

New Beginnings

Lesson # 27 of 27

Scripture/Memory Verse

You did choose Me – rather I chose you and appointed you
that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide;
so that whatever you ask the Father in My Name, He may give it to you
John 15: 16

A Strong Suggestion: It may not be possible or practical for you to try to gather your class to meet after they have been confirmed. If you need to do this lesson before the Confirmation Service, then feel free to do so. However, we would like to strongly urge you to do this lesson with the students *after* they are confirmed. The purpose is to encourage them not only to continue to learn and grow after their Confirmation, but also to emphasize strongly that Confirmation is NOT the “end of a program” but rather the **beginning** of their lives as adult, committed Christians.

Lesson Goals & Objectives

Goal:

1. The students explore ways to live a mature, committed Christian Life.
 - ❖ The students will appreciate that Confirmation is the **Beginning** of this life, not just the end of a program of study.

Objectives:

- ❖ The students will review, discuss and reflect on the experience of Confirmation
- ❖ If they have already been Confirmed, they will share about their thoughts and feelings at their Confirmation.
- ❖ If they have not yet been Confirmed, they will share about their hopes and expectations for being Confirmed.
- ❖ The students will encounter, examine and explore ways in which to live out their Confirmation vows and commitments in real and active ways.

Introduction & Teacher Background

All too often, Confirmation has been called, “The Sacrament of Exit from the Church.” We cannot allow that attitude to prevail! All this learning and preparation has not been for the sake of one single event, but for a rich and rewarding life which blesses not only ourselves, but others as well. We have examined the Great Commandment and the Great Commission: now we are about the business of living them to the full. Your students need to know that they have a wonderful and exciting adventure ahead of them. If they miss out on living that adventure, it would be like being given a new car as a gift and then leaving it forever locked in a garage.

This lesson will begin with some personal reflection on the experience of being Confirmed: whether as a recent memory or anticipation of the near future. The students need to

access their sense of the Presence of God, especially in the Holy Spirit; the blessing and Grace of the Sacrament; and, participation in the Community of Faith. It is hoped that their participation in this entire program has built community among them. They have had a taste of sharing in a mini-Christian Community during these classes – they should now want more of this experience. Are they reluctant to end this class? They should be! They need to know that they can and should continue to grow in their Faith by sharing with their sisters and brothers in the church not only in strictly church-bound activities but also for outreach and service in the larger community. Therefore, they need to be thinking about options for continuing to maintain what they have built and to “take it out there.”

Over the years, a model of a balanced Christian Life has been developed which includes four “spokes” or axes. The vertical is between us and God; it includes Worship/Prayer and also continued reading of Scripture and other good spiritual sources : “Love God”. The horizontal is concerned with our relationships among fellow Christians and other people: “Love your neighbor;” “make disciples” so it consists of community fellowship and service/outreach. All four factors should be in balance for a fully functional Christian Life to flourish.

In this “final” class, we will be encouraging these young (or old) adult Christians to take full advantage of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in their lives to live to the fullest the exciting adventure of being a Christian – a bearer of the Light and Love of the Living God into a dark world.

Personal Prayer

Worship & Liturgy

Community Fellowship

Service & Outreach

Reading Holy Scripture and other good books on the Christian Life

Materials

- ❖ Strips of paper approximately ½ to 1 inch wide and at least 6 to 8 inches long (the wider the strip is, the longer it needs to be – exact size is not important). You can chop up some printing paper in a paper cutter. If you want to improve the visual effect and you have the opportunity, get a package of origami paper from any craft store. Each sheet has a different color on each side of the paper. Cut it into strips. There should be at least one strip for each student with several left over in case of errors in gluing.
- ❖ Scotch tape and/or quick drying glue.
- ❖ Bibles, or Scripture verses printed on sheets of paper to distribute
- ❖ Large sheets of newsprint paper and marking pens.
- ❖ If possible, copy and print the diagram above on hand-out sheets for each student.

Opening Prayer (5 min.)

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Continue: We ask you now, Lord, to show us how we may fully live our vocation to be Your Body in this world in love and service.

Allow the students some time to add their own prayers of petition and thanksgiving.

Into-Activity (5-10 Min.)

Mobius strips: Prepare strips of paper as described in the “Materials” section above and distribute them to the students. Instruct them to take each end in one of their hands and give the paper a “half twist” so that the ends of the paper face each other back to front. Tape or glue the ends together. When the joining is set, take felt tipped pens and begin drawing a line length-wise down the center of the paper. Keep going – they will be amazed to see that the line joins with itself in one continuous endless figure eight. It has no beginning and no end. A “Mobius strip” has no inside and outside surfaces – there is only one single continuous surface.

Say to the students: You may have thought that we were finished and done with this process of preparation for Confirmation. We are not done! You have not merely been preparing for an event, you have been preparing for the rest of your life!

Follow this up by asking them to share about their Confirmation experience (hopefully just past).

- ❖ What had you (or what do you now) expect-ed?
- ❖ Was there anything happening that you didn't (or don't) expect?
- ❖ Were you (are you afraid you might be) disappointed?
- ❖ What impressed you most about this experience? (What do you most hope will happen?)

Give them some time to discuss this openly.

Lesson (20-25 min.)

Draw the cross-shaped diagram found in the Introductory section on a piece of newsprint mounted on the wall or on an easel. (If you have a whiteboard or blackboard, use those).

Explain: We have (one hopes) enjoyed our time together in this class. Now that you have been (or are about to be) Confirmed, we might think that we are done. BUT NO!! Confirmation is only the beginning! You are now given the power of the Holy Spirit to live a full Christian Life of love and service. The Holy Spirit is not given to us just for us to enjoy in our own hearts and minds. Rather, as St. Paul says, we are “equipped for the works of service.”

