5-1994

Faith Decisions: Christian Initiation for Children of the Glenwood Church of Christ

Tommy W. King

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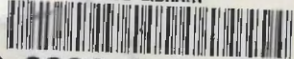
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FAITH DECISIONS:
CHRISTIAN INITIATION FOR CHILDREN
OF THE
GLENWOOD CHURCH OF CHRIST

by
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CHRISTIAN INITIATION FOR CHILDREN

OF THE

GLENWOOD CHURCH OF CHRIST

An Abstract of a Project/Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Tommy W. King

May 1994

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to produce a program of instruction and events

that will facilitate the initiation of children of the Glenwood Church of Christ into

the full fellowship of the church. The project begins by identifying the problem of

an imprecise definition of the status of children within Churches of Christ and how

this uncertainty affects the process of initiating children of the church. The

project continues by avowing the innocence of all children while recognizing a

difference existing between children of the church and those outside the sphere of

the church. The difference is community. Those who are children of the church

live within the boundaries of the community and are nurtured and shaped from

birth to assume their roles as adult members of that community. The model for

their initiation must, by its very nature, differ from the model of initiation for

those who come into the community from outside.

The search for a model for initiation that recognizes the communal status

of children discovers that in the early church there existed the concept of the

catechumenate. Catechumens were community members who had not yet entered

the full fellowship of the community. Ancient catechisms are surveyed to provide

a framework for modern catechetical instruction with the result being the adoption

of a threefold structure of story, ethics, and liturgy. Utilizing this structure, a

curriculum is developed for children of the church in their eighth-grade year (12 - 13 years of age) to be studied together with their parents in a classroom setting. The completed curriculum is then evaluated by two committees: one composed of church members skilled in theology, education and psychology; and the other made up of parents and their adolescent children.

The response of both committees implies that a change in models for initiation of children is desired and can be accepted by the Glenwood Church of Christ. The Faith Decisions curriculum was judged by both committees to be effective in its approach of addressing children of the church within the setting of the community of faith and bringing the story of God's covenant actions to bear on their life situations.

Abstract approved: _____

Primary advisor

_____

Secondary advisor

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Date

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This project/thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Council of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Carley H Dodg
Dean of the Graduate School

June 1, 1999
Date

Project/Thesis Committee

C. Leonard Allen
Primary Advisor

Charles A. Siburt
Secondary Advisor

David Wray
Reader

v

To the children of the
Glenwood Church of Christ
May our gift to you be the heritage of a
loving and nurturing community of faith.

No one could expect more from an advisory committee than the encouragement and help I received from Dr. Charles Siburt and Dr. Leonard Allen. David Wray's involvement went far beyond that of reader, and I thank him for his gracious giving of himself and his time. All of these men have served as my mentors, and I am honored to call them friends.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

To be a child of the church is to live a life of great advantage. Children born to Christian parents learn from birth to call the God of the universe Father, and to recognize his Son Jesus as their loving brother and friend. Woven into the memories of their childhood are the hugs of beloved Bible class teachers, games of tag in the halls of the church after services, the pungent smell of grape juice almost wine passed overhead, and the feeling of belonging at "my" church. Perhaps the most treasured of all memories for those who have grown up in church is the memory of the glorious day of their own baptism. For children of the Churches of Christ, baptism is the principle rite of passage; and as such, it is portrayed as being the most glorious act of one's spiritual life. But in reality, memories of baptism can range from ecstasy to disappointment to confusion. This project/thesis is about baptism. More specifically, it is about how a church that practices believer's baptism can prepare its own children for initiation into the full fellowship of the community. It is an effort to enable churches to bring purpose and intention to one of their most holy tasks.

Ministry Setting

The Glenwood Church of Christ met for worship for the first time in July 1951. The new congregation was planted by the West Erwin Church of Christ in response to crowded conditions in the facilities of the mother church and was strategically located in the rapidly growing southern section of the city of Tyler. In the early years of its history, the church enjoyed a consistent increase in membership and was characterized by a strong, progressive leadership who emphasized a commitment to missions and local evangelism. The Glenwood church also demonstrated a special interest in the development of the young people in its midst. In addition to creating a staff position to direct the education ministry of the congregation, Glenwood initiated one of the area's first Mother's Day Out programs, a licensed pre-school, a foster-care and adoption agency, and a campus ministry at Tyler Junior College.

By the early 1970's the Glenwood church had grown to an average Sunday morning attendance of 700. The members represented diverse social, economic, and theological backgrounds. As the leadership continued to pursue a progressive course for the church, many members left to find congregations that conformed to more traditional Churches of Christ. As a result, the current membership of Glenwood is approximately 580, with an average Sunday morning attendance of 425. This decline in membership left a congregation comprised mainly of professional and white-collar workers. The majority of adult members hold college degrees, with a large number having earned graduate and post-graduate degrees. As would be expected, such a congregation is characterized by thoughtful

Bible study, a concern for meaningful worship, and a theological openness to explore current religious thought and to examine the traditions within the heritage of Churches of Christ. This orientation has had a direct effect on the nurture and initiation of the children of the church.

Over a period of several years, a feeling of confusion and frustration has surfaced among the ministry staff, leadership, and parents as they have attempted to understand how the church's theology of believer's baptism relates to the children of the church. The dynamics of this confusion were noted first in the increasing delay in young people requesting baptism. While most agreed that the baptism of older adolescents was a healthy sign, no real theological basis was generally known to undergird this phenomenon. A more disconcerting realization was that several young people had graduated from high school and left the nurturing fold of the congregation without ever having been baptized. In addition to these observable occurrences was an uneasiness that the church had not fully prepared those who had been baptized. As a response to this situation, in 1987 the church inaugurated a program of instruction for eighth grade students in the church that addressed the meaning of membership and the significance of initiation. Entitled "Faith Decisions," this program was based on Confirmation literature of other religious groups interpreted in the light of the theology of the Churches of Christ. While most agreed that "Faith Decisions" was a welcome addition to the efforts of the church in nurturing its young believers, those involved with the program were aware that the attempt had brought to light the need for an even more carefully planned and theologically sound approach.

Problem and Purpose

The problems encountered in bringing children of believers into the full fellowship of Churches of Christ are rooted in the clash between a poorly developed theology of children and imposition of images of Christian initiation that do not address the spiritual formation of those children. The theology of children among Churches of Christ has basically been limited to an avowal of the innocence of infants and the rejection of infant baptism as an effective rite. The church instructs its children to postpone baptism until an age of accountability, the determination of which is left primarily to the discretion of the parents and children with occasional consultation with church leaders. Such an undefined process has resulted often in confusion and frustration for young people and their families as they face the issue of baptism. They know that the initiatory rite of believers baptism is an issue of first importance and that the resulting theology of baptism has become a major mark of identification for Churches of Christ among the religious world, but there seems to be little direct assistance from the church when this critical time arrives.

Baptism is a principle doctrine for Churches of Christ, but the discussion surrounding it has been limited by two factors characteristic of those churches: (1) a commitment to identifying and meticulously following New Testament patterns in all practices of the church and (2) an agenda shaped by the religious milieu in which the pioneers of the Restoration Movement emerged on the American frontier in the early Nineteenth Century. The American Restoration Movement called for unity on the basis of doctrines that are clearly stated or

illustrated through example in the New Testament. For a movement in search of patterns, the practice of baptism in the early years of the church offered a consistent example. The fact that a New Testament pattern of baptism is clear is recognized by scholarship cutting across denominational lines. Geoffrey Wainwright notes, "On fundamental matters of the Christological, ecclesiological, eschatological and ethical meaning of baptism, there has been widespread agreement among recent New Testament scholars, whatever their denominational allegiance."[1] However, little consideration was given to one aspect of the New Testament pattern: the examples of conversion and the teachings accompanying baptism are found exclusively in the context of adults who are coming into the church from Judaism and paganism.[2] At best, there are only meager indications of how a child of Christian parents was assimilated into the fellowship. Thus, a theology of initiation based solely on New Testament pattern produces a practice applicable to bringing adults (or entire households) from outside the church into the fellowship of the body, but such a pattern presents definite problems for believers' children who are not abandoning a pagan lifestyle, religion, or god.

This problem was not an immediate concern of the leaders of the Restoration Movement in the early nineteenth century. To them, their mission

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[1]Geoffrey Wainwright, *Christian Initiation* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1969), 11.

[2]An exception might be the references to households' being baptized (cf. 16:34), but there is no clear indication that the household included the children. Some point to the concept that children were viewed in the ancient world as non-entities until they approached adulthood; and, thus, an "entire household" would refer only to the adult members of the family, including slaves. There is no definite word on this issue.

had much in common with the mission of the early church as they set out to restore the form and practices of primitive Christianity. They preached their message of believers baptism by immersion to people on the American frontier who had never received baptism or who had been sprinkled as infants, a rite rejected as valid baptism by the new movement. The pattern seemed relevant under such circumstances, and the leaders of the movement gave little consideration to its appropriateness for second-generation restorationists.[3] The result was a doctrine of baptism cast in the mold of radical conversion with a strong emphasis on repentance and regeneration. This model was imposed as the New Testament pattern on the children of believers as well as those entering from outside the church.

This project does not contend that such imagery is unbiblical or that an emphasis on forgiveness of sins, repentance, and regeneration is not meaningful today for someone leaving behind a life of sin and death. It can even be argued that this model is instructive for mature Christians as they reflect back on their baptism and the commitment involved in it. However, a child of the church should find it difficult to experience a radical conversion of New Testament proportions. Initiation implies change, but the change must be from one reality to another. Indeed, the church must confess failure in its nurture of children when all the children entrusted to its care must experience such a radical conversion to

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[3]Some attention to the faith of children was given by both Thomas Campbell and J. W. McGarvey. Thomas Campbell, "Family Education: The Nursery," *Millennial Harbinger*, n.s., 4 (1840): 340-345. J. W. McGarvey, "Religious Duties of Children," *Millennial Harbinger*, n.s., 7 (1843): 536-539.

enter its fellowship. It is ironic that a tradition that so values baptism finds itself without a meaningful statement on baptism for those who comprise its most promising hope for the future.

In proposing an alternative in vision for the initiation of children of a church that practices believers baptism, this project must first seek to state more clearly a theology that addresses the status of the children within the church and that will assist them in claiming their baptism as meaningful initiation. Based on this theological framework, the project will then consider how a church can most effectively prepare its children for initiation into full fellowship. The purpose of the project is to construct a curriculum for younger adolescents in the church that demonstrates an awareness of their heritage of faith and provides a meaningful context for their full incorporation into its fellowship. Brief reflections will be offered on how such an approach might shape the nurture of children from birth to adolescence and how it might inform the instruction of Christians following their baptism.

Survey of Literature

A study of Christian Initiation encompasses a number of theological and historical concerns. Some resources are comprehensive in nature and are recognized as foundational in such a study as this while other resources discuss specific subtopics related to initiation.

General Studies of Initiation

Reginald E. O. White's work, *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*, is a full treatment of the subject of initiation. White traces the concept of initiation from the time of the Old Covenant through the institution of the New Covenant and through the history of the church to the modern church. Particularly helpful are his chapters on "The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation," and "The Biblical Doctrine in the Modern Church," as well as his additional notes at the conclusion of the book. A more recent work that specifically addresses several issues related to this study is *Believers Baptism for Children of the Church* by Marlin Jeschke. Jeschke's first three chapters present an excellent overview of the origin and meaning of baptism and how baptism applies to children of the church. Written from a Mennonite perspective, Jeschke's work is highly adaptable for Churches of Christ. Another standard work on Christian baptism is G. R. Beasley-Murray's *Baptism in the New Testament*. Beasley-Murray, much like White, discusses the history of Christian baptism, but he also devotes much of the book to detailed analysis of major baptismal passages in the New Testament. His final chapter approaches infant baptism from a Baptist perspective and is informative on both the status of children and the effect of baptism. *Made, Not Born: New Perspectives on Christian Initiation and the Catechumenate* is a compilation of papers presented at a symposium sponsored by the Murphy Center for Liturgical Research in 1975. Chapters that will be primary to this study include "Christian Initiation in the New Testament," by Robert M. Grant; "Christian Initiation in the New Testament," by

Reginald H. Fuller; and "Christian Initiation of Adults: The Rites," by Aidan Kavanagh.

From the point of view of the Disciples of Christ comes *Baptism and Belonging,* edited by Keith Watkins. This book presents a collection of liturgies and essays designed to promote understanding of baptism. Of particular interest is the essay "Children and Christian Baptism." In the first two chapters of *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation*, Aidan Kavanagh surveys the history of Christian initiation from the ablutions in Judaism to the initiatory pattern of Hippolytus. Finally, an excellent overview of initiation is offered by Douglas E. Wingeier in his brief treatment of the subject entitled *Confirmation Today, Ten Affirmations*. Wingeier wrote this booklet to assist Methodists in their practice of confirmation, but the questions he raises are relevant to the study of initiation in all traditions.

Children of the Church

Some of the works listed above devote some attention to the issue of the status of children in the church, but the following resources speak directly to that issue. Few writers of the early Restoration Movement considered the status of children. However, in 1840 Thomas Campbell published "Family Education: The Nursery" in the *Millennial Harbinger*. Campbell's article is concerned with religious education for young children, and although he does not present a theology of the status of the child, the implication is that parents (particularly mothers) should be training their children for full membership. In 1864 J. W. McGarvey wrote "The Religious Duties of Children" for the *Harbinger* in which he

presented a brief but fairly well-developed theology of children. From the Baptist

perspective comes a collection of articles edited by Clifford Ingle and titled

Children and Conversion. In the Summer 1983, issue of *Encounter*, Keith Watkins

brought the issue back to the attention of the Disciples in his article "Children in

Worship: A Problem for the Christian Church." Watkins calls for a clarification

of the status of children and a strengthening of both ritual and instruction meant

to lead children to full membership in the church. James Thompson's article "The

Education of Children in the Early Church," published in the *Institute for Christian*

Studies Faculty Bulletin, provides valuable insight into both the status of children in

the church and to the spiritual formation of children. In 1987, Carolyn Mitchell

published an article in *Mission Journal* entitled "Baptism and the Status of

Children in Churches of Christ." Though brief, the article addresses the key issues

that must be faced in developing a theology of children of the church and their

initiation.

