church as the Body of Christ)
1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (Sacrament of Communion)
1 Peter 3:21 (Sacrament of Baptism)

Unit 5 // Session 2

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 116 in the Student Journal.

This week we will look at how this church fits into United Methodism. Many members of our church, including Confirmation mentors and students' families, have belonged to different denominations and faiths previously, and many students have parents who still attend church elsewhere. It is very important not to disparage other denominations or faiths as we explain this one. Of course, we love the UMC, and we want to celebrate what makes it special, but not at the cost of criticizing other belief systems.

You don't need to bring it up, but some students may raise the topic of the recent division within the United Methodist Church. If you do not feel equipped to have those conversations, that is okay; just be sure to connect students to Student Ministry Staff so they can get their questions answered. We don't want to shut down students, but we also don't want to provide them with inaccurate information! If you have questions, you may be interested in watching Pastor Adam's video "Why We Are Staying in the UMC" from May 18, 2022, or his blog post from September 23, 2022, titled "I Am Proud to be United Methodist," which references the website proudtobeumc.com, another useful resource.

If you would like additional information about the United Methodist Church, please visit umc.org—the site has many helpful resources—or speak with your student ministry director.

Main Point

Our church is part of the United Methodist Church, a denomination of Christianity that seeks to put our faith into action both in our communities and across the globe.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Review and Connect

Last week, we learned a bit about the church.

1. What are the sacraments and what do they mean?
2. What is Pentecost?

This week we will look specifically at the United Methodist Church, our denomination.

Video Outline

Understanding the United Methodist Church

1. Introduction to the UMC
   - Many people don't know what "United Methodist" means
   - Our identity and how we talk about our faith can impact others positively or negatively
2. Personal Experience
   - Share your own understanding of Methodists growing up
   - Every church, even non-denominational and Catholic, is part of Christianity
3. What Is a Denomination?
   - A denomination is a recognized branch of Christianity
   - United Methodist is one denomination
   - United Methodists put faith into action locally and globally
   - They share beliefs with all Christians, expressed in the Apostles' Creed
4. Core Beliefs of United Methodists
   - One God who created everyone in God's image
   - The Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
   - Jesus is fully human and fully divine; salvation is a gift for everyone
   - Free will allows each person to accept God's salvation
5. A Big Tent Denomination
   - United Methodists encourage questions and respectful disagreements
   - John Wesley, the founder, often said "agree to disagree"
   - Holding to core beliefs while staying united in community
6. History of Methodism
   - Started by brothers John and Charles Wesley in the 1700s at Oxford
   - Aimed to live a holy life through disciplined practices ("method")
   - Faced challenges but spread their message to people outside of churches
7. Music and Worship
   - Charles Wesley wrote over 6,000 hymns
   - Methodism has a strong musical tradition
   - Many hymns are used in churches today around the world
8. The UMC Today
   - Global church with over 12 million members in 130+ countries
   - Actively involved in missions, justice, and inclusion
   - Works to serve others and stand up for those in need
9. Why It Matters
   - Understanding your faith helps you explain it to others
   - UMC's slogan: Open hearts, Open minds, Open doors
   - Open communion welcomes everyone to participate
   - Knowing what you believe can help others find a place where they belong
10. Final Encouragement
    - Keep learning and exploring your faith
    - You're on an exciting confirmation journey
    - More information can be found at UMC.org

Activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: Two Truths and a Tale
On an index card, write two things that are true about yourself, and one thing that is a tall tale. Everyone will have an opportunity to share and guess which is a lie.

OPTION 2: Guess the Truth
Write down one truth about yourself. A mentor will collect the truths and read them one-by-one. Your group will guess who the truth belongs to.

Teaching Topics

Resurrection is a United Methodist Church (UMC), and the UMC is a **denomination**, or branch, of the Christian Church. There are many denominations of Christianity, and among those denominations there is a lot of overlap (we are all Christians, after all!), but there are also things that make each one special.

KEY BELIEFS OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

- The UMC slogan is "Open hearts, open minds, and open doors."
- The UMC practices "open Communion," meaning that anybody can choose to receive Communion. God's grace is for everyone.
- The UMC believes God's salvation is a gift for everyone. Each person has the free will to choose to accept that salvation.
- We consider ourselves to be a "big tent" denomination—that means we allow and even encourage discussions about faith and even disagreement. We encourage *asking questions* and *thinking* about our faith.
- We follow the beliefs listed in the **Apostles' Creed**:
- There is one God, the creator and sustainer of the universe.
- There is one God in three persons: the Father, the son, and the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus Christ, the son of God, is both fully human and fully divine.

KEY HISTORY

- The Methodist movement started way back in the 1700s by John and Charles Wesley, two brothers who began by gathering a group of students at Oxford University. They met weekly and sought to live a holy life.
- They were called "methodists" because they had established a "method" to actively live out their beliefs.
- Eventually they sought to share the ideas of methodism beyond this group—it wasn't easy, and they faced many setbacks at first.
- A key step in the early Methodists' successful spreading of their faith was for their ministers to preach not just in churches, but also in fields, coal mines, and yards to people who didn't typically go to church. They reached out to people who felt disconnected from church and helped them to become deeply committed to their faith.

TODAY

- Many denominations can trace their origins back to the early Methodist movement, including our own.
- The UMC is a global denomination with churches all over the world in over 130 countries and millions of members in those churches.
- United Methodists strive to be active in our communities as part of our faith. We have local and global mission projects, advocate for justice, and address issues of inequality where we see them.
- Check out umc.org. for more information!

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in **Romans 12:1-2** and **Isaiah 6:8**.

Discuss

- What is one thing you learned today about the United Methodist Church?
- Have you heard of any other denominations of Christianity? Have you ever been to a worship service at another church? What was that like? (Consider both similarities and differences.)
- Have you ever volunteered somewhere? What was that like? What are some ways you could volunteer this year?
- What do you think being a "living sacrifice" means in Romans 12?
- Why do you think Methodists care about serving the community around them?
- How does your church fit into the United Methodist Church as a whole? What aspects of methodism do you see in our church?

Challenge

Just like the early Methodists talked to others about their faith, this week, tell one of your friends that you are participating in a confirmation program at your church. Consider inviting them to youth group for a deeper challenge!

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. (Remember: You can write in your Bible!)

1 Corinthians 15:58
Philippians 4:12-13
Psalm 96:1-3
Titus 3:3-7

Unit 5 // Session 3

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 122 in the Student Journal.

Amidst the rest of the session, it can be powerful to remind students that not only are they the FUTURE church, but they are also the church right now! Even prior to Confirmation, but especially after the ceremony, they ARE the church. Resurrection is them; Resurrection is you, and Resurrection is us—how cool is that?

This week, we want to remind you that YOU are an important piece of what makes Resurrection special. And by being a Confirmation mentor, you make a big difference in what the future church will look like! Thank you.

Main Point

This week, we're learning about our church, Resurrection, A United Methodist Church, and what makes it unique.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Review and Connect

Last week, we discussed the United Methodist Church.

1. Who are John and Charles Wesley?
2. What were some important moments for the Wesleys in forming their ideas that became the United Methodist Church?
3. What are some key beliefs of the United Methodist Church?

Today we are going to talk about our church and its purpose.

Video Outline

The Church of the Resurrection – Who We Are and Our Mission

1. **Introduction**
   - Emphasize the importance of confirmation and spiritual growth.
2. **Founding of Church of the Resurrection**
   - Began in 1990 in a funeral home on State Line Road.
   - Pastor Adam Hamilton started the church at age 25.
   - Named "Resurrection" to reflect life and hope.
   - Mission was to reach non-religious and nominally religious people.

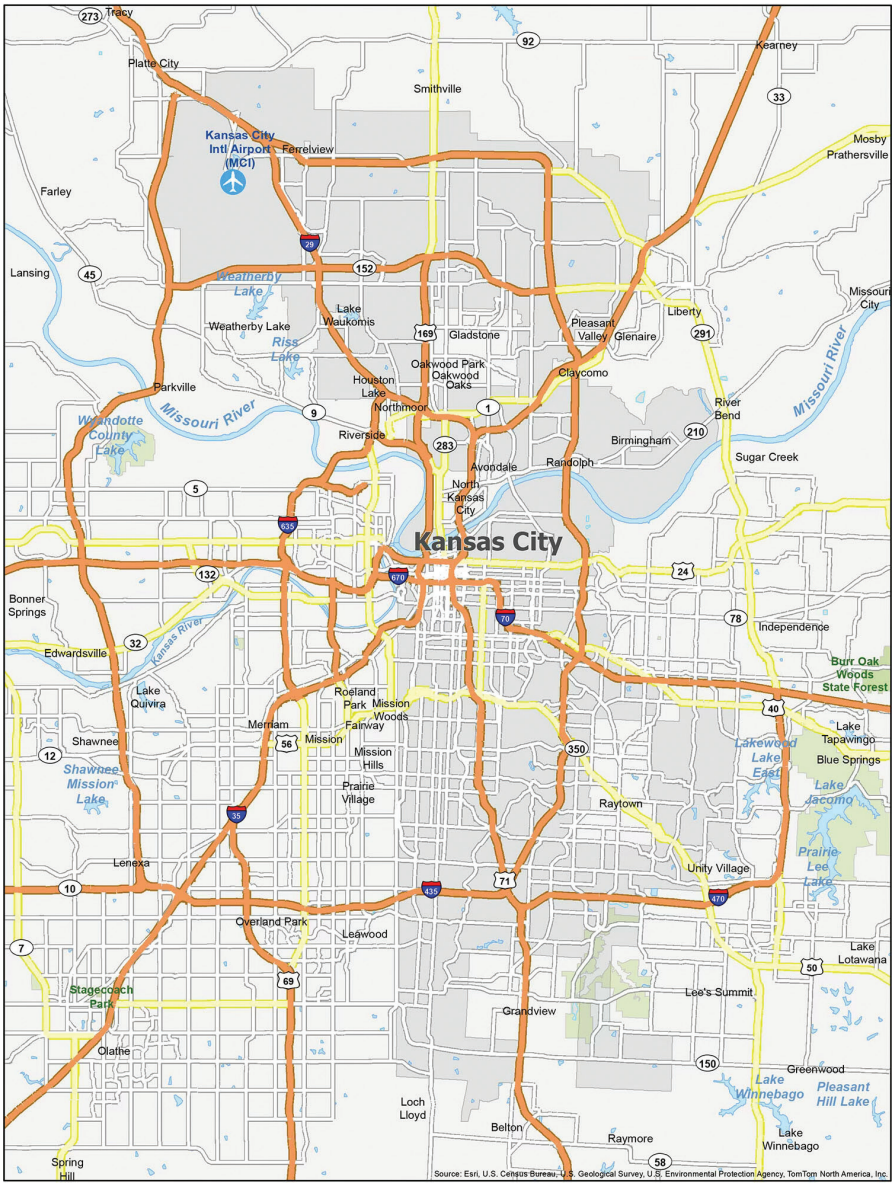
3. **Growth and Current Presence**
   - Now it has multiple physical locations across Kansas City and an online presence.
   - Each site looks and feels different but shares the same purpose.
4. **Church Purpose and Vision**
   - Purpose: Build Christian community where non-religious and nominally religious people become deeply committed Christians.
   - Vision: Change lives, strengthen churches, and transform the world.
   - Approach includes inviting others to know, love, and serve God using head, heart, and hands.
5. **Spiritual Growth Through Ministry**
   - Worship and prayer engage the heart.
   - Learning and studying engage the mind.
   - Mission and service engage the hands.
6. **Church Identity and Culture**
   - Hope-radiating: Belief that the worst thing is never the last thing.
   - Bridge-building: Promotes unity and understanding.
   - Thought-provoking: Encourages critical thinking and hard questions.
   - Outwardly focused: Active in serving the community.
7. **Vision 2030: Closing the Gaps**
   - *Spiritual Gap*: Help people live Christ-like lives through five essential practices (worship, study, serve, give, share).
   - *Justice and Kindness Gap*: Promote kindness, racial justice, mental health, and homelessness support.
   - *Opportunity Gap*: Support children and families in poverty with education, healthcare, and food.
   - *Generational Gap*: Invest in youth and emerging leaders to carry the church forward.
8. **Final Encouragement**
   - God has called and equipped each student to do great things.
   - Students are the future of the church.
   - The church community is here to support and walk alongside students in faith.

