

What Does It Mean to be Confirmed?

Lesson #1 of 27

Scripture/Memory Verse:

[John said:] "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Matthew 3:11

Lesson Goal and Objectives

Goal

- The students will understand the meaning of the sacrament of Confirmation in order to make an informed decision about receiving the sacrament.

Objectives

- We will define the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- We will discuss baptism as it relates to confirmation.
- We will explore the places in scripture that exemplify the laying on of hands and the imparting of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction: Background Information for the Teacher A sacrament is defined as, "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." The outward sign of Confirmation is the laying on of hands by the bishop, and the inward and spiritual grace is the presence of the Holy Spirit. How this inward gift 'feels' or is manifested obviously varies from person to person, but we hope the experience provides 'rocket boosters' to a person's faith life! The word, *Confirmation* comes from the Latin word, *confirmare*, which means "to strengthen," "to fortify" or "to complete." The Catechism states: "Confirmation is the rite in which we express a mature commitment to Christ, and receive strength from the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop" (BCP 860). In choosing to make this commitment we are saying "Yes!" to God in a public worship service of commitment and God is 'confirming' our decision by the gift of His Holy Spirit. Confirmation is a mature affirmation of our baptismal vows – some people think of confirmation as the "second half" of baptism, but that is not literally the case. However, it is a chance to re-visit our baptismal promises, especially if we were baptized as infants, and to re-affirm those promises which were made on our behalf. These are some of the effects that are given by the sacramental rite of confirmation:

- The Holy Spirit strengthens us.
- We are joined more closely to the church.
- We are made strong to bear continued witness to Jesus Christ and his saving work in his people.

Materials Needed

- Game sheet for "Who Wants to be a Christian Millionaire?"
You may also want some inexpensive prizes for the kids to 'win'—see instruction sheet for details.

- Bibles
- Book of Common Prayer

Opening Prayer (5 min)

Say this together. (Based on the Collect for Young Persons, BCP p. 829) “God our Father, you see that we, your children, are growing up in an unsteady and confusing world: Show us that your ways give us more life than the ways of the world, and that following You is better than chasing after selfish goals. Help us understand that failure is not a measure of our worth, but is a chance for a new start. Give us the strength to hold onto our faith in You, and to keep alive our joy in Your creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*” Or, you can pray extemporaneously – in your own words.

Introductory Activity (5-10 min) *(These ideas are intended to ensure a lively and exciting atmosphere for the beginning of the program. It is fine for each parish to approach this differently if you wish to make use of your own games or materials. It is best not to eliminate any activity.)*

- “Who Wants to Be a Christian Millionaire?” (modeled on the game show, “Who Wants to be a Millionaire?”) **See the attached sheet at the end of this lesson**

Lesson (20-25 min) *(Discuss these ideas with the students)*

The definition of a sacrament is: “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.” The outward sign of Confirmation is the laying on of hands by the bishop, and the inward and spiritual grace is the presence of the Holy Spirit. Confirmation is a Christian sacrament – not just an Episcopal sacrament – in which we receive the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands, through which we are bound more closely to the church, and by which we are made spiritually stronger to bear witness to Jesus Christ in the world. Whew! Why don’t we break this down?

First, it is a decision that we make publicly to “confirm” our faith at a public worship service. For our part we renew our baptismal vows as we “confirm” that we believe in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and, as we agree to pray, to worship, to be an example to others and to “serve Christ in all persons.”

Next is God’s part. Through the laying on of hands, the bishop prays for the Holy Spirit to be a strong presence in your life. We believe that we have already received the Holy Spirit in Baptism, but confirmation represents an adult commitment to God with your own heart, mind and soul.

Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, we can be more closely connected to the Church through a desire to do service projects or mission work, either in our hometown or anywhere around the world to which God may call us. This work sets an example for the people around us showing that we are committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that we know that to love Him is to serve Him. Remember the part where you agreed to “serve Christ in all people” that we just talked about? This is what mission work or service projects are: ways to show Christ’s love to other people as well as a way to learn about how Christ is present in people that we meet – even in some very unexpected ways.

Look at the Confirmation Service in the Book of Common Prayer (pp. 413 – 419) to see how the service unfolds. (Note that “Reception” is for people who have already been confirmed in another Christian church, but who would like to join the Episcopal Church formally as full members, and “Reaffirmation” is for those Episcopalians who would like to re-affirm – say again – their Confirmation promises.)

