

creative  confirmation



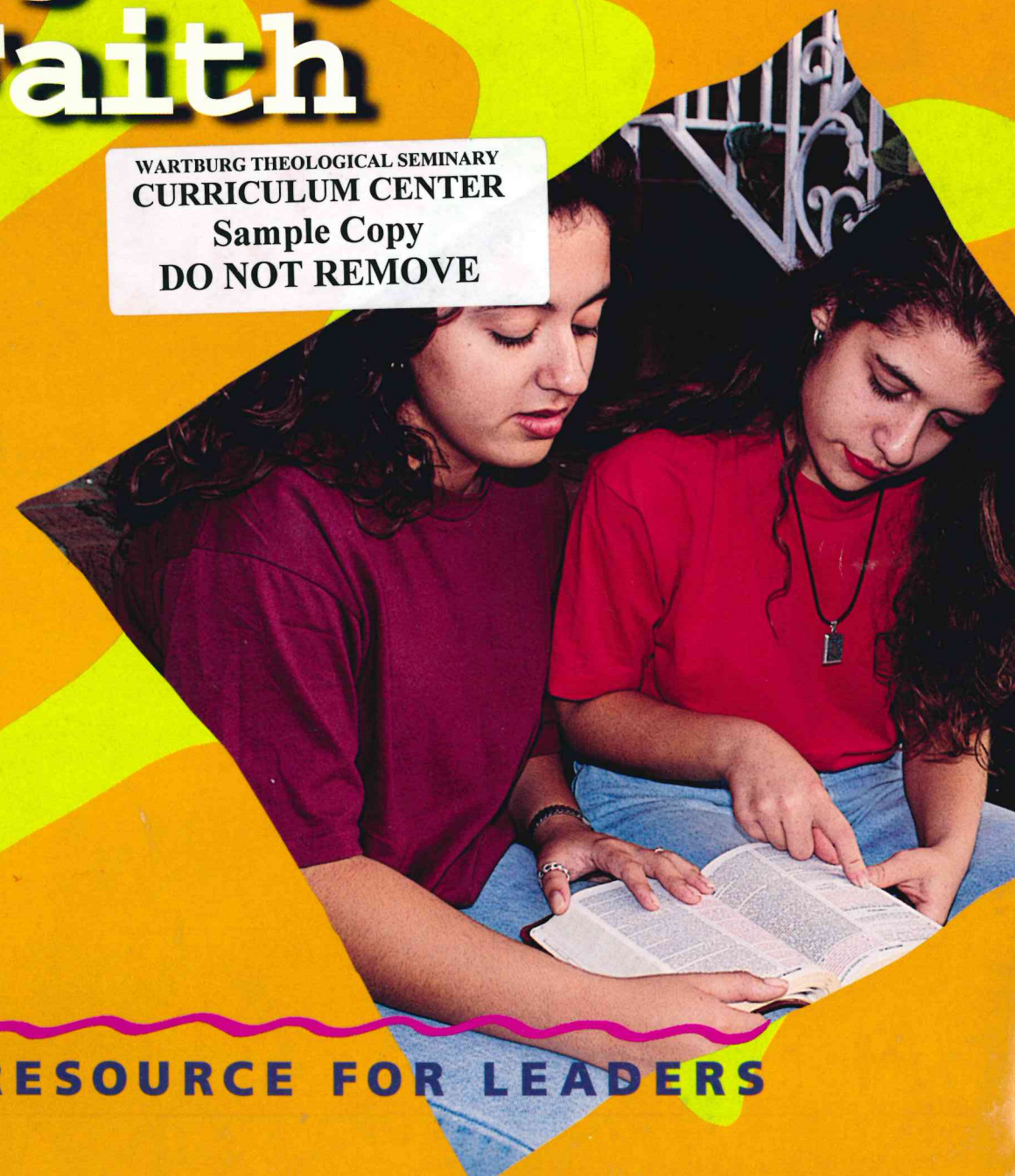
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- ◆ Bible 1: Family Matters
- ◆ Bible 2: From Bondage to Freedom
- ◆ Bible 3: Into the World
- ◆ Small Catechism
- ◆ Worship
- ◆ Community-Building Activities and Games
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- ◆ Youth Journal
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Sharing the Language of Faith

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A RESOURCE FOR LEADERS

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**CHRISTIAN
EDUCATION**

creative  confirmation

Sharing the Language of Faith

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Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis

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Creative Confirmation Series
Sharing the Language of Faith

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Introduction


CREATIVE CONFIRMATION

Welcome to the Creative Confirmation Series. This series invites you to customize a confirmation program that meets the needs of your youth and your congregation. These flexible confirmation resources work together through active and experiential learning activities to emphasize basic Bible literacy, the Small Catechism, worship, and daily life in the Christian community.

LEADER RESOURCES

Nine resource books are provided for pastors and leaders. *Bible 1*, *Bible 2*, *Bible 3*, and *Small Catechism* serve as the core of the program. The other five leader resources—*Worship*, *Community-Building Activities and Games*, *Sharing the Language of Faith*, *Mission/Service Projects*, and *Parent Conversations*—help you build a comprehensive confirmation program by providing related activities that nurture faith development in a community setting. The sessions are designed for a group of up to 12 middle school students.

LEARNER RESOURCES

Study Bible: The New Student Bible NRSV (Augsburg Fortress code 30-10-999) and *A Contemporary Translation of Luther's Small Catechism* (Augsburg Fortress code 15-5305) are the primary student resources for Creative Confirmation sessions. In some sessions a reproducible page from the leader resource is used. The *Youth Journal* guides learner reflection on many of the sessions in *Bible 1*, *Bible 2*, *Bible 3*, *Small Catechism*, *Worship*, and *Sharing the Language of Faith*. In session plans, look for the  symbol and page number that point to a *Youth Journal* activity.

About *Sharing the Language of Faith*

♦ *Sharing the Language of Faith* is one of the leader resources for Creative Confirmation. This resource provides activities that help youth and their leaders explore the connection between language and community. Special emphasis is placed on the language of the community of faith. Youth and their leaders are challenged to learn the traditional language and encouraged to translate the language so that it speaks to contemporary issues and situations. This resource will help youth and their leaders:

- ♦ explore the connection between language and community;
- ♦ gain a basic understanding of the language that shapes the community of faith;
- ♦ share their personal faith stories in language that invites others to participate in the community of faith.

USING THIS RESOURCE

Each of the 29 sessions in this book is designed to last about 20 minutes. Within a single learning period, churches can group more than one session or combine a single language of faith session with activities from the other resource books.

If you are responsible for the entire class time, matching the symbol included in each session will guide you in selecting activities from the other resource books. (See key on contents/credit page.) If an activity does not have a symbol, it can be used in any session.

This resource
provides
activities
that help
youth and
their leaders
explore the
connection
between
language and
community.



Language and community

What's that, you say?

FOCUS This lesson reminds us that language can separate us.



PREPARATION Have available Bibles and chalkboard and chalk or chart paper and markers.

BACKGROUND Jesse is filled with questions. As he and his mother stand in the check-out lane at the grocery store he asks things like, "How does the cash register work?" At home he once asked whether the light stayed on or turned off when the refrigerator door was closed. When the Rosales family moved in next door, Jessie naturally asked, "Why can't I understand what they say? Why don't we all use the same words?"

WARM-UP Through the years we have used different words to describe things we like: That red Corvette is *neat*; that outfit is *cool*; or that CD is *sweet*. Have participants list slang words they use and hear that describe something as good or popular.

Ask, "Are these words understood by people your parents' age?" (*No, not always; they may understand none, some, or all of the words. They may use different words.*)

ACTIVITY Read Genesis 11:1,4-9. The origin of the variety of languages in the world is in part a mystery. In an attempt to resolve this mystery, stories relating to the source of language have been told down through the ages. The story in Genesis 11 gives us one answer to that question. The people had become prideful and thought that by building a tower to the heavens they could become godlike. By causing the people to begin to speak in different languages, God was reminding them who was still in charge.

Ask the participants to suggest ways by which words separate them from siblings, parents, and others. (*Use of foreign language, sign language, profanity, insensitive language, activity-specific terms, or song lyrics are a few possible answers.*)

RESPONSE Both verbal and nonverbal language can be used to separate us from each other. List on the board the participants' suggestions on how nonverbal language can separate. (*Not looking at the person talking, tilting back in a chair, continuing to read the newspaper.*)

Divide the participants into two groups. Have each group prepare and role-play a situation where youth and parents are misunderstanding each other. Tell each group to brainstorm as many ideas as possible to include in their situations. Suggestions could include walking away from the person talking to you, putting your arms across your chest, leaving the room, both parties talking with no one listening, language that's not understood or offensive, and using a sharp or berating tone of voice.

After each role play is presented, list those things in the presentation that created a lack of communication. Write these on the chalkboard. Following both presentations, have groups redo their role plays, changing them to show ways that the communication problems could be handled. This might involve changing one's own behavior (look at the person talking to you), or changing one's reaction to another person (calmly using "I" statements like, I feel put down and angry when you use that tone of voice; can we start over?)

This activity demonstrates that verbal and nonverbal language can both separate us from others and bring us together.

End with a prayer of thanks for God's presence and asking for God's direction in our communication with each other.



See corresponding activity in the *Youth Journal*, page 66.



Language and community

Coming together

FOCUS As we continue to learn about language and community, this lesson reminds us that language can create community.



PREPARATION Have available Bibles and chalkboard and chalk or chart paper and markers.

BACKGROUND As Kong Tau got off the plane he was bombarded by words that failed to communicate. In a new country, seeing people in different clothes, he felt like he was walking through a maze. It was confusing to think in his native tongue while listening to his hosts welcome him in English. He felt alone and afraid. The next day his loneliness began to fade and his fear subsided as he was welcomed to a center for Southeast Asian immigrants. Immediately he heard conversation he could understand. He felt like he was home again.

WARM-UP Tell participants of a time when you felt at home because of the language being used or stories being told. It might have been the language you used when talking about computers, a hobby, a sport, a musical interest, or words learned in a foreign language class. (*For example, megabytes, sonata, first down.*) Ask participants to share similar experiences. Tell of a time when you understood what was being said without the use of words. (*Grandma patting the back of your hand, a scowl, a wink, or a hug.*) Ask participants to share similar experiences.

ACTIVITY Read Acts 2:1-8. In the story of Babel (Genesis 11:1,4-9) we read about God scattering people through the use of a variety of languages. In the day described in Acts, called Pentecost, we read of people using their various languages and yet being understood by each other. Through the power of the Holy

Spirit they felt like they were "at home" and "at one" with each other. They could understand what everyone was saying. Through this experience they shared their excitement about their encounter with Jesus Christ.

Ask participants to think of times when they felt left out or confused because of language being used. (*In a foreign country; in a hospital room listening to two doctors discuss a relative's case; trying to join in the conversation at a football game with a group of enthusiasts but not understanding the sport; or as a newcomer in a group of friends who have their own special terms for people, events, or feelings.*) List the responses on the chalkboard.

Next, form groups of two or three. Tell the groups they are now advice columnists. Assign each group one of the situations listed and have them compose a letter of advice that gives positive ways to use language (verbal and nonverbal) to approach the situation and create greater understanding and community. Remind groups to think about both sides in the situations, as communication is almost always a two-way street. When groups finish, have them share their situations and advice letters with the whole group.

RESPONSE Discuss together why an awareness of language and its ability to separate or bring together people is important to how we live our faith. (*We can share our faith more effectively through both words and actions when we stop to think of how and if others understand what we do and say.*)

Close by praying together a familiar prayer like the Lord's Prayer or a common table grace, or sing a song that everyone knows.



Language and community

Media influences

FOCUS Language used in media and music can both build community and create a sense of inadequacy.



PREPARATION Bring to class a number of magazines and newspapers that show a variety of advertisements and articles that might evoke various feelings. You will also need a die from a board game.

BACKGROUND Killing time in the mall, Jamie stood at the magazine rack in the front of the bookstore. Just looking at the covers of the magazines made Jamie feel "different." Scores of covers pushed images of what a "healthy" body was to look like. Paging through one magazine, Jamie only saw young people with straight teeth, perfect complexions, great hair, and wide smiles on their faces. Mixed in were articles about troubled youth or families, usually without pictures.

Jamie looked through some favorite magazines and began to make comparisons. Wearing last year's jeans and shoes, and glasses that seemed to accent the negative, Jamie began to feel uncomfortable. One nagging question seemed to lead to another. Knowing full well the photographs in the magazines were touched up, Jamie stood there and wished God would have spent more time touching up the body Jamie lived in. Questions abounded: When will my body look like I want it to? Do those I hang around with really like me, or am I a charity case?

In the background, a popular song was playing. The singer despaired over the plight of the homeless. In the next song, the artist sang about taking what you want—if it makes you happy, it's okay. Then a song came on that described in detail a woman's body—a body designed to give pleasure. It was time to go. Jamie walked out the door and began a cold walk home.

WARM-UP Read aloud the "Background" story about Jamie. Ask, "Is Jamie a boy or girl? What mixed messages came through in what Jamie saw and heard?"


ACTIVITY Ask participants to list words, share lyrics, and describe images that can encourage or build up one's self-image or sense of belonging. (*One's school song, smiles, compliments.*)

Pass around the newspapers and magazine advertisements you brought to class. Ask participants to select an advertisement and evaluate it by asking questions such as, "What words or phrases attempt to convince me that without the product I will be incomplete or not as happy? Is the product necessary in order for me to be happy or my best? Does it promote values I admire? Who benefits from the advertising? Is anyone harmed by it?"

RESPONSE Assign one feeling to each of the six sides of the die you brought to class. Write the numbers and feelings on the board. (*1. Happy; 2. Angry; 3. Belonging; 4. Embarrassed; 5. Inadequate; 6. Jealous.*) Ask each participant to roll the die and then relate an advertisement or popular song that makes them feel the feeling assigned to the number rolled on the die.

Remind participants that language has a powerful influence. Ask how we can protect ourselves from advertising, song lyrics, and other forms of media that can be destructive to our sense of belonging or how we view ourselves and others. (*Remember we don't have to buy into media messages; be selective in the songs we listen to; remember that God loves us for who we are; that we should love others for who they are, not what they have; look for and support positive messages.*)

End with prayer.

 See corresponding activity in the *Youth Journal*, page 67.



Language and community

Do unto others

FOCUS Learn how the language we use affects our self-esteem and that of others.



PREPARATION Have available paper and pencils for participants and a Bible.

