



FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Find time to explore these questions as a family after each session.

Session 1

- How do you know that the church is telling the truth about a God who loves you?
- Do people ever confuse God's message with that of culture or their own selfishness?
- Do you ever miss some important message that God gives us through Scripture? Is that the fault of God, the Bible, your leader, or you?
- Where can you go to hear God's voice? What do you do? How can you be more open to God's communication?
- Is Scripture more important to the teenage generation, your parents' generation, or your grandparents' generation? Why is that?
- Is God trying to tell your generation something? What is it? How does God communicate it?

Session 2

- What does the word *sovereignty* mean? What are some real-world examples of sovereign things?
- In what ways are you affected by sovereignty? How are you affected negatively? When are you taken care of positively?
- How does it feel when someone has power over you? How does it feel to know that God cares for you?
- How might a loving God use sovereignty? How might a sovereign God use love?
- How should a committed Christian disciple react to God's sovereignty?

Session 3

- What does sin do to us? Why is sin important?
- Do we sin because we don't try hard enough or because it is part of our nature?
- What kinds of things that you hate are you personally most concerned about doing? How can you try to stop doing them? What happens when you keep doing them?
- Do you ever feel like Paul, that you "do the very thing" you hate? What does that feel like? If it feels so bad, why do we keep sinning?
- In your deepest spirit, do you believe you can be forgiven? Do you believe you *are* forgiven? When has confession helped you recognize/accept/feel forgiveness?
- Does God's forgiveness erase sins, push them away, make them meaningless, or what? How does God's forgiveness work?

Session 4

- If God knows the answers beforehand, does that change their outcomes? Does God's knowledge change the "your-ness" of your decisions? If so, how? If not, why not?
- What is "wonderful" (Psalm 139:6) about God knowing your choices, movements, thoughts, and words?
- What does it mean to you that your salvation is chosen or "destined" (Ephesians 1:4–5) before you were born?
- Why do some people think predestination is "unfair"? Would you personally prefer to work out your salvation in your own life? Why or why not? Which do you trust more: your capacity to earn God's favor, or God's grace?
- Why are some people scared of spiritual predestination? Why are other people joyful about it? Do those perspectives say more about what people think of themselves or God? Explain.
- Is there any way to *know* if God has predestined you to salvation or damnation? If so, what is it? If not, why not?
- Do you have any reasons to believe that God elected you to damnation or salvation? How might you act if you are scared of not being chosen for salvation? How might you act if you are joyous about the possibility of being chosen for salvation?

Session 5

- If the whole world belongs to God, how can one person be important to God? If God has a plan for the whole world, does it really matter how you live? Explain.
- If God's plan for the world is good, and you do something bad, do you ruin God's plan, or will God's plan come about anyway? Explain.
- If God has a plan that is going to happen, why do anything "good"?
- How does it feel when someone thanks you? How do you feel when you say thanks?
- How do you thank people? Why do you thank them?
- How do you thank God? Why do you thank God?

Session 6

- In the world, when is change good? When is it bad?
- In your life, when is change good? When is it bad?
- Does God change? Should churches change?
- In your life, how can you balance the good parts of change and the good parts of tradition? How can churches balance change and tradition?
- How is God reforming the church now?
- What is something that you would like to see the church or your congregation change?



LITTLE CABIN SONG

Little Cabin in the Woods

Little cabin in the woods,
Little man by the window stood,
Saw a rabbit hopping by,
Knocking at the door.
"Help me! Help me! Help!" he said,
"Before the hunter shoots me dead."
Little rabbit, come inside,
Safely to abide.

(sung quietly, high-pitched)

Tiny cabin in the woods,
Tiny man by the window stood,
Saw a rabbit hopping by,
Knocking at the door.
"Help me! Help me! Help!" he said,
"Before the hunter shoots me dead."
Tiny rabbit, come inside,
Safely to abide.

(sung loudly, low-pitched)

Great big cabin in the woods,
Great big man by the window stood,
Saw a great big rabbit hopping by,
Knocking at the door.
"Help me! Help me! Help!" he said,
"Before the hunter shoots me dead."
Great big rabbit, come inside,
Safely to abide.

