



GUIDED BY TRUTH

ENDURING FAITH®
CONFIRMATION JOURNAL



This journal belongs to

and I started my journey on

Acknowledgments

Thanks be to God for the beautiful work He carries out when His people collaborate in ministry and for all the congregations, church workers, volunteers, and peers who have ever shared in that exercise with me as we consider new approaches to teaching the faith. Special thanks are owed to Pete Jurchen for the inspiration to consider the Six Chief Parts through new perspectives in his book *Timeless Truth*; Lindsey Schmidt and Joel Symmank of Woodbury Lutheran for their field-tested approach to using a journal to pass along the faith and their willingness to share their materials and priceless feedback as we adopted a similar approach; and many at Trinity Lutheran in Klein, Texas, particularly John Cordrey, who helped ensure our journal became a reality.

A special thanks to God is owed as well for those He used to pass on the faith to me throughout my life and those who helped me learn what it means to pass on the faith to others, especially Scott Malme and Hal Toenjes, who taught me so much on my vicarage at Pilgrim Lutheran in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and Pastor David Brighton, who guided my confirmation journey at Mount Calvary Lutheran in Warner Robins, Georgia, and encouraged me to pursue God's calling into pastoral ministry.

May God continue to raise up those who share a passion for both learning about and passing on the central teachings of the Christian faith.



**ENDURING
FAITH®**

Copyright © 2023 Concordia Publishing House
3558 S. Jefferson Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63118-3968
1-800-325-3040 • cph.org

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Concordia Publishing House.

Written by Lee Hopf

Scripture quotations are from the ESV Bible® (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Catechism quotations are taken from *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*, copyright © 1986, 2017 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Quotations marked *LSB* are from *Lutheran Service Book*, copyright © 2006 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Quotations from the Lutheran Confessions in this publication are from *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, second edition, copyright © 2006 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Manufactured in Shenzhen, China/033411/340869

Table of Contents

UNIT 1: Starting the Journey2

UNIT 2: Who Am I?.....42

UNIT 3: Who Is God?90

UNIT 4: How Do I Live My Life? 130

UNIT 5: How Do I Interact with God and How Does
God Interact with Me? Part 1 166

UNIT 6: How Do I Interact with God and How Does
God Interact with Me? Part 2.....202

UNIT 7: How Do I Interact with God and How Does
God Interact with Me? Part 3.....232

UNIT 8: Continuing the Journey.....264



Unit 1

Starting the Journey . . .

Imagine going on a hike. This isn't just any hike—it's the most incredible hike you could ever go on.

Imagine passing a river that has some of the toughest rapids in the world, then passing another place that is so calm you can see yourself in the water as you're walking by. Imagine a forest so dense that you can barely see as you walk through, only to later be in another part that is so full of life and light and color that you'll never forget it. Imagine climbing to the top of a mountain and taking in the most beautiful landscapes you have ever seen, only to climb down into a valley and encounter the coolest and deepest caves as you're walking along.

Imagine taking that journey.

Every one of us is on that kind of a journey. It's called life. That journey begins when we're in the womb and will continue until the day that Jesus returns. Sometimes, the journey is thrilling; other times, it seems boring. Sometimes, it seems dark and makes us afraid, while other times, it brings us beauty and meaning beyond what we could have ever imagined.

As we take this journey, we ask ourselves some pretty important questions along the way: What am I supposed to do with the time that I'm given for this journey? Will I make the most of it? Or will I rush through and miss some of the best parts? Will I give up when the journey seems tough? Or will I keep pushing toward the end that we all know is worth it?

You have come to a crucial point in that journey. We call this part of the journey **confirmation**. It's time to grow deeper in this thing you've been given in your Baptism, which is called faith. It's your time. You hear this word *disciple*, and you want it to be a word that describes you. You want to both identify deeply with what it means to be a disciple and own it as part of who you are.

When you come to the end of this leg of the journey, you will publicly confirm both your baptismal faith and your identity as a follower of Christ. And that's no small thing.