BACKGROUND Six-year-old Jenny ran in through the back door of her house, tears streaking her cheeks. "Mom," she yelled, "Kelly is calling me names again."

Jenny's mother, tired from a busy day at work, called out, "Remember, Jenny, sticks and stones can break your bones but words can never hurt you." That might have been what her mom had been taught, but Jenny sure didn't believe it.

WARM-UP Share the "Background" story with participants. Then tell them, "Draw a picture of yourself. It can be as simple as a stick figure. Around the picture write a few hurtful words that others have used in reference to you. Turn the paper over and draw another picture of yourself. Surrounding this picture write affirming and complimentary words others have used in describing you."

ACTIVITY In just remembering words used to describe us, we are reminded of their power. Divide participants into groups of two or three. Ask half of the groups to role-play situations where language or the way words are used is hurtful. (*Ideas could include remarks such as: You sure are tall. You sure are short. You really don't know how to do that? Why are you wearing that sweater? Knucklehead, think a little. General categories could include racist, sexist, or elitist remarks.*)

Ask the other groups to role-play situations where the messages are more positive.

Next, work orally as a large group to compile two lists on the chalkboard—words that tend to

tear people down and words that help to build people up. Note that words like *small, tall, smart, or big* could have either a positive or negative connotation. It depends on how the words are used and to whom they are directed. For example, to tell high achievers that they are smart might just add more pressure to succeed. To comment on the height of the tallest person in the class might be embarrassing. As we can't always know how comments will be received, it's important that we try to be sensitive to people's reactions and be considerate whenever possible.

Finally, ask participants to think about what responsibility we bear when we overhear hurtful remarks intended for others. (*To do nothing is in part participating in the remark; we can choose to say something to help erase the hurt; we can talk with those who say hurtful things.*)

RESPONSE Remind participants that just as someone else's language affects what we think of ourselves, so our language affects others. Suggest that participants look for an opportunity this next week to use language to build people up rather than tear them down. Ask that they bring their stories to share next time you meet.

Then have group members give a compliment to each person in the group. (*Idea starters: smart dresser, kind, good student, willing helper, good listener, great tennis player.*)

End by reading aloud Psalm 8:3-5. Ask, "How did the psalmist describe God's creation of you? (You have been made little less than God.)" In prayer, thank God for this assurance and ask for God's guidance as we speak to and about others.

Memory Significance

INTRODUCTION

I will call to mind the deeds of the LORD; I will remember your wonders of old (Psalm 77:11).

In the preface to his Large Catechism, Martin Luther says that it is the duty of every head of household to "examine their children at least once a week and ascertain what they have learned of it (the Catechism), and if they do not know it, to keep them faithfully at it." For generations pastors, parents, and teachers have followed Luther's advice, drilling and testing young people on their memory work. Many older folks remember their confirmation years as the time when they "read for the pastor" and their instruction was almost all memory drill. Today less emphasis is placed on memory work. But at no time has anyone suggested that memory work be completely left out of a confirmation program. Memory remains an important element in the language of faith.

Thoughtful teachers and students will always have questions about memorization. They will ask, *Why* should I memorize anything? and *What* is so important that it ought to be memorized? This article will attempt to answer these basic questions about memorization. In doing so, it will briefly examine biblical images of memory; consider stories of how memory defines, shapes, challenges, and comforts God's people today; and finally offer some suggestions as to how the gift of memory can be developed in

confirmation students.

MEMORY IN THE BIBLE ♦ WHY REMEMBER?

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom (Luke 23:42).

The Bible is a book of remembrances. Ancient Israel's most basic statements of faith are grounded in a call to remember God's acts of deliverance. The First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me," is introduced with a memory, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:6). Thus, biblical ethics are not simply a matter of obeying the law, but growing out of a remembrance of all that God has done. God's people are told to "Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

Worship life is grounded in memories passed from one generation to the next. St. Paul speaks of how he "received from the Lord what I also handed on to you" (1 Corinthians 11:23). Even offerings are to be presented within the context of memories; "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt . . . few in number . . . So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD,

have given me" (Deuteronomy 26:5-10).

One of the biblical images that describes a fall into sin is that of the failure to remember God (Judges 8:34). But the Bible's picture of memory goes much deeper than people's remembering.

God remembers, too. The people of Israel were led out of Egyptian slavery as "God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Exodus 2:24). The message of hope that prophets brought to those in Babylonian exile was that God would not forget them. "Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you" (Isaiah 49:15).

One prayer spoken again and again by folks in trouble is simply, "Remember me." Jeremiah prayed it as he was persecuted by his enemies, as did the thief crucified beside Jesus (Jeremiah 15:15; Luke 23:42). God also chooses to forget. Forgiveness is explained in terms of God's message, "I will not remember your sins" (Isaiah 43:25; Jeremiah 31:34).

The very existence of the church can be traced to the fact that God causes people to remember. Jesus said, "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). As Mary prepared to give birth to the Savior, she

sang of how God "has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy" (Luke 1:54).

We remember what the Lord has done in the past because God remembers us in the present. And as we remember what God has done, the present is changed. We are called to turn from the old ways of sin and death and we are given new life and hope. The barriers between what God has done in the past, what God is doing in the present, and what God will do in the future collapse in the people's remembrance of a God who remembers.

STORIES OF REMEMBRANCE TODAY

This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me (1 Corinthians 11:25).

If we use the biblical vision of what memory does for God's people, the success of a confirmation memory program may be a little hard to measure. For memory is more than just the ability to recall so many Bible verses, hymns, or portions of the catechism. Memory is one of gifts of the Spirit through which people are brought into communion with their God and their sisters and brothers in Christ. Consider the following stories about memory working in Christian communities and think of stories of memory that emerge out of your community and life.

Peter was four years old and fussing on his mother's lap in church. When the rest of the congregation stood for the prayers of the church, Peter's mother remained in her pew, holding him, hoping that he would be quiet until the service was over. The pastor brought the prayers to a close, speaking these words, "Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who teaches us to pray . . . Our Father in heaven. . . ." As the people around him joined in with the pastor, little Peter folded his hands, bowed his head and

spoke the same words, "Our Father in heaven. . . ."

Lola was over 90 years of age. She had been a brilliant student once, and had gone on to teach high school for three generations. But in the last year both her hearing and sight had failed and she had become confused, hostile, irritable, and extremely depressed.

Once a month at the nursing home where Lola stayed, a local pastor came to celebrate the Lord's Supper, but she did not usually attend these services. Why should she? Unable to hear or see, she felt confused and became disruptive. One day, a nurse's aide who was new to the job and unaware of Lola's situation brought Lola to the activity room for the service. The aide sat next to the old woman, holding her hands and stroking her hair. As the pastor distributed the bread and wine, the nurse's aide took Lola's hand, placed the bread in it, and lifted it to her lips. The wine followed. Lola fumbled with the bread, coughed at the wine, and then became very calm. She whispered, "The body and the blood . . . given for you. Amen, come Lord Jesus." Then Lola's lips formed the words and rhythms of her long-dead husband's favorite hymn, "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."

Stories like these are repeated over and over again as God's people gather for worship and prayer. They are also repeated as people separated from the church by geography, politics, disease, sin, and despair are reminded by their memories that in Christ all the faithful are of one body and one hope. A biblical vision of memory will say that these stories and thousands like them are the true test of the church's memory.

WHAT SHOULD WE REMEMBER?

Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray (Proverbs 22:6).

Clearly, memory is a gift that God

Memory is one
of the gifts
of the Spirit
through which
people are
brought into
communion with
their God and
their sisters
and brothers
in Christ.

gives the people of faith. It is more than the simple ability to recite a few texts that have been pounded into one's mind. As an expression of the Holy Spirit at work in God's people, memory renews the broken in spirit, strengthens the tempted, and comforts the lonely. Memory involves the whole person and all the senses. We do not only remember words but also rhythms, tastes, smells, images, and emotions. Luther explained how Christian memory works in this way:

By the fullest kind of meaning it (memory) should be taken to refer to the persistence of any power in praise of God. Thus to remember means always to praise, give thanks, tell others, bless, not only with the tongue as in a physical synagog but with the whole heart, with the tongue and with the whole life. So the intellect remembers when it keeps busy meditating on these things; the will remembers when it keeps on loving and praying; the hand remembers when it is constantly active. . . . I remembered the works of the Lord.

(From *Luther's Works*, Vol. 11, edited by Hilton C. Oswald. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1976.)

While memory is a gift, it is also a discipline of the faith. Parents and teachers must commit themselves to a good measure of planning, discretion, and hard work in order to give young people those memories that will sustain them in Christ. A clear picture of what young people should memorize is needed. The promises made to a child by par-

ents and the church at Baptism provide this picture.

At Baptism we promise to raise our children in such a way so that "living in the covenant of their Baptism and in communion with the Church, they may lead godly lives until the day of Jesus Christ" (*LBW* page 121). We also promise to teach them the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. Simply put, within the Lutheran tradition, memory work begins with the Catechism.

Martin Luther wrote that there are five basic statements that every Christian should know and upon which they should meditate. These statements are: the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the words by which Jesus instituted the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. But before we start drilling students on the Catechism, we should note that the Catechism in large part reflects the ongoing worship and devotional life of the people of God.

The Lord's Prayer and the Creed are regular parts of most worship services, as are the words associated with Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Historically, the Ten Commandments were often heard within the context of worship and can be used effectively today as public or private devotions. With all this in mind, it seems that the best way to help people memorize the Catechism is by making worship and devotional life "memorable."

What makes worship memorable? While everyone will carry different memories of a given worship service or confirmation class, there still are some obvious ways of making things memorable. Texts to be memorized should be chosen carefully and then repeated often and in a wide variety of settings. If something is important enough to memorize, repeat it in the classroom, in regular worship, at Bible camps, at youth retreats, and at the kitchen table. (See Deuteronomy 6:6-9.)

There are many ways of helping participants memorize. Music, song, rhymes, dance, games, puzzles, and even calisthenics can make a text and worship more memorable. Tests can be a useful tool to encourage memorization, but beware! Young people become very cynical when those testing them have not committed the same text to their own memories. Teachers and parents should be prepared to pass any test they give. Above all else, parents, pastors, and teachers should know that the examples they set through living and speaking the language of faith will be the most lasting—memorable—impression participants have.

Memory

The silly and the sublime

FOCUS Educators have long recognized that humor and nonsense are excellent tools for memorization.



PREPARATION Have available Bibles, *Dr. Seuss's ABC* or a similar alphabet book or poem, pencils, paper, and a sense of humor.

BACKGROUND By the time young people are in a confirmation program, they should already be familiar with at least those portions of the Small Catechism that are regularly used in worship, such as the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed. Most should also have some knowledge of the Ten Commandments. They may not, however, be able to recall the specific pieces of the Catechism in order or by the numbers. Neither may they know that it is the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer that reads "give us today our daily bread," or that it is the Fifth Commandment that reads "you shall not kill."

Without this understanding of the order of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer or the Ten Commandments, participants miss out on the wonder of the inner logic of the pieces. They do not see, for example, how the Commandments move in ever-widening circles, from a concern about our nearest neighbors (our God and our parents), to concern about neighbors that are farther away. An effective way to give youth this type of memory is through the use of songs, rhymes, and silliness.

WARM-UP Arrange the class in a circle. Have each participant read one letter's worth of the alphabet book or poem, starting with A. Then read Psalm 34 in the same way.

Explain that in Hebrew, each verse of Psalm 34 begins with consecutive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 34 is something of the biblical equivalent of an alphabet book. The psalm is held together by the logic of the alphabet. Ask participants why they think alphabet books and poems help people remember.

ACTIVITY Divide into groups of four or five. Appoint someone from each group to act as a recorder. Ask participants to turn to Exodus


20:1-17, where they will find the Ten Commandments. Ask each group to think of something that might help them remember each commandment—the sillier the better. The recorder should write down the commandments and suggested ideas. (It might be a good idea to establish guidelines on ethics and good taste—silly is one thing, profanity another.)

Examples:

- First Commandment—one God
- Second Commandment—Jesus Christ or Holy Spirit—two word names for God.
- Third Commandment—Do you *remember* the Third Commandment and the Sabbath day?
- Fourth Commandment—Four, the number of ears your mother and father have together.
- Fifth Commandment—make a fist one finger at a time—now do not kill.
- Sixth Commandment—Deals with sex—how do you spell sex? S-E-X. How do you spell six? S-I-X. Sex/six. How could you forget?
- Seventh Commandment—Don't steal home in the seventh inning.
- Eighth Commandment—two bears in the woods have eight legs. Do not *bear* false witness.
- Ninth and Ten Commandments—Do not covet. In sign language, the symbol for *drool* is sometimes used as a way to explain *covet*. Don't drool over your neighbor's house.

Have groups share their memory devices with the large group.

RESPONSE Close with a "popcorn prayer." Have each participant pray a brief prayer, with the first word of each prayer starting with a consecutive letter of the alphabet: Almighty God, Beautiful Savior, Christ Jesus, and so forth. Remember, there are biblical models for such prayers.

 See corresponding activity in the *Youth Journal*, page 68.



Memory

Speaking the word

FOCUS The Scriptures are meant to be heard and are made more memorable when read aloud and heard.



PREPARATION Have available Bibles, copies of *LBW*, and copies of "A Choral Reading of John 2:1-11" (Reproducible Page 12).

BACKGROUND St. Augustine, a pastor and teacher in the early church, wrote that he once saw his bishop reading with his eyes gliding over the pages, but his voice at rest. The sight of a person reading silently was so strange that Augustine went to great lengths to explain why anyone would do such a thing and thereby deny others the gift of the scripture. We should remember that throughout history, right up to the present day, the majority of God's people have been and are unable to read. So when a person is able to read, he or she is obligated to share this precious gift.

The Bible was written and preserved so it might be heard aloud today and so that its message might be remembered today. The stories, poems, songs, legal sections, and genealogies of the Bible are most memorable when read aloud and heard. One way of encouraging participants to memorize Bible verses and stories is by having them read and hear the biblical message.

WARM-UP Read a short psalm from *LBW* responsively with the class. Have one half read up to the red asterisk in the middle of each verse, and the other half respond with the second half of the verse.

ACTIVITY: READING BIBLICAL POETRY This activity will help participants gain an appreciation of the poetry of the Bible, and

through oral reading, help them to remember what they read.