Try singing the song with surfer lingo,
as a hip-hop song, or as a song from an opera!

[draw a cabin shape in the air]
[hand above eyes, looking around]
[two fingers as hopping bunny ears]
[pretend to knock knuckles on a door]
[throw arms up three times]
[pretend to be a hunter]
[wave the rabbit inside with one hand]
[use one hand to pet other hand]

[draw a tiny cabin shape in the air]
[one finger above eyes, looking around]
[top part of two fingers as hopping bunny ears]
[pretend to gently tap a finger on a door]
[throw fingers up three times]
[pretend to be a tiny hunter]
[wave the rabbit inside with one finger]
[use one finger to pet another finger]

[draw a huge cabin shape in the air]
[both hands above eyes, looking around]
[hop around like a huge bunny]
[pretend to pound both fists on a door]
[throw arms up and jump up three times]
[pretend to be a huge hunter]
[wave the rabbit inside with entire body]
[use one hand to pet other arm]





Web Resource 1b
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BREATH AND SPIRIT

רוּחַ

- The Hebrew word רוּחַ (*ruach*, pronounced "roo-ahk") means "breath," "spirit," "wind," or "spirit of emotion."
- Ezekiel 37 uses all three senses of *ruach* within a few sentences: "breath" (v. 5, 9), "wind" (v. 9), and "spirit" (v. 14).
- No English words use the Hebrew root *ruach*.
- The Hebrew word *ruach* is nearly identical to the Greek word *pneuma*.
- The sense of *breath* in the Hebrew word *ruach* is generally more cosmic, like *breath* of God.

נָפַח

- The Hebrew word נָפַח (*naphach*, pronounced "nah-fahk") means "breathe" or "blow."
- Ezekiel 37:9 uses both *ruach* and *naphach*: "Come from the four winds (*ruach*), O breath (*ruach*), and breathe (*naphach*) upon . . ."
- Genesis 2:7 uses *naphach* straightforwardly: "Then the LORD God . . . breathed into his nostrils the breath of life."
- No English words use the Hebrew root *naphach*.
- The sense of *breathe* in the Hebrew word *naphach* is generally more physical, like blowing on a fire.

πνεῦμα

- The Greek word πνεῦμα (*pneuma*, pronounced "noo-ma") means "breath," "spirit," "wind," or "spirit of emotion."
- John 3 uses several senses of *pneuma* within a few sentences: "spirit" (v. 6), the Holy "Spirit" (v. 6, 8), and "wind" (v. 8).
- The most common English words that use the Greek root *pneuma* are . . .
- *pneumonia*—a disease of the lungs
- *pneumatic*—anything to do with air pressure
- The Greek word *pneuma* is nearly identical to the Hebrew word *ruach*.
- 2 Timothy 3:16 uses a rare derivative of *pneuma*: θεόπνευστος (*theopneustos*). The prefix *theo-* means "God" (as in *theology*), and the suffix *-tos* means something like "having been." So, the word means something like "having been breathed/spirited by God."
- The verse can mean "Scripture is/ was breathed/inspired (given spirit) by God" or "God breathed/inspired (gave spirit to) all Scripture." It is possible, but less likely, that the verse could mean "God inspired (gave emotional inspiration to the writers of) all Scripture."

πνεῦμα

רוּחַ

נָפַח



POWER OF SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 3:8

The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me."

Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy.

Deuteronomy 6:5

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

Psalms 46:10

"Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth."

Psalms 147:5

Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; God's understanding is beyond measure.

