



FAMILY CONNECTIONS

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

Session 1

- Have you ever said you were sorry when you didn't mean it? How did you know you weren't sorry? Did other people know?
- How do we show people we are sorry?
- How do we show God we are sorry?

Session 2

- Can you remember and share stories about a family member's baptism?
- What do you think baptism means?
- How do you think baptism can help us live our lives as God intended?

Session 3

- What kind of things do you crave?
- Have you ever felt hungry for one thing and tried to fill that hunger with something else? Did it work?
- Have you ever tried to fill a hunger for God with something else? Did that work?
- How can God use our hungers for good things?

Session 4

- Can you share a time when you believed something when all evidence pointed to the opposite being true?
- Do you think faith should be based on facts or feelings or something else? Why?
- How do we show trust in God when we are feeling unsure about faith?

Session 5

- Which do you think is more important: the end or the means to the end?
- When do you think it is OK to compromise?
- On what things would you be unwilling to compromise?
- Why do you think God would allow some things to be difficult?

Session 6

- Do you believe in angels? Why or why not?
- Can you think of an experience you had where you felt that God had taken care of you? Share the story.
- Did you ever consider that there could have been angels at work there?
- What can you do to show God's care for others?



VÄSTERÅS METHOD

Matthew 3:1–12

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’” Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Directions: Read the above passage silently. Use the following symbols to mark insights, ideas, and questions that come to you as you read.



Make a star next to words or phrases that give you new insight.



Draw a smiley face by words or phrases that are good news for you.



Make an exclamation point next to words or phrases that point out a challenge to you.



Draw a question mark by anything that you don’t understand.