This confirmation journal is a tool to help you along the way.



1.1 Getting Ready

As you work through this journal, you'll be exploring this Christian faith that was given to you in your Baptism and also why we believe what we do. Just like any good hiker, you'll need a couple of tools to help you along the way:

Question numbers throughout this journal refer to the 2017 edition of *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*.



- ❑ **God's Word—the Bible.** This is no ordinary book. In its words, we find life, and we find a living and active God. This is the most important tool for the journey! We'd all be lost without it.
- ❑ **Luther's Small Catechism.** Sometimes, it's nice to have a guide. The Small Catechism is a summary of what God's Word teaches us about the faith that was given to us in Baptism. When you need a quick reminder, this book is that helpful guide!
- ❑ **Faith Habits.** Along the way, you'll be exposed to the basic habits we share in the Christian life. These habits will help you foster and grow in the faith that was given to you in your Baptism. Just like hikers know they need water to stay strong for the journey, we know these habits keep us spiritually fit.

Each page in this journal is an opportunity for you to grow in this faith that you are beginning to claim as your own. While each lesson may be brief, try to keep in mind that the goal isn't to finish the journal quickly. **The goal is to learn and explore your faith.** Remember: no journey worth taking should be rushed. Enjoy it!

While you can use this journal by yourself, the journey will be even more enjoyable and meaningful if you share this journey with those God has placed in your life. Now is your opportunity to engage in conversations of faith with your parents, your guardians, and other adult mentors in your life who want you to continue to grow in this faith God has given to you.

Something else to keep in mind: ***every time you open this journal, find an opportunity to pray before you start.*** Seize every one of those opportunities to pray. Ask God to open your eyes and your heart to what He would have you see and learn. Then take your time with what follows.

Really think through what's being asked in this journal, and you will gain a deeper understanding of each piece of this baptismal faith that you are about to explore. **Take the time to write out your thoughts** rather than scribbling down a few words. It will make the journey all the more valuable by the end.

Finally, as you work through this journal, know that this is *your* journal. Use the margins to write any questions, thoughts, or **ahas** that you might have along the way. Talk about your questions with someone at home or at church. Share your ahas! It's exciting when God shows us something we've never thought about before.

As you go on this journey, you'll notice that this journal has been broken down into units for you. At the end of each unit, ask your confirmation leader for the Unit Check-In so that you can share your learning.

This may seem like a lot! But I've got one more piece of advice before you begin your journey: enjoy it. ***It will be worth it.***

Read

HEBREWS 11:1; EPHESIANS 2:8-9; 3:17-19

What do these verses say about faith that you might be able to share with someone who has never heard the term *faith*?

Faith is a gift. Why is it helpful for us to remember that God gives us faith rather than thinking that we somehow earn it or come up with it?

Reflect

What do you think is the most important thing Christians should remember about faith?

As you start your confirmation journey, what questions do you have about the journey ahead of you?

A friend of yours who doesn't go to church with you hears this word for the first time: *confirmation*. They ask you, "Hey, I know you're doing this thing called confirmation. What is that all about?" What would you tell them?

As you begin this confirmation journey, **write a prayer to God in the space below** thanking Him for this opportunity and asking Him to keep your heart and mind open as you continue forward.



1.2 Where to Go?

As you start reading your catechism, you'll see this question often: **“What does this mean?”** As we take these first steps in the journey, let's start with an easy observation: we are Christians. But the question for us as we begin may be one you haven't wrestled with before: What does it mean to be a Christian?

Imagine that you're in an elevator, and someone steps on with you and sees that you're wearing a shirt with the name *Jesus* on it. The person looks at you kind of excited and says, “I've always wanted to meet a Christian, but I've never had the chance. I'm curious: What does it mean to be a Christian?” In the space below, **write how you would answer them.**

A Christian is . . .

Probably the simplest answer we can give goes something like this: a Christian follows Jesus. Another way you might phrase it could be this: a Christian is someone who believes in Jesus Christ as his or her Savior, Redeemer, and Lord. What did you come up with?