Spiritual Formation

This project will also consider how the model of Spiritual Formation

informs the initiation process. Sources that are relevant to the discussion include

Will Our Children Have Faith? and *Bringing Up Children in the Christian Faith* by

John Westerhoff and *Where Faith Begins* by C. Ellis Nelson are seminal studies in

the field of spiritual development. This project will also utilize a set of notes on a

series of lectures on the topic of "Spirituality and Spiritual Development,"

presented in August 1987, by John Westerhoff as a visiting professor at Princeton

Theological Seminary. *Learning Through Liturgy*, co-authored by Gwen Kennedy

Neville and Westerhoff, offers additional insight into Westerhoff's model of spiritual formation. James Fowler's work *Stages of Faith* will be considered although the model presented by Fowler is now viewed as too rigid to describe adequately the journey of faith. *Christian Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom,* by Susanne Johnson, is a key resource in the field of spiritual formation within Christian Education. Johnson proposes that spiritual formation should be the organizing concept for Christian Education, and she structures her book to address the basic questions of educational theory from a formational standpoint.

In *On the Way,* Les Steele looks at Christian formation in story and examines how various sections of the New Testament function in a formative manner. His work analyzes and critiques various psychological theories and probes the role of faith, church and family in the growing of faith. *Theological Approaches to Christian Education,* edited by Jack L. Seymour and Donald E. Miller, offers a philosophy of Christian education that seriously considers the role of theology (or critical thinking) in the education process. Sharon Parks' *The Critical Years: The Young Adult Search for a Faith to Live By* is written from the perspective of developmental psychology. Though it is concerned with young adults of college age, it gives an excellent analysis of the activity of faith and pictures faith development as journey. The number of resources available on spirituality is rapidly growing, and limitations for this study will be difficult to define. Two that offer special promise are *Education for Spiritual Growth* by Iris V. Cully and *Spirituality for Ministry* by Urban T. Holmes.

Children in the Worshiping Community by David Ng and Virginia Thomas contributes to the discussion, particularly the chapters on "The Faith that Calls Children to Worship" and "The Children that Faith Calls to Worship." In "Spiritual Direction: A Model for Adolescent Catechesis," *Religious Education*, Spring 1986, Gary Davis sketches what catechesis would look like if it were informed by spiritual direction rather than standard forms of pedagogy. By way of contrast, Lewis Rambo's article, "Conversion: Toward a Holistic Model of Religious Change," *Pastoral Psychology*, Fall 1989, describes the scope of radical conversion in the life of believers. "The Age of Accountability: Faith Shaping in Early Adolescence" was written by Jerry and Becky Gross to address the age of baptism for children of the church. It also briefly explores the concept of faith development.

Catechisms

In addition to current studies of spiritual formation, this project will examine the historical church's approach to catechism. Two standard studies that give excellent histories of catechesis are Philip Carrington's *The Primitive Christian Catechism: A Study in the Epistles* and M. Dujarier's *A History of the Catechumenate: The First Six Centuries*. Carrington's work traces the form of catechism from Judaism and reveals the catechetical nature of portions of the New Testament epistles. His appendices on Colossians and the Sermon on the Mount will inform this section of the project. Two works by Thomas Finn are relevant to this section of the project: *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate: West and East Syria*, and *The Liturgy of Baptism in the Baptismal*

Teaching of St. John Chrysostom. A Faithful Church: Issues in the History of Catechesis is edited by John Westerhoff and O. C. Edwards, Jr. Of special interest is Edwards' article which presents the history of catechesis "From Jesus to the Apologists," and Westerhoff's essays on "The Present Situation" and "The Future." Ancient sources include the *Didache,* Irenaeus's *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching,* the catechetical material of Cyril of Jerusalem and Chrysostom, and *Apostolic Tradition* by Hippolytus.

<div align="center">Catechesis</div>

Once the framework of a needed catechesis has been determined through the selection of a valid model informed by catechetical material from scripture and the church fathers, attention turns to sources that will assist in developing those particular topics of the catechetical curriculum. Since the project is working within the parameters of Churches of Christ, a foundational source will be *The New Testament Church* by Everett Ferguson. Ferguson gives from the point of view of Churches of Christ a brief discussion of salvation history and the meaning of the liturgy and sacraments of the church. Another resource helpful in all phases of the curriculum is the booklet by Wingeier mentioned in the General Studies above. Of all of John Westerhoff's books, his *Liturgy and Learning Through the Life Cycle*, co-authored with William Willimon, offers the most practical advice in the area of reflective thinking on liturgy as education. Donald Miller's *Story and Context* is an important resource because Miller's concept of education as journey is very close to Westerhoff's model. Miller offers excellent suggestions for sharing the story, learning through worship, and encouraging moral

development. *The Teaching Minister* by Clark M. Williamson and Ronald J. Allen presents the teaching of the church as a living experience in which the learner thinks reflectively on the story, the ministry, and the liturgy of the church. C. P. M. Jones' brief article "Liturgy and Personal Devotion," in *The Study of Spirituality,* offers a needed comparison between corporate and private worship.

Sharing Faith by Thomas Groome devotes a chapter to the art of bringing the Christian story and vision to the learner in a realistic and involving manner. Further understanding of the importance of Christian worship in the initiation process will be sought from *Introduction to Christian Worship* by James F. White, which is a comprehensive analysis of worship and contains an excellent bibliography. The first three volumes within the *Alternative Futures for Worship* series address worship in general, baptism and confirmation, and the Eucharist. Specific help on the subject of baptism will be found in *The Drama of Decision*, a study of baptism as a time of decision, by Oscar Brooks; John Jansen's *The Meaning of Baptism*, a collection of meditations; William Willimon's *Remember Who You Are: Baptism and the Christian Life*; Oscar Cullmann's *Baptism in the New Testament*; and Oscar Brooks' *Drama of Decision*. In the area of ethics and moral behavior, *Helping Teenagers Grow Morally* will prove valuable. Also in the field of ethics, works of Stanley Hauerwas will be consulted. Some very practical help can be found in the confirmation literature of various denominations. *Choice* is a confirmation curriculum by Joseph Moore written for the Roman Catholic Church. It contains many excellent applications and exercises for adolescents who are entering a deeper understanding of their faith. *The Way* is a confirmation

curriculum written for the United Methodist Church by William Willimon. Typical of Willimon's style, the curriculum contains very well written stories and summaries of church doctrine and history. *We Share the Spirit of Life*, by Joann Heinritz, is another Catholic curriculum that emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life; and *Confirming Faith*, by Kieran Sawyer, is also written from the Catholic tradition. Sawyer offers particularly creative exercises for young believers.

<div align="center">Basic Assumptions</div>

First of all, this project assumes the form of believers baptism as practiced in Churches of Christ. Churches of Christ firmly believe in the innocence of childhood, and they reject the necessity and effectiveness of infant baptism. Baptism will be understood as immersion administered on the occasion of a personal confession of faith. Churches of Christ view baptism as a necessary rite for appropriation of the salvation of Christ, and it is the rite of entrance into the full fellowship of the church.

Secondly, the project assumes spiritual development as a process. In recent years, many scholars have recognized that the development of faith and spirituality is not normally the result of a single event or a single teaching strategy but is a lifelong process with recognizable stages. This theory has generated several taxonomies. This project will utilize the terminology of John Westerhoff in describing spiritual development as process.

The third assumption is that adolescence is the age of choice. The church has historically recognized adolescence as the age of choice in appropriating faith

as one's own. Recent studies in developmental psychology confirm that the fundamental crisis faced by adolescents is that of identity formation, a decision that is at the heart of a maturing faith. This project will proceed under the assumption that adolescence is an appropriate age to consider the faith decisions integral to Christian initiation. However, some attention will be given to this field of study as it relates to the status of children in the church and to the development of a curriculum that encourages the continued development of spirituality.

Definitions

In the course of this project Christian initiation will be defined in the terms utilized by R. E. O. White. White defines the doctrine of initiation as the answer to the question: "At what point and by what means does the religious heritage of the race impinge upon and become the personal possession of new individuals in succeeding generations."[4] Since this project is being conducted in the context of Churches of Christ, the answer to the question of point and means is understood to be the baptism of a believing individual. Thus, the study of Christian initiation will focus on the theology, teachings, and practices surrounding the act of baptism.

Another frequently used term in the project is children of the church. This term, along with "child of the church," will be used to describe sons and daughters born to Christian parents and reared in the nurture of the church. Children of the church will be used to apply to the church universal although the theology of the

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[4]Reginald E. O. White, *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 13.

project is primarily concerned with children of the Churches of Christ. Neither term is age specific. Within the project children of the church will at times refer to infants as well as adolescents and adults who were born into Christian families who actively participated in the life of the church.

The third word definied is catechesis. Historically, catechesis referred to the teaching given to candidates for baptism and to those newly baptized. In more recent years, the word has been used both to describe all Christian teaching and, in religious education circles, to describe a particular type of rote learning of church doctrine involving questions and answers. For the purposes of this study, the term catechesis will return to its historical sense of referring to the teaching immediately surrounding one's initiation into the church.

Fourthly, catechumen is defined as one who lives within the protection of the church community but who is just outside its full fellowship. A catechumen is being prepared by the community for baptism.

Liturgy normally refers to the formal worship practices of a church. In this project, liturgy will also refer to the sacramental acts of the community as well as all its congregational acts of worship and service.

Finally, crisis conversion is defined in relation to its contrast with the entrance of children of the church into the full fellowship of the covenant community. In its purest sense, the word crisis denotes any time of decision and would apply in some degree to all conversions. However, in this study the term crisis conversion will refer to the dramatic conversion of one called to faith from a life of unbelief and to drastic change in life resulting from such a conversion.

Limitations

This project is limited to the children of the church, specifically, the children of Christians within Churches of Christ. It will not comment on the status of children born to parents who are not Christian. The project is not intended to describe the conversion of an individual from outside the church but to describe the process of faith development and the personal appropriation of faith within the context of a nurturing church. Therefore, radical conversion will be discussed only as a means of comparison and contrast to the experience of children of the church as they seek to enter the full fellowship of the church.

A second limitation of this project is that it is not intended to produce an exhaustive theology of baptism. As stated in the assumptions, believers baptism as practiced within Churches of Christ will provide the framework for the study. It will be necessary to explore the relationship of believers baptism to children of the church in regard to their status in the church before baptism and the meaning of baptism in the life of such a child.

A final limitation is the intent of the project to produce a curriculum for adolescents that can be taught in a thirteen- to twenty-six-week period. Such a purpose limits the scope of both the project and the curriculum. The curriculum is meant to give meaning to the initiation process for children of the church and will serve only as a component in the process leading to spiritual maturity. The curriculum will provide methods of study only on those subjects directly related to initiation, and the methodologies and strategies presented by the curriculum will be age appropriate for adolescents.

CHAPTER II

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

A Theology of Children

Status of Children in the Church

A study of the initiation for the children of the church begins with a theology of children. Before one can address bringing children of the church into the full fellowship of the church, one must wrestle with the question, "What place in its fellowship does a church practicing believers baptism grant its unbaptized children born to Christian parents and reared in the nurture of the church?" If a church judges infants to be innocents and denies them the rite of baptism until such a time deemed proper for them to avow their own personal faith, where do such unbaptized children fit into the body life of the church? A clear answer to this question is of utmost importance because the answer, whether spoken or tacit, produces far reaching effects. A precise and biblically informed answer to this question provides the opportunity for the church to celebrate its wholeness and to rejoice in the process of bringing its children into its full fellowship. An imprecise definition of the relationship between the church and its children results in a nebulous and confusing process of incorporation and an initiation that fails to address the reality of young lives. It may even result in the children of the church never reaching a level of understanding or acceptance of the challenge of becom-

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ing full, mature members of the body of Christ. The church that has acquired the vocabulary to name the relationship it shares with its children is the church that is able to develop a thoughtful and theologically sound approach to initiating children into full fellowship.

Historic Christianity has proposed two descriptions of the status of children: (1) all children are born bearing the guilt of sin and sharing in the separation between fallen humanity and God; and (2) all children are born innocent of sin and live in relationship with God until they are capable of choosing evil over good -- a choice that all humans eventually make. Augustine is credited with bringing the first position to prominence, and its resulting doctrine of original or inherited sin has dominated Christian thinking since the fourth century. Churches that follow this teaching act consistently with it by baptizing their infants soon after birth. Proponents of the doctrine of innocence and free-will point to Tertullian as evidence that the apostolic church reserved baptism for those who could make a conscious statement of faith and confession of sin. These churches act consistently with their belief by not baptizing infants and granting that decision to the individual when he or she has attained an age of accountability and is capable of requesting baptism. The problem of describing the status of children in the church would seem to rest with those who refuse baptism to their children. However, even those who practice infant baptism (i.e., Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed) do not afford their baptized children full membership in the church. Full membership and admission to the Eucharist await confirmation, a practice developed as an attempt to address just this issue. Thus, all traditions face the

common problem of describing the status of children, baptized or unbaptized, in the church.

Children in the Kingdom

Of the two positions described above, Churches of Christ affirm the second. Since the early days of the American Restoration Movement, Churches of Christ have been united in their belief that children are born into a state of innocence. The churches have also been united in their relative silence concerning what position their children occupy within the church. Children are not considered church members, but a general feeling is shared that they are a part of the church family. D. M. Baille insists that such an ambiguous status is not acceptable: "Christians have to face the alternative whether their children are in the church or are outsiders, whether they are children of God or children of wrath, whether they are Christian children or 'little pagans.'"[1] While the insistence of Baille that precision be brought to the description is well founded, the alternatives he proposes are not valid. The belief that children are born in innocence implies that no children in this world are children of wrath. There are no "little pagans." All children, whether children of Christians or non-believers, are children of God and are, therefore, children of the kingdom.

