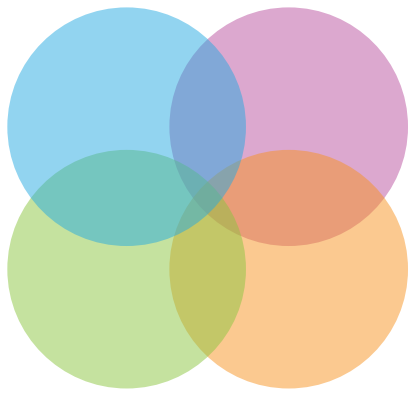


BIG GOD

BIG QUESTIONS

CONFIRMATION FOR A GROWING FAITH

TEACHER'S
GUIDE



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Teacher's Guide

"My heart I offer you, Lord, promptly and sincerely."

—John Calvin

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What Is Confirmation?

In baptism the church celebrates the renewal of the covenant with which God has bound his people to himself. By baptism, individuals are publicly received into the church to share in its life and ministry, and the church becomes responsible for their training and support in Christian discipleship. When those baptized are infants, the congregation, as well as the parents, has a special obligation to nurture them in the Christian life, leading them to make, by a public profession, a personal response to the love of God shown forth in their baptism.

—Confession of 1967, 9.51

What Is Session 1 About?

The biblical concept of covenant loyalty is introduced in relation to the practice of Confirmation. Because God has been loyal/faithful to us, we are called to be loyal/faithful to God. Confirmation, as a reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant, calls us to make specific promises to God, ourselves, and the church.

Bible

Joshua 24:1–3, 13–15, 22–25

Joshua 24 offers the final of several examples of covenant peppered throughout the book of Joshua. Nearing his death, Joshua recounts the past and entreats the people to remain faithful to God and the covenant. Joshua cautions them that God is not bound to be faithful to them if they stray to other gods.

Theology

Confirmation calls youth to make a personal and public response to the love of God shown forth in the baptismal covenant, whether Baptism occurs in childhood or at the Confirmation worship service. In Confirmation, confirmands are asked to commit themselves to Jesus Christ and to affirm their intentions to live out their faith as part of a faith community.

Confirmands

Youth form fierce loyalties. Friendships are extremely important to them. They would do anything for one another, yet if one slips and tells a secret or goes somewhere that all weren't invited, the group turns on that person. Hormones are in control of emotions and physical changes, which are rapid and confusing. Through the covenantal emphasis of Confirmation, the church makes opportunities for youth to develop healthy relationships with other youth and with adults whom they feel that they can trust.

Key Words

Covenant is a relationship started by God with God's people. A hallmark of covenant is the expectation that each party will remain loyal to the relationship. Confirmation is an opportunity to affirm and reaffirm the covenant the church makes in Baptism.

Confirmation is an act of covenant renewal that includes three parties: 1) God confirms a youth's baptismal identity as a child of God, whether Baptism occurred in childhood or will happen at the Confirmation worship service; 2) the youth confirms their faith in Jesus Christ and the teachings of the church; and 3) the congregation confirms the youth's spiritual gifts for ministry and active church membership.

Membership in the church happens at Baptism. Confirmation signals a shift from being a baptized member to an active member (that is, active in the ministries and governance of a congregation).

Supplies

Bibles

Infographics: The BIG Questions, The Old Testament Stories, The Holy Spirit
DVD/Video, media player

BIG Journal, one for each youth

Copies of Resource 1a (p. 104), magazines

Copies of cards cut from Resources 1b–e (pp. 105–108)

Prepared newsprint (see "Covenant Loyalty in Our Church")

Wide variety of colored cloth, paper, or paint swatches (see "So What? Now What?")

Large trash can (see "Close with Worship")

Name tags, newsprint, colored pencils, sticky notes, markers, glue, poster board

Guests to Invite

Confirmation mentors, one per youth

Engage guests in all parts of today's session. Suggest they lead an activity. Encourage participation in conversations.

Notes and Reminders

What Is Confirmation?

I. Get to Know Each Other

Supplies:
Name tags,
markers, copies
of Resource 1a

Welcome each youth and confirmation mentor. Wear name tags. Hand out BIG Journals to the confirmands. Have the youth/mentor pairs mingle, asking and answering questions on Resource 1a. The pairs introduce one another to the group by using the answers they have collected.

Pray: Dear God, thank you for bringing us together. Help us ask questions. Help us listen to each other's answers. Help us be OK when we don't know the answer and help us be OK when our answers are different. Help us to be brave enough not just to learn together, but to grow together. Amen.

Be sure to respond to discussion questions yourself, from time to time. Letting youth know about your life as a Christian is a significant way to "share your faith" with confirmands.

Have the confirmands and mentors name the promises and commitments they have made or expect to make in their lives. Suggestions include: the Pledge of Allegiance; the Girl Scout or Boy Scout promise; the honor code from a local middle or high school; marriage vows; and other promises people make. Discuss:

- Why do we make promises?
- What difference does a promise make in the way we act?
- What happens when we break promises? Who is hurt?
- What do you know about the idea of "covenant" as a special form of promise?