Explain that the poetry of the Bible is not based on rhyme and mechanical rhythm but on a balance of ideas. Parallel ideas, some complimentary and some contradictory, are put side by side so as to form a logical rhythm in the psalm.

Divide the group into pairs. Assign each pair a brief psalm or song from the Bible, such as a song from Luke (Luke 1:46-55, 1:67-79, or 2:29-32), a Pauline hymn (Philippians 2:5-11), or a song from Revelation (Revelation 5:9-14 or 7:15-17). If possible, assign psalms or biblical texts that will be read in regular worship during the next few weeks. (See "Prayers of the Day, Psalms, and Lessons" on *LBW* page 13 for a listing of lessons and psalms.)

Ask each pair to read its text aloud together. Then tell each pair to develop a responsive reading from the same text. Ask pairs to listen for the rhythm of ideas in the texts and divide their readings according to those rhythms. Encourage each pair to memorize its reading.

Speak to your pastor about having your group lead the congregation in the reading of the psalms and other lessons during regular Sunday worship.

RESPONSE Distribute copies of "A Choral Reading of John 2:1-11" prepared earlier. Read through the introductory paragraphs, assign parts, and perform it together as a closing.



See corresponding activity in the *Youth Journal*, page 69.



Memory

Signing the language of faith

FOCUS Through learning portions of the Ten Commandments in ASL, participants will gain an appreciation of ASL and a valuable tool for memorization.



PREPARATION Arrange for an American Sign Language (ASL) resource person or obtain a video of the life of Christ translated into ASL. Prepare for each participant copies of "Signing" (Reproducible Pages 10 and 11). (Sources for sign language materials are given at the end of this session.)

BACKGROUND American Sign Language was developed as a way for people who are deaf or hearing-impaired to communicate. ASL is now recognized as a language not at all unlike English, French, Spanish, or any other spoken language. When viewed as a foreign language, ASL offers a new and different way of looking at familiar material, and can deepen appreciation and understanding of the language of faith. Many familiar hymns, prayers, and biblical texts have been translated into ASL. Some of your participants may have learned the signs for songs like "Jesus Loves Me" when they were in grade school or attending vacation Bible schools or Bible camps.

Besides making material more memorable, signs can also help participants better understand abstract concepts. For example, some participants have difficulty with the meaning of the word *covet* as used in the Ninth and Tenth Commandments. One way to sign *covet* is to use the sign for *drool*. These commandments then become, "Do not drool over your neighbor's house, family, . . ." and many participants understand quite clearly what this means.

When using ASL, recognize it as a language. Take the time to learn what the various signs mean. Do not make up silly signs; rather, respect this language. It could become a beautiful and moving part of your confirmation program.

WARM-UP Sing "Jesus Loves Me" with the group. (Confirmation-age participants might be a bit reluctant to sing this song, but they should know it, and you perhaps can have them sing it to a new melody, such as "Amazing

Grace.") If any participants know a sign language translation of the song, have them lead the group in signs.

ACTIVITY Invite your resource person to introduce ASL and then do a signing of a familiar Bible story, such as the Christmas story from Luke 2 or one of Jesus' parables. If you are unable to invite a resource person, show a signing video of such a story.

Hand out the "Signing" reproducible pages prepared earlier. Explain the signs as best you can, then begin teaching them by working on short phrases and simple concepts. It may help to divide into groups of three or four people who help each other learn.

RESPONSE Close with the Lord's Prayer. If you have obtained materials that show the signing for the prayer, sign the introduction (Our Father in heaven) or the doxology (For the kingdom, the power, and glory are yours, now and forever. Amen).

Some sources for sign language materials

- Basics of Signing: *Signing Exact English*, Gerilee Gustason, et al. Modern Signs Press, Inc. P.O. Box 1181 Los Alamitos, CA 90720
- Biblical material in sign: American Bible Society 1865 Broadway New York, NY 10023 The ABS publications include VHS videocassettes of the life of Christ, the Gospel of St. Mark, and the books of Ruth and Jonah.
- Division for Church in Society, ELCA 8765 Higgins Road Chicago, IL 60631 The Division for Church in Society has some ASL material available upon request. They can also put you in touch with churches in your area that are using ASL in worship and teaching ministries.



Sharing faith stories

Sarah and Job

FOCUS Living faith believes in God's promise of blessing in the midst of everything that stands in the way to threaten it.



PREPARATION Make as many copies as necessary of "Web" (Reproducible Page 7). You may wish to partially fill one out to use as an example.

BACKGROUND The story of Sarah in Genesis is like fragile strands of hemp cord woven into a strong rope. Sarah came to the brittle edges of life many times and was strengthened by the challenges she found there. Her suffering was very real and personal because she was Abraham's wife for a long time but "bore him no children" (Genesis 16:1). Even her willingness to give Abraham offspring through her slave-girl Hagar was rewarded by Hagar's contempt after Hagar had conceived (Genesis 16:4-6). But the Lord was faithful to Sarah in a way that brought laughter to her own heart and to those who knew her. She bore a son, Isaac, long after she had passed child-bearing age (Genesis 18:12 and 21:1-7).

Fragile strands of life's experiences came together for Job, too, as he struggled with misfortune, wanting to have it out with God. Everything was taken away from Job, a blameless and upright man who feared God and avoided evil (Job 1-37). Though friends faulted him, Job firmly held to his claim of innocence and refused to let go of God. When God finally answered Job's cry for conversation, it wasn't for a friendly chat (Job 38-41). God rehearsed for Job what God had done as creator of the universe. Only then did Job begin to understand the power and faithfulness of God in his misfortune.

WARM-UP Gather the whole group together to brainstorm the question, *Where are misfortune and suffering in the world today?* Write this question on a sheet of newsprint or on a chalkboard. Encourage everyone to participate. Brainstorming does not require a person to defend what is offered or to rank it with other offerings. Record all responses.

Divide the group into pairs. Ask each pair to select one or two situations of misfortune and suffering from the list and discuss what each person knows about these situations and what these situations mean to them.


ACTIVITY Begin by sharing "Background" with the group. Allow comments, then continue.

Faith stories involving misfortune and suffering are about the hope one finds in those situations. Sarah believed in the promise to her and Abraham in spite of not being able to bear children until near the end of her life. Job believed God held the meaning of his devastating misfortune. Give each class member a copy of "Web" (Reproducible Page 7) on which to make a "web" of one of the situations discussed in the small group.

The webs are used in this way: Name the situation in the circle in the center of the paper. From this center circle, lines extend outward as spokes with circles at their ends. Put ideas and concepts that are implied in the situation in these circles. These extensions help discover other things in the situation. Then draw lines making connections between circles to see further relationships. Encourage participants to use their imaginations to extend the web as far as possible, adding additional extensions and circles as necessary. Finally, ask the participants to take a different color pen or marker and name on the web what they see as signs of hope in the midst of suffering, or positive actions that could be taken to create hope.

RESPONSE Pair participants with each other as learning partners for sharing what was learned about suffering and hope in the stories of faith. Partners may wish to use their webs in this sharing.

End with prayer.

 See corresponding activity in the *Youth Journal*, page 70.



Sharing faith stories

Deborah and Jonah

FOCUS God makes faith possible, and God actively participates in life.



BACKGROUND Deborah was one of the leaders in early Israelite history who were called judges. Her activity is recorded in Judges 4-5. She and Barak, the army commander, led Israel to victory over its enemies, the Canaanites.

This was not a military victory for its own sake. At the time, the Canaanites were a threat to the ebb and flow of daily life among the Israelites. Roads were unsafe. Vital trade and communication routes were greatly reduced. Farmers were in constant danger. Inhabitants throughout the region often had to flee their homes and land.

Deborah rallied the forces of Israel that made the land safe. Then, together with Barak, she sang a hymn composed to celebrate the victory. This was a hymn to the Lord whose might achieved the victory for the people (Judges 5).

In another time, Jonah troubled a lot about the Lord. The Lord told him to go to Nineveh to cry out against the wickedness of the people. Nineveh was to the east, but Jonah took off to the west! After a disturbing sea voyage, Jonah finally went to Nineveh and declared its impending destruction. The people repented. God did not destroy the city. And Jonah became angry.

Jonah was not pleased that the Lord was "a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love" (Jonah 4:2). Then God made Jonah realize that he was more concerned about things that comforted him than about the people of Nineveh, whose repentance the Lord wanted and rewarded.


WARM-UP Begin by sharing "Background" with the group. Emphasize that sometimes God acts in ways easily recognized and sometimes

through experiences in which we least expect to find God. In any case, life is never apart from God. Then divide participants into reading groups of three—two people to be readers and one person the recorder. Ask the groups to read Jonah 3-4 and make a list of things in Jonah's experience. Each reader can read one chapter, but all should contribute to noting things that happen in Jonah's life as the recorder makes the list. When finished, discuss these questions: *Why did Jonah react as he did? Can you name a situation when you were angry because a good thing happened to someone you disliked? Does this relate to coveting? Next, have the group select five or six things that describe Jonah and God's relationship.*

ACTIVITY Have the groups prepare a two- or three-minute "radio news report" on Jonah. The report should highlight the relationship between Jonah and God with a closing "human interest" comment on how God was active in Jonah's life.

Ask each group to present its report to the whole group. Then divide the participants into pairs and ask each person to identify for the other one thing that shows how God is active in his or her life through such things as friends, prayer, feelings, and thoughts.

RESPONSE Ask each person to write a brief paragraph that could become part of an autobiography others could read someday about how God has been active in his or her life. Suggest that the participants keep these in a special place where they can take them out, read them again, and add to them. End with prayer.

 See corresponding activities in the *Youth Journal*, pages 71-72.



Sharing faith stories

From Mark and Matthew

FOCUS Some people think that faith is hanging on when there is nothing left. That's not the case in Christian living; living faith includes courage and action.



PREPARATION Gather materials for the art-as-meditation designs suggested in "Activity."

BACKGROUND Mark 2:1-5 tells about the healing of a paralyzed man. Jesus had returned to Capernaum. People gathered to hear him preach. The crowd was typical: strong and pushy people got to the front.

Along came four people carrying a paralyzed man. The crowd didn't make way. But the four bearers were determined. They had courage.

They carried the paralyzed man to the roof of the house and dug a hole through which the man was lowered. "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven'" (Mark 2:5). The man was healed.

Matthew 15:21-28 contains a similar story of faith. A woman had a sick daughter and came to see Jesus. The disciples wanted Jesus to send the woman away. They almost succeeded. But she persisted, even when she got to speak with Jesus. Jesus acknowledged the woman with this response: "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish" (Matthew 15:28). Matthew's daughter was healed instantly.

WARM-UP Begin by sharing "Background" with the group, then select one of the stories for dramatization. Make a list of the elements in the story—anything that could be represented in a drama: characters (including groups), places, and things.

Read the story and ask for volunteers to play the parts of the various characters, places, and things. Explain that it is important to represent all elements in the story and that class members should choose the elements they have some feeling about. For example, as well as the characters, some might want to be the dogs in the Matthew story or the sheep Jesus mentions. In Mark's story, some might want to portray the door in front of which people were gathered to hear Jesus. The goal of the dramatization is to

help the participants get inside the story with their feelings, their voices, and their actions. Note: Some groups may need your enthusiasm and coaching to get going. Join in the fun and help them capture the spirit!

After the dramatization, ask for reactions: "What was it like to be . . . ? (*I felt angry. It was hard carrying the man to the roof. I didn't like playing Jesus with the woman.*)"

If you have time or at a future date, consider having the youth create a second drama based on a contemporary situation with events or themes that parallel the story from Mark.

ACTIVITY Review the teaching point under "Focus." Ask participants to think of a time when living their faith made them feel courageous. Then work in think-pair-share groups, where participants pair up and interview each other briefly about times they felt courageous, or the need to be courageous, because of their faith. They should spend only enough time to identify these experiences for each other. Note: Bring this activity down to earth by talking about everyday courage—standing up for someone being bullied, saying you're proud to be in a church group if teased about it, and so on.

Ask each participant to make an art-as-meditation design to show how courage and faith are present in his or her life. Things that could be used include playdough, paints, movement, poetry, wood carvings, or other art materials and forms.

RESPONSE Put the participants in groups of three and ask each to talk with the others about the art-as-meditation designs. Some might want to plan ways to exhibit these designs for others to see.

Come back together as a large group and end with prayer.

See corresponding activity in the *Youth Journal*, page 73.



Sharing faith stories

Lydia and Nicodemus

FOCUS For the people of the Bible, as in our lives today, stories of faith always have elements of seeking and risk taking.



PREPARATION Prepare for each participant a copy of "Experiences That Changed Me and Others" (Reproducible Page 8).

BACKGROUND Lydia (Acts 16:12-15) was a dedicated businesswoman and a devout religious person. We don't know what religious tradition she followed before meeting Paul, but she was serious in her pursuit of truth. She went daily to the place of prayer by the riverside near Philippi where she lived. Paul met her there on a Sabbath and spoke about Christ. "The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul" (Acts 16:14). As a result, she and her household were baptized.

In her hunger for truth, Lydia wasn't afraid to risk growth. She let her faith expand through the knowledge and power of God.

Not many years before, another seeker of truth came to Jesus. He was Nicodemus, a Pharisee and leader of the Jews. Jesus told him that "No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above" (John 3:3). Nicodemus wanted to know how that was possible.

Jesus said it was a matter of being born of the Spirit, knowing the power of God in one's life as it comes in its own time and in ways we cannot always anticipate. That is like experiencing the wind, which "blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes" (John 3:8).

WARM-UP Ask participants to write at the top of a sheet of paper the words *I Got It*. Distribute a copy of *LBW* to each. Ask everyone to turn to "Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness" (page 56) and the Apostles' Creed (page 65). Ask each person to read these two parts of the liturgy and jot down what they tell us

about ourselves and God. "I Got It" is an activity in which we explore the beliefs we receive as members of the church.

ACTIVITY Begin by sharing "Background" with the group. Share that the faith we receive from others gives us a place to belong and feel at home. As we learn it, we come to know it as "our story." But faith doesn't stop there. Each person must discover how the community's faith can be lived personally. The truth is ever before us to be known more fully. That means we have to take the risk of growing in faith. Allow questions and comments, then go on.