Activity (pick one)

Option 1: "ONE CHURCH, MANY LOCATIONS"

Supplies Needed: Map of KC metro area

For today's activity, use copies of the included map for students to attempt to identify our church locations. Students are challenged to put a star at each Resurrection location. Students will partner up (groups of 3 are okay). Mentors will hand each group a map of the Kansas City metropolitan area. Students are challenged to put a star in each Resurrection location. This activity will be challenging for them—award them a point if they are close. You may award a point if a student mentions our online and tv members! Use the church website at resurrection.church to double check your answers. Who can get the most correct? If groups struggle, come together as a whole class to label the map!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Platte City
Smithville
Kearney
Mosby
Prathersville
Kansas City Intl Airport (MCI)
Ferrelview
Farley
Lansing
Weatherby Lake
Weatherby Lake
Riss Lake
Lake Waukomis
Gladstone
Pleasant Valley
Glenaire
Liberty
Missouri City
Oakwood Park
Oakwood Oaks
Claycomo
Houston Lake
Northmoor
Parkville
Wyandotte County Lake
Missouri River
Riverside
Birmingham
River Bend
Sugar Creek
Avondale
Randolph
North Kansas City
Kansas City
Bonner Springs
Edwardsville
Kansas River
Independence
Burr Oak Woods State Forest
Lake Quivira
Roeland Park
Mission Woods
Fairway
Merriam
Mission
Shawnee
Mission Hills
Lake Tapawingo
Blue Springs
Lakewood Lake East
Shawnee Mission Lake
Prairie Village
Raytown
Lake Jacomo
Prairie Lee Lake
Lenexa
Unity Village
Overland Park
Leawood
Lake Lotawana
Stagecoach Park
Lee's Summit
Grandview
Olathe
Greenwood
Lake Winnebago
Pleasant Hill Lake
Loch Lloyd
Belton
Raymore
Lake Winnebago
Spring Hill
Source: Esri, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, TomTom North America, Inc.

Option 2: SPEED ROUND

Today, we will be learning about this church, but it can also be helpful to spend more time learning about each other! Partner up. In 1 minute, answer as many of the following questions with your partner as you are able. Your mentor will keep the time, and when the minute is up, switch partners and repeat the process. When the next minute is up, switch again!

Tell your life story in 1-2 sentences.
What is one of your greatest accomplishments?
Where do you go to school?
What is your favorite food? Why?

Teaching Topics

This week, we're learning about our church, Resurrection, A United Methodist Church, and what makes it unique. Perhaps you were baptized at Resurrection as babies, or maybe you are pretty new. Either way, you may not know that much about this church, so this week is an opportunity for them to understand what makes our church unique. You likely have reasons YOU like Resurrection—share those in your group.

FAST FACTS:

- Resurrection was founded in 1990 by Pastor Adam Hamilton.
- Resurrection is a United Methodist Church.
- Resurrection has several campus locations around the city, plus services online and on TV.
- The Resurrection logo is in the shape of an ancient baptismal font with the varying shades of blue representing all people.

GUIDING STATEMENTS:

(These guide us as we make decisions as a church.)

Our Purpose is to build a Christian Community where non-religious and nominally religious people are becoming deeply committed Christians. ("Nominal" means "in name only"—"nominally religious people" are those who would say "Sure, I'm a Christian," but don't really practice their faith.)

Our Vision is to be used by God to change lives, strengthen churches, and transform the world.

Our Journey is to know, love, and serve God.

KEY DISTINCTIVES: We strive as a church to have these characteristics: outward-focused, bridge-building, thought-provoking and hope-radiating. If these are how our church is defined, then we are on the right track.

COMMON SAYINGS:

You may hear these statements in sermons and from our church members:

"The worst thing is never the last thing." Bad things happen. But part of being a Christian means we know God is with us through good and bad. We know, because we believe in Christ's resurrection, that the worst thing is never the last thing.

"Not only do I believe it; I'm counting on it!" Sometimes as Christians we are asked,

"Do you really believe this stuff?" This is a good response. We are counting on God and his grace.

VISION 2030: Closing the Gap

We strive to close the gap between the way things are now and the way we would hope them to be, making this world look more like God's Kingdom. We believe God actively calls us to do this work, and we have identified 4 areas to focus on between now and 2030.

Close the Spiritual Gap – We want to deepen the faith of everyone at Resurrection.

Close the Generational Gap – We want to create a church community where all generations are valued, respected, and cared for, and we want to connect people across generations.

Close the Kindness and Justice Gap – We want to address injustices across our community and model for our community and world what it looks like to truly love our neighbors.

Close the Opportunity Gap – We hope to break the cycle of poverty for children in Kansas City by providing access to education, food, housing and healthcare.

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in **Micah 6:8** and **1 Corinthians 1:4-9**.

Discuss

- What is one thing new you learned about Resurrection today?
- What is your favorite part about our church community?
- What are some of the ways our church is involved in our city and around the world?
- Do you want to start getting involved in a new way this year at Resurrection? How?
- What is one thing you care about having in a church community?
- How can we make our church community and our student ministry a place of welcome and belonging?

Challenge

GET TO KNOW YOUR CHURCH

Spend some time this week learning some of the programs our church has to offer. Click around our church website (resurrection.church) and/or spend some time on Sunday at the Connection Point looking at the different groups, events, and projects. If you are looking at the website, go beyond the sermons—you'll want to click on "join a group" or "next steps" to find more options. Just spend some time exploring and be ready to report back next week about what you found!

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. (Remember: You can write in your Bible!)

John 13:14-17
1 Corinthians 3:16
2 Corinthians 9:6-8

VISIT ANOTHER CHURCH

Unit 5 // Session 4

Session Overview

Refer to Page 130 in the Student Journal.

This week, a favorite of both students and mentors, you will be visiting another United Methodist Church with your small group. It is a great way to see that we are a part of a larger denomination beyond our local church. It demonstrates the great variety and diversity that exists within Methodism.

The expectation is that you will complete this experience AS A GROUP. (It's much more interesting and enjoyable when you have a chance to talk about the shared experience together.) If a student from your group is unable to join you, they can make up this independently as long as they submit proof that they have worshipped with another UM church (a bulletin, a photo, a screen shot, etc.).

SUGGESTIONS OF UMC CHURCHES TO VISIT IN KC

(you are not limited to this list, but these are a few places if you don't know where to go!):

- St. James United Methodist, Kansas City, MO - sjumckc.org
- Woods Chapel United Methodist, Lee's Summit, MO - www.woodschapelchurch.org
- Grace United Methodist, Olathe, KS - graceumc.church
- Bonner Springs United Methodist, Bonner Springs, KS -bonnerspringsumc.com
- Stilwell United Methodist, Stilwell, KS - stilwellumc.org
- Heritage United Methodist, Overland Park, KS - heritageumc.org

A full list of other United Methodist churches in our area can be found at
www.greatplainsumc.org/kansascitydistrict (Kansas UMCs)
https://www.moumethodist.org/churchlocator?topic=Northwest (Missouri UMCs)

Engage your small group with these questions during or after your visit:

- What did you notice that was different than worshipping at your church?
- Was there anything about your visit that you had not seen or experienced before?
- How did you feel as a visitor? Is this how you want others to feel when they visit your church?

Unit 5 // Seasonal

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 132 in the Student Journal.

Something that can confuse kids and adults alike is the scheduling of Easter. Even people who are heavily involved in church will usually shrug and say they just look at the calendar each year. And why wouldn't they? Finding out if it has to do with the cycles of the moon and where the first date of spring falls is not terribly helpful for most folks. So, we find ourselves looking at the calendar annually to see where Easter lies.

This week, you'll explore that and more with your students as we dive into the Church Calendar. Some of this may be confusing, but students do tend to enjoy finding out there is actual significance to the colors used in church services and a reason behind the scheduling of church holidays. (Color symbolism can be big with students this age. They may have additional thoughts to share on that topic if you start the ball rolling.)

Although it is a few weeks away, Easter is approaching! Now might be a good time to remind students that our church always needs ushers and greeters for all those packed Easter services. Encourage them to talk to their families about serving together in that capacity.

Main Point

Christian Churches follow a year-round calendar designating the dates of important celebrations in our faith. The highlights of the calendar are the Christmas and Easter cycles.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Review and Connect

Last week, we discussed John Wesley's General Rules and Doctrine.