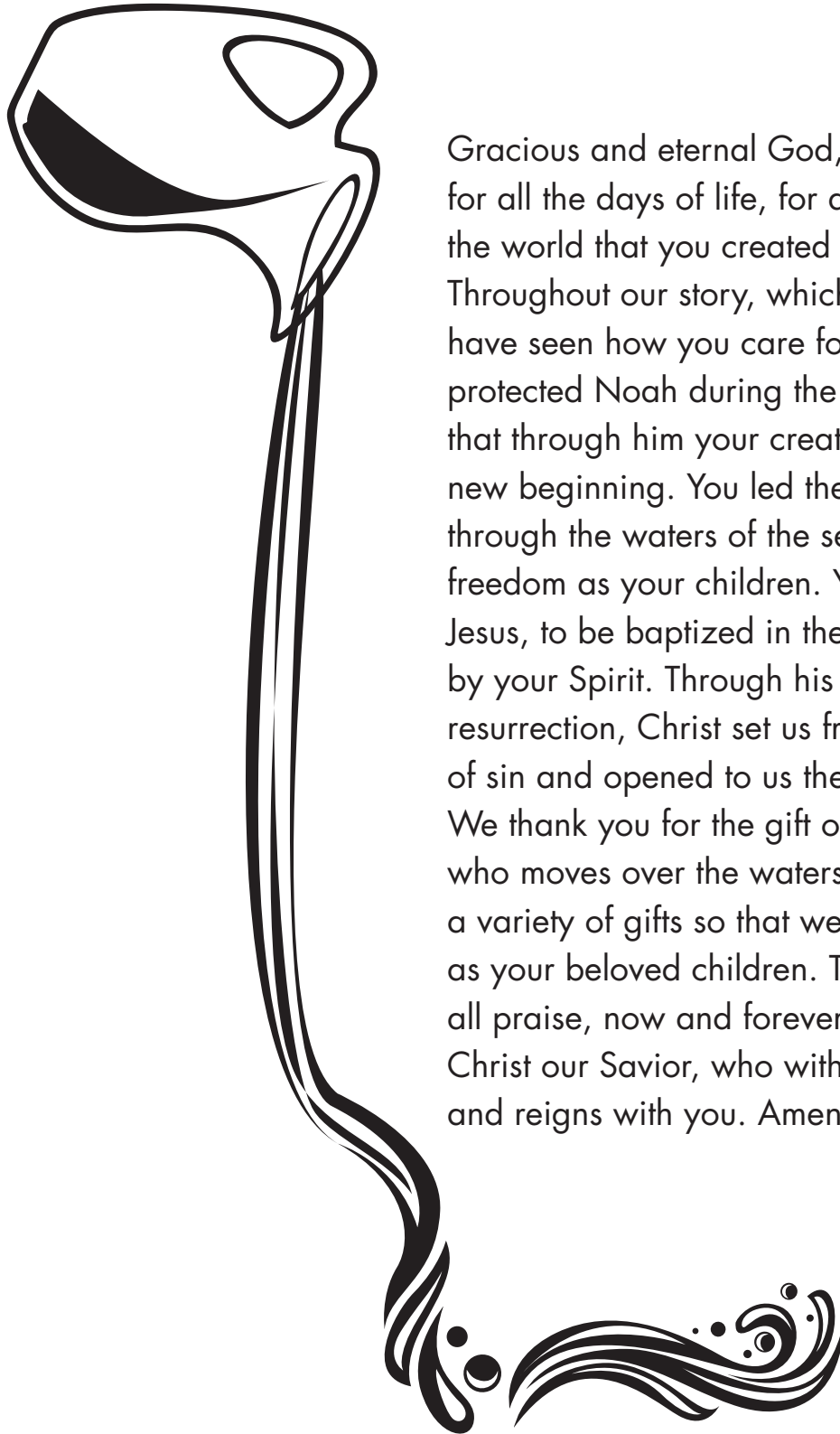


A PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Lord, we know that it is easy to hide our faults from others and to pretend that we are perfect. But we know deep inside that no one is perfect. When we pretend otherwise, we deny ourselves the gift of your community of grace. Help us to be willing to confess together so we can help, encourage, and love one another not in spite of our flaws, but because we have all experienced your love for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



WATER PRAYER



Gracious and eternal God, we give you thanks for all the days of life, for all the seasons, for the world that you created and care for still. Throughout our story, which is your story, we have seen how you care for us. You guided and protected Noah during the time of the flood, that through him your creation would have a new beginning. You led the people of Israel through the waters of the sea, leading them to freedom as your children. You sent your Son, Jesus, to be baptized in the Jordan and anointed by your Spirit. Through his baptism, death, and resurrection, Christ set us free from the shackles of sin and opened to us the way to eternal life. We thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit, who moves over the waters still, filling us with a variety of gifts so that we may live and serve as your beloved children. To you, O God, be all praise, now and forevermore, through Jesus Christ our Savior, who with the Holy Spirit lives and reigns with you. Amen.



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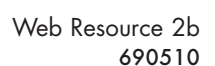
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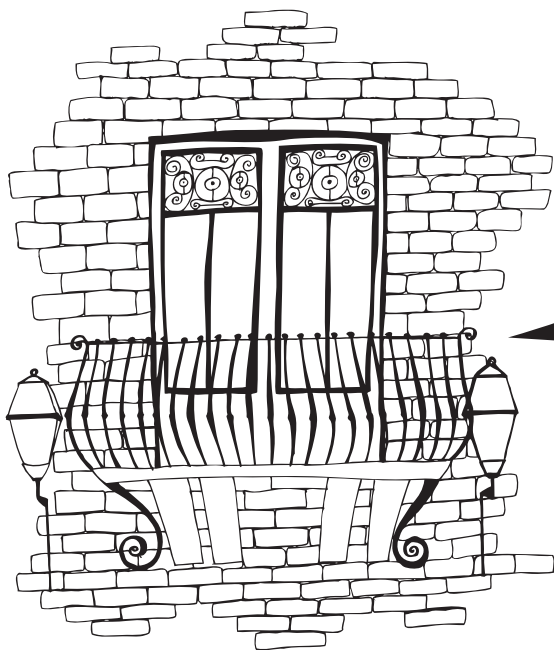
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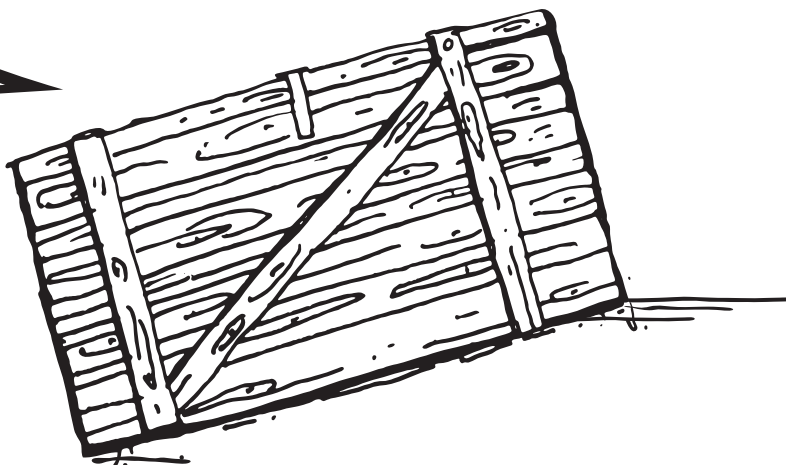


UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS



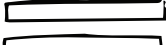
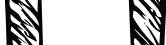
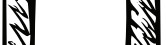
You are special.
You are my child.
I am pleased
with you.
You are loved.
You are worthy.

You are nothing.
You never do
anything right.
You are unlovable.
You are your
mistakes.
You are not
good enough.