This line of reasoning finds support in the statement of Jesus recorded in Matthew 19:14: "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." Commenting on this

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[1] D. M. Baille, *The Theology of the Sacraments*, quoted in G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 371.

passage, James Thompson states, "Jesus' words, 'For to such belongs the kingdom,' refer not to childlike disciples, but to children. Whereas children were not officially counted in the synagogue until the *bar mitzvah,* Jesus gives them a place in his kingdom. In the same way that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor and the helpless (Luke 6:20), it belongs to the children."[2]

To describe all children as citizens of the kingdom of heaven has biblical precedent but is rarely mentioned in Churches of Christ. The reluctance to assign kingdom status to children could lie in a tendency to identify the kingdom with the church. If the church is synonymous with the kingdom, then all members of the kingdom would be members of the church as well. Such a view limits the boundaries of the kingdom of God. Rather than simply stating that the church is the kingdom, it is more accurate to describe the church as existing within the kingdom of God. Certainly the kingdom is larger than the earthly church. The boundaries of the kingdom encompass the heavenly beings known as angels, cherubim, and seraphim as well as the great cloud of witnesses who have gone before (Heb. 12). The boundaries of the kingdom also encompass the church, which is composed of those who are justified, cleansed from sins, participators in Christ and the Spirit. The boundaries of the kingdom encompass children.

Therefore, Christians and children have much in common to celebrate as well as some differences to note. There is beauty and freedom to be found in recognizing each other as kingdom residents, and the purity of children enables

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[2]James Thompson, "The Education of Children in the Early Church," *Institute for Christian Studies: Faculty Bulletin* 4 (November 1983): 17.

them to model many behaviors of the kingdom that adult Christians tend to discard with age. However, the fallen but forgiven nature of adults provides them with the wisdom to know that the children will someday find righteousness no longer through their own innocence but only through the blood of Christ. A part of the calling of Christians is to prepare their children for that time.

The Problem of Initiation

This last realization returns us to our problem. If children are fellow members of God's kingdom yet destined to retain that status only through the redeeming work of Christ in the church, how is that transition made? How do children move from innocence to redemption? Must they first leave the kingdom and endure a period of "lostness" in order to re-enter the kingdom as members of the body of Christ, the church? The model of crisis conversion, which is the model most available to Churches of Christ, would suggest an affirmative answer. Such a model of conversion requires that a time be determined when the church ceases to tell its children that their relationship with God is strong and secure and warns them that they are in danger of the fires of hell. Children who have felt so much a part of the community now discover that they stand outside that community. The determination of this period in a young person's life (commonly referred to as the age of accountability) has been the subject of numerous studies. The age of accountability is crucial if church bears the responsibility of creating an awareness of crisis at that age so that its children may meet that crisis in conversion.

In one form or another, the practice of initiation for children in Churches of Christ has followed this process: (1) an age of innocence; (2) upon reaching the age of accountability, an awareness of crisis; (3) the resolution of that crisis in baptism and full church membership. The first stage of this process has been discussed above and has not proven to be problematic other than in the church's failure to celebrate fully the kingdom status of its children. The second and third stages have produced problems. For some young people, a real point of crisis does indeed arise in their lives. No one can deny that some children of the church rebel against family and church and reject both faith and the lifestyle inspired by faith. At times, the cause of such rebellion can be attributed to failure within the family or the church, but often rebellion seems to arise from the mystery of the human will. For these young people, hope lies in recognizing their crisis and seeking to return to the people of God through repentance and baptism. But the mission of the Christian family and the church is to nurture faith in its children. What happens when the family and the church succeed in their task? What happens when a child of the church never feels a loss of continuity with the people of God? Is the only alternative to educate them about their peril so that the model of crisis conversion will function properly, or are there other models of initiation that can address the reality of their lives?

Children in the Community of Israel

In his book *Believers Baptism for Children of the Church*, Marlin Jeschke suggests that there is indeed a second model of conversion that is much more

appropriate for the church's children.[3] It is the pattern of nurture in Christian principles from childhood, nurture in the "discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4), nurture within a community of faith. Jeschke points out that this pattern is evident in both the Old and the New Testaments even though the New Testament gives many more examples of dramatic crisis conversion. The dominance of the crisis pattern can be attributed to the situation in which the gospel was first preached. With the apostles, particularly Paul, who was ever reaching into new mission fields, the majority of conversions recorded in scripture would involve a change from unbelief to belief and often from overt paganism to Christianity. With the scope of the New Testament writings being only the first generation of the church, it is not surprising that the status of children born into Christian families and the process of their initiation into the church receives less attention. The few references that apply to those who are reared within the community of faith must be carefully weighed.

Jeschke compares the situation of children of the church to that of the children of the nation of Israel.[4] At one point, God found it necessary to deliver Israel from the bondage of Egypt. Leading them from slavery, God created a covenant community and brought them safely to the Promised Land. The descendants of those who experienced this dramatic deliverance were expected to be nurtured in the understanding of all that God had done in blessing his people.

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[3]Marlin Jeschke, *Believers Baptism for Children of the Church* (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1983).

[4]Ibid., 67.

In Deuteronomy, God admonishes Israel, "Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise" (Deut. 6:6,7). These children learned of God's grace, and they were encouraged to understand from the beginning of their lives that they were blessed. Israel was commissioned to teach her children that their lives depended on the mercy of God. However, the children "did not need to return to bitter Egyptian bondage in each generation in order to make their own difficult crossing through the Red Sea and the Jordan. Later generations had the privilege of growing up under the blessings of covenant life in the land."[5] Jeschke emphasizes his point in stating,

> The difference is not accidental. The situation of subsequent gener-
> ations was *intended* to be different. It was not God's will that each
> generation grow up in bondage. The purpose of the original deliver-
> ance under Moses was to create a new kind of human society where
> people could grow up in a redeemed community, the kind of com-
> munity God intended already in the creation.[6]

Such a concept does not suggest that later generations had no responsibility to the covenant. It was understood that there would come a time in the life of each Israelite when he or she would personally appropriate the meaning of the covenant and assume responsibilities within the covenant community.

In one sense, the children of the Jewish community were born into the covenant; in another sense they were initiated into the covenant community

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[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid.

through the circumcision of the male children at the age of eight days.[7] There is no biblical evidence of any other ceremony involved in bringing a young person into the full fellowship of the community. Personal acceptance of covenant responsibilities appears to have been a process of maturation and participation within the community. Roy Honeycutt recognizes three elements contributing to this process. Each generation renewed its commitment to the covenant (1) by participating in group ceremonies that told the stories of the creation, the exodus, and the giving of the law, (2) by displaying character consistent with the demands of covenantal relationship with God, and (3) by sharing in the worship of the family.[8] As the child matured, he or she accepted a more adult role in the community. Boys grew to become husbands and fathers and became the spiritual leaders of their families. Girls left the covenantal relationship of their fathers and continued in the covenant as wives and mothers. No single rite signified the completion of this process. On the contrary, it was the rejection of the covenant that required action, and this procedure was considered to be a great dishonor to the community and to the family.

Later Judaism did develop a rite to mark the transition from a child of the covenant to an adult of the covenant. The ceremony of *bar mitzvah* (and, even later, a parallel ceremony for girls) granted this status in the community.

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[7]Under the old covenant only the male children were ritually identified with the covenant through the male rite of circumcision. Females were members of the community through their relationship with a male, either as daughter or wife.

[8]Roy L. Honeycutt, Jr., "The Child Within the Old Testament Community," in *Children and Conversion*, ed. Clifford Ingle (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1966), 25.

Becoming a "son of the covenant" (*bar mitzvah*) was reserved for the age of puberty and followed gradual, intentional preparation that began as early as five years of age.[9] It was a communal process -- the community opening itself, giving of itself, and establishing accountibility as its young members matured to take their places beside their elders. Personal faith was not inherited, but the blessing of being reared within the covenant community was, and the end result of that blessing was faith.

Children in the Community of Christ

The old covenant is not the new covenant. There are definite differences, some of which have been emphasized to the point of obscuring the similarities. The latter prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel both spoke of a coming age when God would deal with humanity on a more individualistic basis. Jeremiah told his people that one day "everyone shall die for his own sin; each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth will be on edge" (Jer. 31:30). This stands in contrast with such communal punishment as is evident in the story of Achan (Josh. 7). God's new covenant would bear similarities to the old, but "its individualistic nature is such as to underscore that God will deal with a man on the basis of his own relationship with God and the covenant written 'upon their hearts'" (Jer. 31:33).[10] The preaching of the apostles bears out this appeal to individuals: "Everyone who believes will be saved" (Acts 13:39). Yet the new covenant also created a

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[9]Thompson, 17.

[10]Honeycutt, 29.

community. Under the new covenant, people of all races and nations are called as individuals to community, and the community itself becomes a force in shaping the lives of those who comprise it. This shaping is particularly true for those children privileged to be born physically into its realm.

If the model of the covenant community of Israel has any bearing on the new covenant community, then an emendation must be made to the discussion of children within the kingdom. As was stated above, all children are citizens of the kingdom, but not all children are privileged to be associated with the redeemed community of the church. This is comparable to the situation under the old covenant where the children within the nation of Israel had special status, even before they came of age and assumed full responsibility in their covenant relation-ship. Even though God was concerned with the welfare of all the children of the world (cf. Jon. 4:11), the children of his people were especially blessed. Paul acknowledged this privilege in Romans 3:1,2. Does this imply that the status of children of the church can be distinguished from innocents outside the church? Paul indicates that this is the case in his discussion of the Corinthian families in which one spouse was not a believer. In imagery that parallels the situation of the Old Covenant, Paul comments, "For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy" (I Cor. 7:14). Some scholars have argued that Paul's language indicates that the children of Christians are already full members of the community of faith. For example, Oscar Cullmann boldly declares, "The child of such a marriage of baptized parents

belongs automatically to the Body of Christ purely by reason of its birth. . ."[11]

Others are quick to point out that there is a difference between holiness and sanctification. While holiness does indicate special status, it does not preclude the necessity of baptism.[12] Children are holy in the same way as the unbelieving spouse is holy. Both live in the sphere of the covenant community, but both remain candidates for baptism to acquire the full blessing of adults in the community. Jeschke adds the weight of Christian history to the argument when he notes that the option of not baptizing children of the church has never been seriously entertained.

> To require baptism of descendants of Christians has been the almost unanimous impulse and normative practice of all branches of the Christian church throughout history. . . .This impulse has a sound basis, for there is a common denominator of meaning in the baptism of an adult convert from paganism and of someone nurtured within the church. In both instances, baptism calls for the appropriation of faith.[13]

Thus the church is called to initiate through baptism children who initially carry the status of being in the kingdom and who have the distinction of being holy yet who must seek to affirm their own commitment to the covenant God has made with the community through the gift of his Son. Baptism is an act of the new covenant. The community of the new covenant can learn from the community of

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[11]Oscar Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), 44.

[12]Reginald E. O. White, *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 362.

[13]Jeschke, 71.

the old covenant the concept of nurturing the development of their children into full, responsible members of the community.

Children as Catechumens

By contrasting children of the church as holy as opposed to children outside the church as unclean, Paul has indicated that children of the church have the distinction of already being dedicated to God in some manner. Unfortunately, the language of the New Testament does not go further in describing the status of children of the church. In the search for a term to facilitate the church's understanding of its relationship with its children, a careful examination of the writings of the early church in the years following the close of the canonical writings is helpful. If a term is to be selected to describe the status of children of the church, that term must include the awareness that the children are being nurtured in their faith by the covenant community, that they are not unbelievers but young believers,[14] and that they carry with them the status of being holy. As children of the church they participate in the worship of the church, and they are the objects of the church's attention in prayer and ministry. Indeed, the early church did have a term that described just such a relationship with the community. Within the confines of the church was a group who lived within the sphere of the community but just outside its full fellowship. They were the catechumens. Beasely-Murray is correct in noting that the children of the church "are in a position peculiarly

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[14]The concept of children as believers is also a concern in the interpretation of Titus 1:6. While the exact meaning of the phrase "believing children" is open to interpretation, it presents the possibility of acknowledging the faith of young children.

comparable to that of the catechumen."[15] In fact, in describing the catechumens in the time of Cyril of Jerusalem, Edwin Gifford states, "Such persons were either converts from Paganism and Judaism, or children of Christian parents whose Baptism had been deferred."[16] The catechumens were a recognized group of learners among the church. They were admitted to all services of the church except the Eucharist and were the subjects of intense training leading up to baptism. According to *Apostolic Tradition*, when someone was accepted into the class of learners, or catechumens, that person was considered a convert and regarded no longer as a pagan but as an incipient Christian.[17] Beasely-Murray celebrates the analogy of children of the church with the catechumens:

> Admittedly there is a difference between catechumens of mature years, undergoing instruction for a defined period at their own request, and young children, whose preparation for the Church commences even before birth in the prayers of the parents, and whose nurture for the glory of God begins long before they can appreciate what they receive. Nevertheless, where Christian parent-hood is regarded as a vocation from God, the blessing of God is not withheld, and often the prayers are wonderfully answered in lives guided unto Him. But it must be stressed that in this circumstance the catechumenate does not begin with baptism but has baptism as its goal, and with it the full entry on to the rich inheritance of the Church's fellowship. A restoration of the catechumenate for their children would prove of inestimable blessing to the Churches and would do more than anything else yet suggested for the restoration

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[15]Beasley-Murray, 373.

[16]Phillip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), vol. 7, *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril*, by Edwin Hamilton Gifford, xiii.

[17]*Apostolic Tradition* 16, quoted in Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1978), 55.

of baptism and Church membership to their original dignity and glory.[18]

To recognize the children of the church as catechumens, learners, incipient Christians, or Christians in process would deliver both parent and child from the duplicity of crisis conversion. As catechumens, the children would be recognized as the believers they are. Faith can be affirmed, celebrated and nurtured. The wholeness of the people of God can be realized. The day when the child's faith is appropriated and owned in baptism can be eagerly anticipated as a day of fulfillment rather than crisis, a day recognizing the saving process of conversion that *is* the life of community.

Initiation of Catechumens: A Model for Community

The church that grants the status of catechumen to its children presents the rite of baptism to them not in the context of crisis but in the context of fulfillment and maturity. The conversation between the church and catechumen includes discussions about growing up in faith and becoming adult in the church. When children are young, the church speaks simply, but as children grow older, they are admitted into more adult conversation. They hear of the problem of sin in the lives of the faithful. They discover that even those who intensely love God fail him and that their lives are incomplete without the abiding presence of his mercy.[19] Catechumens know that the need for this kind of abiding grace is

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[18]Beasley-Murray, 373.

