

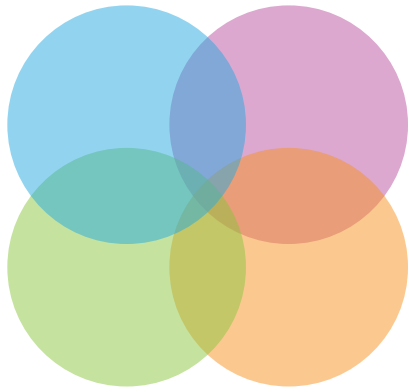
BIG GOD

BIG QUESTIONS



CONFIRMATION FOR A GROWING FAITH

HOME/
MENTOR
GUIDE



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Home/Mentor Guide

*"My heart I offer you, Lord, promptly and sincerely."
—John Calvin*

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What Is Confirmation?

The BIG Question

Confirmation is an act of covenant renewal that includes three parties:

1. the Spirit of God confirms a confirmand's baptismal identity as a child of God, whether baptism occurred in childhood or will happen at the Confirmation service;
2. the confirmand confirms their faith in Jesus Christ and the teachings of the church; and
3. the congregation, including parents and other family members, confirms the confirmand's spiritual gifts for ministry and active church membership.

If there should be only one word to encompass the whole [of Confirmation], it might be “embrace.” Yes, they were embraced, welcomed into the church at baptism; but as life progresses God continues to welcome us into new stages of faith and accountability for it, and we have the opportunity over and over to embrace the covenant in which God embraces us.

—Ron Byars, *Embraced and Embracing: Exploring the Foundations of Confirmation*

Continuing the Conversation

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, 9.5]

Joshua 24:1-3, 13-15, 22-25

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 calls us to make specific promises to God, ourselves, and the church.

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).

Your Confirmand

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.

Ideas for Connecting with Confirmands at Home and with Mentors

Parents/caregivers and mentors, in collaboration with the confirmands, select activities to explore the themes in each session.



Discussion idea

(For parents/caregivers) With your confirmand, complete the covenant in the BIG Journal, p. 5. This is a fantastic way to talk about what you expect from each other during Confirmation, as well as a tool to hold each other accountable. Discuss: How has your loyalty to God changed or grown since you were the age of your confirmand? What has God done for you in your life? What would you want to say to our generation about faith and relating to God?

Movie idea

The film *Amazing Grace* (2006, PG) tells the story of William Wilberforce, an eighteenth-century British antislavery activist and member of Parliament. Much of Wilberforce's motivations and inspiration come from his commitment to God and the mentorship of pastor John Newton, the author of the hymn "Amazing Grace." Discuss how our loyalty to God affects our public lives.

Discussion idea

With your confirmand, read the following covenant stories. In each story, look for what God promised and what God expected in return (that is, what it meant to be God's people): Genesis 17 (Abraham and Sarah); Genesis 32:22–32 (Jacob wrestles with the angel); and Exodus 19–20 (Ten Commandments). Discuss: What did God promise in each covenant? What did God expect? What does it mean to be God's people? What do you think God expects of young Christians today?

Movie idea

View a movie clip that illustrates the power of being named a recipient of covenant love. In *Toy Story* (1995, G), Woody and Buzz Lightyear, two toys, are trapped in the house of neighbor Sid, who destroys toys. Buzz, who used to think he was a real "space ranger," has learned he's "only a toy." Depressed, he's given up hope of getting home. Show the scene from 0:56:40 (thunderstorm) to 0:59:37 ("Yes, sir!"). Discuss: How is Buzz reminded of his most important identity? How does remembering change Buzz? How is Andy's ownership of Buzz and Woody like God's covenant with us? How can we remind one another of our most important identities as members of God's covenant?

Looking Ahead

Ask the leader of the Confirmation class to share the video for session 2.