Whenever you go on a journey, part of the preparation has to start with this question: Where are we going? When it comes to this journey we call life, many people really don't know the answer to that. They are left asking the question “Where do we go?” or “How do we even begin to know where to go?”

For us, we can provide a little direction to someone who might feel lost. Think about it: where someone goes depends entirely on what (or who) they're following. **For us, as Christians, we know where we're going because we know who we're following. We're following Jesus!** That's why we call ourselves Christians.

Part of this journey will be exploring what this means. What does it mean to follow Jesus? What does it mean to believe in Jesus as my Redeemer and Savior?

That will all come. Until then, let's look at some places in Scripture that help us to see the importance of both following Jesus and believing in Him.

Read

JOHN 5:24 AND ROMANS 10:9

What do these verses tell you about believing in Jesus?

What is the most important point to remember from these verses? Why?

JOHN 8:12

What is the promise that Jesus gives to those who follow Him?

How does this promise connect to the gift of faith and believing in Jesus?

JOHN 6:66–68

NOTES

What reason does Simon Peter give for following Jesus even when many people turned away from Him?

Open your Small Catechism to Questions 1, 4, and 5.

Read through the questions and the verses given. Which of the verses that you read stood out for you the most? Why?



REMEMBER!
When you're asked to look at a "Question" in your Small Catechism, it means to read through the question, answer, Bible verses, and notes!

Reflect

What does following Jesus look like? How would you be able to tell if someone followed Jesus just by watching that person for a day?

How would you define *belief* to a first grader? What does it mean for a Christian to believe in Jesus?

Talk to God the Father for a moment in prayer, asking Him for help as you continue to follow Him. Thank Him for the gift of faith that allows you to believe in His Son. If it helps, **write it in the margin.**



1.3 We Need a Map

If you want to get to where you're headed, you need to know where you're going. Seems obvious, right? We need a map. We might know *who* we're following now, but it only helps if we see where He's going. So how do we find out?

There are plenty of places to go these days if you want to find information. Years ago, we'd head to the library and search through books to find what we needed to know. Today, someone might simply pull out a phone and head to the internet to find an answer. But what about us? And what about our question that we wrestled with last time? We now have a good definition of what a Christian is, but where do we turn to back up our definition?

Where would you go or who would you talk with to back up your definition of what a Christian is? **Write your answer below.**

I would go . . .

You could ask a friend. You could search the internet. You could turn on the television or even post to social media and ask the world for an answer to the question. When we do that, we'll find hundreds (or millions!) of different answers. Everyone will have an opinion.

So where do we turn?

God is pretty smart. He knows that we need something a little more reliable than social media. So He gave us something that is always reliable, will never steer us in the wrong direction, and will always be the place to go whenever we have a question about life, faith, or any number of things. When we want to know the answer to some of life's questions (such as "What is a Christian?"), look no further than the most reliable source for all of those questions: God's Word.

We'll learn more about God's Word as we continue this journey—we'd be hopeless without it! Until then, just remember: when you find yourself forgetting what it means to be a Christian or you feel

like you've lost your way and need a good road map to get you back, turn to the only reliable source to bring you to the right answer. **Turn to God's Word.**

Read

ISAIAH 40:8

Lots of things are temporary, but God's Word isn't. Why is it comforting to know that God's Word remains forever?

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13

What does this verse tell us about what God's Word can do?

How is God's Word different from other sources of information?

Reflect

What questions do you have up to this point in the journey about confirmation? about faith? about God's Word? **Write your questions below or in the margin**, and challenge yourself to **ask a trusted adult these questions** in the next couple of days.

Why is God's Word a better source of information about what it means to be a Christian than people on social media or the internet?

Before you turn to your next lesson, **write down everything you know** about our "road map" that we call the Bible in the space below. Include anything at all!



1.4 So . . . What Is the Bible?

We've already tackled some big questions in this journey together: What is a Christian? Where do we go when we want to learn what a Christian is? You'll find that **this confirmation journey is really an experience in asking some of life's biggest questions and turning to God and His Word for answers we can truly trust.**

As we continue this journey, be sure to **write down other questions you have along the way!** That way, you'll be able to remember them to ask your parents, guardians, leaders, or pastors later.