[19]The church must strive to communicate to its youth definitions of "sin" and "salvation" that are more comprehensive than the common understanding of these words. Admittedly, fully exploring these teachings is an adult activity. To some

confessed before the community and the gift of wholeness of life (salvation) is

claimed in baptism. Children learn about the covenant and hear the words of

Jesus, "This is the blood of the covenant which is poured out for many" (Mark

14:24). They know that covenant members must come into contact with the blood

that initiated the covenant. Children of the church hear the adults of the church

talk about the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians, and they are

told that the Holy Spirit is the gift of God in baptism. Children hear of the

blessing of the Eucharist and how the presence of Christ is made visible in the

lives of the disciples through partaking in the Supper. They know that only those

who have been baptized are called to the table. In other words, catechumens

enjoy the life of the community as children, but they are made aware of the

greater blessings of life as adults in the church. Their desire for such blessings is

the result of their formation (or conversion)[20] for these are blessings sensible and

desirable only to those who have acquired the characteristics of the community of

faith, to those who believe in the Story and in the God of the Story. Just as an

adolescent anticipates the privileges and responsibilities of an adult in the social

and political culture, a child of the church learns the privileges and responsibilities

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degree, however, children should become aware of sin as being more than misdeeds, small and large, and salvation as being more than rescue from danger. Adolescents approaching baptism can relate to the concept of sin as the brokeness and inadequacy of humanity and to salvation as fullness and completion of life.

[20]The basic meaning of conversion is change. The change involved in conversion can be change from a pagan adult to a Christian adult, or it can be the formational change of an infant in the kingdom to a young person shaped by the church. This study uses the term crisis conversion to indicate a dramatic change over a short period of time and the term conversion to indicate the process that readies one for initiation into the church whether that change be sudden or years in development.

of maturity in the covenant community. An adult Christian is what the child is in the process of becoming.

In this context, the decision to enter the full fellowship of the church through the act of baptism is not a decision that awaits an emotional crisis but is an event eagerly anticipated years in advance. (This is not the situation of one who comes to Christ in crisis.) Since the decision is a result of an ongoing conversation between church and catechumen within the realm of community, the process of deciding can be trusted to the church as well as the individual. To ask some within the community, "Do you think I am ready for baptism," becomes a valid inquiry for a catechumen whose faith is acknowledged and who has been nurtured in an atmosphere of belonging. For the church to have the conviction to answer "No" as well as "Yes" to that question would show that the church has accepted its role of nurturing and has accepted the act of baptism as the communal event it is. The conferring of full membership by the church becomes as much an action of the church as an individual decision, and it is an occasion that is hopefully even more meaningful than the rites of passage experienced in culture.

One might wish to describe the model of initiation being presented here as a developmental model. In essence that would be true as it presents conversion and entrance into the church as a process occurring in stages or phases over a period of time. However, the word developmental, through its use in psychological and religious studies, now implies that these stages can be delineated and analyzed as separate units. The concern of this study is not to identify stages

but to recognize the elements of nurturing that a covenant community of God utilizes to encourage maturation of its young. The process of becoming Christian is a process of development, but it is development in context of a covenant community. It does not necessarily follow a distinct route in that development. Perhaps it would be wise to follow the lead of Susanne Johnson, who prefers the use of the more biblical terminology of formation and transformation, indicating that the process is up and down, back and forth, and sometimes static.[21] The analogy of a journey is appropriate in describing Johnson's model, or it can be described as a process of sanctification. Perhaps the greatest truth of this model is that it forces the church to admit that the one act of baptism does not make one a Christian -- at least in the fullest sense of being Christian. The goal for the community is not to baptize its children but for the baptism of its children to be a meaningful and progressive act in their continuity with the covenant.

Becoming Christian is a lifelong process.[22] For those outside the sphere of the church, that process can begin with initiation into the church. Such an initiation is a dramatic change of culture, behavior, and world view. But for those within the sphere of the church (e.g., children of the church), the process of becoming Christian begins at physical birth in the community, with initiation into the full fellowship coming later in the process. Such an initiation is a change, a progression; but it is not the beginning nor the end. The imagery used to bring

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[21]Susanne Johnson, *Christian Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 117.

[22]cf. Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:28.

understanding to this decision should reflect its position of being more a continuation than a beginning. It is a decision our children make that is consistent with the decisions made for them in younger years, and it is a decision consistent with what they have already become through their life in the covenant community. It is the natural response of a faith that is maturing. It is becoming adult.

The event of baptism, thus, can occur at different points in the process of becoming Christian. Baptism always stands as the door into the body of Christ and into his redeeming work; but it can *initiate* a life of discipleship, or it can *continue* it. Baptism is not an optional rite for Christians; it is a fundamental sacrament so intertwined with the salvation offered by God through Christ that it is impossible of us to separate the two. All those moving toward maturity in Christ, toward an inheritance in the kingdom, toward acceptance of covenantal responsibilities, toward a wholeness of life must go through a watery passage. They can walk through that passage at different stations in their journey, and the progress of their journey at the point of baptism will determine the meaning of that baptism as initiation. Some enter the water as broken and contrite adults who have wasted years of the precious gift of their lives. Others enter as idealistic youths whose young lives bear the shape of the community of faith but who aspire to the full measure of God's grace and spirit to live before him in good conscience. The action of God in baptism remains the same, but the meaning of the act for the one baptized will be interpreted according to his or her progression in discipleship. The church must learn to celebrate all meanings of baptism.

There is an old argument over the interpretation of the Great Commission as recorded in Matthew 28:19: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ." The debate centers on the correct translation of the two participles (go, baptize) and the one imperative (make disciples). Did Jesus tell his apostles to go and make disciples and then baptize them, or did he tell them to make disciples by baptizing them? The debate is between those who believed salvation is prior to baptism and those who believed baptism is prior to salvation. But the church that teaches that baptism is an essential of salvation that can occur at different points and with different meanings in the lives of those who are baptized has a definite answer to the question, "Does the church baptize disciples or make disciples by baptizing?" The answer is, "Yes."

To view baptism as a milestone in the process of spiritual maturity is not to diminish the richness of the meaning of baptism. Baptism, whether for those outside the care of the church or for those among the catechumens, is a rite filled with imagery and significance. A baptismal candidate would find difficult, if not impossible, to have all biblical images of baptism in mind when entering the water. To propose that children of the church first understand baptism from the context of developmental process is only to suggest an initial point that touches the reality of their situation and enables them to experience meaningful initiation. This follows the pattern of the New Testament writers who chose different images of baptism in addressing their various audiences. At times baptism was death (Rom. 6); at other times it was birth (John 3); and on occasion it was a change of clothes

(Gal. 3:27). The needs of the hearers determined the facet of baptism that was meaningful. When applied to the life of a child of the church, some images of baptism will be more appropriate than others. As the process of maturing in Christ continues and as faith encounters the challenges of life, the depth of the sacrament will unfold before the young Christian. Since the church and its catechumen share a mutual trust, both can be satisfied with some truth of baptism leading to initiation, and both can trust that more truth awaits discovery as young lives mature.

In a later section on suggestions for catechesis, a more comprehensive listing of the biblical images of baptism is presented. At this point, it is helpful to consider whether any of those images might allow a child of the church to approach baptism in terms of a developmental step of maturity in the redeemed community. Several images appear applicable to this model. In 1 Corinthians 12:12,13 Paul reminds the church that baptism is incorporation into the body of Christ, making one a useful and active member of that body. Baptism is the breaking of natural barriers, a common experience that unites all--Jew or Greek, slaves or free. (Could we add "young or old" to the list?) This is demonstrated by the reception of a single Spirit that lives within all those who have been baptized. In Galatians 3:26,27, Paul writes of baptism as a family experience. Baptism is the mark of adoption (cf. 4:5) and the wearing of the family garb, which is that of the older brother Christ. The family imagery is also apparent in Ephesians 1:13,14, where baptism and the receiving of the Holy Spirit mark one as an heir in the family. All of these images demonstrate the progression from one status to

another. This is not the whole picture, but it is definitely a part of the whole that speaks to children of the church.

Possible Objections

To propose that Churches of Christ view their children as catechumens is open to objections. Two of these possible objections are discussed below.

Vocabulary

First of all, the vocabulary of catechumen and catechism does not appear to be biblical language. Restoration churches traditionally have taken pride in avoiding terminology that does not occur in the texts of the canon, particularly as represented by the King James translation. This bias is strongest against words that have been a part of the tradition of the Roman Catholic and Reformed churches. For example, only recently have Restoration churches begun employing such useful terms as theology and liturgy. However, the word catechesis is not without biblical precedent as its Greek root word does occur in verb form in some significant contexts. The verb *katecheo* (to inform, instruct) is a rare word in classical Greek and does not appear at all in the Septuagint. Paul and Luke each utilize the word four times. In the writings of Luke, the word carries its normal meaning of instructing or reporting (Acts 21:21,24; 18:25) with the possible exception being the debated meaning of the word in Luke 1:4 ("that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been *instructed*"), where the word appears to carry a more specialized intent. Paul, on the other hand, uses the word exclusively in the sense of instructing someone regarding the

content of the faith (1 Cor. 14:19; Gal. 6:6; Rom. 2:18, where the law is the subject of instruction). It has been suggested that Paul himself introduced the term to designate the teaching of the faith.[23] By the middle of the second century and the writing of 2 Clement, the word had already become the normal term for instruction given to those preparing for baptism. Therefore, if early English translators had chosen to transliterate the Greek verb *katecheo* rather than translate it,[24] the Restoration churches long ago might have discussed the need to catechize those who were growing in their faith and knowledge.

Repentance

The second objection runs deeper than terminology; it reaches into the emotional makeup of the church. Being deeply rooted in the model of crisis conversion as a normative experience for all Christians, Churches of Christ can find trusting an initiation that apparently removes the element of crisis a frightening experience. Our suspicion is that unless a person has truly felt lost, that person cannot truly feel saved. The biblical doctrine in question is repentance. If a person must repent before baptism (Acts 2:38), then should there not be evidence of deep Godly sorrow as a result of that repentance? The answer to that question is yes--if the direction of the convert's life or belief system is being drastically altered. But in the case of a child of the church whose lifestyle

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[23]*The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 1975 ed., s.v. "Teach," by Klaus Wegenast.

[24]This was the case with the Greek word *baptizo*. Baptism is one of the most Christian of all words in the English language because it is brought directly from Greek to English. The same could be true with *katecheo*.

and faith have been formed in the shape of the church from the time of the child's birth, baptism does not initiate a radical alteration of behavior, attitudes, and faith. To require an emotional or dramatic feeling of contrition of a faithful child of the church is to require an experience not based on the reality of his or her life. To promise a child of the church that great changes are to be expected following baptism is to prepare the child for disappointment.

Susanne Johnson defines repentance in this manner: "Biblically viewed, repentance is a lifelong turning and returning to God. Becoming Christian requires that we persist in struggling away from the old and toward the new (Rom. 12:2)."[25] In other words, repentance is much more than identifying immoral or inhumane actions or thoughts and feeling contrition for those acts. As one matures in faith, one learns that sin is not only found in such actions but in the very human condition of desiring to live apart from God. Stanley Hauerwas describes this aspect of sin in his book *The Peaceable Kingdom*:

> Just to the extent I refuse to be faithful to God's way, to live as part of God's life, my life assumes the character of rebellion. Our sin is not merely an error in overestimating our capacities. Rather it is the active and willful attempt to overreach our powers. It is the attempt to live *sui generis*, to live as if we are or can be the authors of our own stories. Our sin is, thus, a challenge to God's authorship and a denial that we are characters in the drama of the kingdom.[26]

In other words, repentance can be defined as the opposite of the concept of sin. Sin is the desire to follow one's own will; repentance is a return to God's will.

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[25]Johnson, 64.

[26]Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 31.

Such a concept of sin leads to a repentance that transcends guilt pangs and resolutions for change to become a life-long pursuit of denying self and seeking God's will.

It is an irony of faith that the true dangers of lostness are realized only in salvation and that the nature of repentance becomes clear only in a close relationship with God. Children of the church have learned from birth the difference between right and wrong, and they have been enculturated in feeling penitence for sinful acts and thoughts. As these children approach adulthood in the community of faith, they are not called to redouble their efforts to identify their sins, but they are called to wrestle with the scope of sin. For a catechumen approaching baptism, repentance takes the form of a turning to God in a new way. It is accepting his or her developing role in the covenant community and realizing that only within the full fellowship of the body of Christ can an adult find the grace of God necessary to live before him in good conscience. It is learning that repentance is a lifetime process of a Christian because the turning and returning to God, rejecting our very human tendency to be our own god, is never accomplished once and for all. The honesty of adult Christians in the sharing of their own lives of repentance will enable the young people of the church to understand this biblical concept.

Summary

The church must trust the process of nurturing its young into full fellowship to such an extent that it can assure its catechumens that their spiritual develop-ment has brought them to the point of initiation. The church must instill in its

young that their life in the community of faith has made them different. They are converted. Lewis Rambo defines conversion as "a process of religious change that takes place in a dynamic force field of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations, and experiences."[27] If this is an accurate description, then the ideal conversion would be realized in the nurture of a child of the church. With conversion seen as a process within a dynamic force field, the child of the church becomes the one who is most exposed to such a dynamic force. Questions about the validity of a conversion more naturally arise in the instance of crisis conversion. Can the decision of an emotional moment truly cause a person to abandon the culture of a lifetime? For the child of the church, initiation is not the abandonment of a culture but the full embrace of a culture the child has come to know as home. Such an event is emotional as are all major events in the development of a person--and even more so because of the eternal significance of the event of Christian initiation.

Ancient Catechesis

As was stated above, the ability to designate the status of children in the church has far-reaching effects. One of these effects is the opportunity to benefit from centuries of Christian experience in catechesis. With the rite of baptism serving as the door into the church, the Christian community soon developed a body of teaching to be imparted to those contemplating this, the most important action of their lives.