Remind the group that covenant is a legal term that binds two parties together, like a contract or a promise. In the Bible, God is the one who makes the covenant. God says, "I will be your God, and you will be my people." Ask:

- What does it mean to be God's people?

2. Covenant Loyalty in the Bible

Supplies:
Bibles,
Infographic:
The Old
Testament
Stories,
magazines,
newsprint, glue,
poster board,
colored pencils,
sticky notes

Joshua 24:1-3, 13-15, 22-25 (Joshua calls the people to covenant faithfulness)

After the death of Moses, Joshua led the people through the Jordan River into the promised land. They had been wandering in the desert for over forty years, trusting in the promises of God to be fulfilled. However, entering this new life and this new land would not be easy. When the Israelites entered and possessed the land of Canaan, the inhabitants worshiped many gods and created idols, statues, or figures, which they believed had powers. In their minds, their gods ruled natural things such as rain, lightning, hail, the harvest, how many children they had, and so forth. They gave their loyalty to these visible "gods." It would have been easy for the Israelites to give their loyalty to "gods" they could see and touch while mixing with the local people. Joshua was worried. Let's discover why he was worried.

Distribute Bibles. Read aloud Joshua 24:1-3, 13-15, 22-25. Discuss:

- What does the story tell you about covenant loyalty?
- What does it mean to "put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel" (v. 23)?



Large group?
Form teams
and make
several
collages.



Have a volunteer create and draw a symbol of Joshua 24 on a sticky note and place it by Joshua on The Old Testament Stories infographic.

Hand out magazines and newsprint. Find pictures of things that youth and adults allow to become “gods” (such as TV, sports, success, alcohol, drugs, video games, computers, money, and so on). Tear the pictures out of the magazines and glue them on the poster board to make a collage. Hold the collage for “Close with Worship.”

When the collage is complete, ask:

- In what ways do these things become “gods” for us? How do they attract our loyalty away from God?
- How can we put away our “gods” and give our hearts to God?
- What are some things we can do to be Joshua for each other and stand firm against the appeal of false gods?
- What promises do you think you will be asked to make at Confirmation?



Have confirmands and mentors reflect on the Joshua story in the BIG Journal, pp. 6–7.

24/12
plan

For twenty-four sessions that are forty-five minutes, jump to “So What? Now What?” and offer a closing prayer of your own. Begin the next session with the video and discussion.

For twelve sessions that are ninety minutes, continue with the video and discussion.

3. Watch a Video

Supplies:
DVD/Video,
media player

I Cue the video for session 1. Ask the confirmands and mentors to listen for ways that Presbyterians express their convictions about the Christian faith and the church. Note the four BIG Questions or the vows the confirmands will be asked when they are confirmed.

4. Covenant Loyalty in Our Church

Supplies:
Prepared
newsprint

I Print the following questions on newsprint and post:

- In what ways have you shown loyalty to God?
- How important have promises or vows been in your faith life?
- How have you tried to live out the vows you made at your Baptism and your Confirmation?
- What would you want to say to our generation about faith, Jesus Christ, God’s grace, the church, and so on?



Ask the confirmands and mentors to pair off. Have the youth ask the mentors the posted questions. Jot down notes in BIG Journals, p. 3. Ask confirmands to share their findings with the group. Discuss:

- Of all the things you heard the mentors say about loyalty to God, what stands out to you? Why?
- Of all the things you heard the mentors say about promises and vows, what stands out to you? Why?
- What did the mentors want to say to your generation about faith, Jesus Christ, God’s grace, and the church? How do their words challenge you and your faith?

What Is Confirmation?

5. How Do I Fit?

Supplies:
Newsprint,
markers



Pair off the confirmands and mentors. Have the pairs turn to BIG Journal, p. 4, where each youth/mentor pair writes a covenant agreement. When all have finished and signed their covenants, ask for reports from each pair.

Make a group covenant. On one sheet of newsprint write the heading “We Promise to God,” and on the other write “We Promise to Each Other.” Record ideas on the proper newsprint. Confirmands and mentors sign the covenant as a way of saying they will honor it.

Point out that the youth and parents/caregivers can use BIG Journal, p. 5, to make a similar covenant.

Congregational Connection

On several sheets of newsprint, write “The Congregation Promises.” During or following a worship service, challenge the members of the congregation to pledge their commitment to the Confirmation covenant by signing “The Congregation Promises” and adding a way that they plan to support the confirmands.

6. So What? Now What?

Supplies:
Infographic:
The BIG
Questions;
prepared
cards cut from
Resources 1b–e
gathered into
separate sets; a
wide variety of
colored cloth,
paper, or paint
swatches



Help the confirmands make connections between what they learn and the BIG Questions to be answered during the Confirmation worship service. Gather around the sets of word cards, each of which includes the words of one of the four BIG Questions and answers. Have the group put each set of words in order.