Using chart paper or newsprint for sharing is an activity to help adolescents do this. Distribute chart paper and a marker to each person. Ask them to write the words *commitment, belief, judgment, and experiment* across the long side of the paper. Then under each word they should write one or two things that describe themselves. What or to whom have they committed themselves? What are the beliefs they are beginning to think about more and more? What judgments have they made that set them over against others or what others believe? What are they experimenting with? (*Answers will vary according to individual experience. Individual variety should be encouraged.*) Talk briefly about why it's important to think about such questions. (*To keep a focus in our lives, to avoid costly mistakes, and to be more aware of others are possible reasons.*)

RESPONSE Distribute "Experiences That Changed Me and Others" (Reproducible Page 8). Ask participants to jot down responses in the three columns. If time permits, ask for volunteers to share their responses. End with prayer.



Sharing faith stories

Katie and Martin Luther

FOCUS Christ is the center of our stories of faith. The principle that guided Luther and other leaders of the Reformation was that *we are justified by Christ through faith*.



BACKGROUND Martin Luther's wife Katherine, his beloved Katie, was the key to the stability of the Luther household. She was Martin's partner, guide, and support. She cared for their children, nursed Martin in his ailments, and oversaw the daily personal needs of guests in a hostel they administered. This often meant preparing food, doing laundry, caring for animals, and planting and harvesting the garden.

Katie was a lively conversationalist and was outspoken on many issues, often disagreeing with Martin. She was more practical than he in many things. But in spite of their human differences, Katie was, above all, Martin's partner in faith. Her last words were, "I will stick to Christ as a burr to a top coat" (From *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy* by Roland H. Bainton, copyright © 1971 Augsburg Publishing House).

Martin Luther's life was deeply social and personal. His efforts to reform the church's beliefs and practices kept him in the public eye and embroiled in controversy. He had much at stake in what he did. His life and livelihood were often in jeopardy. Yet his children were more precious to him than Germany, Hungary, and Bohemia together. His discovery of the righteousness of God as a free gift to all believers became his theme and passion. He came to realize that we are justified by faith alone.

WARM-UP Begin by sharing "Background" with the group. Stress that Luther understood with great zeal that there is nothing we can do to make ourselves right with God. Christ alone

has done it all in his cross and resurrection. Then, divide participants into pairs to form "bookends." Ask each pair to summarize together what they already know about what Christ has done for us and write questions they might have. Examples: *Why would Christ do this? Don't we have anything to do? Why didn't God just do it without Christ?* These questions will be discussed in the closing activity.

ACTIVITY Distribute a copy of *LBW* to each person and ask the bookend pairs to work as learning partners. Give each pair one of the following hymns: 51, 87, 114, 131, 192, 213, 306, 334, 341, or select other hymns. Ask the learning partners to study the hymn and come up with some answers to these questions: *What does the hymn tell us Christ has done for us? Do you live as though this were true? (Answers will depend on what is in the hymn.)*

Have the bookend pairs report to the whole group. Make a list of the answers to the two questions on the chalkboard or chart paper.

RESPONSE Ask the bookend pairs to compare their summaries from the first activity with what they discovered working as learning partners. Then have each pair write a sentence or two about what Christ has done for us. Read these at worship on Sunday, or use them on banners or posters to be displayed.

End the session with prayer.



Sharing faith stories

Albert Schweitzer and Dorothy Day

FOCUS Living the gospel means to befriend the less fortunate, and to work to eliminate injustice and suffering wherever they are found.



BACKGROUND Albert Schweitzer's career covered a wide range of interests and work. He was trained as a musician, philosopher, theologian, and physician. His life was guided by a compelling conviction of reverence for life. He believed that this conviction would lead to love and justice for all of God's creation.

Schweitzer ended his career as a medical missionary in Africa. There he put into practice his compassion for humankind. He used his many talents to help befriend the less fortunate and to champion the causes of the oppressed. For him, life was meant to serve others.

Dorothy Day was a tireless social activist in the middle decades of this century. When she died in 1979, she left a legacy of programs for peace and against the evils done to the helpless in society. Her manifesto was the Sermon on the Mount. Her motto was that it is better to accept suffering than to inflict it.

Throughout her life she worked to help the exploited, the migrant workers, and the many rejects of a depersonalized society found in the corners of great cities. She took literally the words of Jesus when he identified with the hungry, homeless, naked, shelterless, and the least of humankind (Matthew 25:31-40). Her works of mercy were the expression of her faith. They continue today in the many Dorothy Day Centers that care for the hungry and homeless.

WARM-UP Two related activities for groups of three to five participants are poster making and writing a newspaper story.

Have one group make a poster about today's hungry, homeless, abused, or neglected in our society with pictures and headlines from newspapers and magazines. This poster can be mainly informative about the subject or can highlight some activity related to the hungry and

homeless in the community, such as volunteering at food shelves, Dorothy Day centers, or other shelters.

Another group can write a newspaper story about the hungry and homeless that can be put into your congregation's newsletter.

ACTIVITY Begin by sharing "Background" with the group. Allow for comments, then continue.

Caring for the less fortunate as a mandate of Christian living is not always a straightforward course of action. The question behind this concern is, *What are we doing?* The answers may evidence disagreement. Some may feel we are helping the immediate situation. Others may argue that we are creating dependency rather than helping people care for themselves. Stress that we are called as Christians to act; the debate is only over what action is most loving. Ask the group to select a panel or debate team to lead in a discussion of a current social issue. Try to get panel or team members who, based on their own convictions, can present differing ideas on the best way to approach the issue. Note: It may be helpful to have articles and information (on both sides) available to help students prepare.

RESPONSE Use a round robin activity to close. Ask the participants to share something they learned in this session that they want to share with another friend. These can be stories, ideas, or opinions about the statement in "Focus."

End with prayer.



Theological and liturgical terms

Scripture, authority, testament

FOCUS In this lesson the participants learn about the three terms *scripture*, *authority*, and *testament*.



PREPARATION Have available a chalkboard and chalk or chart paper and markers, pencils and paper, and colored pencils or markers.

BACKGROUND When we use the term *scripture*, we refer to sacred or religious writings. *Authority* is a source of knowledge or a power or influence over someone. The term *testament* means covenant or agreement. The Old Testament includes stories describing the old agreement between God and the people. The New Testament includes stories describing the new agreement with God, one that centers on our savior Jesus Christ. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, while the New Testament was written in Greek. Much of the content of scripture was first heard through story telling and later written down to be preserved.

WARM-UP Write the words *scripture*, *authority*, and *testament* on the board. Ask participants to offer synonyms (words having the same or nearly the same meaning) for each term. (*Bible, book, Old Testament, New Testament, power over you.*) Please note that the participants' inaccurate answers can create as much discussion as those that are correct.

ACTIVITY Ask participants to make a list of the people, places, and ideas that are authoritative in their lives. (*Parents, church, school, coach, police, friends, books.*) What does it mean for someone or something to be authoritative? (*It is someone or something you listen to and obey, someone or something you can trust and find as truthful.*)


Using paper, pencils, colored pencils, and markers, have participants draw symbols that represent authority for them. (*Cross, Ten Commandments tablet, a graffiti statement, a brand name, the name of a leadership office.*)

Through group discussion, talk about how scripture or the Bible is used as an authority for their lives. (*Knowledge of the Ten Commandments, following the ways Jesus lived his life.*) Over what areas of their lives does it have authority? (*Treatment of others, knowing what is right or wrong, knowing how God has shown love through Jesus.*) In what areas of their lives does scripture not serve as an authority?

RESPONSE Have participants write a short commercial advertising the authority of scripture and the value of the Old and New Testaments. Begin by brainstorming words and ideas that might be used. (*Ideas might include: answers for life; God's guide; God's people; living by the top ten; God's plan—the two-part story; and the way to know.*)

Ask participants how they might begin the commercial to catch someone's attention. (*Picture of creation, Jesus on the cross, an empty grave.*) What content could show God's authority during the commercial? (*Moses and the Ten Commandments; Jesus raising someone from the dead; Sermon on the Mount; a parable like the Good Samaritan; Christ's resurrection.*)

Through the conversation and brainstorming, help participants gain a better understanding of the relationship between scripture, the New and Old Testaments, and the authority scripture is to have for our lives. End with a prayer of thankfulness for the power of God's word in our lives.

 See corresponding activity in the *Youth Journal*, page 74.



Theological and liturgical terms

Gospel, grace

FOCUS This lesson is intended to teach the meanings of *gospel* and *grace*.



PREPARATION Have available chalkboard and chalk or chart paper and markers.

BACKGROUND The *Gospel* is a story that describes God's grace-filled relationship with God's own creation. We also refer to the first four books of the New Testament as the Gospels (*Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*). *Grace* is often defined as undeserved love or undeserved forgiveness. It is the kind of forgiveness that totally surprises you.

WARM-UP Read or tell the following story to the group:

The air was thick on that summer morning as Jason awakened to the prospect of another embarrassing failure. With no thanks to him, his baseball team was 6-0. Jason had struck out every time he had been up to bat. But this day would be different. For the first time all summer, Jason's dad had gotten off work to see him play.

It was the third inning by the time Jason got up to bat. The pitcher, age 10 but looking more like he was 13, stared in at home plate and hurled the ball. "Strike one," was all Jason heard. It wasn't long before he heard the umpire call out, "Strike two!"

"Come on son," he heard from the old wooden bleachers. The pitcher wound up and threw the ball. As it flew toward him, Jason wished that just this once the ball and the bat would connect. To his surprise, he swung and hit the ball to the left of the shortstop.

"He hit it! He hit it!" his teammates yelled. With excitement registering on his whole body, Jason began to run.

It wasn't long before the cheers turned to laughter. In all the excitement, Jason ran to third rather than first base. All he could hear were the words, "You're out!" as the umpire tried to keep a straight face.

With his head hung low, Jason turned around and began a seemingly endless walk back to the bench. As he arrived, some of his teammates were snickering while others were slamming their fists angrily into their gloves. As he slumped down on the worn bench he heard one lone voice from among his teammates: "Good hit, Jason. Good hit."

ACTIVITY Ask participants, "What's the one thing you can't imagine someone doing for you?" (*Doing all my chores; giving me a million dollars; donating an organ if I was sick; risking his or her life for me.*)

Then ask participants, "What's the one act for which you think you couldn't be forgiven?" (*Answers will vary.*)

Following their answers, share the following verses with participants: "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8). Share with participants that one of the only ways we can even begin to understand the magnitude of God's grace and forgiveness is in our human comparisons. Just as for Jason it was a mystery to have been encouraged by a teammate after messing up like he did, it is an even greater mystery to us to be forgiven over and over by God. Tell participants that one definition of God's grace is *undeserved love*. We experience grace through the forgiveness God has offered us through Jesus Christ. This is the gospel—the good news of Christ.

Share a time in your life when you experienced grace from God through someone else. (*A time you were forgiven or helped in some special way.*) Then ask participants to pair off and share with each other times in their lives when they were offered an unexpected or un-

deserved act of grace, goodness, or forgiveness. (Examples could include: *Dad gave me another chance when I was out past my curfew; my brother forgave me when I spilled a soft drink on his term paper; my friend forgave me for lying about her.*)

Gather everyone in the large group and ask the participants to tell about some of those grace-filled experiences.

RESPONSE Working together, list definitions for the word *gospel* on the chalkboard. (Good news, four books—*Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*—in the New Testament.) Then list

definitions for the word *grace*. (A person's name, undeserved love, a prayer before a meal.) Finally, have the participants suggest ways they can share grace-filled acts with others this week. (Ideas could include *watching for opportunities to extend special help to someone who wouldn't expect it, or going out of the way to be kind or understanding to someone I find difficult to like or who has been unkind to me.*) End with prayer, thanking God for Christ, the good news sent in grace that we may be forgiven, and asking for our hearts to be open so that we may extend a portion of that love and forgiveness in grace toward others.



Theological and liturgical terms

Sin, salvation

FOCUS Among the words that escape an easy definition are *sin* and *salvation*. This lesson helps the participants understand the meaning of these words for their lives.



PREPARATION For this lesson you will need a chalkboard and chalk, and tags or cards as instructed on "Bridging the Gap" (Reproducible Page 4).

BACKGROUND Sin is more than just breaking a law. Sin is separation from God. In this separation, we are also separated from neighbor, self, and the world. Sin is a deed as well as a condition. Salvation is the answer to sin. Salvation is the bridge that fills the gap between humankind and God. The bridge was built by God through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

WARM-UP Read or tell the following story to the group:

There was always a certain sense of excitement when Santiago's family drove the 50 miles south to his grandparent's farm. Although 13 years old, Santiago looked forward to the mile-long bridge they would be crossing.

Santiago's mother had said that when she was a girl the bridge hadn't been built. As they approached the bridge this time, Mom began to remember back to her childhood. "You know, Santiago, there is something else this

bridge has done," she said. "Before it was built, some of our own family couldn't see each other very often. To get across the river you had to drive 27 miles to Shoreland or 31 miles the other direction. It was always a very special day when Uncle Tomas or the cousins could visit. It was only after the bridge was built that I really got to know some of my uncles, aunts, and cousins. Looking back, I guess this bridge did more than just help people cross the river; it brought our family together."

It wasn't long before they had crossed the bridge and Santiago's thoughts were on all the fun they would have that weekend on the farm.

ACTIVITY Tell the participants, "Today we are going to talk about a problem and the solution. In the story just read, the problem was a river that was difficult to cross and kept people apart. The answer to the problem was to build a bridge. In life, the problem is something we call sin and the answer is something we call salvation."

Invite participants to join in a brainstorming session, reminding them that the rules for brainstorming include refraining from evaluat-

ing ideas offered, aiming for quality, encouraging a variety of ideas, and setting a time limit. Set a time limit for your brainstorming, then begin.

Ask the participants to think first about the word *sin*. What words, actions, or emotions come to mind upon hearing that word? List the answers given on the chalkboard. (*Stealing, violence, lying, breaking curfew, polluting God's earth, prejudice, feeling guilty, feeling separated, and hurting are possible ideas.*)

Then ask the participants to suggest ways God could deal with our sin. List these answers on the chalkboard. (*Possible answers are ignore it, forgive us, stop it from happening, or make payment for it.*)

Thank the participants for their ideas and the good examples they offered. Then share that the way God chose to deal with our sin was to send Jesus to die in our place. God chose to sacrifice Jesus, God's Son, for us. That's where the bridge comes in. In the story, the bridge brought together Santiago's mother's family. The bridge we call salvation brings us back together with God, and as members of God's family. Since we continue to sin, we will be crossing the bridge every time we ask for forgiveness. Jesus, in dying for us, became the bridge that saves us from eternal separation from God.