1. Who is John Wesley?
2. What are the three rules Wesley felt were important?
3. Were you able to talk with someone about one of the three rules? How did that go?

This week we will learn about the church calendar and how we celebrate the different Christian seasons of the year. We will specifically look at lent, the season we are currently in.

Video Outline

Lent

1. Introduction and Personal Story
   - Share a personal story of a spiritual discipline you used during Lent or another period of time.
   - The purpose is to shift focus from personal desires to the needs of others.
   - Doing spiritual discipline is difficult but also enlightening.
   - It can increase empathy and appreciation for others.
   - It strengthens our relationship with God and gives new perspective.
2. Fasting in the Context of Lent
   - Fasting is commonly practiced during Lent, often by giving up something in honor of Jesus' sacrifice.
   - Examples of fasting: social media, soda, sugar, or meat (for those of the Catholic faith).
   - Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and leads up to Easter, focusing on Jesus' ministry.
3. The Beginning of Lent: Baptism and Temptation of Jesus
   - Jesus begins His ministry with baptism by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:13-17).
   - Despite being perfect, Jesus chose to be baptized to profess His love for God.
   - Jesus then fasts for 40 days and nights in the wilderness to prepare for His ministry.
4. Jesus' Temptation in the Wilderness
   - During His fast, Jesus is tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1-11).
   - The devil offers Jesus various temptations, but Jesus responds with Scripture, resisting the devil.
   - Jesus teaches us how to resist temptation through reliance on God's word.
5. Fasting and Temptation in Community
   - Fasting can be challenging, but it is easier when done with a supportive community.
   - The Lenten season encourages communal resistance to temptation.
   - Resisting temptation together helps strengthen faith and resilience.
6. Challenge to Fast
   - Megan challenges the audience to try fasting in small ways, such as:
     1. Giving up a day of phone use, favorite food, or TV show.
     2. Replacing those habits with prayer or devotional time.
   - The goal: deepen one's relationship with God and reflect on Jesus' sacrifice.
7. Closing Prayer
   - A prayer for strength during Lent, asking God for help in resisting temptation and honoring Jesus' sacrifice.

Activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: Birthday Line Up

Line up in birthday order, without using words! You'll have one minute. After you finish, see how many you got correct. Reflect on what was easy or difficult.

OPTION 2: Holiday Line Up

Each of you will be given a holiday on an index card. Without using words, get in holiday order. You'll have one minute. After you finish, see how many you got correct. Reflect on what was easy or difficult.

Teaching Topics

THE CHRISTIAN CALENDAR

The Christian year, also called the liturgical year, is made up of two main cycles—the Christmas cycle and the Easter cycle. Both start with a time of preparation and anticipation followed by celebration. The in-between time is called Ordinary Time.

THE CHRISTMAS CYCLE

- Advent-Christmas-Epiphany: The start of the Christian year.
- This cycle begins with Advent, which starts on the 4th Sunday before Christmas. The date changes year to year but will always be between November 27 and December 3.
- Christmas includes the twelve days from sunset on Christmas Eve, December 24, through Epiphany on January 6, celebrating the Magi visiting the Christ child.
- After Epiphany there is a cycle of Ordinary Time from January 7 until Ash Wednesday called The Season After Epiphany.

THE EASTER CYCLE

- Lent-Easter-Pentecost
- The Easter Cycle begins with Lent, starting on Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday is 40 days, not counting Sundays, before Easter.
- Easter moves between March 22 and April 25 depending on the year. The timing of Easter is tricky: it's the first Sunday after the first full moon that comes after March 21 (the first day of spring). Easter Season lasts fifty days, ending with the Day of Pentecost.
- The long period of Ordinary Time between Pentecost and Advent is called The Season After Pentecost.

LITURGICAL COLORS

- Liturgical Colors - In many churches, colors used in the altar cloths, pastors' vestments, and other key areas of worship correlate to the cycle of the calendar.
- Ordinary Time is designated by green, representing growth.
- Lent and Advent are purple, which is considered a preparatory color and symbolizes both royalty and penitence.
- Sometimes Advent is blue, symbolizing hope.
- Christmas, Epiphany, and Easter are gold or white, symbolizing joy and festivity.
- Holy Week and Pentecost are red, symbolizing the blood of Christ and the fire of the Holy Spirit.
- Red and white are also used for other holidays and ceremonies.

LENT AND ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday marks the start of Lent. During Ash Wednesday service, ashes may be used to remind us of our sinfulness and mortality. We focus on our humanity and remember that sin and death have been triumphed over by the resurrected Jesus Christ.

Lent represents the forty days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness after his baptism, being tempted and preparing to begin his ministry. During this time, the church focuses on repentance, fasting, and preparation for Easter. Lent is a time of self-examination and reflection. Sundays during Lent are not counted as part of Lent; instead, each is considered a "mini-Easter." A little joy is appropriate each Sunday in anticipation of the Resurrection.

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in Matthew 3:13-17 and Matthew 4:1-10.

Discuss

- Jesus was perfect. Why would he ask to be baptized?
- John the Baptist was Jesus's cousin, and almost exactly the same age. They probably knew each other growing up and were likely close to one another. How do you think their relationship affected them in this moment of Jesus's baptism?
- Why did Jesus choose to go into the wilderness after he was baptized but before he officially began his ministry?
- Why do you think the temptations came after Jesus had fasted for forty days and not immediately after his baptism?
- There are three temptations named in this passage. Which, if any, are relatable to you, and how?
- Even though Jesus did not give into the temptations, he was still tempted. How does this passage speak to you?

Challenge

As we head into Lent, it's a good time to reflect on timing. Forty days can actually seem pretty long to a student, and it certainly seems long to anyone who thinks about fasting for that period of time! Nonetheless, it can be a good spiritual practice to fast in some way during Lent by giving up video games, sour candy, or YouTube. Encourage students in this practice if they are open to it. Remind them they could also, or instead, choose to add a spiritual practice, such as an extra prayer each day or an extra Bible chapter weekly.

Please be aware that some students can have a complicated relationship with food, so for them, it is better to give up something not related to food, or just to not fast at all, than to potentially exacerbate an eating disorder.

LENTEN FASTING

Fasting is practiced by people throughout the Bible, including Jesus, as a way to grow closer to God. Traditionally, fasting means going without food for a period of time, but in the present day, it may mean going without a particular type of food or abstaining from a bad habit. While it does not have to be relegated to the time of Lent only, Lent is a good opportunity to practice this spiritual discipline.

Consider something you could give up for Lent: maybe chocolate, soda, shopping, video games, or social media. Alternatively, you might consider adding something: praying an extra time each day, reading an additional daily scripture, completing a devotional, volunteering, etc. Be specific and make a plan so this practice can become a habit, at least temporarily. Write out your plan in the space that follows.

If you have a hard time keeping this commitment, use the difficult moments to reflect on the meaning of Lent and your relationship with God. Remember Jesus's temptation in the wilderness and his ultimate sacrifice for us. And remember, we are only human!

If you struggle with eating habits, instead of subtracting food from your diet, add a spiritual discipline unrelated to food, and have a conversation about it with a trusted adult.

In the space below, make one commitment, either to give up or to add something to your daily routine, during the season of Lent.

Joys, Concerns & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group. End with the Lord's Prayer.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages.

Luke 2:39-52
John 1:19-34
1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Unit 5 // Session 5

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 138 in the Student Journal.

During the next two weeks, we'll take a deep dive into the origins of Methodism and John Wesley's theological perspective. John Wesley is the founder of Methodism. There are over 40 denominations that use Wesleyan theology. Students will learn more about who John Wesley was, what he taught, and why we still adhere to his theological worldview so many years later. We'll explore what Wesleyan Theology teaches and why it matters. This week focuses on John Wesley's general rules: do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God.

Following Jesus can sometimes be confusing, and often it feels like an unattainable standard. Paul reminds us that all have sinned and fall short of God's glory, but nonetheless, we are saved through grace (Romans 3:23-24). It can be helpful for students to understand that even people who were alive in the same century as Jesus struggled to follow his example. Jesus is perfect, and we are not: it is impossible to be fully like him, but that doesn't need to stop us from trying. God knows we are not perfect, but he also knows and understands our desire to be and do better. In response to our failures, God shows us kindness and grace.

John and Charles Wesley and the Methodists: The Methodist movement was started in the 1700s by two brothers named John and Charles Wesley. They were both priests in the Church of England (Anglican). They believed there was a better way to do church, so they developed a plan of discipleship and other "methods" so that people could be better followers of Jesus. (Hence the name, "Methodists.") They provided their congregations with some general rules (that we still follow today!) to be better aligned with God's wishes for us. These practices can help break the cycle of messing up repeatedly. It doesn't mean we won't make mistakes, but by using these rules, we can definitely do better.

This week, we are also addressing a big question: if we are forgiven and saved through Christ, what's the point of being good, anyway? Especially if we know we aren't saved by our good deeds alone. The Wesleyan Doctrine seeks to answer these questions.

It can be difficult (even for adults!) to accept that we cannot save ourselves. It is normal to want to do it on our own—we've had that desire, as humans, even before that first moment of grabbing up a spoon to feed ourselves for the first time. What does accepting Jesus's salvation look like? It looks like serving God. When we truly love God, we want to do good deeds—even if that's not what saves us.

Today, you can talk to your students about what that might look like in their lives.

Main Point

Through reading and studying scripture, John Wesley identified key points and general rules to help summarize what United Methodists believe about salvation and how we should interact with the world.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group. Try it from memory!

Review and Connect

Two weeks ago, we learned about our church. Last week, we visited another United Methodist Church. Think about both experiences as we review.

1. What similarities did you notice between our church and the church you visited?
2. What differences did you notice between our church and the church you visited?
3. What additional things did you learn from our church's website or the connection point (information desk)?
4. What does "Closing the Gap" mean to Resurrection?
5. How many church locations does Resurrection have? How many can you name?

Today we will talk more about our Methodist heritage using the general rules and doctrine from the founder, John Wesley.