Post The BIG Questions infographic, and ask the confirmands to open their BIG Journals, p. 9. Discuss:

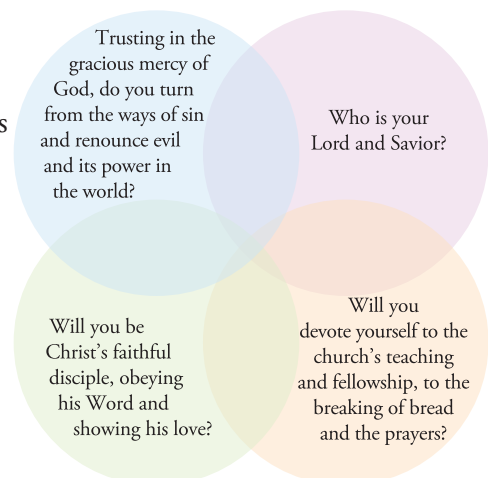
- What is at the heart of each BIG Question?
- Which BIG Question do you think is the most important?
- What do you think God expects of young Christians today?

Invite each person to hold a piece of cloth, paper, or swatch with a color that captures the feeling of their current commitment to God.



Ask volunteers to say, “My devotion to God is _____ (*name of color*) because _____.” After each speaks, all respond, “Praise the Lord!”

Confirmands can use the BIG Journal, p. 8, to reflect on what they have learned about God, themselves, and the church.



Large group?
Form four
teams. Give
each team a
set of word
cards to put
in order.





For next time, ask the confirmands to complete BIG Journal, pp. 10-11.

7. Close with Worship

Supplies:
Infographic:
Holy Spirit,
large trash can,
collage made
earlier in the
session

I Post The Holy Spirit infographic and invite participants to note the many times and places in which the Holy Spirit is active. Tell the confirmands that the Holy Spirit has been and will continue to be active in their lives, particularly during this season of Confirmation as they open themselves up to study Scripture, worship and serve together, and consider questions of faith.

Invite the participants to stand in a circle, holding the collage. Place a large trash can in the center of the circle. Suggest each person pick one thing on the collage that could become too important in life.

Prompt the confirmands and mentors to ask that one thing not become a little god for them.

Consider using
The Holy Spirit
infographic and
praying for the
Spirit's activities
in your lives
and the world at
the end of each
session.

I Have the participants rip the collage into pieces and put the pieces into the trash can.

Before you pray together, tell the participants that at the end of the prayer, you will say, "In Jesus' name, we pray that in our lives and in the world the Spirit..." Explain that at that point, each person is invited to take turns reading the words at the bottom of The Holy Spirit infographic (*moves, breathes, animates, and so on*).

Pray: *God, thank you for Joshua's story. It reminds us that our highest loyalty belongs to you. Help us to put you and those things that draw us to you ahead of the false gods we have put on our collage, especially (each person may name one thing). In Jesus' name, we pray that in our lives and in the world the Spirit (participants take turns reading the words at the bottom of The Holy Spirit infographic). Amen.*

Looking Ahead

Invite to session 2 church members who have a long history with your congregation and who are willing to take part in conversation with the confirmands.

Set up and review the video for session 2. Make the video available to parents/caregivers and mentors, keeping it secure and private.

Gather Bible dictionaries.



1. What is the biggest animal you have ever seen in person?

Name: _____

Answer: _____

2. What is the biggest decision you have ever had to make?

Name: _____

Answer: _____

3. What is the biggest group of people you have ever had to speak in front of?

Name: _____

Answer: _____

4. What is the biggest thing you have ever climbed?

Name: _____

Answer: _____

5. What is the longest road trip you have ever taken?

Name: _____

Answer: _____

6. What is a big mistake you have made (that you are willing to share)?

Name: _____

Answer: _____

7. What is the tallest building you have ever been in (and did you go to the top)?

Name: _____

Answer: _____

8. What is your biggest question about Confirmation?

Name: _____

Answer: _____



Trusting

[1]

in the

[2]

gracious

[3]

mercy of God,

[4]

do you turn from

[5]

the ways of sin

[6]

and

[7]

renounce

[8]

evil and

[9]

its power in

[10]

the world?

[11]

I do.

[12]



Who

[1]

is

[2]

your

[3]

Lord

[4]

and

[5]

Savior?

[6]

Jesus

[7]

Christ

[8]

is my

[9]

Lord

[10]

and

[11]

Savior.

[12]



Will you

[1]

be

[2]

Christ's

[3]

faithful

[4]

disciple,

[5]

obeying his

[6]

Word

[7]

and showing his

[8]

love?

[9]

I will,

[10]

with

[11]

God's help.

[12]



Will you devote

[1]

yourself

[2]

to the church's

[3]

teaching and

[4]

fellowship,

[5]

to the breaking of

[6]

bread

[7]

and the

[8]

prayers?

[9]

I will,

[10]

with God's

[11]

help.

[12]