Romans 10:17

So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

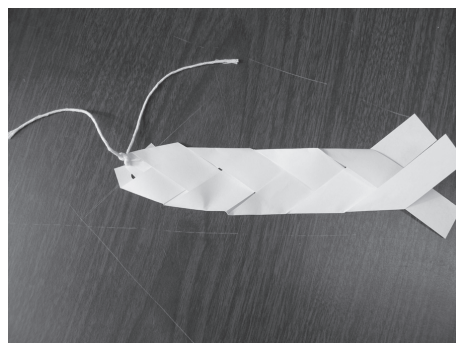
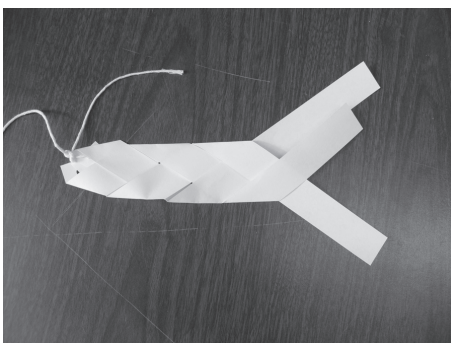
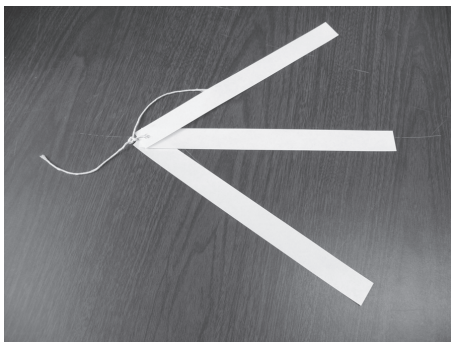
Acts 2:17

"In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."



SCRIPTURE BRAIDING

- Stack the three strips of paper together.
- Punch a hole on one end of the strips of paper and tie the strips together with string.
- As you braid the strips of paper, fold each strip when you bring it back toward the middle of the braid.



INSTITUTES 1.1.1



John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion

"Our wisdom . . . consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. As these are closely connected, it is not easy to decide which comes first and gives rise to the other. To begin with, no one can assess himself without turning his thoughts towards the God in whom he lives and moves, because it is quite obvious that the gifts we possess cannot possibly spring from ourselves and our very being is sustained by God alone. Further, the blessings which constantly spill over from heaven are like streams leading us to the fountain. Here again, the endless good which exists in God becomes more obvious beside our poverty."¹

Paraphrase

We can know about God and about ourselves. But does our knowledge of God help us understand ourselves, or does our knowledge of ourselves help us understand God? On one hand, you know yourself better by recognizing that your very existence is thanks to God. Your life and talents and joy come from God. Your can understand yourself by understanding God. On the other hand, what would you understand about God's grace or forgiveness without understanding what kind of person you are?

1. John Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, ed. Tony Lane and Hilary Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 1.1.1, p. 21.



FORSAKEN

Emily's Essay

Part 1

When my first love broke up with me, I felt like my heart would never be the same. Silly me, I thought that losing that stupid boy was the worst thing that could happen. Little did I know, my friends liked him better than me, so when he started spreading rumors, I lost my reputation, my pride, and most of my closest friends. Now, I could deal with all that. It hurt, but I could hold my head up high and keep going. But once my home life started suffering, things really got difficult.

I had always taken pride in being the "smart girl" – gotten straight A's, all my teachers liked me, and I was a known teacher's pet and perfectionist. I didn't mind. I liked it. School was the one thing I was REALLY good at. But it was hard to study when I was up fighting with my parents 'til 11 or later most nights. My grades plummeted, and I felt stupid for the first time. Like I was a failure. It seemed like things just kept getting worse when my dad started pushing me around, my mom blamed me for everything, my best guy friend couldn't deal with my family drama and stopped talking to me... then the same week one of my close friends from church camp died and my best girl friend left for ten weeks. I turned my back on God, but I felt like God turned his back on me.



Part 2

I couldn't seem to get things back on track. I kept trying to MAKE things be OK. I thought if I worked hard enough, I could make everything all right. But I was wrong. It wasn't until I could get away and be with God that I realized it wasn't for me to make things go right. That was his job. I just had to open my heart to him and look at all the good things he had given me. I forgave my old friends, my ex, my parents, and myself. God got things back on track for me when I gave God the chance. I'm so thankful to God because he helped me remember him. :')

MISSION REFLECTIONS

Describe your mission project. Who did you serve? What did you learn about them? How did you feel being a servant?