Video Outline

Understanding Wesleyan Theology and United Methodist Beliefs

1. **Introduction to the Wesleys**
   - John and Charles Wesley were brothers in the 1700s.
   - Charles wrote hymns like "Christ the Lord is Risen Today" and "Hark the Herald Angels Sing."
   - John was a pastor who shaped ideas about God and church practices.
   - Their ideas helped form the Methodist movement and the United Methodist Church.
2. **What is Theology?**
   - Theology means "words about God" or "study of God."
   - John Wesley's theology shaped what our church believes and teaches—this is called doctrine.
3. **Core Beliefs of Wesleyan Theology**
   - We cannot save ourselves by doing good; only God's grace saves us.
   - Salvation comes through Jesus alone—faith in Jesus brings salvation.
   - Real faith leads to real change—faith naturally leads to good actions, like fruit from a tree.
4. **The Methodist Way of Living Faith**
   - John Wesley believed faith should be lived out in practical ways.
   - He helped form small groups, encouraged scripture study, and singing hymns to grow in faith.
   - These practices became the foundation of the Methodist Church.

5. **Wesley's Three General Rules**
   - Do no harm—treat all people with kindness and avoid doing evil.
   - Do good—actively choose to help and bring goodness to others.
   - Stay in love with God—stay connected to God through worship, prayer, sacraments, and small groups.
6. **Conclusion**
   - United Methodists live by faith in Jesus, guided by Wesley's teachings.
   - We are called to love God and love others through a life of grace, good works, and spiritual growth.

Activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: Moral of the Story

For today's activity, students are thinking about the "moral of the story," or the main point or lesson we are supposed to learn from a movie. For some students, this will be easy: they did it in English class! For others, it will be tricky or challenging, and they haven't had much practice. Consider starting them off with an example or two of a movie, story, fairy tale, or fable that they are all familiar with, and find the moral together. If that is particularly challenging for your group, you may want to adapt the activity in such a way that it makes more sense for your students.

Split into groups of three or four. Have students come up with two to four of their favorite movies from when they were kids (DON'T say the movies out loud). Instruct the students to figure out how to summarize the moral of the story in as few words as possible (they can write it on an index card if it helps). They can't use the movie's title, character names or be too descriptive. Simply describe the moral! Have the students alternate sharing their moral-in-a-few-words description. Have the rest of the group guess what movie they are thinking of. If the group guesses the movie, the OTHER person gets a point. The person with the FEWEST points wins.

OPTION 2: THE RULE-MAKING GAME

Sit in a circle. One at a time, you will say your name and a rule for everyone following you. For example:

"My name is Jose, and the first rule is that when you say your name, you have to clap your hands."

"My name is Taylor (claps their hands), and the second rule is that after you say your name, you have to say a color."

"My name is Eli (claps), blue, and the third rule is that before you say your name, you have to moo like a cow." Etc.

See how far you can get around the circle before someone messes up a rule! Feel free to start again if time allows.

NOTE: A rule is not allowed if it ends the game. (For example, you can't say, "the fourth rule is I win," or "the fifth rule is nobody talks.") Your mentors will be the judges of that!

Answer the following question:

What are some memorable rules you have for games you like to play (like for Uno)?

What are some rules you have to follow at your house?

What are your own personal life rules?

Teaching Topics

John and Charles Wesley were two brothers living in England in the 1700s. They were both ministers in the Church of England (or Anglican Church), but they believed that there was a better way of doing church. Together, they came up with various "methods" to help other Christians grow in their faith, such as meeting together in small groups, studying Scripture, and singing hymns together. Through this Methodist movement came our own denomination, the United Methodist Church.

Living into our Methodism means we should reflect on our "theology" and think deeply about it.

Theology is just a big word for how we think about God and our faith. John Wesley's insights can help us with our own. As Methodists, his work guides us and gives us focus as we figure out what we believe and why. "Wesleyan Doctrine" gives us a starting point to understand what we, as Christians and Methodists, believe about salvation and how it works.

John Wesley's work focused largely on salvation and how grace, faith, and holiness were all related. What we now refer to as the "Wesleyan Doctrine" includes these concepts:

Humans can't save themselves based on good deeds. We are not capable, no matter how much we do, of saving ourselves without divine help. This doesn't mean we can do whatever we want, though! Doing good is still good. It's just not what ultimately saves us.

Salvation comes through faith alone. This is where the "divine help" comes in. Regardless of our own actions, we need God's mercy and grace. We need Jesus. It is through our faith that we are saved. We cannot do it alone.

Genuine faith produces inward and outward holiness. That is to say, if we have real faith, then our morals and our actions will reflect that faith. We will become holy. By loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we also love our neighbors as ourselves, and our entire being will reflect that love in our daily lives. That means we will do those good deeds—we won't be able to help it, we will be compelled to do good things because we love God—even though the deeds are not what saves us.

One keyway that John Wesley identified as the best way for our actions to reflect our faith is through what he called the Three General Rules:

1. DO NO HARM is all about making sure that who we are and what we do is not harm other people. God showed loving kindness to ALL humans. That means we don't get to pick and choose whom we harm and whom we don't. Across the board, if we do no harm, we break the cycle of sin.

2. DO GOOD is about taking action, making wise choices, and doing things that actively bring good into the world. It's not passive. It doesn't happen by accident. We can't just sit around and be "doing good;" we must actually get up and do it.

3. STAY IN LOVE WITH GOD helps us to accomplish rules one and two. When we love something or someone, we're less likely to do harm and more likely to do good. When we love God, and we know that God loves us and wants to shower us with kindness and grace, then we will also choose not to harm the other people God loves, and we will want to do good in this world that God loves.

By following these three rules, we'll be living out our faith in this world.

We aren't the first Christians to study the Bible, and we certainly aren't the first Christians to ask questions about it. Looking at what other Christians have written and said throughout history is good and useful. John Wesley is one of those Christians who spent a lot of time studying scripture, faith, history, and theology, and we use the work he did to inform our lives as Christians and as Methodists.

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in Ephesians 2:4-10, Matthew 22:34-40 and Romans 3:21-28.

Discuss

- When was a time you were given something just because--not because you worked for it or because it was a holiday-but just because?
- In what ways do you feel like it can be difficult for you to rely on God?
- Why do you think faith is key to our salvation?
- Why are good deeds not enough to save ourselves?
- Based on Romans 3:23, what do you think about the rules God has for us?
- If we all fall short of God's standards, why does it matter whether or not we try to meet them?
- How can we move forward knowing we will mess up, but that through Jesus we get to be forgiven?
- What do you think each of John Wesley's three general rules actually look like in our lives today?

Challenge

If you have time, talk with your students about what these rules might look like in their lives and help them choose a rule they can practice this week.

Think about what each of John Wesley's three general rules would look like in your life this week, specifically.

Choose one rule and one specific thing you can do this week to follow that rule. Be very specific. Not "I will talk to God more" but "I will pray X number of times each day." Not "I will be nicer to people" but "I will not yell at my little sister when she makes me mad, and I will invite her to do one thing with me this week." Write out what you plan to do below, then report back on your results next week!

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina. Write in your Bible!

John 15:1-8
Matthew 5:43-48
Galatians 5:13-14
Ephesians 1:3-10
John 3:14-18
Mark 12:28-34

Unit 5 // Session 6

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 144 in the Student Journal.

Students may have difficulty understanding how faith can practically help them. John Wesley's guidance can help us to live out our lives as Christians, helping us with a framework by which we make decisions. We can better understand issues of faith using scripture, tradition, experience, and reason, and we can strengthen our faith through community.

Main Point

John Wesley's guidance can help us to live out our lives as Christians. We can better understand issues of faith using scripture, tradition, experience, and reason, and we can strengthen our faith through community.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Review and Connect

Last week we talked about Lent and the church calendar.

1. What are the church cycles?
2. What is the in between time called?
3. What colors are associated with different holidays and times of the year?

This week we will talk about how John Wesley applied four concepts to making decisions.

Video Outline

Living Faith Through Wesley's Quadrilateral and Christian Community

1. **Introduction to the Quadrilateral**
   - John Wesley created a four-part tool to help Christians understand faith and seek God's will.
   - The four parts are Scripture, Tradition, Experience, and Reason.
2. **Scripture**
   - The Bible is the foundation and starting point for faith.
   - It is God's word and the main source for Christian belief and living.
3. **Tradition**
   - Refers to the shared practices and beliefs passed down through Christian history.
   - Connects us to past generations of faith—our spiritual mothers and fathers.

4. **Experience**
   - Our personal life experiences and emotions help us understand faith.
   - God values our feelings and the experiences of others also help guide us.
5. **Reason**
   - We use our minds, logic, and intellect to think about our faith.
   - It's okay to ask questions and understand scripture in its historical context.
6. **Faith in Community**
   - Wesley believed real faith grows best in community.
   - He formed small groups (societies, bands, and Covenant groups) to support each other.
   - Today, we grow together in small groups, encouraging and helping each other live out our faith.
7. **Living Faith Daily**
   - Faith is personal but not private; it is lived out with others.
   - We aim to live in a way that pleases God and shows love to others.
   - Even though we all fall short (Romans 3:23), God still loves, forgives, and walks with us.
8. **Conclusion**
   - Use the quadrilateral and community to grow in faith.
   - Be proud of your journey, live as an example of God's love, and go team UMC!

Activity

CROSSING THE SWAMP

Your mentor will set out 8 sheets of paper "islands" for you to use in crossing the room. The room is now a deep swamp filled with dangerous leeches, but you must cross it! Follow these rules:

1. Your group must cross the "dangerous swamp" while remaining connected to one another and staying on the safe islands
2. Your team must hold hands while anyone is on the islands to make sure no one falls in.
3. After a foot touches an island, that island must have a foot on it at all times until the last team member removes their foot.
4. If anyone falls in the swamp, you have to start over.

Teaching Topics

Wesleyan Quadrilateral: One of the biggest contributions Wesley made to Christianity was to use various tools to grow in our faith or make decisions about life. Rather than just looking at the world through one or two lenses, we use the four lenses of Scripture, Reason, Tradition, and Experience to shape our perspectives. Together, these four lenses are called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral is a great takeaway tool that we hope students will continue to use throughout their lives. When they encounter a faith question and aren't sure how to answer it, they will at least be heading in the right direction if they turn to scripture, reason, tradition, and experience for guidance.

Students can return to the Wesleyan Quadrilateral when they are making any decision. Encourage them to do so! The more they practice it now, the more likely they will be to use it in the future.

Faith is Personal, but it's not Private: When we are tiny kids, we can't go places on our own, but the older we get, the more we want to make our own choices and do our own things, without parental supervision. This development is normal and understandable: 4-year-olds shouldn't be walking through the store alone, but at some point, in our lives, it becomes perfectly acceptable to do so.