SET ME FREE



Lord, when I feel afraid, set me free to

Lord, when I am angry, set me free to

Lord, when I am worried, set me free to

Lord, when I feel lonely, set me free to

Lord, when I feel like I am a failure, set me free to





MATTHEW 4:1–4

MATTHEW 4:1–4 (NRSV)

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

MATTHEW 4:1–4 (THE MESSAGE)

Next Jesus was taken into the wild by the Spirit for the Test. The Devil was ready to give it. Jesus prepared for the Test by fasting forty days and forty nights. That left him, of course, in a state of extreme hunger, which the Devil took advantage of in the first test: "Since you are God's Son, speak the word that will turn these stones into loaves of bread."

Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy: "It takes more than bread to stay alive. It takes a steady stream of words from God's mouth."

MATTHEW 4:1–4 (COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE)

Then the Spirit led Jesus up into the wilderness so that the devil might tempt him. After Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights, he was starving. The tempter came to him and said, "Since you are God's Son, command these stones to become bread."

Jesus replied, "It's written, *People won't live only by bread, but by every word spoken by God.*"



MATT LIB

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He _____
1
_____ nights, and afterwards he was
2
_____. The _____ came and
3 4
said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these
_____ to become _____
5 6
of _____." But he answered, "It is written, 'One
7
does not _____ by _____ alone,
8 9
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"



MANNA MENU





FAITH STATEMENT

Question 9. What comfort do you receive from [the truth of God's love for the world—a love that is ready to suffer for our sakes, yet so strong that nothing will prevail against it]?¹

This powerful and loving God is the one whose promises I may trust in all the circumstances of my life, and to whom I belong in life and in death.

—*Study Catechism: Confirmation Version*

FAiTh



**Psalms
12:6**

The promises of the LORD are promises that are pure, silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.

1. Bracketed text based on *The Study Catechism*, Q. 8.



PRAYER OF CHOICE

When I feel unsure about _____,
I choose to _____.

When I feel unsure about _____,
I choose to _____.

When I feel unsure about _____,
I choose to _____.

When I feel unsure about _____,
I choose to _____.

When I feel unsure about _____,
I choose to _____.



TODAY'S QUESTION

Shouldn't Faith Make Things Easy?

Directions: When told to begin, start writing whatever comes to mind as you reflect on the question. Do not stop writing. Do not go back to correct mistakes or edit. Do not pause. Just keep writing whatever comes to mind.



THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

Question 71. What do you learn from this commandment?

No loyalty comes before my loyalty to God. I should worship and serve only God, expect all good from God alone, and love, fear, and honor God with all my heart.

*—Study Catechism:
Confirmation Version*



Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday





OTHER ANGELIC STORIES

Note: These stories come from books of the Apocrypha. These books are recognized as part of the Deuterocanonical Scriptures by the Roman Catholic, Greek, and Russian Orthodox Church.

Tobit 12:11-15

"I will now declare the whole truth to you and will conceal nothing from you. Already I have declared it to you when I said, 'It is good to conceal the secret of a king, but to reveal with due honor the works of God.' So now when you and Sarah prayed, it was I who brought and read the record of your prayer before the glory of the Lord, and likewise whenever you would bury the dead. And that time when you did not hesitate to get up and leave your dinner to go and bury the dead, I was sent to test you. And at the same time God sent me to heal you and Sarah your daughter-in-law. I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand ready and enter before the glory of the Lord."

Bel and the Dragon 1:31-39

They threw Daniel into the lions' den, and he was there for six days. There were seven lions in the den, and every day they had been given two human bodies and two sheep; but now they were given nothing, so that they would devour Daniel.

Now the prophet Habakkuk was in Judea; he had made a stew and had broken bread into a bowl, and was going into the field to take it to the reapers. But the angel of the Lord said to Habakkuk, "Take the food that you have to Babylon, to Daniel, in the lions' den." Habakkuk said, "Sir, I have never seen Babylon, and I know nothing about the den." Then the angel of the Lord took him by the crown of his head and carried him by his hair; with the speed of the wind he set him down in Babylon, right over the den.

Then Habakkuk shouted, "Daniel, Daniel! Take the food that God has sent you." Daniel said, "You have remembered me, O God, and have not forsaken those who love you." So Daniel got up and ate. And the angel of the Lord returned Habakkuk to his own place.

Prayer of Azariah 1:23-27

Now the king's servants who threw them in kept stoking the furnace with naphtha, pitch, tow, and brushwood. And the flames poured out above the furnace forty-nine cubits, and spread out and burned those Chaldeans who were caught near the furnace. But the angel of the Lord came down into the furnace to be with Azariah and his companions, and drove the fiery flame out of the furnace, and made the furnace as though a moist wind were whistling through it. The fire did not touch them at all and caused them no pain or distress.