Reflection (10-15 min) Read Matthew 3: 16-17

- What sacrament do these verses describe?
- What is the outward and visible sign of the sacrament of baptism?
- What is the inward and spiritual grace (or gift) that Jesus receives?
- What happened right after Jesus was baptized?
- Read the verses of Matthew 4: 1-11
- How did the Spirit help Jesus in the desert as He was tempted?
- Can you think of times in your life that you were tempted?
- How could the power of God have helped you?

Take-Home Activity (5 min to explain)

*(It is recommended that you make use of this take-home activity to re-enforce the learning experience. You **may** eliminate this exercise if **necessary**. You may also substitute another activity if you find that to be more helpful. You should briefly review this lesson and review the take-home activity at the beginning of the next learning session).*

Have the young people bring home either a Book of Common Prayer or a copy of the pages of the Confirmation Service. They are to concentrate on the words the Bishop will speak as he prays for the Holy Spirit to fill them. *The students will then answer the following questions:*

- What are the three ‘power words’ the Bishop uses in the first prayer for the confirmands? (Strengthen, empower and sustain).
- Briefly describe how can God’s Spirit *strengthens* you – where do you see a particular need for God’s strength in yourself?
- How can God’s Spirit *empower* you – what might be a way in which you can serve Him better?
- How can God’s spirit *sustain* you so you can live a long life in faith?

Closing Prayer (5 min)

Do a “Tap Prayer” around the room. Have the leader start with a theme, such as prayers for neighbors or sick people or for family members. Then, have each student say aloud a name and/or a prayer concern. When each student is done, he or she “taps” the next person in the circle to let them know it’s his or her turn to pray. Students should be allowed to offer prayers aloud or silently.

Scripture References

Baptism of Jesus: Mark 1: 9-13 Matthew 3: 11, 16-17, continuing through Matthew

4:1 – 11

Additional Resources

- See the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer for a quick outline of the sacramental rite of Confirmation.

(See below for the "How to be a Christian Millionaire" worksheet)

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Who Wants to be a Christian Millionaire?

Instructions: You can play this like a regular quiz and just have kids shout out answers; or, you can go around the room, letting each student have a turn; or, you can pick one student and let him choose three other students as life-lines playing the game the way it is played on TV. I would suggest having some kind of simple or silly prize for all the kids anyway – something to eat is always good, or get some of the Christian trinkets from Oriental Trading Company – but obviously you would need to plan ahead for that! The Dollar Store has great, cheap Christian stuff: stickers, storybooks, coloring books – and teens love this sort of thing and get a kick out of it. Crowns are fun for the winners with maybe glow stick scepters for the other participants – all Dollar Store stuff!!

Some Christian Quiz Show Questions:

1. How many books of the Bible are there?
 - a. 12
 - b. 77
 - c. 4
 - d. 66
2. The Bible is divided into two parts. What are they called?
 - a. Part One and Part Two
 - b. The Old Testament and the New Testament
 - c. The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible
 - d. The Red Book and the Blue Book
3. The word “Gospel” means:
 - a. Good News
 - b. Big Book
 - c. Pay Attention
 - d. The End
4. How many Gospels are there in the New Testament?
 - a. 4
 - b. 22
 - c. 14
 - d. 7
5. Another name for Jesus in the Bible is:
 - a. Water-walker
 - b. Miracle Man
 - c. Son of God
 - d. Holy Guy
6. Jesus had how many disciples:
 - a. 6
 - b. 7
 - c. 12
 - d. 24
7. The word disciple means:
 - a. Holy person

- b.** Student
 - c.** Friend
 - d.** Enemy
8. Jesus was born in:
- a.** Jerusalem
 - b.** Bethlehem
 - c.** Zion
 - d.** New York City
9. One of Jesus' famous sayings is this: "I am the Way, the Truth and the..."
- a.** Life
 - b.** Path
 - c.** Most Excellent Dude
 - d.** Man
10. At the Last Supper, Jesus passed around food and drink for his disciples to share with him. What were they?
- a.** Chips and soda
 - b.** Cookies and milk
 - c.** Steak and smoothies
 - d.** Bread and wine

-----Answer Key:

- 1.** d
- 2.** b
- 3.** a
- 4.** a
- 5.** c
- 6.** c
- 7.** b
- 8.** b
- 9.** a
- 10.** d