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[27]Lewis R. Rambo, "Conversion: Toward a Holistic Model of Religious Change," *Pastoral Psychology* 38, no. 1 (Fall 1989): 48.

In keeping with the ideals of Restoration Churches, we will first explore some of the passages that have been identified as catechetical material in the New Testament. In his article "Catechesis, Catechumenate" in the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, Everett Ferguson points to 1 Thessalonians 4:1-5:11, Colossians 3:5-15, and the epistle of 1 Peter as reflecting blocks of catechetical material.[28] Following an analysis of these passages, we will examine the catechetical practices of the church during the second and third centuries, for it is in these years that the church most actively pursued the practice of the catechesis. Two of these documents are among the earliest of Christian writings outside the New Testament canon. The catechetical nature of *The Didache* has long been acknowledged, and Irenaeus' *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* is a late second century document that has been identified both as apology and catechesis. Following a brief analysis of these two writings, some third and fourth century documents will be summarized to trace the development of catechesis as it became a more organized program of the church.

Biblical Texts

1 Thessalonians

Of the six texts mentioned, the earliest is the letter of Paul to the Thessalonian church. Paul's letters exhibit a standard form of theological discourse followed by a paraenetic section which is practical teaching based on the

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[28]*Encyclopedia of Early Christianity.* s.v. "Catechesis, Catechumenate," by Everett Ferguson.

preceding doctrinal statements. This section of practical teachings is usually joined to the preceding text by the conjunction "therefore" or the adverb "finally." In the Thessalonian letter, the first section is more in the form of a defense of Paul's ministry among the church in Thessalonica with the paraenesis based on the validity of that ministry. Having defended his actions among them, he then exhorts them to remember what he has taught:

> Finally, brothers and sisters, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus
> that as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please
> God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so more and more.
> For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.
> (1 Thess. 4:1,2).[29]

This section of 1 Thessalonians contributes to the study of catechesis because Paul is calling the Christians back to the original instruction[30] he delivered to them at the time of their conversion. It can be assumed that the baptism of these Christians followed the New Testament pattern of crisis conversion with baptism coming immediately upon a profession of faith, but it cannot be known if the instruction to which Paul refers was prior to or subsequent to their baptisms. Certainly the Thessalonians heard the preaching of the gospel before they responded in baptism, and many of them no doubt heard some of the ethical demands of the gospel before they made their decisions. Even though the first visit of Paul was brief (Acts 17:1-9), Paul probably continued to instruct the new

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[29]Hereafter all scripture quotations will be from the New Revised Standard Versions unless otherwise noted.

[30]The word translated "instruction" in this passage is not derived from the Greek root *katechezo* but is a form of *paraggello*, which means "to order, to give instructions."

converts until the uproar against his work in the city forced him to flee. Whether this instruction occurred before or after baptism, it was given in the context of conversion.

In the brief space of 1 Thessalonians 4:1-5:11, Paul is not able to reproduce totally the instruction he had previously delivered. His exhortations here can be read as summary statements intended to spur remembrance of his more detailed teachings. From these statements we can note that Paul's instruction falls into two categories: (1) ethical concerns, and (2) the continuing story of Jesus Christ as it relates to the lives of the Christians. Paul grounds his ethical instruction in the call to holy living (4:7). He reminds the disciples that they have received the gift of the Holy Spirit and that God himself has taught them to love (4:8,9). On the basis of God's love and holiness, they are to love one another and to behave in a holy manner in their dealings with each other and the Gentiles. Paul specifically mentions the need for sexual purity and for personal productivity and financial responsibility (4:3-5,10-12). In addition to ethical instruction, Paul is also concerned that the Thessalonians continue to identify with the past and the unfolding story of Jesus Christ. He reminds them of how they received their salvation through the death of Jesus (5:9,10), and he encourages them to find comfort and motivation in their participation with Jesus in his on-going mission (4:13-5:11). His discussion of eschatology is obviously intended for more than information. It is to become the story of the Thessalonians out of which they form their own identities.

In summary, Paul gives Christians today a glimpse into the particular teachings he deemed vital to new converts. Those who had recently come to Christ were to understand the ethical demands that are consistent with the calling of God, and they are to see themselves as participants in the great story of salvation that finds its roots in salvation history but stretches out to the future.

Colossians

The Colossian letter follows the usual style of Pauline epistles in that he presents a theological section (chs. 1 and 2) followed by paraenesis (chs. 3 and 4). However, in Colossians there are some additional elements that make it especially relevant to this study. Throughout this epistle, Paul makes use of traditional material already familiar to the church. For example, in the theological section Paul is concerned that the Colossian church has adopted an inadequate Christology which has left them vulnerable to doctrinal error. In presenting a higher Christology, Paul utilizes what most scholars agree to be a hymn of the early church. Known as the Christ Hymn (1:15-20), this section is a melodic and soaring description of Christ's being as it relates to all creation in general and to the church in particular. Another example of traditional material appears in the household codes Paul incorporates in the paraenetic section (3:18-4:1). These codes, based on the form of the household codes of the Greek culture, seem to be standard fare for the early church and are elsewhere referred to by both Paul (cf. Eph. 5:22-6:9) and Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 3:1-7). Paul's use of such traditional material

is not surprising. In Colossians 2:6 he employs a semi-technical term for receiving

a tradition when he states:

> As you therefore have received (*paralabete*) Christ Jesus the Lord,
> continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and
> established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in
> thanksgiving.

This statement signals to the reader that Paul is prepared to remind them once

again of what they have received and to call them back to the faith they were

once taught.

Paul makes his transition from theology to practical instruction in the

opening verses of Colossians 3.

> So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are
> above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your
> minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for
> you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When
> Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed
> with him in glory (Col. 3:1-4).

From our brief study of Thessalonians we recognize some familiar themes. The

Christian life is rooted in the continuing story of Jesus. Lifestyle grows out of the

past actions of Jesus as well as the anticipated continuity with him in the future.

That this passage is moving toward a review of catechesis is confirmed when Paul

chooses some distinctive catchwords of early Christian catechesis to anchor his

instruction to the Colossian church.[31] He encourages the disciples to "put to

death" (3:5), "put off" (3:8), and "put on" (3:12). This is the language of catechism

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[31]Peter O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon,* Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word
Books, 1982), 174.

in the early church, and Paul is now recalling the Christians to their prior knowledge of the way of Christ.

As was noted above, Paul grounds his instruction in the story of Christ. Now he details the ethical behavior expected of those who live within that story. Paul's list is lengthy. They are to put to death fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed. They are to get rid of anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language. They are not to lie to one another, and they are not to allow prejudice on any basis in the church. Conversely, because they are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, they are to put on compassion, kindness, humility, meek-ness, and patience. They are to practice patience and forgiveness (once again based on the story of Christ). And above all, they are to put on love by allowing the peace of Christ to be the rule in their community life.

At this point, Paul's instruction to the Colossian church goes one step further than did his teaching to the Thessalonians. Paul also shows his concern for the vitality of the liturgical life of the church in Colossae. Verses 15c through 17 have as their setting a worship service opening with a call to thanksgiving.[32] The Colossians are encouraged to perceive the glorified Christ walking among them as his word is read and heard. They are to teach and admonish in wisdom and to join with one another in song. Verse 17 then calls the disciples to bring their story and their liturgical life to bear on every word and every action of their

[32]Ralph P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon*, Interpretation Series (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1989), 125.

lives as they "do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

1 Peter

In *The Primitive Christian Catechism*, Philip Carrington identifies 1 Peter as a transcript of catechetical material.[33] He points to several identifying marks such as the theme of dualism or warfare in the moral realm and the language of the sacraments that serves as a structure for much of the instruction. An example of the latter is the use of the triad of faith-hope-love, around which Peter builds his initial teaching of the epistle. Carrington notes the sacramental nature of this language:

> Faith has to do with baptism in the New Testament, and hope seems to be connected with it; *episteusa* practically means "I was baptised." Love has to do with the eucharist (or *agape*) and life in the holy brotherhood. Faith-hope-love is a phrase which sums up the whole Christian life.[34]

For Carrington, although 1 Peter has been given the form of an epistle, it is but a recasting of Peter's instruction to those who would be baptized.

A complete analysis of the content of 1 Peter lies outside the scope of this writing, but a brief overview of the letter demonstrates once again the subject matter that the apostles deemed vital to the lives of the disciples. Following his greeting, Peter immediately situates the disciples in the story of salvation (1:3-12). Peter instructs them to understand their present difficulties in the context of the

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[33]Philip Carrington, *The Primitive Christian Catechism* (Cambridge: University Press, 1940).

[34]Ibid., 25-26.

continuing story of Jesus, who brought them salvation through his death and resurrection and now lives to bring the final outcome of their faith. He reminds them that this story is as old as the prophets who looked forward to the very times in which the disciples are now living. As a result of this story, certain ethical behavior is in order (1:13-16). The disciples have chosen to identify themselves with this interpretation of history and humanity; therefore, they should invest themselves fully ("set *all* your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed" [v. 13]), and they should adopt the lifestyle of the one who is the originator of the story ("You shall be holy, for I am holy" [v. 16]). Peter then returns to the story (1:17-21) by pointing out that one characteristic of living within the story of salvation is to live as exiles. Exile is the logical result of coming to Christ since he "ransomed you from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors" (v. 18). Once again, Peter exhorts them to recognize what the practical ramifications of this story are (1:22-2:3). They are to "have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart" (1:22). They are to rid themselves of malice, guile, insincerity, envy, and slander. In this section, Peter also moves toward the third category of his instruction--the relevance of liturgy in the lives of the disciples. He reminds them that they have been "born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God." In 2:4-10 Peter continues his encouragement to understand what is happening in the sacramental element of their Christian lives. He builds toward a call for them to appropriate the meaning of their baptism by citing what many scholars believe to be an ancient baptismal hymn:

> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's
> own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him
> who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you
> were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not
> received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Pet. 2:9,10).

As William Willimon notes, this hymn is significant in describing how baptism forms the identity of the believers and shapes them following baptism:

> Baptism says little about what you ought to be or do. It mainly
> asserts who you *are*: You *are* a new people. You *are* a holy nation.
> You *are* royalty so you might as well get used to it. The imperative,
> "you ought," comes only after the indicative, "You are."[35]

The remainder of the epistle of Peter continues in this same pattern. Story, ethics, and liturgy are intertwined as a means of instructing the readers in the life of discipleship. Slaves are to endure suffering because that is a part of the story of Christ. Wives are to win their husbands to the gospel through submission because that was the way of Sarah, and Sarah is part of the story (3:1-6). Husbands are to show consideration of their wives because they are a part of the story and so that their liturgical lives will not be affected (3:7). The disciples can trust their baptism because of God's past actions in saving Noah through water, and Noah is part of the story (3:13-22). The disciples can endure whatever persecutions may come their way because they know the end of the story as well as the beginning (4:1-19). Peter's interweaving of the themes of story, ethics, and liturgy stands as testimony to the importance of these three elements as foundational material for young Christians.

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[35]William Willimon, *Remember Who You Are: Baptism, A Model for Christian Life* (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1980), 28-29.

Summary

The three texts briefly explored above have been cited as examples of early

Christian catechism during the apostolic period. The result of our analysis is to

recognize that when the apostles wished to encourage their young fellow Chris-

tians, they called them back to the very basics of their faith. In reviewing the

basics and applying those fundamentals to the current situation of the readers, the

apostles evidently drew upon the catechetical material with which the Christians

were already familiar. That catechetical material can be classified under three

headings: (1) the story of salvation; (2) the ethics growing out of the story; and

(3) the liturgy that enacts and appropriates the story. With these three categories

in mind, we now turn to the writings of the early church fathers.

<div align="center">Early Church Fathers</div>

While we must admit that identifying catechetical material in the New

Testament requires a reliance on interpretation of the nature of the writing and

inferences from the terminology chosen, such is not the case when we turn to the

writings of the early church fathers, who lived and wrote immediately following the

close of the apostolic age. The early church aggressively pursued the practice of

catechism; and, as a result, examples of catechisms of the first three centuries

survive. In deference to the plea of Restoration Churches to base their teachings

on the canonical books alone, we will not be searching the writings of the fathers

as much for content as for form. Our quest is to determine what subject matter

the early fathers chose to teach the catechumens of the church rather than the specific teachings of that subject matter.

The Didache

The Didache is the earliest example of a manual of church life among the writings of the apostolic fathers. The date of its composition has been widely debated, with suggestions ranging from A.D. 70 to the latter part of the second century. The document was included in some early canons of the New Testament and was quoted by Clement of Alexandria as scripture. Eusebius refers to The Didache as part of the apocrypha of the New Testament. Much, if not all, of The Didache is recognized as catechetical instruction preparatory to baptism.[36] Athanasius names it among the "books not included in the Canon, but appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who are just recently coming to us, and wish to be instructed in the word of godliness."[37] The first section of moral instruction is identified as following the form of Jewish catechism and is thought to be a Christian adaptation of Jewish catechesis for Gentile proselytes.

The Didache[38] opens with a strong ethical statement: "There are two Ways, one of Life and one of Death, and there is a great difference between the two Ways." The "Way of Life" is first detailed (Sections I - IV) with its foundational principle being the chief commandments and the "Golden Rule" as given by

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[36]Encyclopedia of Early Christianity, s.v. "Didache," by Everett Ferguson.

[37]Festal Epistles, 39.

[38]Didache, Loeb Classical Library.

Jesus: "First, you shall love the God who made you, secondly your neighbor as yourself; and whatsoever you would not have done to yourself, do not to another." The teaching of this principle is then presented, primarily through statements taken from the Sermon on the Mount: Bless those who curse you; pray for your enemies; turn the other cheek. Following this first exposition is what is termed "the second commandment of the teaching," which consists of a list of sins: murder, adultery, sodomy, fornication, stealing, magic, abortion, and so forth. The final two sections of "The Way of Life" display a more pastoral tone in counseling against attitudes and actions that might entrap one in sinful behavior: Flee from evil people; avoid pride because it leads to murder; beware of lust because its end is adultery; do not be a grumbler because this leads to blasphemy. The counsel for living includes such practical advice as "Do not consort with the lofty, but walk with righteous and humble men; receive the accidents that befall you as good, knowing nothing happens without God; and be not one who stretches out his hands to receive, but shuts them when it comes to giving" (III, 9,10).