Where is God's caring sovereignty in your life? How can you be more open to this kind of God's power?

God's sovereign love is a mystery beyond the reach of man's mind. Human thought ascribes to God superlatives of power, wisdom, and goodness. But God reveals [God's] love in Jesus Christ by showing power in the form of a servant, receiving sinful men.¹

God revealed God's love by giving you an opportunity to serve. How do you feel about being a part of God's caring sovereignty?

1. "Confession of 1967," *Book of Confessions* (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.], 2007), 9.15, p. 255.



SIN



- The Greek verb αμαρτάνω (pronounced "hah-mar-tah-no"), translated *sin* in English, is originally a term from archery, meaning "to miss the mark." By implication, it came to mean generally "to be mistaken" or in religious language "to wander from the path of righteousness" or simply "to do wrong."
- The Hebrew word חטא (pronounced "khat-tah-ah"), translated *sin* in English, has the same meaning as the Greek αμαρτάνω.
- The biblical sense of sin is as concerned with things we do not do (sins of omission) as with things we do (sins of commission). What are some examples in your own life?
- No one in the Bible, except Christ, is portrayed as being without sin, and Scripture is clear that everyone does sin. Why can't humans keep from sinning?
- The Hebrew word נחם (pronounced "nah-khahm"), translated *repent* in English, means "to be sorry," "to regret," and "to repent."
- The Greek word μετανοέω (*metanoeo*, pronounced "meh-tah-no-eh-oh"), used only four times in the New Testament and translated *repent* in English, means "to change one's mind" or "to turn one's mind from sin."
- The Reverend J. Herbert Nelson defines *repent* as "stop, turn around, go in another direction." What does it mean to you that the Hebrew language focuses more on stopping, while the Greek language focuses more on turning around?
- The main biblical image of repentance is a one-time event. Do you think of repentance as a one-time thing, or should we keep repenting?



TEN COMMANDMENTS

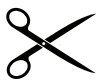
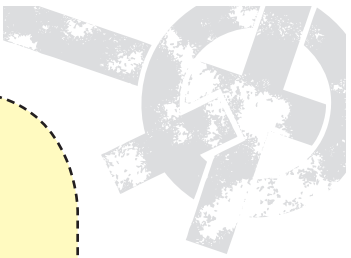


***1. Do not place any other
gods before God.***



2. Do not make or worship idols.

TEN COMMANDMENTS

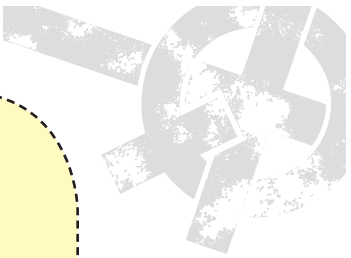


**3. Do not take the Lord's
name in vain.**



4. Keep the Sabbath holy.

TEN COMMANDMENTS

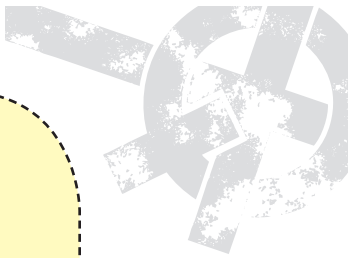


5. Honor your father and mother.



6. Do not murder.

TEN COMMANDMENTS



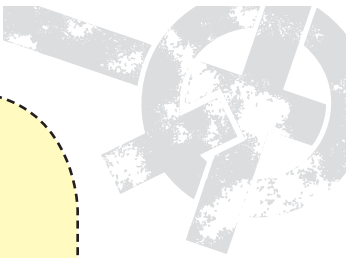
7. Do not commit adultery.



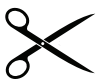
8. Do not steal.



TEN COMMANDMENTS



9. Do not lie.



***10. Do not be jealous of
others' belongings.***



BIBLICAL SINNERS

Read the descriptions of the following people in the Bible. These heroes of the faith struggled with sin, just like we do. Which of them seems most like you?