While we're asking great questions, let's go ahead and tackle another big question. We now know that God's Word is our road map that helps us find answers to some of life's biggest questions, but what is God's Word? **What is this thing we call the Bible?**

Go ahead and **write down some of your thoughts in the space below.** (Feel free to revisit some of your answers from the end of your last lesson too!)

Those thoughts will be a good starting place! Now, it's time to dig in some more.

Consider this question: “What is the Bible?” That can be a big question with a very long answer! So let’s simplify the answer into this definition: **The Bible is a record of what God has done throughout history.**

Go ahead and **rewrite that exact definition** in the space below.

Take your time as you write! **Say each word out loud, and write each word slowly.** Every word is important and has significant meaning.

Think about each phrase in that definition:

- **The Bible**—The Bible is unique. It’s unlike any other book in history. It has many authors and was written over thousands of years. We don’t have other “bibles”—there’s just one thing we’re referring to when we use that word; it’s not a bible among many—it’s *the* Bible.
- **Is a record**—Often, you might hear someone use the word *story* when it comes to what we read in the Bible. What we need to remind one another, however, is that the Bible is a record of **actual events**. These were **real** people and **real** events. The Bible is a very **real** account of **a very real and present God at work in this world**.
- **Of what God has done**—As you read the Bible, what you’ll find is that God is continually at work with His people. God doesn’t stop loving us, and He doesn’t stop showing up in the lives of His people. Ultimately, as the Bible shares with us what God has done, **it’s also showing us what God continues to do in and through His people—even today!**
- **Throughout history**—Think about that word *history*. It’s really a good word when we think about the Bible. As we mentioned above, the Bible is a very real account of what God has done—it’s history; it’s fact. What we can also remember as we think about the Bible as history is that God is ultimately in charge of everything. He’s the author of history.

This means that history is really HIS story—it’s God at work throughout time.

As you continue to engage with the Bible, remember the incredible work that God did through His people to make it possible for you to hold the book we call the Bible in your hands. Also keep in mind what it is as you read it: it’s a record of what God has done throughout history.

Also remember one of the biggest things you learn from the Bible as you read and hear what it says: God isn’t done yet. Yes, it may be a record of what God has done in history, but it also shares with us what God continues to do and will do throughout time—but we’ll get to that.

Reflect

What’s the most important thing for people to know about the Bible?

Why?

What are some of the biggest questions you have about the Bible?

Scenario

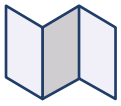
A friend of yours asks you, “I don’t understand why we need the Bible. What do you think?”

How do you answer him or her?

Check out Questions 7 and 9 in your Small Catechism.

Below, **write at least three takeaways** from what you read.

Remember to talk about your journey (that includes your answers to these questions) with your parents/guardians!



1.5 The Basic Map

Before you get buried in the details, it's nice to have a good overview of the journey you're about to go on. It helps to see the basic outline of the map to help you put everything in perspective. If you're taking a road trip to Kentucky, it'd be nice to know what states you're headed through before you start talking about which gas stations you'll stop at along the way. Otherwise, you'll get lost before you get going.

The same is true for the Bible. It's helpful to see the big, overarching picture before we get swallowed up in the details and miss the point.

What's helpful to remember about the Bible is that as it shares with us where we've been and where we're going, it's ultimately reminding us that we're a part of something so much bigger than we could even imagine. One big journey of God with His people. One grand narrative of where we've been and where we will be.

Now, every good story, every good joke, every decent movie, every good paper you write for a class has three main parts: **a beginning, a middle, and an end**. Eliminate one of those three parts and you've got a pretty quick story (with no middle), a confusing one from the start (with no beginning), or an incomplete one (with no end). When it comes to the bigger picture of the Bible, the same principle applies.