Using the cards prepared in advance from "Bridging the Gap" (Reproducible Page 4), hand

out one sin or forgiveness card to each participant. Have the person holding the card naming a sin find the matching person with a card describing the appropriate forgiveness. (*Correct matches are indicated on "Bridging the Gap."*)

RESPONSE Ask two participants to role-play a conversation between a youth and God. The youth should talk about the ways he or she gets separated from God. Note: Announce that we are not assuming this is a personal confession; the role play is to be indicative of possible situations in which youth may find themselves. (*I disobeyed my parents; I fought with my sister; I stole something; I lied; I abused drugs; or I cheated are possible ideas.*) The participant playing the role of God should describe what bridges one crosses to close the separation. (*Confession to God and making retribution are possible ideas.*)

Do several role plays, using as many participants who are willing in the time allowed. When finished, remind the participants that as humans we are unable to avoid sin completely.

End with prayer, thanking God that we can celebrate that God will forgive our sins and that in Jesus our salvation is secure.

 See corresponding activity in the *Youth Journal*, page 75.



Theological and liturgical terms

Liturgy, lesson, creed

FOCUS In our worship practices we use terms in ways unique to worship. Three such words are *liturgy*, *lesson*, and *creed*.



PREPARATION You will need a Bible and a copy of *LBW* for each participant. Have available a chalkboard and chalk or chart paper and markers.

BACKGROUND As we worship each Sunday we use or hear words that we probably do not use or hear in many other times and places. The word *liturgy* literally means the work of the people. We think of it in terms of the

words we use as we address God and those around us during the worship service. The word *lesson* refers to the Bible texts read during a worship service. Most often there is a lesson from the Old Testament, a lesson from the epistles, and a Gospel lesson. The pastor might pick one or all of the lessons to use as a basis for the sermon.

The word *creed* refers to a statement of faith. There are three included in *LBW*: the Athanasian Creed, the Apostles' Creed, and the Nicene

Creed. Each creed attempts to state in a condensed form the beliefs we as Christians hold.

WARM-UP Read or tell the following story to the group:

Jenny had spent the night at her best friend's house. She had been warned that Sunday morning meant all of Carrie's family would worship together, and she would be expected to go along.

Jenny hadn't been in a church since her older brother's wedding. As they walked into the sanctuary, she felt uneasy. She thought to herself, "What do I do? What am I supposed to say? What if I make a fool of myself? Upon entering, someone handed Jenny a program. Jenny overheard Carrie's mom refer to it as a bulletin.

It wasn't long before a pastor came out and announced, "We begin our worship using the liturgy found on page 77 in the front of your hymnal."

Liturgy? What's that? Jenny thought to herself.

Carrie nudged her and said, "Just follow me." Then the pastor said something and the congregation responded. This happened several times. Jenny learned later that what they were saying was called *liturgy*. It reminded her of what they called choral reading in speech class.

After stumbling over some of the words in a prayer everyone read, Jenny heard someone announce, "The first lesson is written in Isaiah, the sixty-third chapter."

What's a lesson? Jenny thought. Then she realized that it must be the reading from the Bible. For a while Jenny felt a bit more confident as she sat and listened to the sermon, then a song sung by the choir. Then, following a hymn, everyone stood and began to say something they seemed to know from memory.

When the service was over, Jenny asked what it was everyone had said by heart. "Oh, that was the Apostles' Creed. We were just saying together what we all believe."

As they drove away from the church, Jenny was both relieved the experience was over and a little curious about what had gone on. She caught herself thinking, "I'm glad I was there. Maybe I should try it again."

ACTIVITY Begin by asking the participants, "Have you ever felt like Jenny—perhaps when you were younger, perhaps visiting another church, or perhaps even now when you attend

worship here?" (*Encourage honesty and openness. Note any questions that come up and handle those you can now. Plan another time to deal with questions that need more time or background.*) Then ask, "If you were to plan a worship service, what would you include in it?" Write the ideas on the board. (*Prayer, confession, statement of faith, sermon, music, offering.*)

Hand out a copy of *LBW* to each participant. Turn to the liturgical setting most often used by your congregation. Explain the purpose of the "Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness." (*We come before God and each other to confess our sins and receive the reminder that we are forgiven.*)

Turn to the point in the service where the lessons are read. (*These are the specific Bible passages chosen for each Sunday.*) You might illustrate by having the participants look up the lessons for the following Sunday in "Prayers of the Day, Psalms, and Lessons" on *LBW* page 13.

Turn to the Apostles' Creed on *LBW* page 65. Explain that a creed is a statement of faith and that the Apostles' Creed was a response to religious issues of the time. Ask the participants to read the creed and ask questions about the meanings of the words.

Using the Apostles' Creed as a guide, discuss with the participants what they might include if they were to write their own personal creeds. What difficult or confusing faith issues would they attempt to clarify and how?

Review by writing the words *liturgy*, *lesson*, and *creed* on the board and asking participants to offer definitions for each term. (*A liturgy is the order and content of the worship service. A lesson is a Bible passage read during a worship service. A creed is a statement of belief.*)

RESPONSE Hand a Bible to each participant. Have them turn to Psalm 100. Explain that this psalm was used as an entrance liturgy as people entered the temple thousands of years ago. Note that some psalms can be used as a liturgy, a lesson, or a creed. Read the psalm responsively with an appointed or volunteer leader reading verse one, the rest of the participants verse two, and so on. End with a prayer that thanks God for the gifts we discover in our liturgy and asking for guidance to discover our faith more fully in our worship.



FOCUS

This lesson will give participants an opportunity to understand several of the phrases used in our liturgy.

PREPARATION Have available a copy of *LBW* for each participant. Prepare the "Fill in the Phrase" sheets and "Mingle and Match" activity pieces as described on "Fill in the Phrase" (Reproducible Page 9).

BACKGROUND The word *worship* is a contraction of an earlier term, *worth-ship*. Remembering this helps us to recall why we worship—to assign worth to that which we consider to be of value. The liturgy we use in worship is one means by which we do this; in a formal way, using words carefully chosen, we reiterate what God has done in Christ for us, and we respond appropriately. In this sense, we are acting out the understanding of liturgy as the work of the people.

If we think to an earlier church understanding of Christ as the one true liturgy—the one who undertook in his death the ultimate work of the people—we are driven to acknowledge the sacred nature of liturgy. Liturgy is more than words. In the liturgy we receive the assurance of God's grace and forgiveness and are called to action. That said, the words we say deserve our careful thought and attention.

WARM-UP Read or tell the following story to the group:

Jon had worshiped with his parents ever since he could remember. When he was smaller he could get by with coloring on the children's bulletin and eating raisins and cereal. He didn't even have to worry about standing up and sitting back down. He would just sit with his feet sticking barely over the edge of the pew. But as he got older, things changed. He liked to see his friends. He liked some of the music, and even enjoyed singing in the youth choir. It was all that talking back and forth between the congregation and the pastor that Jon didn't understand. All that talking back and forth and singing made him feel self-conscious and uneasy. Although he was a pretty good student,

Theological and liturgical terms

Liturgical phrases

there were words and phrases he would rattle off that made no sense to him. Jon would think to himself, "Some of this worship service just isn't for me."

ACTIVITY Hand out the "Fill in the Phrase" pages prepared earlier. Ask the participants to write their own meanings to each of the phrases listed. When they finish, have them turn to *LBW* page 56 and work together orally through the phrases, reading the complete phrase from the hymnal and looking for similarities and differences between their answers and the answer suggestions given in the "Notes for discussion" section that follows. Clarify and expand upon the participants' ideas when needed, but respect the answers offered by the participants. (Note: The phrases discussed in this session come from the first setting of liturgy in *LBW*. In doing this activity, use the setting most often used in your congregation, and adjust the page numbers accordingly.)

Notes for discussion

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (*LBW* page 56). *We begin our service by acknowledging that we worship the triune God. God the Father or Creator; God the Son, our savior Jesus; and God the Holy Spirit, our comforter, reminder.*

Later in our confession the worship leader announces, "God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (*LBW* page 56). *To be righteous is to be holy or one with God. To be unrighteous is to be in need of forgiveness. In asking to be cleansed from unrighteousness, we are asking to be forgiven and that we will receive the power of healing and the courage to change. We come to worship confident that forgiveness will be granted (1 John 1:9).*

In our confession the congregation prays "we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves" (*LBW* page 56). *With these*

words we confess that we are tied or bound to sin. We confess that we can't get out of the mess by ourselves. We ask for God's mercy, forgiveness, and help.

"The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (LBW page 57). *Through God's love we have received forgiveness and the realization that we belong.*

"The Lord be with you" (LBW page 62). *This is another way of saying God bless you. We are reminded that God is with us.*

"Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs" (LBW page 65). *With these words we are announcing for whom we are praying. We begin by praying for all people.*

"Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (LBW page 65). *As we close our prayer, we place or commend those for whom we have prayed into God's care. As we let go, we trust God's will be done.*

"The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace" (LBW page 74). *As the service ends, we are reminded of these words from*

Deuteronomy. To be blessed is to be watched over by God. To experience God's graciousness is to receive God's forgiveness. To be looked upon with favor is to be reminded that we are God's own.

RESPONSE Use the phrase and meaning cards prepared earlier to play a "Mingle and Match" review game. Hand phrase cards to half of the participants and meaning cards to the other half. Then have the participants mingle until each one has found the participant whose card matches his or hers. When the correct match is found, those two people should stand together until the others finish. End by having all the pairs read their phrase and meaning cards to the large group.

Close the session by asking the participants to pick the phrase that means the most to them during worship. Then ask the participants why they worship. (*The purpose of worship is to encourage each other through our presence, ask for forgiveness, and give God thanks and praise.*) Suggest that during the week they think about the phrases they use in worship and spend personal reflection time daily on those phrases. End with prayer.



Christian symbols

Speaking without words: cross

FOCUS Jesus' cross on Calvary and its meaning stand behind all crosses used within the Christian community.



PREPARATION Have available chalkboard and chalk or chart paper and markers; white and colored paper for drawing, painting, and other art work; markers; water colors; pencils; pens; playdough, clay, or other sculpting material; wooden sticks; glue; a copy of LBW for each group member; copies of "Symbols" (Reproducible Pages 1 and 2).

BACKGROUND Jesus was put to death on a cross, the contemporary Roman method of execution. We believe that Jesus died to bring all people back into a right relationship with God. We are not sure of the exact shape of Jesus' cross, but it has come to represent all that Jesus' death means for believers. It reminds us of the sacrifice Jesus made on Good Friday, and it calls forth faith in him now. What people remember and how they respond in faith are expressed in many different ways. That's why the cross has taken many shapes throughout Christian history.

Some people think the Tau cross (T) was the one used in Jesus' day. It is thought to be the shape of the standard on which Moses raised the serpent of brass (Numbers 21:9). According to tradition, it was the mark made by the Israelites with blood on their doorposts at the time of Passover. It is the shape of the cross found in many early catacombs.

The Latin cross may be most familiar. The lower part of the vertical beam is longer than the upper part. It is empty, reminding all that Jesus conquered death and was victorious over the grave.

The Greek cross has four arms of equal length. It may have originated among those who wanted to emphasize the perfect love of God in Jesus' sacrifice.

The Celtic cross is like a Latin cross with a circle around the intersection of the beams. This was the cross Columba took with him to Scotland in the sixth century. The circle represents eternity.

The Jerusalem cross is known as the Crusaders' Cross. It is made up of five Greek crosses, a large one in the center with small ones in the spaces between the arms. The five crosses represent the five wounds of Christ.

WARM-UP Ask the participants what they know about the cross and how it is used by people today. Record answers on the chalkboard or chart paper. Give each person a copy of LBW. Taking turns, read aloud the hymn "Beneath the Cross of Jesus" (LBW 107). Ask what the hymn says about the cross and add answers to those recorded earlier. (*A mighty rock, a home within a wilderness, where Jesus suffered.*)

ACTIVITY Pass out the reproducible pages prepared earlier. Share the information from "Background" with the participants, finding the various crosses as they're discussed. Ask if anyone has a favorite cross and why.

Tell the participants you have a variety of materials from which they can choose to do a sculpture, painting, drawing, or other art piece that represents what the cross means to them. When finished, let each share something about his or her art project.

RESPONSE Ask the participants to discuss what they have learned about what the cross is and how it is used in the church. Compare answers with those given during "Warm-up." What new knowledge or appreciation has been gained? End with prayer.



Christian symbols

Speaking without words: church

FOCUS Symbols representative of the church call to mind the whole experience of life in community or important aspects of that life.



PREPARATION Have available chart paper and 8½" x 11" paper; pens; pencils; markers; poster paper; audio player and a cassette or compact disc with traditional or contemporary church music; copies of "Symbols" (Reproducible Pages 1 and 2).

BACKGROUND The church is a fellowship of people joined together as a family of faith. They are on a journey together with God. Symbols of the church capture this life together in its various parts.

The ship or ark has traditionally been used for the church. It is based on the idea that the world is like a sea capable of tossing people about. Though the ship is beaten by waves, it provides safety for all inside. The Latin word for ship is *navis*, from which comes the word *nave*.

The vine symbolizes the church made up of believers in close relationship with Christ. Christ is the vine and we are the branches (John 15:1-11). This symbol represents the dependence of all people on Christ.

A similar symbol is the flock of sheep. It was used very early among Christians to represent the church as the sheep of the Good Shepherd. This symbol also shows the close dependent relationship between the believer and Christ.

The anchor represents the hope in which Christians live. Hope, like an anchor, grounds the believer firmly in Christ so that the storms of life will not destroy the believing heart. Hope is referred to as an anchor in Hebrews 6:19. Sometimes the anchor is also used to represent the cross.

Other characteristics of the Christian believer in the church are courage and life. These are often symbolized by a fish or the Greek word *ichthus*, meaning fish. That word is an acronym for the Greek phrase meaning Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. The fish itself is a symbol of life.

Early Christians often identified themselves by drawing the outline of a fish in the sand when they were in the presence of enemies.

The wheat and weeds and the dragnet are two other symbols of the church. They describe the church as made up of many people, both good and not so good. The wheat and weeds symbol comes from Jesus' parable where he encourages both to grow together until the harvest (Matthew 13:24-30). The dragnet image comes from the parable in Matthew 13:47-50.

WARM-UP Divide the participants into groups of three. Ask each group to think of things people do together in family, school, or friendship groups. Ask the groups to write these things on chart paper. Then ask each group to report briefly to the entire group. Point out that things people do in common symbolize living together and represent the importance of the group to its members.