The "Way of Death" is briefly stated in Section V. As one might assume, the "Way of Death" is described as the opposite of "The Way of Life." Many of the same actions that were to be avoided in life are now listed as comprising "The Way of Death." The catalogue of sins includes the standard references to the taking of life, sexual misconduct, and sins of pride; but it also is strikingly bold in its denouncement of sins against social justice. Among the actions condemned are being "corrupters of God's creatures, turning away the needy, oppressing the distressed, advocates of the rich, and unjust judges of the poor."

The "Two Ways" concludes with an exhortation that one should "see that no one make you to err from this Way of the teaching, for he teaches you without God" (VI,1). Then, in a rather surprising concession to the grace of God, the teacher provides a caveat: "For if you can bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect, but if you can not, do what you can" (VI,2).

Section VII of *The Didache* opens the liturgical instruction with a discussion of baptism. The place of ethical teaching is noted by the opening phrase, "Having first rehearsed all these things . . ." giving evidence of the need for such instruction prior to the baptism of the candidate. The teaching concerning baptism primarily concerns the mechanics of the rite. Baptism is to be administered in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in running water. Other situations are taken into account, with concessions made for the lack of availability of running water or cold water or even enough water for immersion. The candidate for baptism is also encouraged to fast before baptism. Liturgical catechesis continues with instruction on fasting and prayer (VIII), in which disciples are taught to pray the Lord's prayer three times daily. Section IX teaches the observance of the Eucharist, detailing the prayers to be offered in advance of the serving of the cup and the bread and a warning offered that only those who have been baptized are to partake of the Eucharist. Section X offers a prayer to be repeated at the conclusion of the common meal, which appears to be the context for the observance of the Eucharist. Sections XI - XIII reveal tests for determining false teachers, apostles and prophets. Section XIV is an exhortation to gather for the Eucharist on the Lord's Day, with instructions to confess trans-

gressions and reconcile relationships before worship. The Liturgical material concludes with the command to appoint bishops and deacons (XV).

Of the three categories of catechesis suggested by the biblical material, the recitation of the story of salvation is the least apparent within *The Didache*. Only in the final section of the document is the story brought to bear on the lives of the disciples. Section XVI is an exhortation to endurance and faithfulness beginning with the traditional word, "Watch." The teaching here is eschatalogical, with the emphasis being on the continuing story in which the disciples live. They are to realize the signs of the approaching end and have faith that their future lies in the resurrection of the dead. Believing such a story provides the foundation and the motivation to continue their ethical and liturgical lives.

Irenaeus

The life of Irenaeus spanned most of the second century (ca. 115 - ca. 202). He was acquainted with Polycarp, who was a student of John. His work *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* has been described both as apology and catechesis. In his article, "Irenaeus' *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* and Early Catechetical Instruction,"[39] Everett Ferguson has argued effectively for the view that the primary purpose of the writing was catechetical. Irenaeus was a pastoral bishop who was concerned with protecting the church from the influences of Gnosticism. With this as his agenda, he chose the story of salvation as his approach for catechism,

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[39]Everett Ferguson, "Irenaeus' *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* and Early Catechetical Instruction," *Studia Patristica* 18:3 (1989): 119-140.

teaching that true salvation is attained only through faith in what God has revealed and in what he has done.

The Proof is addressed to Marcianus and is written out of a concern that he "keep the faith in its purity."[40] In the second paragraph, Irenaeus observes that man is made up of soul and body and that there is need for both bodily holiness (defined as the abstinence from shameful things) and holiness of soul (defined as the preservation of faith). He asks two questions: "For what is the use of knowing the truth in word, while defiling the body and accomplishing the works of evil? Or what real good at all can bodily holiness do, if truth be not in the soul?" He encourages his reader to have a true perception of reality, and the basis for this perception is the recalling of his baptism which is described in the imagery of a rebirth.[41] According to Irenaeus baptism has set Christians apart as the adopted children of God. Thus, to the Jew, God is Lord and Lawgiver; to the Gentile, God is as Maker and Creator; to all humanity God is judge; but to the Christian, God is Father.[42] This concept provides the foundation for Irenaeus to pursue his main concern--the story of salvation. His story begins with creation of man and a description of the earthly paradise. Irenaeus continues with the creation of woman, the primal innocence of the first couple, the imposition of the tree of knowledge and the eventual fall. The history of redemption follows, taking the reader through the remainder of the primeval history of Genesis, the calling of

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[40]Irenaeus *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 1.

[41]Ibid., 3.

[42]Ibid., 7,8.

Abraham, the deliverance from Egyptian captivity, the giving of the law, and the entrance into the Promised Land. At this point Irenaeus, with a brief reference to the prophets' role in calling the people back to the God of the patriarchs, moves to the incarnation of the Son of God. With the introduction of Christ, Irenaeus returns to the Old Testament to demonstrate how Christ was either present in or foreshadowed by those events. For example, Adam was made of virgin earth before man had tilled it. Christ was born of a virgin. A tree (the tree of knowledge) was involved in the fall of man, and a tree (the cross) was involved in the redemption of man. The remainder of *The Proof* relates prophecies found in the Old Testament to the events of Christ's life. In relating these fulfilled prophecies, Irenaeus is able not only to provide a convincing argument for the truth of scripture, but he also presents the details of the life of Christ and the beginning of the church under the New Covenant. In other words, Irenaeus relates the story of salvation from its beginning in creation through its major events leading to his own time.

Once again we find the three basic elements of catechesis. Admittedly, Irenaeus chooses the telling of salvation history as his primary method of teaching the faith, but he begins his journey by asking his reader to recall his baptism and what that rite signified. Along the journey through the story, Irenaeus pauses to indicate the ethical demands that are implied by such a story. He explicitly states this when discussing the mission of the apostles.[43] The apostles were sent to show mankind the way of life, "turning them back from idols and from fornication

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[43]Ibid., 41.

and from selfish pride, purifying their souls and their bodies through the baptism of water and of the Holy Spirit." Of course, the story of salvation is the centerpiece in Irenaeus' teaching, and he obviously desires his reader to adopt this story as his own story.

Third and Fourth Century Documents

In an early third century document, *The Apostolic Tradition*, Hippolytus writes of a well-organized catechumenate in which candidates for baptism undergo a three-year period of training:

> Let a catechumen be instructed for three years. But if a man be earnest and persevere well in the matter, let him be received, because it is not the time that is judged, but the conduct (18).

Hippolytus gives details about the examination of a catechumen's character and the ceremony surrounding baptism, but he writes little about the instruction that is delivered during the three-year catechumenate. He does indicate that the night before baptism is spent in vigil with the bishop "reading the scriptures to them and instructing (*katecheo*) them" (20).

The Apostolic Constitutions is a fourth century compilation of earlier Christian writings. Within the *Constitutions* is a rather detailed description of the type of instruction given to catechumens. According to Section 39, the catechumen is to be taught about God, the creation, the fall, and the flood. The catechumen should hear the stories of how God glorified the saints in every generation--such stories as Seth, Enos, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and his posterity, Melchizedek, Job, Moses, Joshua, Caleb and Phineas. They should learn the story

of "how God still took care of and did not reject mankind." Then the catechumen hears the story of the Lord's incarnation, his passion, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension. Following this teaching of the story of salvation, the instruction turns to "what concerns the renunciation of the devil, and the joining of himself with Christ; for it is fit that he should first abstain from things contrary. . ." (40). The catechetical material concludes with directions for the baptism and anointing and a written prayer for the newly baptized disciple to offer.

The *Catechetical Lectures* of Cyril of Jerusalem come from the middle of the fourth century and comprise the earliest extant example of a full and systematic course of catechism.[44] Cyril's catechism is based on earlier examples of catechetical material but differs in the arrangement of topics. Cyril structured his teaching on the phrases of the creed of his church, a creed very similar to the Nicean Creed. Because of this arrangement, Cyril's catechism is more doctrinally oriented than previous examples, but he does emphasize in particular the details of the life and death of Jesus as well as the ethical demands of the gospel. For example, in Lecture IV, which gives an overview of the ten points of the creed, Cyril encourages the catechumens to pious doctrines and virtuous practice:

> For the method of godliness consists of these two things, pious doctrines, and virtuous practice: and neither are the doctrines acceptable to God apart from good works, nor does God accept the works which are not perfected with pious doctrines. For what profit is it to know well the doctrines concerning God, and yet to be a vile fornicator? And again what profit is it to be nobly temperate, and an impious blasphemer? (IV,2).

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[44]Gifford, xii.

Although Cyril teaches on baptism in preparation for the rite, he reserves his extensive instruction in liturgy for the newly baptized. To those who have been initiated, he reveals the mysteries of baptism and the Eucharist. One further note of interest in the lectures of Cyril is his exhortation to parents: "If you have a child according to the flesh, admonish him of this now . . ." (XV,18). Catechesis was not the exclusive office of the bishop but the calling of parents as well.

Summary

The analyses of both the biblical material and the documents from the early centuries of Christianity have revealed that the apostles and the church fathers held certain truths to be fundamental in accepting the life of discipleship. Though they displayed different emphases in the process of catechesis, they also demonstrated remarkable consistencies. Whether their concern was to bring catechumens into the full fellowship of the church or to call disciples back to the fundamentals of faith, the apostles and church fathers would summon the learners to encounter the story of salvation, the ethical demands of the story, and the liturgy of the church as it interacted with the story. The analyses also revealed that different teachers viewed different elements of these three categories to be more valuable. These emphases can be attributed in part to the varied situations they addressed as well as the teachers' own personal views as to what was most meaningful to themselves. However, if the church of today is to enter the task of catechesis seriously, it must make every effort to see that its catechesis adequately addresses these three areas.

A few observations concerning the nature of the presentation of these three fundamental elements is in order before moving on to other concerns.

1. **Story:** The story of salvation begins with the creation in all its goodness. Of particular interest is the fact that humanity was created in the image of God. The story includes the fall of humanity with all its consequences and the beginning of God's plan for redemption in the choosing of Abraham. The deliverance of the people of Israel reveals the merciful and saving nature of God and sets the stage for the crowning act in the story -- the revelation of Jesus Christ. In relating the mission of Jesus, the story speaks of what was done in his life, his death, and his resurrection; but it also continues by telling what Jesus is doing today and what the end of the story will be. Throughout the process of narrating the story, one concern is always evident. This is not a story about others; it is the story of the teacher and the listeners. The appropriation of this story in a very real and personal sense is the initial step of living within the kingdom of God.

2. **Ethics:** Moral behavior and ethical principles grow out of the story. For those who identify with the story, questions of right and wrong do not find resolution in human logic or in societal trends. Ethics is not a study of rules or even the endeavor to be good. For Christians, ethics is the call to become a part of a story that grants significance and calls to specific behaviors. The standard of

behavior for people of the story is the revelation of God's own nature and the working out of that nature in the lives of his chosen people. God's concerns are their concerns. His holiness is their goal. And it is a way of life made possible through the redemptive act of God in his Son.

3.　**Liturgy:** People of the story view their liturgy sacramentally. The act of worship is the point at which the invisible realities of God become most visible. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper make visible the saving death and life of the Christ. It is worship that allows people of the story to maintain a grasp of reality so that they might continue to serve and love their God and their fellow humans. When Christians are struggling, they are called to reexamine their acts of worship because in those acts of worship reality is enacted and appropriated.[45]

The church serves its catechumens well when it gives to them a rich heritage of the story, a firm commitment to living as people of the story, and the ability to see the acts of the invisible God in its acts of worship.

Contemporary Catechesis

The term catechesis carries a negative connotation in the church today, but that was not always the situation. Catechesis was once greatly honored, and the

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[45]Another example of liturgy and life is found in the situation in Corinth. The Corinthian church was divided; its members were acting selfishly; and many were weak and ill. Paul called the church to reexamine the Eucharist and appropriate the reality of the sacrament (1 Cor. 11:17-33).

catechists in the church were highly esteemed. Through the years, changes in the catechism and in the educational philosophy of the church have affected our understanding of catechesis. An overview of catechesis through church history will help in determining a model for catechesis today.

A Brief History of Catechesis

Catechesis in the Early Church

The catechumenate was a well-developed practice of the church during the first four centuries of its history. It was an intense period of instruction lasting several years. According to Richard Osmer, the abandonment of the practice of catechism was the result of several factors.[46] When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine, the church experienced a large influx of converts, and pressure was exerted to make initiation into the church quicker and easier. Also, political pressures on the Christian Empire of Rome made it advantageous to baptize infants as a means of insuring nationalistic ties as well as religious affiliation. Before that time, infant baptism had been a sporadic practice of the church and was never viewed as the norm for Christian initiation.[47] With the rise of infant baptism and the shortening of the process of adult initiation, the church further developed the sacrament of confirmation. Confirmation was the rite of anointing with oil and the laying on of hands to

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[46]Richard Robert Osmer, "Restructuring Confirmation," *Theology Today* 49, no. 1 (April 1992): 46-67.

[47]Robert Grant, "The Development of the Christian Catechumenate," in *Made Not Born* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976).

signify the imparting of the Holy Spirit. This rite had originally been a part of the baptismal ceremony, but in the case of baptizing infants it was postponed until the person could own his or her faith. Catechetical instruction continued to be offered to baptized children in preparation for their confirmation, but it was less organized in structure and not granted its previous weight of importance.