Peter—Peter was Jesus’ right-hand man and even led the church for a few decades in the first century. However, he was self-conscious and when someone accused him of being Christian, he denied knowing Christ (Luke 22:54–62).

Noah—Noah is one of the most obedient people in the Bible, and he had no problem with people ridiculing him for following God. However, after returning to dry land, he gave in to temptation (Genesis 9:20–21).

Moses—God depended on him as much as anyone in the Bible. However, as a young man, Moses could not control his anger and killed someone (Exodus 2:11–12). Eventually, he found peace and God called him to serve, but he refused (Exodus 3–4). After much convincing, he finally gave his life to God, making plenty of mistakes along the way.

David—David was a gentle young man, who loved God and prayed deeply. However, after he became popular and wealthy, he fell into a spiral of sin, covering up one wrongdoing with another (e.g., 2 Samuel 11).

The Priest and the Scribe—Two responsible men, whom everyone thought were moral, both passed a man who was beaten up and left in a ditch (Luke 10:25–37).

Rahab—Rahab was totally wrapped up in sin and everyone knew it. However, when it came time to make the right decision, she did it (Joshua 2).

Rich Young Man—A rich young man told Jesus that he obeys all the commandments. Jesus doesn’t challenge the truth of this, and we might as well assume he was an upright person, obeying every rule carefully. However, Jesus challenges him to take the next step and the man is too selfish to give up his comfortable life (Matthew 19:16–30).

Adam and Eve—In the beginning, they lived harmoniously with God and each other. However, they began to trust their own wisdom over God’s Word (Genesis 3:1–7).

Saul—Saul was at the top of his class in school, had followed every rule, and had the respect of adults so much so that they let him take part in official legal proceedings. However, when he saw the people he looked up to doing something wrong, he didn’t have the courage to speak up (Acts 7:54–60).

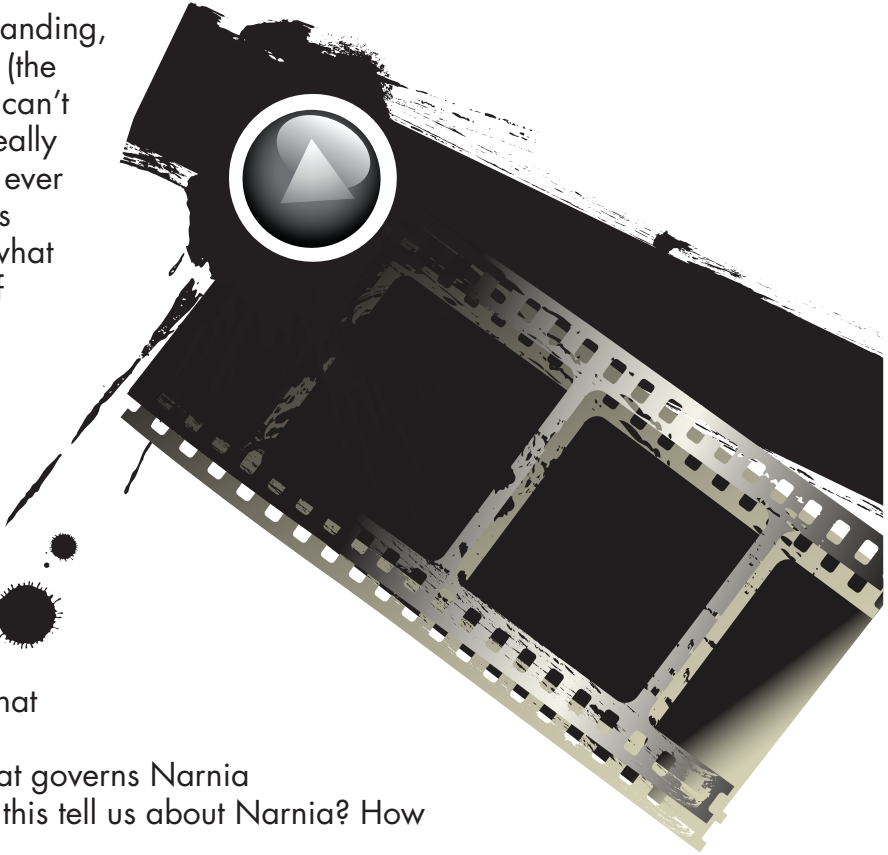
Sarah—God chose Sarah to raise Ishmael and Isaac, but she was so jealous of Hagar, Ishmael’s birth mother, that she kicked them both out of the house (Genesis 21:8–10).