ACTIVITY Pass out the reproducible pages prepared earlier. Share "Background" information with the participants and find the symbols on the pages as they are discussed.

The church is also symbolized in its music. With traditional or contemporary church music playing in the background, have participants continue working in small groups. Ask each group to select one of the church symbols discussed and make a poster for display in the Sunday school.

RESPONSE Teaching is a good way to learn. Ask the participants to select one symbol of the church to explain to a friend in the congregation who is not in this group. Together, plan a way for this to happen. End the session with prayer.



Christian symbols

Speaking without words: sacraments

FOCUS Sacraments are always connected with the Word of God. The Holy Spirit works in us through word and sacraments.



PREPARATION Have available molding clay that can be baked in an ordinary oven; paint; markers; pens; 8½" x 11" paper; felt for a banner; glue; a copy of *LBW* for each participant; copies of "Symbols" (Reproducible Pages 1 and 2).

BACKGROUND God's grace comes to us concretely in the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. They are the means of grace because they are commanded by Christ, use earthly elements, and offer a heavenly gift. The symbols of the sacraments are representations of their earthly elements and the vessels for their use.

The primary vessels for Baptism in Lutheran experience are the font and the shell or scallop. The font is the piece of furniture, free-standing or attached to a wall, in which the water is placed. The font is often near the pulpit. Originally it was placed near the entrance of the church, symbolizing Baptism as entrance into Christ's church. It is made of different materials, usually stone or wood, depending on the architecture of the church. The font is sometimes eight-sided, a shape symbolizing regeneration through Baptism. The shell or scallop represents the way Baptism is administered, either by pouring or sprinkling.

The usual symbol for Holy Communion is the chalice or cup with the round host bread coming out of it. Chalices range in their design from very ornate, jeweled cups to simple earthen goblets. This sacrament is also represented by the paten or dish with a loaf of bread on it. Sometimes one sees the symbol of grapes with or without a bunch of wheat, the natural sources of wine and bread, representing Holy Communion.

Representations of the Last Supper, either carved or painted, can be found on altars, indicating that the altar is the Lord's Table and the

Last Supper the occasion when this sacrament was instituted.

The harvest vine is another symbol used for Holy Communion, conveying the belief that this sacrament is the wine of fellowship. The loaves and fishes in the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 are also symbols for Holy Communion. So, too, is the symbol of a fish with a basket of bread.

The manna that God gave Moses and the people in the wilderness is also used as symbol of Holy Communion in its association with Jesus' words, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35).

WARM-UP Distribute a copy of *LBW* to each person. Have half of the group read the opening paragraph of "Holy Baptism" on *LBW* page 121. The other half should read the third option on *LBW* page 70, beginning with "Blessed are you" in the communion liturgy. Then use an interview method for discussion in which participants interview each other in pairs to find out what each knows about the particular sacrament and to get reactions to the *LBW* text. Then ask all to share with the whole group the information they learned in their interviews.

ACTIVITY Pass out the reproducible pages you prepared earlier. Share "Background" information with the participants, drawing attention to the various symbols as they are mentioned.

Let the participants self-divide. Using the materials available, have one group make a banner about Baptism or Holy Communion. Have the other group mold and bake a clay symbol of one of the two sacraments.

RESPONSE Divide into groups of two to four. Ask groups to discuss how our five senses are involved in receiving the sacraments. End with prayer.



Christian symbols

Speaking without words: Bible

FOCUS The Bible is the Holy Scriptures of the Christian faith, and is the guide for the faith and life of Christians.



PREPARATION Have available Bibles and copies of "Symbols" (Reproducible Pages 1 and 2).

BACKGROUND The Bible molds Christian beliefs and practices. Christians call it God's Word because in it God speaks to them in every generation revealing God's will for all creation.

The main symbol for the Bible is an open book. It indicates that Scripture is available to all and throughout most of the world. The Bible, or parts of it, has been translated into more than 1000 languages. Another symbol representing the Bible is the lamp. In Christian art, the lamp stands for knowledge and wisdom. Behind this symbol sometimes are the words, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). The scroll or roll on which the Bible was written before books were used often can be seen in church windows. The open scroll can represent also the pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible.

There are also symbols for parts of the Bible. The tablets of stone with numbers 1 through 10 on them signify the Ten Commandments. Individual books of the Bible sometimes have symbols that suggest their content or something about the author. A fleece or lion represents the book of Judges because the main characters in it are Gideon and Samson. Isaiah's symbol is tongs and a burning coal, remembering his call. Jeremiah is represented by a stone, since he was stoned to death. A closed gate stands for Ezekiel and envisions the New Jerusalem. Daniel is symbolized by the lions he faced because of his faith. A shepherd's crook is the symbol for Amos, who was a shepherd in Tekoah. A great fish represents Jonah, and a broken sword stands for Micah, who spoke of swords being turned into plowshares.

Each Gospel writer also has a symbol. The symbol for Matthew is a winged man because

this Gospel begins with the genealogy of Jesus; Mark's is a winged lion because Mark emphasizes Christ's kingly character; Luke's is a winged ox because this book emphasizes Christ's sacrificial death; and John's is an eagle because this Gospel portrays Christ's divine nature.

WARM-UP Pass out copies of "Symbols" (Reproducible Pages 1 and 2). Share "Background" information with the participants, drawing attention to the various Bible symbols as they are mentioned.

Ask the participants to close their eyes and try to recall where they have seen some of the symbols mentioned. After a few moments, ask group members to share what they recalled. (*Stained-glass windows, church furnishings, books, cards, jewelry, and vestments may be mentioned.*) If time permits, go next for a walk through your church building, particularly the sanctuary. Look for the symbols discussed here and in other sessions.

ACTIVITY Form three groups. Point out that on the "Symbols" pages, some of the Bible symbols have Bible references noted. Tell the participants they are going on a "symbolic" Bible hunt. Then assign each small group a few of the symbols for which they will find and read the appropriate Bible verses, and be ready to share with the large group what is learned.

RESPONSE Ask each group to share briefly what it learned. Point out that this was a symbolic hunt because, like symbols that tell only part of the story, the verses read are only part of each story. It is hoped these word images will excite them to read further and discover more.

End with a prayer that thanks God for the gift of the Bible and its power in our lives.



Christian symbols

Speaking without words: Christ

FOCUS Christ is the source of all symbols of Christian faith and life.



PREPARATION Have available 8½" x 11" paper; a blank mural sheet made from chart paper or newsprint; markers; pencils; copies of "Symbols" and "Cinquain" (Reproducible Pages 1, 2, and 3).

BACKGROUND Belief in Christ determines who Christians are and how they live. Over centuries, as Christians developed many symbols expressing the richness of life in Christ, they also developed symbols of Christ himself.

One representation of Christ is a lamb: the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Christ's image is seen on crosses as the crucified messiah or as a king (Christus Rex) bearing a scepter and holding the earth in his hand. He is the Christ child in a manger. He is the Good Shepherd with his sheep. He is the Bread of Life.

The unicorn is a symbol of Christ. In legend it is a swift animal that could only be captured when it grew gentle at the sight of its mother and placed its head in her lap.

The blossoms of a thorn tree became known as the Christmas Rose, a symbol of the nativity. In some places, the poinsettia is also regarded as a symbol of the nativity. The lily, symbolized in the fleur-de-lis, represents the human nature of the savior.

Jesus' passion and death are symbolized by a crown of thorns, sometimes containing three nails, by the rooster that crowed after Peter's denial, and by a robe and dice to recall the gambling at the foot of the cross to see who would get Christ's seamless robe. The pelican nourishing her young with her own blood represents Christ giving his blood for all. The phoenix bird that is said to have risen to life out of the ashes of its funeral pyre is a symbol of Christ's resurrection. The pomegranate is a symbol of resurrection as well as a symbol of royal-

ty and Christ's kingly reign. The butterfly represents Christ's victory over the tomb.

Monograms, initials, and individual words also symbolize Christ. *IHC* or *IHS* stand for the Greek word *Jesus*. *NIKA*, often flanking the cross, is a Greek word meaning "victor." *INRI* on Jesus' cross are the Latin initials for "Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews." The *Chi Rho* (sometimes the second letter is superimposed on the first) are the first two letters in the Greek word for Christ. $\alpha\omega$ (alpha and omega) are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet representing Christ as the beginning and end.

WARM-UP Pass out the "Symbols" pages prepared earlier. Share "Background" information with the group, drawing attention to the various symbols as they are mentioned. When finished, ask the participants to recall where they may have seen some of the symbols mentioned. Ask the participants if they have favorite symbols for Christ and why. If time permits, walk through the church building and see how many symbols of Christ the group can find.

ACTIVITY Have the participants work together on a mural project to be displayed in the church building. Working simultaneously on the mural paper, the participants should write or draw concepts, supporting ideas, and pictures that relate to Christ. Remind the group that the "Symbols" pages might spark several ideas with which to begin.

RESPONSE Pass out the "Cinquain" pages prepared earlier and explain how a cinquain poem is composed. Ask each participant to compose a cinquain about Christ, with the word *Christ* being the first line.

Close with prayer, incorporating the cinquains if the participants are willing.



Devotional reading of the Bible

Happiness

FOCUS This activity will help participants express happy feelings and reflect on happiness in various Gospel stories.



BACKGROUND Happiness can be found in something as simple as eating ice cream on a hot summer day, or in something as profound as the birth of a child. No matter the magnitude of one's happiness, God shares in that joy. Happy times are appropriate times to offer thanks and praise to God.

Encourage personal devotions by sharing with the group the following Bible verses to read when celebrating: Psalm 148; Psalm 150; 1 Peter 1:3-9; Matthew 28:1-10; Luke 1:46-55; Luke 15:11-32; Luke 19:29-40; and Romans 15:7-13.

WARM-UP Write "Happiness is . . ." in large letters on a chalkboard or newsprint. Give each participant a piece of paper and a pencil. Ask each one to complete the sentence, "Happiness is . . ." on his or her paper. Offer one or two examples to the group such as, "Happiness is a warm hug" or "Happiness is passing a math test." Give the participants one or two minutes to write their sentences, then ask each one to share his or her sentence with the group.

ACTIVITY: GOSPEL JOY Tell the group that just as happiness is a part of their lives, it was also a part of Jesus' life and the lives of the people around him. In order to explore happiness as it is recorded in Gospel stories, divide the participants into four small groups. If you have five or fewer participants, have them work individually or in pairs.


Give each small group a Bible, paper, and a pencil. Ask each group to designate one of its members as recorder. Now assign each small group one of the following Gospel stories: Luke 1:39-55 (Mary's song of praise); Luke 19:1-10

(Zacchaeus); Luke 19:29-39 (Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem); Matthew 28:1-10 (resurrection narrative).

Ask each small group to choose one person to read its text aloud in the small group. Suggest that the other members of each group close their eyes and listen carefully. When each small group is finished reading its text it should discuss the following questions and record its answers. (You may want to write the questions on the chalkboard or newsprint for all to see.) Who experienced happiness? What was he/she/they happy about? How did he/she/they respond to this happiness?

When the small groups have finished their discussions, ask them to share their findings with the whole group. After each small group has shared, ask everyone to think about happiness as they experience it in their lives. Ask, "What happy times are appropriate to share with God? (*Any happy times.*) What are some ways to share happiness with God? (*Through prayer and song; by letting happiness reflect in actions toward others.*) How do you share happiness with others? (*Telling them, celebrating.*) What are ways you can share the happiness you find in your faith with your peers? (*Inviting them to church or youth group; through positive attitudes, conversation, and actions.*)"

RESPONSE Ask each participant to think of a particular happy experience he or she would like to share with God. Invite each participant to verbalize his or her thanks in a circle prayer.

 See corresponding activity in the *Youth Journal*, page 64.



Devotional reading of the Bible

Sharing the good news

FOCUS This activity will offer participants the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ in their own words.



BACKGROUND Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ is at the heart of our call as Pentecost people. Teaching young people the story of Jesus' life is an important part of this call. But in addition to teaching the story comes the all-important aspect of helping young people share that message in words that have meaning in their lives, thus enabling them to move the story from the printed page and impress it upon their hearts and upon the hearts of those they touch.

Encourage personal devotions by sharing with the group the following list of Bible verses that inspire reaching out to others: Psalm 19; Isaiah 55:12-13; Matthew 5:13-16; Acts 2; Romans 15:14-21; and 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

WARM-UP Ask the participants to arrange themselves in a wide circle around a cardboard box. Give each participant a few sheets of newspaper or used computer paper that can be crumpled into balls. Tell group members that they will take turns throwing the paper balls at the box. If a participant misses the box, he or she is to name one thing he or she knows about the life of Jesus. If a participant throws a paper ball into the box, he or she may choose another participant to say something about Jesus' life. Continue the activity for about five minutes. For large groups, you may want to divide into small groups of five participants or less.

ACTIVITY: SHARING THE GOOD NEWS Tell the group that we often refer to telling about Jesus' life as "sharing the good news." Ask the participants why the story of

Jesus is called *good news*. (*It tells us we are saved, chosen, and loved.*) Ask the participants why Jesus would want us to share his story with others. (*So that everyone can be saved and feel loved.*)

Now divide the group into pairs and ask each pair to read through Acts 10:34-43 (Peter telling others about the life of Jesus). As they read, they should write down all the words or phrases that they think are important descriptions of Jesus.

Now that they have compiled a list of words and phrases that describe Jesus, ask participants to reflect on their lists and then each write an account of the good news of Jesus Christ in his or her own words. Remind the participants that just as Peter shared the good news in his own way, they can draw upon their own unique styles of expression when telling Jesus' story. Some ways would include drawing, poetry, song writing, or telling the story in contemporary words and symbols. They should strive to tell the story in a way that would make sense to others.

Allow the participants as much time as possible to work on their stories.

RESPONSE Ask the participants to share their good news stories with the partners with whom they were paired earlier. (If unfinished, participants can share what they've done so far.)

End with a closing prayer that thanks God for the good news given in Christ and asks for continual inspiration as we strive to share that good news.



Devotional reading of the Bible

Weakness and strength

FOCUS Through this activity participants will explore and share personal weaknesses and strengths while reflecting on the story of Bartimaeus.



BACKGROUND Sometimes it seems that weakness runs people's lives. Some are so busy trying to overcome it that they lose sight of their strength. But no matter the number or the magnitude of weaknesses, like Bartimaeus, people have the ability to reach past them. That ability is found in the gift of faith God has given all in the healing power of Christ.