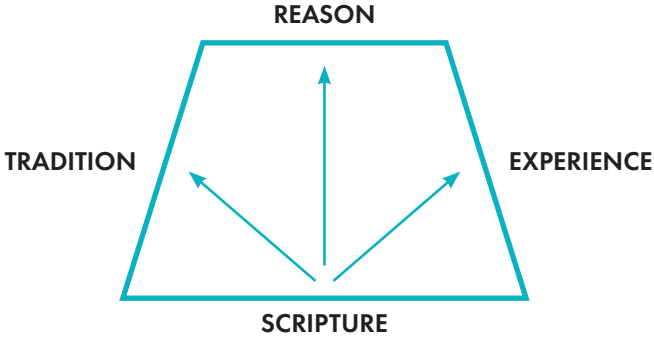
Our faith journeys are similar. We often start going to church due to adults in our lives, but at some point, we have to start making that decision for ourselves. Some students are there already, and some are still coming because a parent or guardian makes them; most students are somewhere in between. But even when we make the choice on our own, it can help to have others alongside us. Many people see faith as an independent process, because choosing to follow Christ is an independent decision. However, they are missing out on a huge part of the journey in trying to do it alone.

It can be helpful for students to understand this concept by thinking as a team. They can practice baseball by themselves, but at some point, if they really want to be good at baseball, they need teammates to work with them, support them, encourage them, and hold them accountable. We can, and should, do this with faith, too.

Remind students that this is what they are doing with their Confirmation group! That's why it's so important to participate, be consistent, and encourage others. That's what we do for our teammates.

Wesley commonly used four resources to reflect on issues of faith. We call these 4 resources the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. This 4-part tool helps us better understand our faith, make decisions, and try to determine God's will. It involves looking at a situation or question from four different perspectives:

Scripture: The Bible, which is our foundational source for Christian belief and living.
Tradition: our heritage, faith traditions, and those things that Christians have done and believed throughout history.
Experience: our individual interactions and encounters throughout life. We can also lean into the experiences of others.
Reason: the use of our God-given logic and intellect as we think rationally and logically. This can include thinking about scripture within its historical context



Through the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, we recognize that God created our emotions/feelings (experience) and our minds (reason). We do not have to check our brains at the door of the church, and we do not have to stifle our emotions either.

God also gave us other people in our faith community (tradition), and God gave us the Bible to read and study (Scripture). We don't have to do things on our own. We have others around us and the Bible, too.

Speaking of other people, one of John Wesley's core beliefs was that a true faith in God happens best in community. He encouraged societies, bands, and covenant groups to ensure that people in his church could live out their faith in smaller communities. We continue to live out our faith in community today in small groups.

FAITH IS PERSONAL, BUT IT'S NOT PRIVATE.
We make a personal choice to be Christians, have faith, and live that out in our daily lives, but we live those lives with other people. Here are 3 ways to do that better:

Participate – Sharing our thoughts and actively listening to others' perspectives is important to building community.

Be Consistent – Showing up regularly makes a big difference to the group. (Imagine if a baseball player only went to practice once a month!)

Encourage – Each of us can make a difference in the lives of those around us. We should encourage our peers to share, be there for them when they are having a hard time and celebrate their joys with them.

Bible Connection

Read together our passage for today, found in Hebrews 10:24-25.

Discuss

- How do your friends help you to improve or to accomplish things?
- What is the greatest thing you have done with a team or group?
- How can small groups help you to better understand God?
- What are some other benefits of having a small group at church?
- How do the 4 parts of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral help you to understand God? (Answer this question for each of the 4 parts.)

Challenge

THE WESLEYAN QUADRILATERAL
Think of a question you have or a decision you are making. Then work through the Quadrilateral to help you (maybe) find an answer.

1. Scripture: What does the Bible say about this topic? Think generally: the Bible might not say something specific on this topic, but Jesus is pretty clear about what is important. What insights can you glean from Jesus?
2. Tradition: What advice do you think a wise and mature member of your church (a mentor?) would give you about this question?

3. Experience: What life events could help you think through this decision? What can you learn from others' experiences here?
4. Reason: Use your God-given logic and ability to think rationally. What else do you know that could factor into this question?

If you've come to an answer, great! If you haven't, or if your answer still feels incomplete, don't worry. Some answers take a long time to find. Give it time and talk to God about it. You can also talk to your mentors or another trusted adult!

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages.

Proverbs 2:1-6
Luke 6:1-11
Matthew 18:20

Unit 5 // Session 7

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 150 in the Student Journal.

In the Bible, and particularly the Old Testament, we watch humans struggle to be in relationship with God and one another repeatedly. God eventually establishes a Covenant with a special group of people to help them live in harmony with one another. This Covenant began with Abraham. God promised to bless him and give him land and many descendants. In return, Abraham and his family were to be a blessing to the whole world. You may remember that Abraham had not been successful in having children with his wife Sarah, so instead fathered a child with his wife's servant, Hagar. That child's name was Ishmael, and the Islamic faith claims him as its ancestor. But then of course, as God promised, Sarah and Abraham had a child named Isaac. Isaac is claimed as the root of the Jewish faith, and the Israelites descended from him.

Because Christianity and Judaism share more scriptural history, we read much about the Israelites in our Bible. But Islam has a rich history as well, and your students will likely have Jewish and Muslim classmates, so it's worth talking a bit about both.

Abraham's descendants held up their end of the Covenant and used their blessings from God to care for others and show hospitality to their neighbors...sometimes. But other times, they used their blessings to oppress and hurt others and forgot about God altogether. The Old Testament is full of such stories, and that tendency to stray from God leads to some of the most difficult-to-understand passages in the Bible.

Later, through Jesus, this covenant was opened up to the entire world. As Paul writes in Romans 10:12-13, "There is no difference between Jew and Gentile— the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" However, Paul is quick to write that God did not reject the Israelites or forsake the people of the covenantal promise: "I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew" (Romans 11:1-2). God still loves and cares for all people and wants us as Christians to do the same.

Main Point

In scripture we read how God chose to be in a special relationship with the descendants of Abraham. Through Abraham, the Christian faith shares an origin with the Jewish and Islamic faiths, but Christianity believes that Jesus is the Messiah. That belief in Jesus is central to all of the Christian denominations that have developed over thousands of years.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group. Try it from memory!

Review and Connect

Two weeks ago, we discussed a few of John Wesley's contributions to our method in living a Christian life.

1. What are the four parts of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral?
2. What are we supposed to do with the Wesleyan Quadrilateral? How can it help us?
3. What did John Wesley think about small groups?
4. If "faith is personal, but not private," what does that mean to you?

This week we will talk about the origins of monotheistic faiths and how they came to be the modern Christian church with all sorts of expressions of belief in one God.

Video Outline

Understanding Other Faiths and Our Shared Humanity

1. **The Importance of Learning About Other Religions**
   - There are over 4,000 religions in the world, with five major ones including Christianity.
   - Within Christianity alone, there are around 45,000 denominations.
   - Christians can choose to respect others of different faiths rather than judge or reject them.
2. **Real-Life Examples of Religious Diversity**
   - Some people face discrimination because of their religion.
   - Respect and kindness go a long way in building understanding and friendship.
3. **Shared Origins of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam**
   - All three religions trace their roots back to Abraham.
   - Abraham had two sons: Ishmael (linked to Islam) and Isaac (linked to Judaism and eventually Christianity).
   - God promised to bless both sons and their descendants.
4. **Key Differences Between the Three Faiths**
   - Founders: Christians follow Jesus, Muslims follow Muhammad, Jews follow Abraham.
   - Scriptures: Christians read the Bible, Jews follow the Old Testament, Muslims follow the Quran.
   - Practices:
     - Christians: baptism, communion.
     - Muslims: five pillars (prayer, charity, fasting, pilgrimage, faith declaration).
     - Jews: Sabbath, bar/bat mitzvahs, Passover celebrations.
5. **Key Similarities Among the Faiths**
   - Belief in one God (called by different names like God, Allah, Yahweh).
   - Shared values: prayer, helping those in need, fasting, pilgrimage.
   - All recognize Jesus, though only Christians believe he is God's son.

6. **The Danger of Stereotyping**
   - People of all faiths have done both good and harmful things.
   - It's wrong to judge an entire religion by the actions of a few individuals.
7. **Encouragement to Stay Curious and Respectful**
   - Understanding others' beliefs leads to compassion and peace.
   - Confirmation is a chance to think deeply about your own beliefs while respecting others.
   - Focus on what unites us instead of what divides us.
8. **Understanding Christian Denominations**
   - Denominations may seem less important but help explain why Christians believe and practice differently.
   - People already know others with different faith views, so it helps to understand the reasons behind the differences.
9. **Friendship as a Comparison**
   - Friend groups change over time due to distance, disagreements, or new environments.
   - Denominations are like friend groups that split because of differences in belief about Jesus and faith practices.
10. **Major Historical Church Splits**
    - Around 1000 years after Jesus, the Eastern Orthodox Church split from the Roman Catholic Church over disagreements about the Trinity and priesthood.
    - About 500 years later, Martin Luther protested Catholic practices (like paying for forgiveness), sparking the Protestant Reformation.
    - The printing press helped spread these new ideas and allowed people to read the Bible for themselves.
11. **Formation of the United Methodist Church**
    - Originated from the Church of England, which split from the Catholic Church due to King Henry VIII's desire for a divorce.
    - The United Methodist Church has split and reunited over the last 300 years, mainly due to issues like slavery and inclusion.
12. **Non-Denominational Churches**
    - These churches claim not to follow a denomination but have also formed due to splits and differences.
    - In reality, they are also part of the pattern of division and reform.
13. **Why Denominations Happen**
    - Differences in interpreting unclear parts of the Bible lead to disagreement.
    - These disagreements result in new groups or denominations.
14. **What Unites All Christian Churches**
    - All Christian denominations believe in Jesus as the human form of God.
    - They agree on Jesus's teachings, death, and resurrection.
    - Despite differences, Jesus remains the central figure of the Christian faith.

Activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: BLESSINGS SHOWDOWN
In this activity, we are going to "count our blessings," competition-style!

Divide the group up into two equal teams. Have each group select a Writer who has somewhat legible handwriting. Give the Writer a blank piece of paper and a pen.