So when we take a look into the Bible—a record of history—we're talking about the beginning, middle, and end of the history of all creation. Sounds pretty daunting, doesn't it? How can we even begin to wrap our minds around that?

Here's the awesome thing: God has already shown us the beginning, middle, and end of this awesome thing we started to explore in our last lesson: the Bible. That's right! The Bible lays out for us where everything started, how it continued, and where it will end up.

This picture will help remind you how simple the big picture of God's master plan really is.



So where do you think it all starts? The beginning, of course! The very first verse of the Bible says, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Pretty simple, right? In the “Beginning” column above, **draw the earth from God’s perspective** after He created all things. Start by drawing a circle and then fill in the earth with the continents and oceans.

Now reflect on what it must have been like to be there on that day. It was perfect. In fact, do you remember the words used in Genesis to describe the world after God created it? **Take a look at Genesis 1:31 and fill in the following:** “God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was _____.” (Keep your Bible open!)

So what happened after creation? If you aren’t as familiar with what we refer to as “the fall,” go ahead and brush up on it by reading Genesis 3. **Make some notes in the space below** about what we refer to when we say “the fall”:

Sin entered into this world because of the temptation of Adam and Eve. God’s perfect creation had fallen in the sense that it was no longer perfect because of sin’s presence in the world. But God made a promise!

In Genesis 3:15, God promised that He would send an answer to the problem of sin in the world. That verse assured God’s people

that one day, God would send someone who would be an answer to sin and who would bring about the restoration of His creation. That's when we come to the middle of God's big picture of history.

For the middle section, we can label this "Jesus." Jesus was God's answer to the problem of sin in this world. Jesus is the one who would restore the world to the way God had designed it. In the "Middle" column of your diagram, **draw what comes to mind when you think of Jesus**. Maybe you'll draw a cross or an empty tomb. Maybe you'll draw Jesus doing one of His miracles. Whatever it is, use the space to illustrate this middle point of the big picture of what God is doing and has done in this world.

Now reflect on what you know about Jesus and what He did. **Write some thoughts below.**

You might be saying to yourself, "Wait a minute! If Jesus came to restore things to the way God designed them, then why is there still sin and brokenness in this world?" Exactly! If we cut the big picture short with the life and ministry of Jesus, it's like telling a story without the ending. When we think to ourselves, "Wait! This doesn't seem finished!" we're right on track.

There's more to the picture.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, He reminds His followers that there is a day coming that is pretty important. Some refer to it as "Judgment Day" because it's the day when Jesus will return in glory to "judge the living and the dead," as we say in the Apostles' Creed. As Christians, we refer to it in plenty of ways! Some of our favorites are "the Day of Resurrection" or "the Day when Christ returns." The Book of Revelation in the Bible paints an interesting picture of that day as an ultimate final battle between God and His enemies: sin, death, and the devil.

While many see that day as one to be afraid of, as Christians, we can look at that day with joy and hope in our hearts! That day is the day when Jesus will **restore all things** to the way they were meant to be once and for all. The fire that is mentioned in Revelation is one

that is meant to purify and clean, much like you clean a stick in the fire when you've been roasting marshmallows. It's all about bringing the restoration that God promised from the very beginning.

What words or thoughts come to mind when you think about the day when Jesus will return? **Write them in the space below.**

In the "End" column of your drawing, **draw the earth again** like you did in the first drawing— go ahead and draw your circle, draw the continents, and fill in the oceans. Now **draw a cleansing fire or a burst** (like you see on packages that say "NEW!") **around the earth** to show the restoration and cleansing that God will do to restore all things to how they once were.

That's the BIG PICTURE we get when we read God's Word.

It's as simple as remembering the beginning, the middle, and the end. Leave one out, and things get a little confusing. Bring them all together, and you've got **a great perspective to see what God has done, is doing, and will do in the future!**

Reflect

NOTES

How might knowing the bigger perspective of the beginning, middle, and end help someone to make more sense of the world around us?

What advice would you give to someone who is afraid of the day when Jesus will return?

What new things did you learn from this lesson?