Catechesis during the Reformation and Restoration

During the Reformation, the emerging Protestant churches returned to the avid pursuit of catechism, with the catechesis becoming an intense period of education following baptism and prior to Confirmation. Several catechisms with differing emphases were produced to enable parents and ministers to prepare children for the time they would assume full responsibility for their faith. As Osmer observes, the Catechism "was designed to shape the character of its participants at the profoundest level, inviting them 'to find their only comfort in life and in death in their faithful Savior, Jesus Christ,' to recall the first question of the Heidelberg Catechism."[48]

Although catechism was an important concern of the Reformation churches, the churches born out of the American Restoration Movement found little place for catechesis in its church life. With its roots in revivalism and its strong emphasis on conversion as an individualistic and adult decision based on either an intellectual or emotional response to the preaching of the gospel, the Restoration church saw no need for the more lengthy process of catechesis. The

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[48]Osmer, 52.

model for conversion became the crisis conversion model of the New Testament as it is specifically seen in the examples of conversion in the book of Acts. Actually, to delay baptism for a time of instruction seemed not only unnecessary but dangerous. In addition to the adoption of this model of conversion, another factor that limited the concept of catechesis was the fact that most converts entering the Restoration churches were coming out of other Christian traditions. The correction of certain points of doctrine (especially in the area of ecclesiology) and the acceptance of baptism (which was often a rebaptism) were deemed conversion. There was little need to instill the basics of story or ethics as these had been learned earlier in life. The proper adjustments made in liturgy were sufficient.

Where this development left the children of the church was rarely discussed. Two early pioneers of the movement did wrestle with the method of communicating the faith to children. In articles published in the *Millennial Harbinger*, both Thomas Campbell and J. W. McGarvey discussed the need of rearing children in the faith, with both men assigning the instruction of children primarily to the home, but they did not explore how these children made the transition from children of the church to the full fellowship of the church.[49] The norm of crisis conversion was so entrenched in the nature of the church that it was assumed the children would grow into a time of crisis. If a crisis did not occur naturally, it could be arranged.

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[49]Thomas Campbell, *MH* 4, new series (1840): 340-345. McGarvey, *MH* 7, series 5 (1843): 536-539.

Sunday School, Religious Education

and Catechesis

There has been another development since the beginning of the Restora-

tion Movement that has had a dramatic impact on the teaching of children of the

church. The Sunday School movement began outside the church but was taken

into the churches in the period between 1830 and the Civil War.[50] By the turn of

the twentieth century, it had become the principle method of education of children

for most Protestant groups -- including the Churches of Christ. At the beginning

of the Sunday school movement, some who valued catechesis issued a warning that

the Sunday Schools should not supplant catechetical instruction of children, but

their opposition was a losing battle.[51] While Sunday Schools quickly replaced

catechism among some traditions, their advent actually gave the Restoration

churches a method approaching catechism. With Sunday Schools came printed

curriculum that reflected the church's insistence on cognitive learning of scripture

and the story of salvation. Perhaps this emphasis reached its apex with the

development of the Jule Miller Filmstrips, a resource intended for evangelism but

widely used in Sunday School classes for adolescents. Entitled "Visualized Bible

Study," the filmstrips related the story of salvation and pointed to some

implications for liturgy. However, the late 1960's and early 1970's saw a decline in

the use of these filmstrips and a major rewriting of the printed curricula taught in

the churches. These changes can be attributed in part to a dissatisfaction with

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[50]Donald E. Miller, *Story and Context* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 53.

[51]Osmer, 60.

some attitudes and teachings of the resources, but they can also be attributed to a much more pervasive force: the discovery of the Religious Education Movement. Religious Education emerged in the first three decades of the twentieth century; but because of isolationist tendencies, it was not widely accepted into Churches of Christ until the late sixties. Its advent can be related to the rising level of formal education among the church's ministers and a more open attitude among the churches to the ideas of other Christian traditions. In a spirit to catch up with developing educational theory, Churches of Christ began a dialogue with the proponents of Religious Education. The driving force of the Religious Education Association, established in 1903, was to incorporate the findings of modern psychology and education into religious education.[52] Guiding this reform were the principles of Religious Education:

1. Transmission of a "fixed and predetermined content" is inherently authoritarian. Educational *process* is more important than *content*, for it determines whether or not individuals and groups will actively engage material.
2. Present experience is the primary norm by which inherited beliefs and practices are judged, accentuating the importance of contemporary relevance and meaning.
3. The primary goals of religious education are personal growth and social transformation.[53]

The results of these goals are obvious among children of the church today. Church leaders are acutely aware that their children have acquired less cognitive information than in generations past. The question is whether this is a positive or negative development.

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[52]Miller, 53.

[53]Ibid., 61.

An evaluation of the effects of the Religious Education movement among Churches of Christ would no doubt produce a mixed report. It is not the purpose of this writing to call for the church to abandon Religious Education in favor of catechesis. It is a call to realize that Religious Education and catechesis are not the same. A deeper exploration of Religious Education would reveal many valuable contributions it has made to the lives of those in the church, both children and adults. By its nature, though, Religious Education does not seek to instill the foundational principles of catechesis. Catechesis must become another mission of the church.

Is a call for catechesis for children of the church just a nostalgic and uninformed yearning for the way things were? By no means, because Churches of Christ have never fully addressed the need for catechism. Catechesis is a possibility only when churches can name the relationship between the church and its children and can present those children with a form of initiation that is true to both the biblical story and to the reality of their lives. The call for catechesis by its nature includes cognitive learning, but it should not be rejected on that basis. Cognitive learning of the story of salvation, the meaning of liturgy, and the lifestyle of God's people is not intended to, nor must it by necessity be, restrictive. The intent of such knowledge is to form a foundation for free thinking. Perhaps those who wish to push beyond rote learning of foundational principles should realize that it is the knowledge of those principles that formed the basis of their freedom and ability to move on to higher knowledge.[54]

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[54]cf. Heb. 6:1,2.

A Model for Catechesis

The need for catechesis in the church has become an area of concern for some who have been leaders in the field of Religious Education. The challenge is to find a model for catechesis that is true to the nature of the teaching and communicates with the catechumens of today.

John Westerhoff

One educator within the church who has called for a return to catechesis is John Westerhoff.[55] Westerhoff defines catechesis as being three deliberate, systematic, sustained processes of human learning within a Christian faith community to help persons arrive at baptism and to assist the community in being the body of Christ. To him, catechesis is a lifelong pursuit continuing beyond baptism although he recognizes that there are times when the church should provide a more intense effort at catechesis. He views catechesis as involving three processes: (1) formation, (2) education, and (3) instruction. Formation is defined as a type of Christian nurture. It is best compared to apprenticeship in which the learner is formed through relational contact as well as through the imparting of information. Formation occurs through the incorporation into the community's story, participation in the community's rites, observing the community's role models, and learning the community's vocabulary. Formation begins at the first contact with the community and continues as an individual interacts with the

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[55]The following material is derived from a series of lectures delivered by John Westerhoff at Princeton Theological Seminary August 3-7, 1987. The conclusions and applications of Westerhoff's material represent this writer's understanding and further reflection.

community. It is a childhood experience, but it is never ending. Formation can be unintentional, but the community should go about it intentionally as well. Education is the process of reflecting on experience. Educational activity includes thinking critically about one's formation and gaining insights (theology) and making application (ethics). Education is an adolescent experience. Instruction is technical learning. It is the acquiring of more knowledge; it is learning skills. In instruction one approaches the Bible in a more skillful way and learns the finer points of the church's doctrine. Instruction is an adult activity.

In Westerhoff's model the basic element of the three elements of catechesis is liturgy. Participation in the cultic acts of the community is the primary means of formation. Reflection on liturgy is the essence of education as one reflects on daily life to prepare for participation in worship and one reflects on worship experience to prepare for a faithful life. Within the liturgy is found instruction which enables a more complete participation in that liturgy and a more faithful manner of living the word in daily life.

If Westerhoff's model is applied to the need for an intentional catechesis for children of Churches of Christ as they approach initiation into the full fellow-ship of the body, then the catechesis would be structured to include the first two processes of the model. On the assumption that children of the church come to the point of full fellowship during adolescence,[56] the appropriate teaching for

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[56]This is an assumption of this study. No effort has been made to prove or disprove the generally accepted position that adolescence is the time of decision or the "age of accountability."

their stage of development would be activities included in the processes of formation and education.

Susanne Johnson

Another scholar working in the field of initiation and formation is Susanne Johnson. Johnson describes the church as facing a dilemma of not being Christian enough because it has not taken seriously the radical, countercultural, protracted process of Christian initiation. She describes Christian initiation as

> a process of conversion and transformation that involved training in the skills required by the Christian Story, instruction in the sacred writings, assumption of a responsible role in the faith community, participation in its service and mission, introduction to the cloud of witnesses, the reshaping of ethical vision, and formation of ethical responsibilities.[57]

In describing her model for becoming Christian, Johnson points to the themes of participation and formation as the "threads that provide conceptual continuity."[58] For Johnson, formation is the process of becoming a part of the community and adopting its past as relevant to one's own present existence. Participation is the dynamic of interacting with the community and allowing the community to define and shape existence. Johnson is frustrated with the church's adoption of the psychological models for spiritual development and notes the deep need that people have for a soul. She writes, "We need a Story that truthfully renders to us the shape of the world and that equips us spiritually and morally to live in it."[59]

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[57]Johnson, 27-28.

[58]Ibid., 19.

[59]Ibid., 18.

And she opens her next paragraph with the statement, "The symbols of the Christian faith deny that life is unendurable and meaningless."[60] Throughout Johnson's work she calls for a reappropriation of the Christian Story as the formational force it is. She identifies the Story as the source of Christian character and sees the liturgy of the church as a primary location for the participation in community life which gives definition to life. In a very real manner, Johnson's approach to formation and participation parallels the threefold approach to catechesis we have discovered in scripture and among the ancients.

Donald Miller

The concern of Donald Miller in his book *Story and Context* is education within the community rather than initiation into the community. However, his observations on the educational process have relevance to the nurturing of the young into the full fellowship of the church. Miller describes his model as a community model. He defines community as "a group of persons sharing common commitments, norms of behavior, symbolic culture, and living within a shared environment."[61] The community functions as educator as it nurtures its own members through these inherent characteristics. Miller identifies the foundational activity for any community as the sharing of its story. "A story offers a point of view of the world. It gives the listeners an 'onlook,' a perspective."[62] The living

[60]Ibid.

[61]Miller, 18.

[62]Ibid., 118.

of the story gives rise to theology (critical thinking on the meaning of the story) and to ethics (common values and actions). Miller agrees with Westerhoff that worship is formative, but he suggests that education in worship must be intentional.

Summary

These three scholars propose their own models for education or catechesis, but they share some common elements that are consistent with the review of ancient literature. Inherent within a covenant community is the concern that its young and naive learn their story, think critically on that story as regards their lives, and find meaning in the cultic symbols of the community.

Conclusions

Summary of Theology

This study has developed the following proposals in presenting a theological perspective for the project.

1. Children of the church share with all children the status of being in the kingdom of God, but children of the church differ from those outside the church. Because they are physically born into a special relationship with a covenant community, they are nurtured into faith through a developmental process within the community rather than facing a crisis conversion to enter that community. Any process of initiation for children of the church must take into consideration their milieu of the community.

2. The status of children of the church can best be compared to the catechumens of the early church. They have experienced conversion through a lifelong process of formation in the Christian family and the church. They are not entering the community as strangers to Christ and his body, but they are seeking a way to be fully incorporated into the fellowship of the community as adults. They are seeking a baptism that is consistent with what they have become. Of all terminology utilized by the early church, the term "catechumen" best describes this status within the community.

3. If children of the church can be described as catechumens, then insight into catechesis should be sought through the study of identified catechetical passages of the New Testament and the study of the catechisms of the early church.

4. The study of catechetical material reveals that the early church was concerned that its catechumens appropriate the story of salvation, learn the behavior of the community as it grows out of the story, and recognize the connection of the liturgy of the church to reality of God.

5. The abandonment of the catechumenate should not be a deterrent to the church's commitment to catechesis, but rather the failure of the current system of incorporation and the renewed interest of Christian scholars in catechesis should provide motivation for the church to seek once again an intentional method of catechesis.

Suggestions for Catechesis

for Churches of Christ

The intended result of this theological overview is to establish a framework

for a curriculum of catechetical study that will be helpful to children of Churches

of Christ who are seeking initiation into the full fellowship of the church. As is

evident in the preceeding discussion, the catechesis of children is a lifelong process

that cannot be reduced to one brief course of study. The purpose of such a

curriculum is to build on the children's lifetime of experience within the

community and their Christian families and to offer a time of transition to deeper

critical thinking about their faith and its implications. The presentation of a

program of faith decisions is also the church's way of telling the children that the

community judges them as prepared candidates for baptism. To facilitate that

project, the following suggestions are offered.

Terminology

The vocabulary of a community is a treasured possession of that

community. At times it is more difficult to change vocabulary than to change

form. Recognizing that such words as catechumens and catechism are strange to

the ears of members of Churches of Christ, the terms children of the church and

faith decisions are proposed in their stead. Although these terms do not convey

exactly the same meaning as catechumens and catechesis, they capture the essence

of the pursuit of providing a meaningful Christian initiation. Perhaps in years to

come other terms will be discovered that are more accurate, or perhaps the

church will become more comfortable with the initiation of its children and once again accept the ancient vocabulary.

Involvement of Parents

Most Christian parents recognize their responsibility in passing their faith to their children, but many parents have grown to rely on the organized teaching program of the church to meet that need. We cannot assume that such an approach is effective. James Thompson, after examining the New Testament passages relevant to the nurture of children's faith, states,

> Although children have a place in the community, the task of instruction rests with fathers. In the early church, there is no record of educational institutions established by the church for the sake of children. The church provided training programs for new converts, but not for children. The home was apparently the place where the faith was communicated from one generation to the next.[63]

If the church chooses to participate in the education of children, and if the church chooses to be involved in assisting children in their preparation for Christian initiation, the church must also involve the parents in the process. In his survey of the history of catechism among the Reformation churches, Richard Osmer notes,

> Typically, parents bore primary responsibility for teaching the catechism to their children . . . During home visitation by church officers or the minister, the progress of children in learning the catechism regularly was checked, and parents were held accountable if their children seemed to be neglecting this duty . . . In order to make sure that parents had sufficient understanding to carry out their teaching role, ministers were to preach and teach regularly on the material covered in the catechism.[64]

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[63]Thompson, 24.

[64]Osmer, 56-57.

Any approach to catechesis should invite the parents to be involved and enable them to perform their task. Even as the families of the church are reflecting the varied structures of families in the surrounding society, parental involvement must be a goal.