Set a timer for 30 seconds. (There will be three 30-second rounds.) During each round, each team has to come up with as many blessings as they can think of in the selected category.
The Round Categories are:
Round 1: Foods that Bless Us
Round 2: Items/Objects that Bless Us
Round 3: People that Bless Us (specific names or categories)

After each round, have teams count up their points, 1 point per blessing. The team with the most points after three rounds wins!

OPTION 2: SHARED STORIES
Jews, Muslims, and Christians all trace our roots back to the story of Abraham, and we have a common history and heritage. While we have some differences in our beliefs, we have many things in common as well. See if as a group, you can list some of the similarities we have with our Jewish and/or Muslim friends.

Teaching Topics

There is a large amount covered under this week's teaching topics. It's okay to just focus on the highlights or look at items students find most interesting if you don't have time to explore the whole section. Just remind students they can go back and read it on their own if they want more info!

The roots of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity stem from one family, fathered by Abraham. We find his story in the book of Genesis.

FATHER ABRAHAM

- Abraham was a devout follower of God, but he was frustrated because he had no children to inherit his name and property, and he was getting old. God told Abraham he would have as many descendants as there are stars, he could see in the sky.
- But Abraham was impatient. Instead of waiting for his wife Sarah to become pregnant, Abraham had a child with his wife's servant, Hagar. Nonetheless God still kept his promise (he always does!), and Sarah had a baby, too.
- Hagar's baby was named Ishmael. Sarah's baby was named Isaac. The Jewish faith traces its ancestry back to Isaac, and the Muslim faith traces its origin to Ishmael.
- Christianity is ultimately a continuation of the Jewish faith, so we, too, trace our history to Isaac. But remember, both Isaac and Ishmael are sons of Abraham. That's why he's sometimes referred to as "Father Abraham."

ISLAM

- Islam is the religion of Muslims. They worship one God, known as Allah (Allah means "God" in Arabic).
- They believe the word of God was revealed to the "final prophet" Muhammad, who shared those revelations with his followers. Muhammad's words were written in the Quran, Islam's holy book.
- Muslims believe in many other prophets, including several from our Old Testament. They believe Jesus was one of the most important prophets, but they do not believe he was the Son of God.
- Muslims follow The Five Pillars of Islam: Profession of Faith, Prayer (5 times a day), Charity to the Poor, Fasting during Ramadan, and Pilgrimage to Mecca.

JUDAISM

- Judaism is the world's oldest monotheistic religion. Jews believe in one God who revealed himself through the ancient prophets.
- Abraham's son, Isaac, had a child named Jacob, who later took the name of Israel. His descendants became known as the Israelites.
- Jews believe God made a covenant, or promise, with his followers. Christians believe this, too. But here's where we differ: Jews believe the Messiah will come one day but has not yet arrived. They consider Jesus to be a rabbi, or teacher, not the son of God. As Christians, we believe Jesus is God's Son, the long-awaited Messiah.
- Their scripture is the Hebrew Bible, also known as the Tanakh. This is the same as the Old Testament in the Christian Bible. We can learn much about the Jewish faith by studying the Old Testament, though they also have holy texts on how it should be interpreted.

ALL OF US

God chose Abraham's family to receive a special blessing. But this didn't get them off the hook! Instead, this gave them an extra challenge: because they were God's chosen people, they were now charged to bless the whole world. They were God's messengers and blessing-bringers, and they were chosen to be a blessing to others.

As Christians, we too are now God's people, and we are given that same charge and calling: to be a blessing to others and to show God's love to the whole world.

CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS – A BRIEF HISTORY

Over the years Christianity has developed what we call "denominations" which are different branch of Christianity. Different Christian denominations have varied traditions and different stances on some concepts within the Christian faith. While these different denominations sometimes disagree on specifics of faith, ultimately, they have more in common than not because all Christian churches believe Christ is the Son of God.

The Orthodox Church: As the earliest form of Christianity, it is one of the oldest surviving religious institutions in the world.

The Catholic Church split from the Orthodox Church in the 11th century due to disagreements about church authority and organizational structure as well as a few other items, such as the nature of the Holy Spirit. The Catholic Church has a global structure of organization and authority headed by the Pope.

The Protestant Reformation: In 1517, Martin Luther posted a list of 95 Theses explaining what he believed was wrong with the Catholic Church. The 16th-century Church and many of its leaders were seen as greedy or corrupt. Luther believed the Church had too much power and did not need to be an intermediary between people and God. Instead, Luther thought people could form their own relationships with God independently and with personal responsibility. This church split was the Protestant Reformation.

The Anglican Church: In 1534, the Anglican Church split from Catholicism. The split happened when the Pope wouldn't let the English King end his marriage to his first wife. The Anglican Church's beliefs remained in line with Catholicism at first, but the King was considered the head of the Church instead of the Pope. Over the years the Anglican Church adopted more Protestant beliefs. Today it has traits of both Catholic and Protestant faiths.

The Methodist Church split from the Anglican Church in the 18th century. The United Methodist Church is considered to be a "Mainline Protestant" church today.

AREAS OF DIFFERENCE AND SIMILARITY

Tradition – Orthodox and Catholic churches place a heavy focus on tradition. While Protestants also value tradition, Orthodox & Catholic churches tend to emphasize it more.

Creed – A creed is a statement of faith. The Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, and many Protestant churches (including the UMC) believe and often recite versions of the Nicene Creed. The Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant churches use the Apostles' Creed as well, but the Orthodox Church does not. Both the Nicene and the Apostles' Creed mention the "holy catholic church." This is not referencing the big-C Catholic church. In this case, "catholic" means the universal Christian faith—that all Christians are of one faith in Christ.

Communion – Christians use communion to remember Christ's body and blood, shed for us and the forgiveness of our sins; for Christians, this is how we commemorate the Last Supper.

Orthodox and Catholic Beliefs – Forgiveness of sins is obtained through communion. Christ becomes present in the bread and wine, which become the actual body and blood of Christ, though the two churches disagree on how exactly that happens.

Protestant Beliefs – Communion is a symbol of grace and a way to remember Christ's sacrifice for us. It is typically believed by Protestants that the bread and wine don't transform into Christ, but they represent him. However, there is a wide array of thought on this topic within different Protestant denominations.

Confession of Sins – All Christians believe we are forgiven through Christ, but the way we experience that can be different.

- The Orthodox and Catholic Churches both practice the confession of sins to a spiritual leader or priest, who will often respond by prescribing ways the individual can make amends.
- Protestants believe the individual does not need an intermediary to receive forgiveness and are instead encouraged to confess their sins to God directly, often during the worship service (collectively and/or in silent reflection).

Saints – Most Christians believe anyone in heaven is a "saint," but there are some key differences.

- Catholic and Orthodox churches canonize or glorify particularly holy individuals as Saints. They believe these Saints may intercede with God on someone's behalf, and therefore they may pray directly to a Saint. Mary, mother of Jesus, is given special status by the Catholic and Orthodox churches. She is venerated above Saints, but below God. She is not worshipped, but she is often prayed to and mentioned in worship services.
- Protestants believe all Christians are saints and are called to imitate Christ, but Christ is the only one who can mediate between God and humankind. Therefore, our prayers go to God or Christ, not to a Saint.

This list is just a small sampling of areas of difference and similarity. If you visit other churches, you may notice other things, perhaps in their music, the way they practice baptism, etc.

ONE CHURCH

Because we are Christ followers, the Holy Spirit shows up and creates a temple within each of us. There are many denominations of Christianity, but regardless of denomination, the Christian church begins with its followers. We are all responsible for making our lives align with Jesus. Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Protestant, or otherwise, we are all part of the Church, and that is a miracle—a divine, extraordinary event—we get to participate in every day.

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in Genesis 15:1-5, Genesis 17:1-8 and John 17:20-23

Discuss

Today, invite students to focus not only on the differences between Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, but also on the similarities. You might also ask them, "How can we be a blessing to our neighbors of other faiths?"

During today's discussion, when students talk about other faiths or going to other churches for worship, steer away if students drift into being too critical of others. Remind them that our promise to God is to love and bless others—even those of other faiths. In addition, remind them that what we have in common is more important, and that what works for them in their faith journey might not work for others, and vice versa.

Today's session is also a bit of a history class on the origins of the many denominations of Christianity. Initially, of course, it was one religion, but there were differences of opinion pretty quickly! We all accept Jesus as Messiah, but beyond that, there's a lot of ground for disagreement.

This is another good opportunity to remind students of the importance of the Apostles' Creed, because it states what we believe as Christians. These are the tenets of our faith that have been accepted by all denominations, and the Creed unites us. It encompasses our most important beliefs. Whatever else we may not see eye-to-eye on, we are all one church in Christ.

Of course, the connection is that all Christian denominations are working from the same text with altered interpretations! You may need to spell that out for students at the end of the activity.

- We learned a lot today! What stuck out to you? What is something you want to learn more about?
- What do you think God was saying when he told Abraham to look at the stars?
- What did it mean for Abraham and his family to be chosen by God? What does it mean for us today to be chosen or called by God?
- In what ways does our church bless those around us, in our community and our city and in the world? How can we as a group or as individuals bless others in our lives?
- How does understanding other faiths better help us understand our own faith better?
- What is significant about these 3 Abrahamic faiths being so closely related? How are these three faiths being closely related similar to Christian denominations also being closely related?
- Today's Bible passage contains words spoken by Jesus in prayer at the end of the Last Supper. He prayed this in front of his disciples during his last evening with them. What was Jesus talking about and why do you think it was so important for him to speak this specific message?
- Have you ever been to a worship service at a church that was a different denomination? What similarities and differences can you remember?
- What do you think makes your church unique?
- In what ways does our church bless those around us, in our community and our city and in the world? How can we as a group or as individuals bless others in our lives?

Challenge

RANDOM ACT OF BLESSING

We've all heard of spreading Random Acts of Kindness. This week's challenge is very similar: look for ways you can bless other others through big and small ways. Maybe you can offer to cook dinner for your family one night this week or make a dessert as a sweet treat. Offer to rake leaves for your neighbor or shovel their sidewalk. Look for chores to do in your home outside of your regular responsibilities.

Are there any service or giving projects going on at the church that you and your family can connect with?