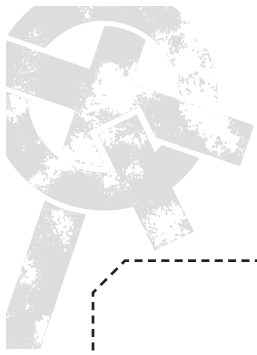


FILM CONNECTIONS

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

- In the first scene, Peter (the older, commanding, sometimes heroic brother) asks Edmund (the younger, clumsy, angry brother), "Why can't you do as you're told?" Was Edmund really being selfish in this case? Does religion ever feel like someone is telling you to "do as you are told"? Are you good at doing what you're told? Why or why not? Which of these characters do you most associate with?
- As Mr. Tumnus begins to trick Lucy, he sees something scary in the fire. When you are about to sin, do you ever feel a tinge of conscience or regret? Why or why not?
- Edmund is tempted by Turkish Delight (a fancy candy) and by having his siblings become servants. Do you ever sin because of temptations like that? What does a temptation feel like?
- Aslan tells Peter that the Deep Magic that governs Narnia "defines right from wrong." What does this tell us about Narnia? How does this connect to our world?
- The White Witch tells Aslan that, according to the Deep Magic, Edmund's "blood is my property." Does she mean that Edmund's actions have natural consequences or that they deserve punishment? What is the difference between these two? In our world, do your actions have natural consequences, deserve punishment, both, neither, or something else? Explain.
- Why does Aslan give up his life in place of Edmund's? Isn't Aslan far more important than Edmund? What aspects of this scene remind you of Christ on the cross?
- In the book, written by C. S. Lewis, Aslan explains sacrifice this way: "It means," said Aslan, "that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of Time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards." If justice is Deep Magic, what is the Deeper Magic?
- Aslan forgave Edmund before he sacrificed himself. What does it mean that God has forgiven us since "the darkness before Time dawned"?
- After the battle, the children forgive Edmund. Do you feel forgiven more often by people or by God? Why are both important?





I KNOW WHAT

Name: _____

Circle one . . .

On a desert island, I would want a: television computer
Before I die, I want to: skydive have a family
A good vacation would be to: Hawaii Europe
I like to read: novels magazines
One thing I can't stand is: mean friends mean strangers

Name: _____

Circle one . . .

My favorite class is: science art
I can't live without: sweets spicy foods
Country music is: amazing boring
Without sports I would: not know what to do love life
My parents/caregivers are: not so bad not fun to be with