Encourage personal devotions by sharing with the group the following Bible verses that encourage us when we feel weak: Psalm 18:1-3; Psalm 121; Proverbs 3:5-6; Mark 11:22-24; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; James 1:2-4; and 1 Peter 5:6-7.

WARM-UP Using masking tape or chairs, mark two points in your meeting area about 20 feet apart. Tell the participants that they will have five minutes to move their entire group from point A to point B. Each person may move from point A to point B only one time. They may move individually or in pairs. Assign each participant a weakness. (Unable to see, unable to hear, unable to speak, unable to walk, unable to use arms.) Participants will need to work together and use their strengths to move everyone from point A to point B.

After five minutes stop the activity and ask each person to tell what strengths he or she used to help the group. (*Carried someone, gave directions to someone who could not see, led someone.*)

ACTIVITY: BARTIMAEUS Ask one or two participants to read aloud Mark 10:46-52. Then ask, "What is Bartimaeus' weakness? (*He is blind.*) What is his strength? (*Persistence, boldness, faith.*) What does his faith in Jesus help him do? (*Overcome his weakness.*)"

Now ask the participants to close their eyes while you read the story to them as though Bartimaeus is telling it. This time they are to

imagine that they are Bartimaeus. Ask them to concentrate on what they see, hear, and feel as they experience the story in the first person.

Read the text slowly and dramatically, making sure to adapt it to read as a personal narrative. (For example: "I, Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When I heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth. . .")

When finished, ask the participants to share what they noticed about the story this time that they may not have noticed before. (*I noticed I was a poor beggar, I felt how determined I was to speak to Jesus.*) Then ask, "When you imagine yourself as Bartimaeus, do you feel mostly weak or mostly strong? (*Weak because I lived in the gutter, strong because I did all I could to meet Jesus.*)"

Now ask the participants to imagine that Jesus has just entered the room and is walking toward them. What will they say when Jesus asks, "What do you want me to do for you?" Repeat the question again and then encourage, but do not force, each participant to respond. If you prefer, you may consider having the participants write responses rather than saying them. As the participants respond, reply, "Your faith has made you well."

Note: The youth may ask why God doesn't heal all those who believe and pray. This frustration deserves acknowledgment. God's healing takes many forms, and may not mean healing the affliction. We rely instead on the courage and strength of the Holy Spirit, God's love in the midst of our doubt, and the promise of new life after death.

RESPONSE Close the activity by joining hands in a circle and asking each person to thank God (aloud or silently) for a strength he or she has.



Devotional reading of the Bible

Loss and grief

FOCUS This activity will help participants consider ways to share personal experiences of loss as well as discuss the grief experienced in the story of Lazarus.



BACKGROUND Grieving the loss of a loved one is a profoundly personal experience. But sharing one's painful loss with other people, and with God, is a step toward healing. In addition, taking one's grief to the pages of Scripture reveals a message of hope from a God who does not abandon those who mourn, but cries along with them.

Encourage personal devotions by sharing with the group the following Bible verses to use at times of grieving: Psalm 23; John 3:16; John 14:1-3; Romans 8:35-39; 1 Corinthians 15:20-22; and Philippians 4:4-7.

WARM-UP Begin by giving each person a copy of "I Miss You" (Reproducible Page 5). Ask them to take a few minutes to fill in the pages.

For a group that is established and reflects a mature attitude, encourage, but do not force, participants to share what they wrote with another person in the group. If you feel this would be inappropriate for your group, use the pages for a time of personal reflection only. Encourage the participants to share their experiences with someone they trust at a later time.

ACTIVITY: THE DEATH OF LAZARUS

Bring the participants back together and acknowledge the difficulty we often have with sharing personal feelings of loss. But sharing our hurt, anger, and emptiness with God and with other people will help us live with our losses. Tell the participants that you are going to read the story of the death of Lazarus to them. As you read, you will ask them to experience the story from the perspectives of three different characters: Martha, Mary, and Jesus.

As they listen to the first portion of the story (John 11:17-27), ask the participants to imagine

that they are Martha, focusing on how Martha feels about her brother's death and how she is experiencing grief. When you finish reading this section, ask each person to share his or her insight into Martha's feelings. (*She felt sad, she felt confident her brother would rise again.*) Where did Martha find comfort and strength in her grief? (*Through Jesus' presence.*)

Now ask the participants to imagine that they are Mary as you read John 11:28-37. When you finish ask, "How did Mary show her grief? (*She was emotional, crying.*) Where did Mary find comfort and strength? (*Through friends who consoled her.*)"

As you read through the final section of the story (John 11:38-44) ask the participants to concentrate on Jesus' feelings. When finished, ask, "How did Jesus feel? (*Sad, disturbed, confident in God's power.*) Where did Jesus find strength in his grief? (*Through his prayer to God.*)"

Ask the participants to think about the experiences of loss about which they wrote earlier. To which character from the story of Lazarus do they most relate when they think about their own experiences of grief? Ask them to tell why they are like the persons they chose. (*Answers may include I pray, I cry a lot, I talk with friends.*)

The participants may ask why God didn't raise their loved ones from the dead. Allow this discussion. God's actions are not always ours to understand. We do know, however, that while life on this earth ends, there is the promise of eternal life with God.

RESPONSE Spend a few moments in silent prayer in which the participants share personal grief concerns with God, then pray the Lord's Prayer together.



Devotional reading of the Bible

Self-expression

FOCUS This activity will give participants the opportunity to discover contemporary feelings in the Psalms and to express their personal feelings and beliefs in writing.



BACKGROUND Perhaps the most widely used method of self-expression is writing. Whether in a letter to a friend or an entry in a diary, people tend to experience personal growth and self-discovery through the written word. Giving young people opportunities to write about their feelings and beliefs can be an outlet for their self-expression. Writing their thoughts and feelings to God can be an adventure in the journey of faith.

WARM-UP Give each person a copy of "Psalms for Today" (Reproducible Page 6). Ask the participants to work in pairs to match the psalms with the statements on the sheet. After a few minutes, bring the group back together and share the correct answers. (1. d; 2. a; 3. e; 4. b; 5. c.) Based on this activity, ask the participants for a definition of a psalm. (A poem or song addressed to God or telling about God.)

ACTIVITY: PSALM WRITING Ask each participant to name his or her favorite song or poem and what it is that he or she likes about it. Next, ask the participants why they think people write songs or poetry. (To express themselves, to make others happy.)

Tell the participants that people have been expressing their feelings through poetry and song for much of our human history. Poems and songs do not need to be fancy or even rhyme to be expressive. No matter how they may word it, writing about their feelings can help people discover new things about themselves.

Explain to the participants that the Psalms are a collection of poems and songs that were


probably used by the Israelites as part of their worship. The psalmist sang from the heart and often expressed deeply personal questions and feelings with God.

One way of categorizing the Psalms is as follows: 1. praise and thanksgiving; 2. songs of faith; 3. lament; 4. confession; 5. royal songs (used for coronations of kings or to speak of God as ruler over Israel); 6. songs of creation and the history of God's people; and 7. songs of wisdom (that ponder the relationship between God and human beings).

Using the backs of their "Psalms For Today" pages, ask the participants to spend the remaining time writing a psalm. Remind them of the various categories you mentioned earlier and encourage them to choose one category as a starting point for writing a psalm. Also remind them that a psalm generally shares personal thoughts and feelings with God, along with thankfulness and praise. Note: It would be helpful if you wrote a psalm, too, and shared it.

When the participants are finished, ask them what it was like to write a psalm. Encourage the participants to continue to write their thoughts and feelings to God, as well as to use the book of Psalms in their personal devotions.

RESPONSE Close the activity by either asking the participants to share their psalms with the partner with whom they worked earlier or by asking interested participants to share their psalms with the whole group.

 See corresponding activity in the *Youth Journal*, page 65.



Devotional reading of the Bible

Reflection

FOCUS In this activity participants will take time to reflect on Scripture and respond to their reflection in prayer.



BACKGROUND In an often hectic world it can be difficult to find even a moment to stop and mutter a quick prayer to God, much less take time to discover one's prayer through Scripture. But taking time to read God's Word, reflect on the message, and respond to the thoughts and feelings it evokes might be key to discovering relief from much of the stress both young and old face when confronting the tasks of each new day.

Encourage personal devotions by sharing with the group the following Bible verses to use with prayer: Jeremiah 1:4-10; Psalm 5; Psalm 71; Matthew 5:1-11; Matthew 6:7-13; Luke 6:27-31; and Luke 12:22-34.

WARM-UP Give each participant two pennies to hold while you read Mark 12:41-44 (the widow's offering). Then ask the participants to pair off and take turns reading the text to each other.

When everyone is finished reading, go around the room with an offering plate and ask the participants to name personal gifts they have to offer as they drop their pennies into the offering plate. (I'm a good friend, I sing in the choir, I help other people, and so forth.) Place the offering plate where everyone can see it for the remainder of the activity.

ACTIVITY: SCRIPTURE PRAYERS Tell the participants you want them to spend several minutes reflecting on the story of the widow's offering. To help them do this, they may reread the story silently or look at the offering plate of pennies while they think about how the text speaks to their lives. Remind them that

this should be a time of quiet, contemplative reflection during which they should focus on how the text makes them feel and what thoughts those feelings bring to mind.

After several minutes, give each participant a piece of paper and a pencil or pen and ask that they respond to the thoughts and feelings that were generated by their reflections on the text. In their responses, they may want to write a prayer to God or list questions and concerns they have (based on their reflections), and then silently share the list with God. Some may prefer to draw pictures that are symbolic prayers, showing how the text applies to their lives.

When everyone is finished, place the offering plate of pennies on the floor and ask the participants to sit in a circle around it. Go around the circle and ask each person to share how he or she felt about using Scripture in prayer. (Bored, helped to focus on feelings.) How might this type of prayer help in our daily lives? (Slow us down to think, help us see how the Bible fits into our lives.) What are some times when this kind of prayer would be especially appropriate? (When home alone, when a solution to a problem isn't easily found.) Encourage the participants to continue to use Scripture as part of their prayer lives.

RESPONSE Ask each person to take two pennies from the offering plate and place them in his or her Bible. Encourage the participants to let the pennies remind them of the gifts they have to offer, and of the gift of prayer God has given to them. End with a prayer of thanks for God's continual care.

Symbols

CROSS



Tau



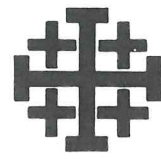
Latin



Greek



Celtic



Jerusalem

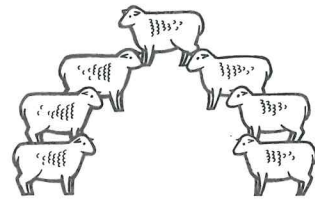
CHURCH



Ship



Vine



Flock of sheep



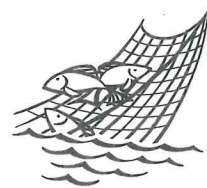
Anchor



Fish



Wheat and weeds



Dragnet

SACRAMENTS



Font



Shell



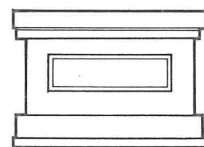
Chalice



Paten with loaf of bread



Grapes with wheat



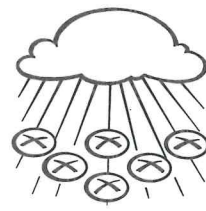
Altar



Harvest vine



Loaves and fishes



Manna

Symbols

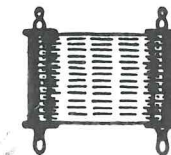
BIBLE



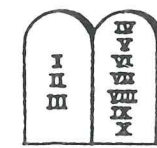
Open book



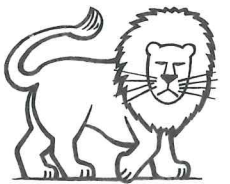
Lamp



Scroll



Ten Commandments



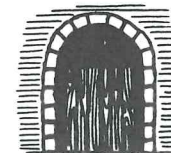
Lion (Judges)



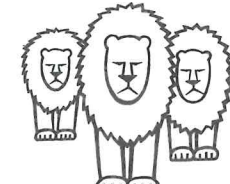
Tongs and burning coal (Isaiah)



Stone (Jeremiah)



Closed gate (Ezekiel)



Lions (Daniel)



Shepherd's staff



Large fish (Jonah)



Broken sword (Micah)



Matthew



Mark

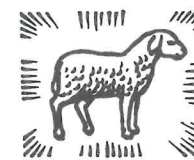


Luke



John

CHRIST



Lamb



Christus Rex



Christ in manger



Unicorn



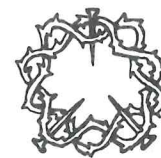
Christmas rose



Poinsettia



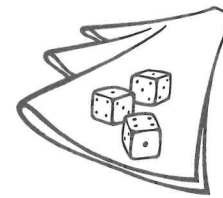
Fleur-de-lis



Crown of thorns



Rooster



Robe and dice



Pelican



Phoenix



Pomegranate



Butterfly



IHC and IHS



NIKA



INRI



Chi Rho



Alpha and Omega

Cinquain

A cinquain is a poem of five lines. The first line is often one word. The other lines do not have to rhyme. They express thoughts and feelings about the first line. An example of a cinquain using the word *Christians* as the first line follows:

Christians.
Followers of the risen Lord.
He called them first.
Sharers of his love.
He still calls.



Reproducible Page 3 ♦ Sharing the Language of Faith

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Bridging the Gap

Write each item (not each pair) on an individual piece of tag board or paper large enough to be seen across the room, as the participants will be matching the sins to the solutions. Prepare an appropriate number of tag board cards according to class size.

In the exercise, stress that with all sin, forgiveness is the most important part of the solution: We ask for forgiveness from God and those involved, and we extend forgiveness to those who have hurt us.

Sin: Taking something from the drugstore.
Solution: Going to the manager and paying for the product.

Sin: Gossiping about someone in your class.
Solution: Stopping the idle talk and asking the person for forgiveness.

Sin: Beginning to think that I don't need God.
Solution: Coming to God through prayer and asking for guidance.

Sin: Fighting with my sister or brother.
Solution: Sitting down and talking about what gets us angry at each other.

Sin: Failing to do a chore.
Solution: Asking for forgiveness and working at remembering.

Sin: Polluting the earth.
Solution: Showing care and stewardship in my use of the earth's resources.

Sin: Wasteful spending of money while people go hungry.
Solution: Sharing the resources I have in order to help those in need.