After you've participated in a couple Random Acts of Blessings, reflect on these questions using the journal space provided in the next few pages:

- In what ways have you personally been blessed in your own life?
- Was it easy or hard to look for ways to bless others around you?
- How did blessing others make you feel? What was their reaction to being blessed by you?

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages. Try Lectio Divina! Write in your Bible!

Genesis 15:9-22
Exodus 19:4-6
Deuteronomy 6:6-9
Isaiah 42:6-7
Romans 10:9-13
John 14:15-21
Matthew 16:13-19

UNIT 6

Unit 6 The Journey Continues

Session 1: Review and Conversation with Mentors
Session 2: Inviting Others into God's Story
Session 3: What's Next?
Confirmation Weekend

>> UNIT OVERVIEW

This is not the end. This is actually the beginning. While confirmation is winding down, this is meant to be a life-long launch into the exploration and enactment of Christian faith. In this unit we will review the year, prepare for the confirmation ceremony and begin to consider what the next steps will be.

Unit 6 // Session 1

Session Overview

Refer to Page 160 in the Student Journal.

This week each student to has an opportunity to speak with one of their Confirmation mentors one-on-one (or one-on-two—see note below). We are nearly at the end of Confirmation, and it's a good time to check in with students. While one mentor is doing one-on-one conversations, the other mentor can be reviewing the week-to-week discussions, to help refresh what has been learned so far. Here are some things to talk about with each student during your one-on-one:

- Take a look at the Confirmation requirements and ask how they are doing. If there are requirements they still need to complete, help them make a list. Most Confirmation students are at an age where they could really use help with this—you are doing important work!
- Check in with them regarding the Apostles' Creed. If they don't have it memorized, remind them how important it is and maybe give them some suggested strategies.
- Ask if they have any questions or concerns. Give them a chance to talk. Some students may not be comfortable talking in front of the whole class, but they might have something weighing on their mind.
- Ask them what is working for them in Confirmation, and what would help them to finish the Confirmation journey well. Do they need anything different from you?
- Double check that they are still interested in being confirmed and becoming an adult member of our church. If they are hesitant, let your Student Ministry Staff know, as it may require further conversations with the student and perhaps a parent or guardian. It is okay if they do not want to be confirmed right now; they can always choose to be confirmed in a later year or to join the church as an adult. We don't want them to feel forced into it, as that can lead to a shallow and inauthentic faith and a difficult (and potentially irreparable) relationship with the church.

If you don't think you will have time to complete one-on-ones with each student, you could do one-on-twos. Partners may actually be more comfortable for students who have a peer they are close with, AND it's more efficient, timewise. It will also work really well if they are in partners for the review.

If you run out of time to meet with students, consider scheduling time this upcoming week. Remember to follow Safe Gatherings guidance.

Before beginning one-on-ones, instruct the rest of your students on what they should do during this time in order to review the week-to-week discussions from the year. You know your group well. Use your best judgment. Should they answer the questions in partners, or in larger groups? What would work for the whole group in order for you to

simultaneously have individual time with students?
You may suggest they read the Bible passage in small groups or partners and complete the discussion that way as well, depending on timing and how long your one-on-ones take.

Be VERY clear with your students regarding your expectations for their behavior while you are talking to other students in a one-on-one and reiterate the importance of the one-on-one conversation.

Main Point

Instead of new topics, today we explore what we've learned so far.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group.

Review and Connect

Last week we talked about other faiths related to Christianity and the many kinds of Christian expression that currently exist.

1. How is Judaism like and different from Christianity?
2. What's one thing all Christian denominations have in common?
3. What are some areas of difference among Christian denominations?

This week we will review the content from this past year and meet one-on-one to answer any questions you may have. Follow your mentors' instructions as you complete the following review with a partner or in a small group. When you have finished the review, take a look at the Bible Connection as a group and discuss.

Activity

ONE-ON-ONES
Each student will have the chance to meet one-on-one with one of their confirmation mentors today. Together, review the confirmation requirements and see what you need to prioritize during this second half of confirmation. This is a great time for you to ask any questions you have.

REVIEW
While your other group members are having their one-on-ones, review with a partner or small group.

Unit 1 Introduction

Session 1: Parent Meeting: Check Location for Meeting Time and Details
Session 2: Welcome to Confirmation – Intro Apostles' Creed
Session 3: Meet Your Bible

What are the important parts of the Apostles' Creed?
What are some important things to remember when using the Bible?
How many books of the Bible can you name?
What is Lectio Divina?
How much highlighting/underlining/sticky notes/etc. have you used in your Bible?

What is one Bible verse that has stuck with you? Why?

Unit 2 God the Father

- Session 1: The Old Testament
- Session 2: The Story of God
- Session 3: Relationship: Broken
- Session 4: Prayer: Talking with God –Lord's Prayer

What is the story of the Old Testament?
What is the overall story of God?
Why study the Old Testament?
What does it mean to "sin"?
What are the two kinds of sin?
Why do people sin?
What is the consequence of sin?
What is the ACTS format for prayer?
What are some ways to connect with God other than prayer?

Unit 3 God the Son

- Session 1: The New Testament
- Session 2: Jesus: God With Us
- Session 3: Relationship Restored
- Session 4: The Promise of the Resurrection

What is the story of the New Testament?
Why study the New Testament?
What are some of the reasons God sent Jesus to us?
How is Jesus 100% divine and 100% human?
What does "the Incarnation" mean?
What do we have to do to earn God's forgiveness? (A trick question!)
What are the three forms of grace recognized in Methodism?
What is Jesus's role in forgiveness? (We'll learn more in a few weeks!)
What promise(s) did God make to us with Jesus's resurrection?
What does Jesus's resurrection mean to you?
What does it mean for all people?
Where does the Resurrection appear in the Apostles' Creed?

Unit 4 God as Holy Spirit

- Session 1: The Holy Trinity – Spiritual Gifts Assessment
- Seasonal: Advent and Christmas
- Session 2: Partnering with God's Mission
- Session 3: What's Yet to Come

What is Advent?
Can you remember what the four Advent candles represent?
When is the Christmas season (officially)?
What can you remember about the nativity story?
What is the Trinity? What are the roles of each of the 3 parts?
Can you remember any metaphors for describing the Trinity?

Why does it matter that God is three-in-one?
How does the Trinity relate to the Story of God and the structure of the Bible?
What is your favorite spiritual gift that you have and why?
How can your spiritual gifts help you to partner with God's mission for the world?
Why is it important for us as Christians to serve others?
What is the difference between Heaven and the Kingdom of God?
What is our job, as Christians, regarding the Kingdom of God?
What is the relationship between grace, atonement, and the Kingdom of God?

Unit 5 The Church

- Session 1: What is the Church?
- Session 2: The United Methodist Church
- Session 3: What is Resurrection UMC?
- Session 4: Visit another Church
- Seasonal: Lent and the Church Calendar
- Session 5: John Wesley's General Rules and Doctrine
- Session 6: John Wesley's Guidance
- Session 7: Abrahamic Faiths and Christian Denominations

What are the two sacraments Methodists recognize?
What are some key beliefs of the United Methodist Church?
How many church locations does Resurrection have? How many can you name?
What does "Closing the Gap" mean to Resurrection?
Who are John and Charles Wesley?
What are Wesley's Three General Rules?
What are the 4 parts of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral?
What are we supposed to do with the Wesleyan Quadrilateral? How can it help us?
What did John Wesley think about small groups?
If "faith is personal, but not private," what does that mean to you?
What are the different cycles during the Christian year?
What is Pentecost?
What is Lent?
What do you remember about Judaism? How is it similar to and different from Christianity? Who is Abraham in the Bible? What is his importance? Can you remember the names of any of the other members of his family?
What's one thing all Christian denominations have in common? (Hint: It's the thing that distinguishes Christianity from other religions like Judaism or Islam.)
What are some areas of difference among Christian denominations?

Bible Connection

Read our passage for today, found in John 6:26-51.

Discuss

Even when Jesus was right in front of them, many people still did not believe or understand that he was the Son of God and asked him to perform a miracle for them. Ultimately, he did perform the miracle of all miracles, but in this passage, he tries to use words and logic to convince them.

- Why do you think he chose this tactic?
- Are you good at convincing people using words?
- Do you feel like you are a person who is swayed by logical arguments, or do you usually require physical proof before you believe something?
- How is confirmation going for you so far? What has been the best thing, and what has been more difficult?
- Which confirmation session(s) do you feel like you remember best and why?
- What are you still hoping to learn as we complete the second half of Confirmation?

Challenge

ANOTHER CONVERSATION

In your meeting today with your mentor, you looked at the confirmation requirements. How are you doing with those?

Your challenge for this week is to go over that checklist with a parent or guardian. Share what you still need to do to be ready for the confirmation ceremony, and make sure you're set up for success!

Make sure they have the ceremony on the calendar and talk about the people you would like to invite to your ceremony so that they can get it on their calendars, too.

Joys, Concerns & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages.

Hebrews 12:1-3
John 14:25-26
1 John 2:24-25

Unit 6 // Session 2

Speaker

Session Overview

Refer to Page 168 in the Student Journal.

Many of us are aware that outside of the church, evangelism gets a pretty bad reputation, but it gets one even within the church. All of us can think of a time when someone tried to push their faith onto us in a way that was anything but Christlike. Because of this, we often shy away from talking about our faith in an attempt to not offend or insult those around us. Our default position tends to be along the lines of, "You believe what you believe. I'll believe what I believe."

But evangelism is simply sharing your story with others. It is telling those around you about the ways that God has shown up in your life and how you have changed by being in relationship with Jesus. In our story today, that is exactly what the Samaritan woman does: She meets Jesus in a powerful way, and she goes back home to tell her whole village about that encounter. In fact, we are told in John 4:39, "Many Samaritans in that city believed in Jesus because of the woman's word when she testified." All the Samaritan woman did was share her story, and through her testimony many others came to know Christ.

Of course, there are other ways of inviting others into God's story without even talking. We can show how God has transformed our lives through our actions, our attitudes, and our service toward one another. Those in Generation Z (people born between 1995-2015) are especially drawn to social justice, human rights, and service toward one another. Fortunately, these are all things that Jesus cares a great deal about too! It is really easy to make the connection between students' hunger and thirst for justice and Jesus' own compassion toward the marginalized and outcast. Making that connection is a beautiful form of evangelism!