We have learned about the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. We have everything we need to live these out. Let's take a look at how to do this.

First, we are called to love God. **Write the word, "Prayer" at the top of the cross to your left.** If we are going to love God, we must have an ongoing friendship with Him. We nurture that friendship by spending time with Him in prayer. Remember "A-C-T-S"? In our personal prayer, we should try to make use of all four of these ways of prayer. **Discuss**

Write the words, "Worship/liturgy" to the right of the top of the cross. Personal prayer flourishes best in the context of community prayer. We have learned about the Book of Common, our worship as Anglicans, and the importance of the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist. We need to come together with our Christian Community to worship God together in the liturgy and to receive the sacraments. **Discuss**

There is another factor and nourishing and growing in our relationship with God. **Write: "Reading Holy Scripture and other good books on the Christian Life" at the bottom of the cross.** We need to get to know God better. We do this by listening to His voice speaking to us in Holy Scripture. The Bible is "God's Love Letter" to us. We need to read at least a little bit of the Bible every day. If take even a few minutes to ponder the words of the Gospels or the Prophets, (for example) you will grow in your relationship with God. You may find that you sometimes have some difficulty understanding the Scriptures. Join a Bible study group – or get the clergy/leaders of your parish to start one. This group could certainly continue on by being a Bible study group. In addition to reading the Bible, it is also very helpful to read good books on the Christian Life. Check with your rector on what books might be helpful: some books identified as "Christian" may sometimes contain weird or unhelpful ideas. **Discuss**

Besides our relationship with God, the Great Commandment also tells us to love one another and to love our neighbors. The Great Commission sends us out to share the Gospel with everyone.

Write next to the cross on your left-hand side: "Community Fellowship." Jesus said that we should love one another. Love is the greatest and most indispensable factor in the Christian Life. In the early days of the Church, when people were often martyred for their Faith, the pagans would say, "How those people love one another!" Christian love astonished them. Christian love shows the world the love of God, makes Jesus real to them and demonstrates the power of the Holy Spirit. However, we also need to give and receive love for one another. We can't experience this if we never spend time with one another. "Lone ranger" Christians soon find that their spiritual lives have dried up. We need to help each other along the way and to receive each other's support. This can be as simple as sharing a pizza. **Discuss: use a sheet of newsprint to allow the students to "brain-storm" some ways of enjoying fellowship with one another.**

Finally – but perhaps most important – we receive the Holy Spirit not just as a nice experience for ourselves to enjoy, but in order to have the power to show God's love in Jesus Christ to the world. **Write: "Service" on the right-hand side of the cross diagram.** Committed Christians, empowered by the Holy Spirit don't just sit around waiting for other people to do the work to make the community run. This refers to our own church community, but also to the village and/or town in which we live. **Brain-storm: Think of ways in which we can serve our parish and local communities.** (Examples: acolytes, teaching in church school, helping with maintenance jobs around the church, driving the elderly to church events, helping with food pantry, tutoring in after-school programs... the possibilities are endless)

Many people consider “service” and “outreach” to be pretty much the same thing. **Write “outreach” next to “service.”** However, there is some distinction between the two. Properly speaking, “Outreach” means sharing the Gospel with those who do not yet know Jesus. **Brainstorm: What are some ways that we can share our Faith with those who may have never heard the Gospel – and such people are all around us.** Sharing our faith does not have to be “Bible-thumping” or obnoxious. Give the students time to share about this. One simple way: invite your friends to come to church or to church events with you. (If they have not yet been confirmed, urge them to invite unchurched friends to come to the Confirmation service. If they have just been confirmed, urge them to share with their unchurched friends what this experience meant to them.) Getting involved with local service projects in school or at the local library, firehouse or other community centers may also provide opportunities to show “Love in Action” as a Christian. When people ask: “Hey, why are you so happy and energetic?” We can tell them: “It is the love of Jesus in my life!”

Summarize: Take a look at the Four Factors of the Christian Life. **Draw a circle around the cross diagram.** In order for a wheel to stay nice and round and to role well, it needs even spokes to hold it together. Your life in Christ needs to be nourished and to have active outlets for your love. Keep these factors in balance, and you will grow as a true Christian in the love and power of God.

Discuss.

Reflection (10-15 min.)

Read Matthew 10: 5 – 16

We are also sent into the world by Jesus Christ to be His ambassadors.

- If Jesus were here with us in this room now, (and He is, if we are gathered in His Name) how would He send us out into the world?
- What would you want to ask Him about your mission?
- What do you think He would say to you as you go out to share the Gospel?

Take-home Activity

When you graduate(d) from high school, it feels like your life, as you have know it has ended. But really, you can see that graduation is only the beginning of new opportunities for new jobs or going to college – new adventures. There is an old saying: “Today is the beginning of the rest of your life!” Another is: “New Beginnings are all we ever have.” Go out now and BEGIN! to live out the great adventure of living a full an glorious Christian Life!

Closing Prayer (5 min.)

Have everyone pray together the Prayer after Communion at the top of page 366 in the BCP (even though they have not received Communion just now, we have all received Him some time recently) : Almighty and everliving God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring

us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom. And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

Encourage the students to give thanks to God in their own words for this time of learning, sharing and growth. Ask for God's blessing upon them in your own words as they go out "to do the work He has given us to do."

Scripture References

- John 15: the whole chapter
- Matthew 10: 5 – 33
- Luke 10: 1 – 12 and 17 – 20