Sin: Not associating with someone because of race.
Solution: Seeing people as individuals and honoring the gift of diversity.

Include other examples appropriate to your class.

Reproducible Page 4 ♦ Sharing the Language of Faith

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I MISS YOU...

Is there someone missing in your life? Maybe a friend or family member or even a special pet. Maybe you lost him or her through death or divorce or a move or an argument. Use the boxes below to write about your loss.

The name of someone I have lost is—

I lost this person when—

This person was important to me because—

The thing I miss most about this person is—

When I talk to God about this person I feel—

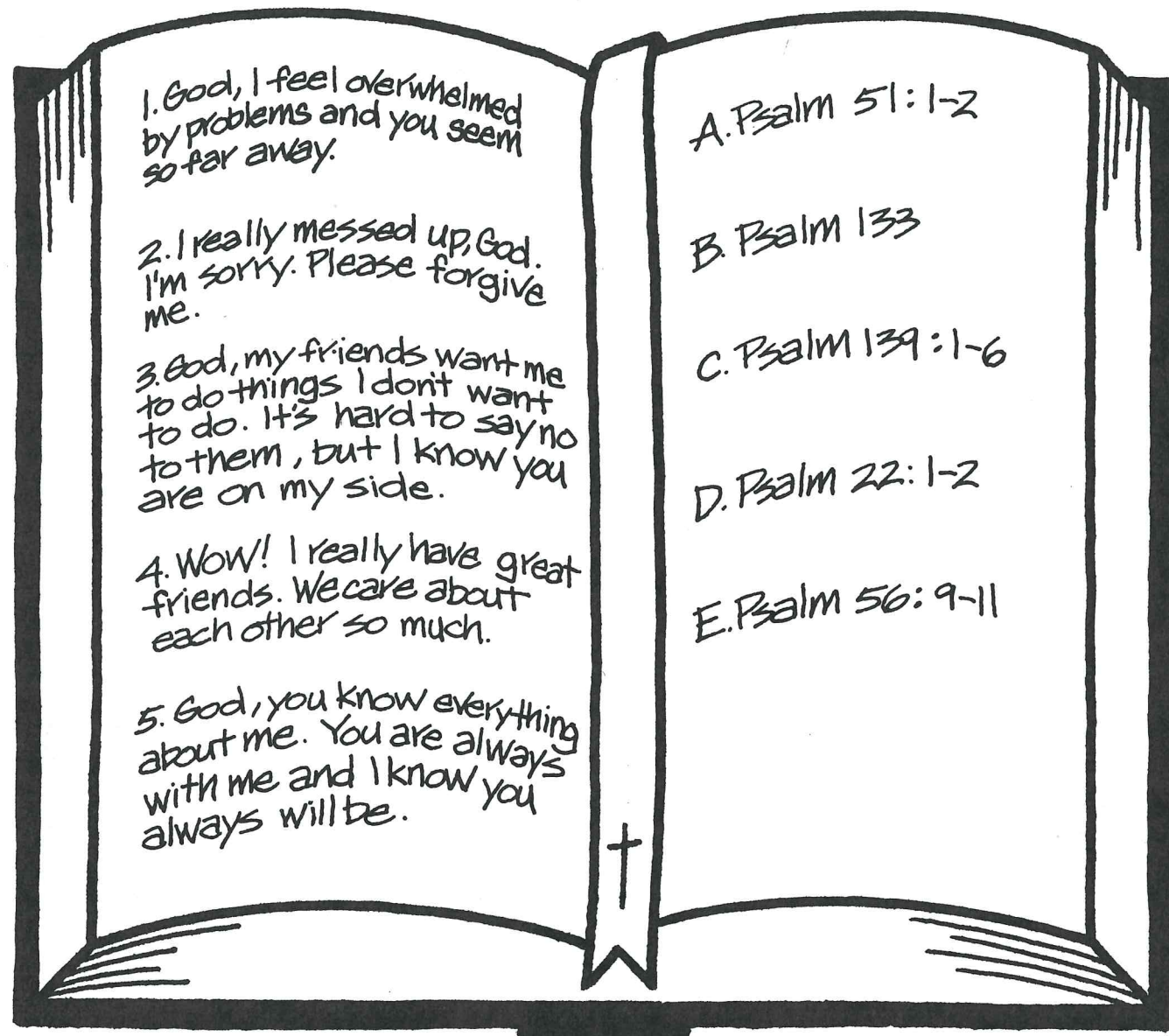


Reproducible Page 5 ♦ Sharing the Language of Faith

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Psalms for today

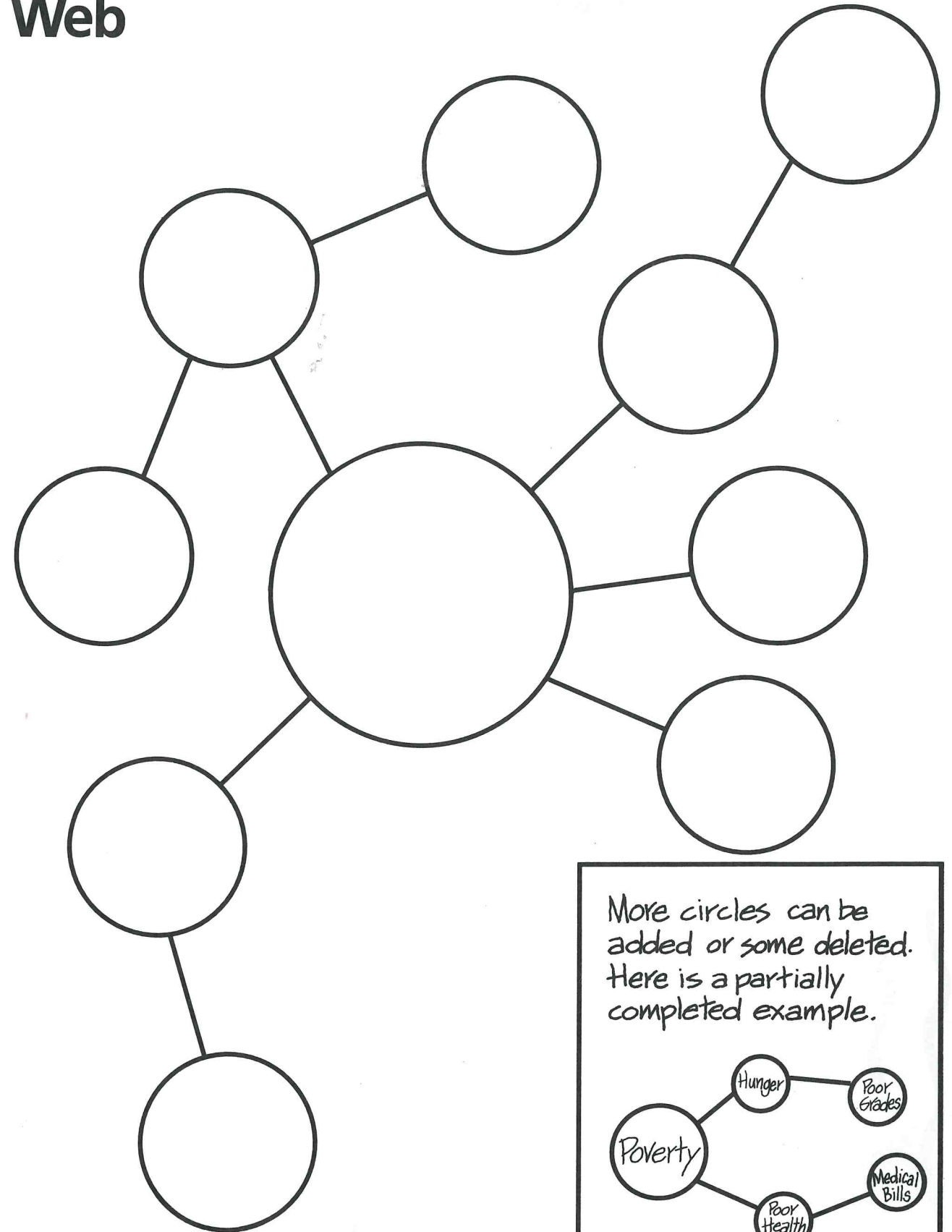
Match the statements with the Psalms that describe the feelings they express.



Other Psalms to consider when you're feeling...

- afraid - Psalm 27 and 121
- discouraged - Psalm 13 and 42
- impatient - Psalm 40
- weak - Psalm 31 and 146
- worried - Psalm 46
- at peace - Psalm 131
- tempted - Psalm 15 and 139
- thankful - Psalm 95 and 147
- guilty - Psalm 32
- doubly thankful - Psalm 150

Web



Experiences That Changed Me and Others



Briefly describe three important experiences in the last six months that changed your life. List the other people involved with you in those experiences and note how you think those experiences affected these other people.

Experiences	Other people	Effect on others

Fill in the Phrase



For the "Fill in the Phrase" activity on page 25, photocopy only the liturgical phrases portion of this page.

For the "Mingle and Match" activity on page 26, use both the phrases and the meanings to prepare the 16 cards

needed for the activity. To do this, write each phrase on a separate piece of tag board or 8½" x 11" sheet of paper, then write each of the meanings on separate pieces of tag board or paper.

Liturgical Phrases

1. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

2. God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins.

3. In bondage to sin.

4. The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . be with you.

5. The Lord be with you.

6. Let us pray for the whole people of God.

7. Into your hands, O Lord, we commend.

8. The Lord bless you and keep you . . . The Lord look upon you with favor. . . .

Meanings

1. It's you, Lord, we are worshiping.

2. We are confident of God's forgiveness.

3. We can't get out of this mess.

4. Through God's love we are forgiven and we belong.

5. God bless you.

6. We pray for all of these people.

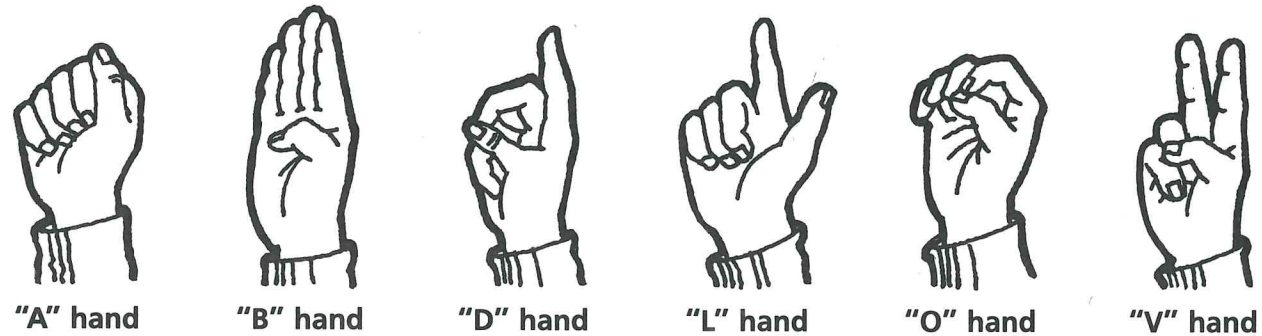
7. We trust God to care for those for whom we pray.

8. We receive God's blessing and know we are God's own.



Signing

In making signs, you will be asked to use the hand shapes for various letters of the alphabet. Those shapes are as follows:



First Commandment: I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods.



ME
Point to self with right index finger.



GOD
Bring "B" hand above head down to "B" hand at chest. *God in heaven comes down to man.*



OTHERS
Turn right prone "A" hand over and move it to the right. *Pointing to another.*



EQUAL
Hold both downturned "B" hands at chest; bring them together repeatedly so index fingers touch.



NONE
Place both "O" hands together; move right hand rightward and left hand leftward.

Signing

Fifth Commandment: You shall not kill.



KILL
Thrust right index finger under left prone palm. *Stabbing through.*

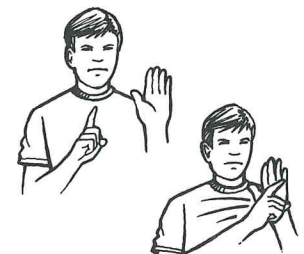


FORBID
The downturned right "D" or "L" hand is thrust forcefully into the left palm.

Seventh Commandment: You shall not steal.

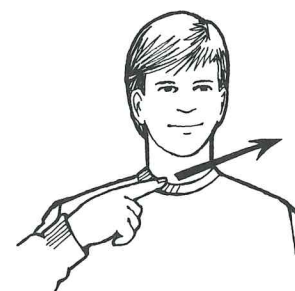


STEAL
Bend left arm toward right shoulder; draw bent fingers of right "V" hand from elbow to wrist. *Taking something from under a person's arm.*



FORBID
The downturned right "D" or "L" hand is thrust forcefully into the left palm.

Eighth Commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.



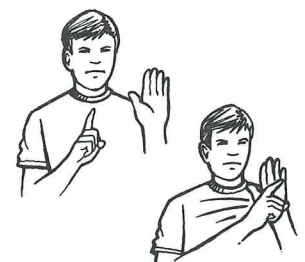
LIE
Push right index finger, palm facing downward, across lips from right to left.



FORBID
The downturned right "D" or "L" hand is thrust forcefully into the left palm.



DROOL (COVET)
Place index finger of right hand at corner of mouth, pointing left. Move hand downward with fluttering fingers.



FORBID
The downturned right "D" or "L" hand is thrust forcefully into the left palm.



A Choral Reading of John 2:1-11



(Based on the NRSV)

When dividing a group or congregation into the voices for this reading, think about these suggestions:

1. Voices can be divided on the basis of gender, age, or just where people are sitting. For example, have the narrator's voice be that of all the men, women, or people on the right or left side of the room. The same holds true for the voices of the servants.
2. Do not be bound by any preconceived notions of who should be doing what. Think in terms of a theology of proclamation. For example, the voice of Mary, mother of Jesus, can be all those responsible for carrying our Lord into the world today, such as teachers, pastors, members of councils, and so forth, just as Mary carried Christ into the world. It need not be a woman's voice. In the same way, all those present can be the voice of Jesus. If the Church is the body of Christ, then all the believers should speak the words of Christ.

Narrator: On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him:

Mother of Jesus: They have no wine.
Jesus: Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.

Mother of Jesus: Do whatever he tells you.

Narrator: Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

Jesus: Fill the jars with water.

Servants: And we filled them up to the brim.

Jesus: Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.

Narrator: So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him:

Steward: Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.

Narrator: Jesus did this the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory.

All: And his disciples believed in him.