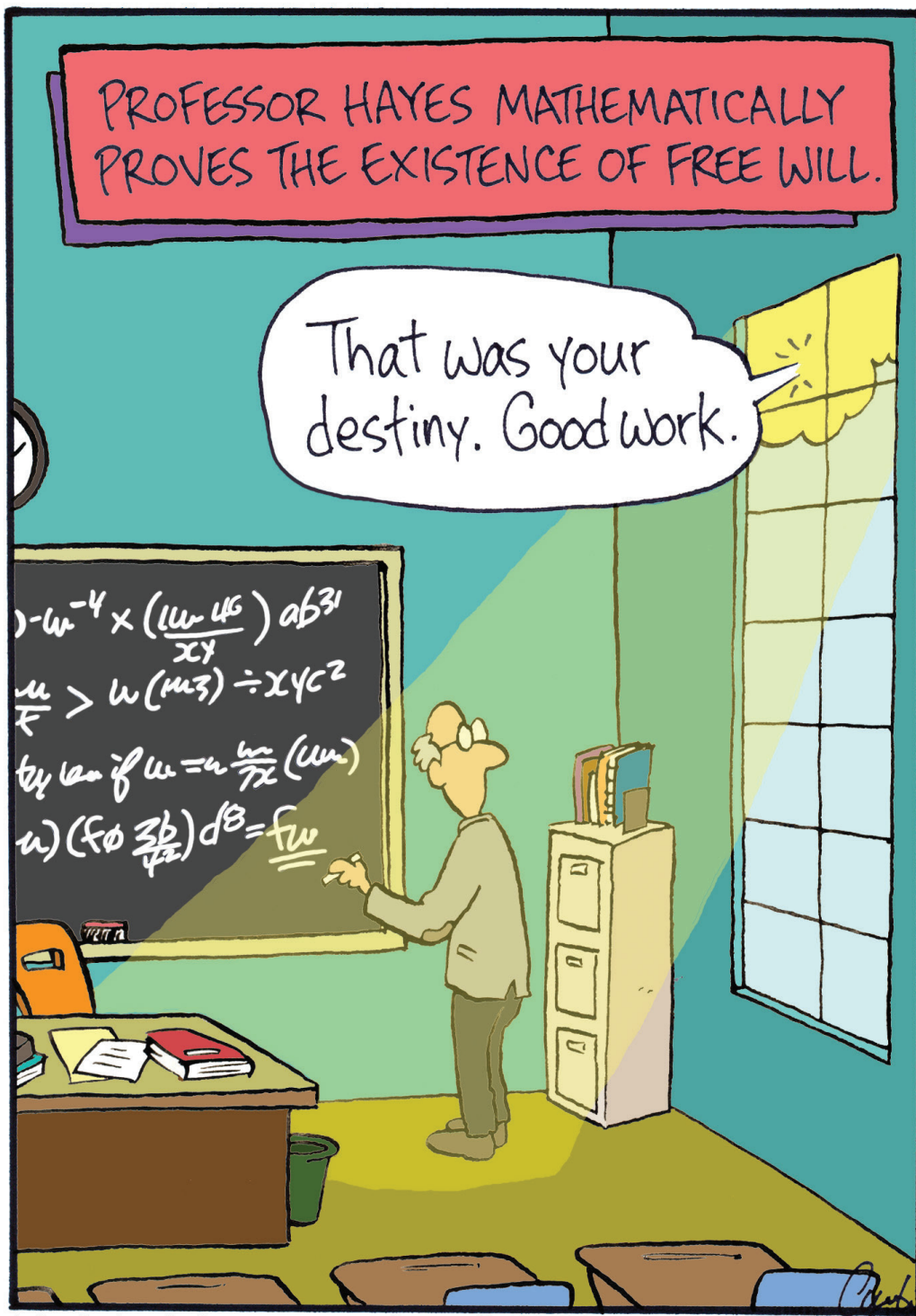
Name: _____

Circle one . . .

Doing my hair takes: a long time no effort whatsoever
I like movies that: make me laugh make me scared
Texting is: dumb hold on, while I finish this text
Speeding on the highway is: dangerous no big deal
Ice cream should always: be simple vanilla have lots of toppings