Ultimately, evangelism is supposed to be good news. Encourage your students to grow more comfortable talking about the good things God has done in their lives. They don't have to use big words or churchy language to share their faith with others. All they have to do is tell their stories and invite others into the big and beautiful Story of God.

Next week is our final small group meeting. Check in with students this week to see if they have questions about the Confirmation ceremony. Remind them of the expectations and timing.

Main Point

Once we have accepted the invitation to be a part of God's ongoing mission in the world, we can invite others into God's story by sharing our faith with them.

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together as a group by memory. Students will need to recite the creed from memory at the Confirmation ceremony, so please encourage them to practice.

Review and Connect

You are getting close to the Confirmation Ceremony. Let's talk a little about your expectations

1. Are you ready to be confirmed?
2. Do you have any questions about the Confirmation Ceremony?

Today we are going to discuss how you might invite others to experience God in ways that will add meaning to their lives.

Video Outline

Breaking Barriers Through Relationship and Service

1. Introduction and the Struggle to Connect Worship with Service
   - Share that Sundays is a time to grow in faith.
   - Many people compartmentalize worship and service as separate activities.
   - This division can create an "us vs. them" mentality when helping others.
2. Personal Story of Serving
   - Share a story about a time when you have served through the church.
   - Share your observations of the barriers that sometimes exist.
   - Share the beauty of service.
3. Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (John 4)
   - Jesus approaches a Samaritan woman—someone considered an outsider.
   - He asks her for a drink, placing himself in a position of need.
   - Jesus shares power by building a relationship, not just offering help.
4. Shift in Perspective
   - Serving shifts our perspective
   - We are not separate from the people we serve.
   - Choose to sit and be with others which can potentially lead to deeper, mutual conversations and relationships.
5. Challenge to Confirmation Students
   - As students grow in faith, they are invited to model Christ-like love.
   - Jesus' love changed the disciples' perspective—ours should too.
   - Students are encouraged to notice and include others, especially those who are isolated.
6. Shifting from "Doing For" to "Being With"
   - Real relationships form when we value people, not just serve them.
   - Listening and receiving from others breaks down power imbalances.
   - Demonstrating love through presence can reflect Christ's teachings.
7. Walking Into the Hard Spaces
   - Jesus went to Samaria intentionally; we are called to go to uncomfortable places too.
   - Sitting in difficult spaces brings spiritual growth.
   - In these moments, we may see Christ in others—and they may see Christ in us.

Activity (pick one!)

OPTION 1: SHARE YOUR FAVORITE

Pick a topic where people might have strong opinions about which one is the best or their favorite (such as a TV show, movie, food, restaurant, book, song, band, or superhero).

Each student will have 30-45 seconds to convince the others as to why their favorite is the best option and everyone else should make it their top choice as well.

When we have found something that we love—whether it's a new restaurant, a television show or movie, or the latest band or YouTube star—we can't help but want to share that thing with the world! We want to tell everyone about our new favorite thing and have them share in our joy. It's the same with sharing our faith: we should want to share our love with Jesus with the whole world, just like the Samaritan woman at the well from our story for today.

OPTION 2: SEVEN WORD GOSPEL

How would you tell someone about God's Story in seven words or less? In 2011, the publication Christian Century asked this question to both Christian theologians and their everyday readers. Here were some of the responses they come up with:
God, through Jesus Christ, welcomes you anyhow. We are who God says we are.
Christ offers new life for all. Jesus loves me, this I know.

So, how would you share the good news of the Christian message in seven words or less? As a group, come up with your own "Seven Word Gospel." Try to think of an easy way to explain God's Story to someone who has never heard it before.

Teaching Topics

Evangelism comes from a Latin word (Evangelium) that means "good news." Practicing evangelism is as simple as telling others about the good things God has done in your life, or how your life has changed for the better because of your relationship with Jesus.

Just as we are still in the middle of the Story of God, our own individual stories are still being written. You don't have to be perfect or have all the right answers or use big "churchy" words to tell others about Jesus. Sharing your story is as easy as telling others about what God has done in your life in the past or how God is working in your life now.

One way to invite others into God's story is to follow the formula "Pray, Care, Share."

First, pray for those around you that do not yet know about Christ: your friends, your family members, your classmates, or teammates. Ask that God will be revealed in their lives.

Then, show that you care for them. This could be through kind words, acts of service, or even through a smile. There's a famous quote from Theodore Roosevelt that says, "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care." Before sharing your story with others, they need to know that you care for them.

Finally, when the time is right, share your story with them. Tell them about who Jesus is to you. Let them know that Jesus cares for them as well and longs to be in a relationship with them too.

Another famous quote that is often credited to St. Francis of Assisi says, "Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary." There are other ways to share your story with others beyond using words and conversation. Most of the time, people want to know that we are listening to them and that we won't judge them. We need to show that we are safe and caring people before we invite those around us into God's Story.

Bible Connection

Read together our passages for today, found in John 4:4-30, 39-42.

Discuss

- Do you talk to your friends about God? If yes, what is that like?
- How has being in a relationship with God changed you or made a difference in your life?
- How did the woman at the well respond to her encounter with Jesus? What did she do after talking with him?
- What are some of the challenges or obstacles to sharing your faith with others? What challenges or obstacles did the Samaritan woman face when she shared her story with the rest of her village?
- How did the people in the woman's village respond when she shared her story with them?
- Why is it important to tell others about our own encounters with Jesus? How can you share your faith with others without using words?

Challenge

SOCIAL MEDIA SHARE

Sometime this week, share on social media one thing that God has taught you through your confirmation journey. If you are on Instagram, be sure to tag your Student Ministries location! If you are not on social media, share one thing you have learned from confirmation this year with a friend in person or on a text message. You might even consider using this as an opportunity to invite your friends to attend the Confirmation Ceremony so that they can celebrate your confirmation and your commitments to God!

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.

Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.

Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

For Extra Study

To learn more about our topic for the week or to dive deeper into Scripture, check out these Bible passages:

Acts 22:3-16
Acts 1:8
2 Corinthians 2:18-21

Unit 6 // Session 3

Session Overview

Refer to Page 174 in the Student Journal.

You made it! You have reached the culmination of a whole year of pouring into the lives of your students. Now is the time when students commit to the church and claim faith for themselves. We hope that you take time to enjoy this momentous occasion with your group. Today, students will participate in one final small group discussion and prayer time.

They will have the opportunity to write a letter to God as a capstone to their experience.

We want students to leave Confirmation with an understanding of how they can take the next steps in their lifelong journey of faith.

During the session ask questions about how they intend to remain committed to their faith. Here are a few questions you can ask:

- How do you want to stay involved in the church after Confirmation?
- How might you continue to grow your faith through other Discipleship Groups (Lead, then Commit – these are our two high school curriculums that help students continue to become deeply committed Christians)?
- How often do you plan on attending worship?
- How might you serve others within the church (Kid's Ministry, Matthew's Ministry, ushering/ greeting, tech booth, committees, band/choir, Confirmation Jr. Mentor)
- Where might you serve others outside the church either through the church or other organizations (ex. Serve Trips or other serve projects)
- Is there anything in particular I can pray for you about?

Check in with students this week to see if they have questions about the Confirmation ceremony. Remind them of the expectations and timing.

Offer up a final prayer. Try to make this as personal as possible. You may want to name each student in your prayer or recount highlights from the year. Close by thanking God for their commitment to their faith in Jesus.

You have made an incredible difference in the lives of these students! Thanks for your willingness! Thanks for being positive! And thank you for sharing your faith in a meaningful way that will have lasting impact on the lives of others!!!

Main Point

We are each given the invitation to become a part of God's mission and join God's Story. Will you choose to be part of the Story of God?

Prayer

Before diving into today's lesson, be sure to open with a word of prayer, then recite the Apostles' Creed together, from memory, as a group. (Say it a couple of times if you want to practice for the ceremony!)

Review and connect

Last week we discussed inviting others into God's story.

1. Who did you share your church experience with last week?
2. Did you invite anyone to your Confirmation Ceremony?
3. Did you share anything on social media about your church experience?

Today we will have an opportunity to share with God what has been meaningful to you about confirmation and what you intend to do next as a result of this experience.

Activity

LETTER TO GOD

Pick a space where you will be comfortable and not distracted by your friends. Before you begin writing your letter to God, spend a few moments in prayer. Thank God for being with you always and for helping you through your Confirmation journey. Ask God to show you something new about yourself.

After you finish praying, take a few minutes to write a letter to God. Some things you might want to include in this letter are:

- Things you have learned through Confirmation
- Ways you have grown deeper in your faith during Confirmation
- Commitments you want to make to God or the church after Confirmation
- Concerns or questions you might have
- Any obstacles or challenges in your faith
- How you want to continue to grow closer to God

Teaching Topics

Everyone chooses a path to go down, whether they mean to or not. Faith is something you choose for yourself. YOU are the only person who can decide if this is a path you walk down.

As Christians, we believe the path of Jesus is the best possible path you can choose. Ironically, it's a path you can only walk with others—which is why Jesus left us the church. We are meant to walk this journey in community alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We hope that through confirmation, you not only choose to follow the path of Jesus, but you choose to commit to the church. You can commit to the church in the following ways:

WORSHIP: Worship each weekend, in person when possible.
STUDY: Grow in your faith outside of worship through personal time with Jesus and through a small group.
SERVE: Serve by using your gifts and talents both inside and outside of the church walls.
GIVE: Give back to God of your time, talents, and resources.
SHARE: Share your faith with others in your words and actions.

Bible Connection

Read our passage for today, found in Acts 4:32-35.

Discuss

- Why do you think the church exists?
- What do you think Jesus wants the church to look like?
- For Jesus, being his follower meant being in community with other followers. Why do you think he made this a priority?
- What does the church mean to you? Why is the church important in your life?
- As you wrap up your confirmation journey, what commitments do you want to make to be a part of the church?

Challenge

LETTERS TO MENTORS
If you have time, either today or some other time in the next week or two, it would be so nice to write your mentors letters thanking them for helping you and your class on this journey.

Joys, Concerns, & Prayer

Close by sharing joys and concerns and praying together as a group.
Share Joys first – Things you are thankful for or ways you've encountered God this week.
Share Concerns second – Things going on that you want to lift up to God and share the burden of with others.

Pray – An individual can pray for what has been shared, and close by praying the Lord's Prayer together as a whole group. If needed, you can reference the full text of the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this journal.

RESURRECTION
STUDENTS