GOOD WORK



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FILM CONNECTIONS

Star Trek

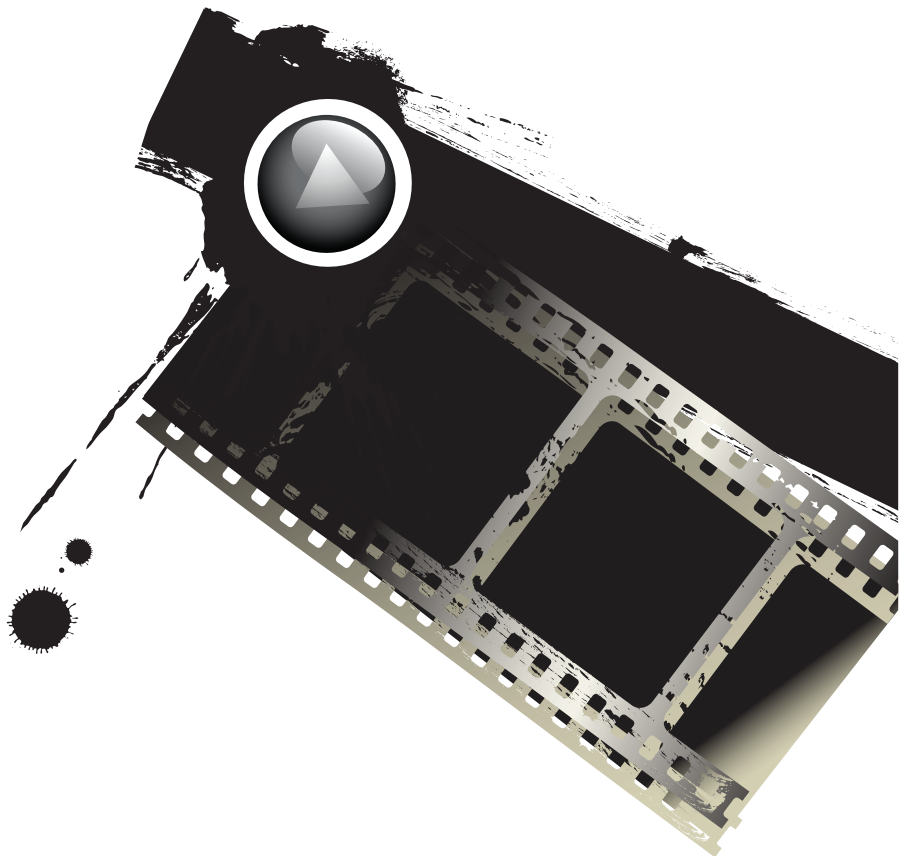
While you watch the movie . . .

- Watch especially for scenes that mention *destiny*.
- Pay attention to whether the characters seem to believe in free will or believe that all choices were determined.

After watching the movie . . .

Read Romans 8:28 and explore the following questions about predestination.

- What might Spock say about that verse?
- The movie claims that Kirk and Spock have a destiny, but did they have any control over it?
- Do you believe you have a destiny? Why or why not?
- Do you have any control over your destiny?
- Does God know your destiny?
- Do you believe God has a purpose for you? Why or why not? Do you know what it is, or are you trying to figure it out?
- What does Romans 8:28 say about purpose and predestination?





IN GOD'S HANDS

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

He's got the whole world in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands.

He's got my brothers and my sisters in His hands,
He's got my brothers and my sisters in His hands,
He's got my brothers and my sisters in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands.

He's got the sun and the rain in His hands,
He's got the moon and the stars in His hands,
He's got the wind and the clouds in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands.

He's got the rivers and the mountains in His hands,
He's got the oceans and the seas in His hands,
He's got you and he's got me in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands.

He's got everybody here in His hands,
He's got everybody there in His hands,
He's got everybody everywhere in His hands,
He's got the whole world in His hands.





RANDOM ACTS



God's grace is so amazing!

amazing

The best response to God's blessings in my life is to share kindness with others. If you agree, do something nice and pass this card onto someone who needs a random act of kindness!

kindness

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kindness

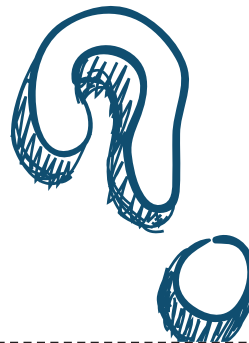


DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What Bible passages do you consider important to the Reformed tradition? Why are these passages important?



Why do we call Presbyterian and related churches *Reformed*?



Why are Lutheran and some other Protestant churches not called *Reformed*, if they came out of the Protestant Reformation?



How has the Reformed tradition changed over the centuries?



What is different between the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and other Reformed churches in the rest of the world?



What aspects of our congregation's life come from before the Reformation? What do we do or believe that comes from the more modern parts of the Reformed tradition?



What aspects of our congregation's life come from outside the Reformed tradition?



Why are you a Presbyterian?