Threefold Agenda

Throughout this study a threefold approach to catechesis has been proposed. Since the goal of the project is to produce a curriculum that can be presented to adolescent children of the church within a reasonable time frame, some limitations must be imposed on the material to be included. Based on the biblical texts and ancient catechisms, the curriculum will be structured to include story, ethics, and liturgy. The hope that lies in such an approach is that the formative aspects of story and liturgy will resonate with the early years of the children while the educational aspects of ethics and critical thinking on the meaning of liturgy will be appropriate for the adolescent years. A brief curriculum can only aspire to bring some resolution to a childhood of nurture and meaning to the initiation that lies ahead.

Catechesis

Catechesis implies that there is a body of objective information to be communicated from one generation to the next. That information is not to be memorized only, but to be internalized in such a way as to shape lives. Catechesis can employ a variety of learning strategies, but its goal is not self-discovery. The goal is to be shaped by a story outside oneself.

Images of Baptism

This study has proceeded under the assumption that believer's baptism is the crucial step of initiation into the full fellowship of the church. We have also observed that the image of crisis conversion with baptism interpreted in terms of death, burial and resurrection does not fully represent the situation of a child of the church. Dramatic conversion implies dramatic change, yet for a child nurtured in the faith, disciplined in behaviors, and inculturated in the story, the change experienced following baptism falls short of drama portrayed in our teaching. If this is the only picture of baptism we have to offer our children, then we are preparing them for a clash between expectation and experience; and, in effect, we are devaluing their baptism. We must ask the question, "Are there other biblical images of baptism other than death to sin and resurrection to a new life?"

The answer to the question is that there are indeed many images found in the pages of scripture that give meaning to the act of baptism. G. R. Beasley-Murray lists the following:[65]

> forgiveness of sin - Acts 2:38
> cleansing from sin - Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:11
> union with Christ - Gal. 3:27
> union with Christ in death and resurrection - Rom. 6:3ff
> sharing of risen life - Rom. 6:1-11
> participation in Christ's sonship - Gal. 3:26f
> consecration to God - 1 Cor. 6:11
> membership in the church - 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27-29
> possession of the Spirit - Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 6:11;12:13
> new life in the Spirit (regeneration) - Titus 3:5; John 3:5
> grace to live according to the will of God - Rom. 6:1ff; Col. 3:1ff

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[65]Beasley-Murray, 264.

deliverance from evil powers - Col. 1:13
inheritance of Kingdom of God - John 3:5
pledge of the resurrection of the body - Eph. 1:13f; 4:30.

Another list of images is presented in the document *Baptism, Eucharist and*

Ministry -- Commission on Faith and Order.[66]

> Baptism is the sign of new life through Jesus Christ. It unites the
> one baptized with Christ and with his people. The New Testament
> scriptures and the liturgy of the Church unfold the meaning of
> baptism in various images which express the riches of Christ and the
> gifts of his salvation. These images are sometimes linked with the
> symbolic uses of water in the Old Testament. Baptism is participa-
> tion in Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12); a
> washing away of sin (1 Cor. 6:11); a new birth (John 3:5); an enlight-
> enment by Christ (Eph. 5:14); a reclothing in Christ (Gal. 3:27); a
> renewal by the Spirit (Titus 3:5); the experience of salvation from
> the Flood (I Peter 3:20-21); an exodus from bondage (I Cor. 10:1-2)
> and a liberation into a new humanity in which barriers of division
> whether of sex or race or social status are transcended (Gal. 3:27-28;
> 1 Cor. 12:13). The images are many, but the reality is one.

Another significant list is given by Susanne Johnson.[67] She states that through

baptism we are

1.   united with Christ and his work and given a share in the
      ministry of reconciliation and redemption (2 Cor. 5:18);

2.   incorporated into Christ's body on earth, the church (1 Cor.
      12:13);

3.   given the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14);

4.   forgiven of sins, cleansed, with the image of God restored
      (Acts 22:16);

5.   reborn from the womb of God (2 Cor. 5:17).

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[66]Commission on Faith and Order World Council of Churches (1982), "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry," in *Creeds of the Churches*, 3rd edition, ed. John H. Leith (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 606-607.

[67]Johnson, 53-54.

To the question, "What does baptism mean?" William Willimon offers the answer, "Everything that water means!"[68]

The truth of the images of baptism rests not in any one image nor in the total of all of them. In our attempts to explain baptism totally, we sometimes give the impression to our children that the effect of baptism is dependent on the correct understanding and actions of the one being baptized. We forget that baptism, like salvation in general, is essentially something God does. The image we choose to understand the effect of baptism can be one or several among the many. The truth is that as we grow into our baptism we will find new meaning in each of the images. The act of baptism is unifying. The variety of images of baptism speaks to the individual. We owe it to our children to allow them to hear all images and to appropriate those images most meaningful to their lives.

Conclusion

This theological perspective has been an attempt to work within the Restoration tradition on a problem seldom addressed by Churches of Christ. In a time when Churches of Christ seem to be losing more and more of their young people to other traditions and to the world itself, it is the time to ask serious questions about the theology of children and the initiation process meant to bring children into faithful maturity. The desire to hang on to the past is strong. But when the practices of the past have been neither biblically sound nor effective, new questions must be asked.

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[68]Willimon, 94.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The project was initiated in six stages: (1) the selection of a formative/evaluation committee; (2) the evaluation of the theological perspective; (3) the writing of the curriculum based on the revised theological statement; (4) the evaluation of the curriculum by the formative/evaluation committee; (5) the evaluation of the curriculum by a committee of parents and teens; and (6) the final revisions of the curriculum.

Formative/Evaluation Committee

The process of producing a curriculum guided by the proposed theological perspective required the selection of a committee that was qualified in several areas. As the committee would be asked to evaluate both the theological statement and the resulting curriculum from a theological and doctrinal standpoint, it was necessary that committee members display a certain level of theological awareness and expertise. Also, the committee would be assisting in the writing and evaluation of curriculum for eighth-grade students. A knowledge of the developmental issues and training in educational processes would be valuable. A final concern was the religious heritage of the committee members. The

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curriculum was to be produced for children who had been reared in the Churches of Christ, yet it was to be a curriculum that explored new avenues for Churches of Christ. Therefore, committee members who were themselves children of Churches of Christ would bring needed experiences while members who had grown up in other traditions would provide a different perspective that would contribute to the process.

Eleven members of the Glenwood church were asked to serve on the formative/evaluation committee. All eleven contributed to the effort although not every committee member contributed to every phase of the work. All committee members were college graduates, with nine having earned post-graduate degrees. Four committee members held degrees in education, and three had earned degrees in Bible and ministry. The committee also included a physician, a licensed therapist, a man completing his training in counseling and therapy, a youth and family minister, an associate minister, and an elder. Eight members had been children in the Churches of Christ (one at Glenwood); two were reared in the Baptist tradition and one was a child of the Catholic church. Of the eleven, only the one whose childhood years were spent in the Catholic church had received any formal catechism.

The Formative/Evaluation Committee agreed to meet together from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. each Wednesday evening during the months of September and October 1993.

Evaluation of Theological Statement

The first task of the committee was to evaluate the Theological Statement

which was to serve as the basis for the Faith Decisions curriculum. At the initial meeting of the committee on September 1, 1993, copies of the theological statement[1] and an evaluation form[2] were distributed to each committee member. The form was designed to measure the committee's evaluation of the organization, the relevance, the theological integrity, and the practicality of the statement. Also distributed were excerpts of the introductory chapter of the project/thesis detailing the assumptions and definitions utilized in the writing of the theology.[3] The committee was then introduced to the general nature and mechanics of the project. They suggested the second meeting be utilized in discussing their first impressions of the theological statement, with their evaluations being presented at the third meeting.

Writing the Curriculum

Beginning with its fourth meeting, the Formative/Evaluation Committee assisted with the initial stages of the writing of the curriculum. While the scope of the curriculum was determined by the Theological Statement, the structure of the lessons was yet to be decided. The committee offered suggestions as to learning activities that would be appropriate for the material and the theology. Incorporating these suggestions, the material was divided into thirteen lessons, and preliminary drafts of the first four lessons were presented to the committee

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[1] The theological statement is included in this document as Chapter II.

[2] A copy of this evaluation form is printed in Appendix III.

[3] This information is located on pages 15-18 of this document.

members for their approval and modifications. This process occupied the committee during the remainder of its meetings.

Committee Evaluation of the Curriculum

The completed curriculum was presented to the committee on November 17, 1993. They were asked to read through the entire curriculum and submit evaluation forms individually.[4] The form was structured to evaluate the curriculum theologically, educationally, sociologically, and psychologically. The twelve statements on the form requested a response on a Likert Scale ranging from one to five, with one representing strong disagreement and five indicating strong agreement.

Parent and Teen Evaluation

On December 8, twenty-one parents and teenagers gathered to evaluate the Faith Decisions curriculum. All of the teenagers had participated in past Faith Decisions classes, and the parents had been involved in the opening ceremony of the previous curriculum. The group first listened to a brief presentation of the theological basis for the Faith Decision program and for the new curriculum. The organizing principles of the curriculum were discussed, and the preliminary events of the class (e.g., parents orientation, opening banquet) were introduced. The most obvious change, the inclusion of parents in the class, was announced and discussed by the group. Each participant was then given a copy of the student journal. The group was led through the first lesson as a

[4]For evaluation form, see Appendix IV.

means of explaining the various components that comprise each lesson. Following the detailed examination of lesson one, the teaching goals and some highlights of the entire curriculum were discussed to give both a sample of activities and the scope of the program.

Based on this introduction to the proposed new curriculum, the parents and teens were asked to complete evaluation forms.[5] Both the parent and the teen evaluation forms were structured to measure primarily how they would respond as participants in the program. They were not asked to evaluate the curriculum from a more technical or philosophical stance, but as consumers indicating their likes and dislikes. The parent form and the teen form were almost identical so that the responses to the same questions could be examined from the perspective of the entire group or as comparisons between the opinions of the teens and the parents. Each form concluded with questions about the preparation for baptism in which each evaluator had participated.

Revision of Curriculum

The final step of the project was the revision of the curriculum based on the evaluations of the Formative/Evaluation Committee and the Parent/Teen group. This process included the correction of mistakes in grammar, syntax and word processing noted by both evaluating groups. Attention was also given to elements of the curriculum that were of concern to the evaluators.

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[5]See Appendices V and VI.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter will include the results culminating from the work of the
Formative/Evaluation Committee and the Parent/Teen Committee. As noted in
the earlier chapter on methodology, the work of the Formative/Evaluation
Committee was divided into three primary tasks: (1) the evaluation of the
theological statement; (2) consultation in the formation of the curriculum arising
from the theological statement; and (3) evaluation of the completed curriculum.
This chapter will report the results of these three tasks, followed by the results of
an evaluation of the curriculum by a Parent/Teen Committee.

Evaluation of the Theological Statement

At its first meeting, the Formative/Evaluation Committee received copies of
the theological statement and an evaluation form with instructions to complete the
form within two weeks. Prior to the return of the forms, the committee met to
discuss their first impressions of the theological statement and to request
clarification of any concepts within the statement. The form itself presented four
aspects of the statement, allowing the committee to respond on a five point Likert
scale. The form also provided space for comments by committee members.

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Therefore, the results of the first task of the committee will be reported in three stages: (1) the initial impressions and concerns of the committee in regard to the theological statement, (2) the tabulated results of the committee's evaluation of the statement, and (3) final committee comments about the statement.

Initial Impressions of Committee

The discussion in the second committee meeting revolved around two observations and two concerns. Having read the theological statement, some of the committee members observed that this approach represented a change in the basic approach to initiation of children of Churches of Christ. They reflected on their own experiences as children of the church in which guilt had played a major role in the process of initiation. Committee members observed that while the Glenwood church (as well as other Churches of Christ) had moved away from the use of guilt as the primary motivation in initiation, no real theology or philosophy had taken its place. The noted result was the confusion of both parents and children as they approached this step. One particularly poignant statement was made by a committee member who had been a child in the Glenwood church during the 1970's. She spoke of the large group of young people who were teenagers together in the Glenwood church and how, to her knowledge, only a handful were now faithful in the church. She attributed this result in part to an ill-defined sense of identity emerging from the confusion surrounding baptism of children of the church. Her statement encouraged the committee to believe a change in the process of initiation, even though it represented a major step in

redefining a longstanding practice of Churches of Christ, must be pursued.

Secondly, the committee observed that to define further and to structure the initiation of children of the church was not a biblical process. The committee member who made this observation wanted the entire committee to be fully aware that the project was operating outside the avowed intentions of Churches of Christ to adhere to biblical example or command in its practices -- especially in the realm of initiation. This observation was discussed, but the committee was not deterred from the task. They cited the lack of biblical precedent for the baptism of those in the situation of children of the church and the importance of initiation as a process that addressed spiritual realities in their lives.

The first concern of the committee was the general feeling that a Faith Decisions Class intended for children of the church might tend to exclude some young believers. As the discussion of this concern progressed, it became apparent that the committee understood the program to include only those children from two parent families with both parents being very active in the church. Reassurances were given that the program would make no effort to exclude teenagers by attempting to judge the worthiness of families to participate. All children in the sphere of the church would be welcomed. Children from single-parent homes or children with only one parent in the church would not be discri-minated against. In the rarer event of children who had no parents in the church, mentors could be appointed to serve as spiritual parents for the process. These arrangements seemed to address the concern of the committee members.

The second concern centered around a particular suggestion made within

the theological statement. A question arose over the meaning of the following

section:

> Since the decision is a result of an ongoing conversation between
> church and catechumen, the process of deciding can be trusted to
> the church as well as the individual. To ask the church, "Do you
> think I am ready for baptism," becomes a valid inquiry for a
> catechumen whose faith is acknowledged and who has been nurtured
> in an atmosphere of belonging. For the church to have the
> conviction to answer "No" as well as "Yes" to that question would
> show that the church has accepted its role of nurturing and has
> accepted the act of baptism as the communal event it is.

Some on the committee interpreted this to be a formal process in which the

church would vote on whether a child would or would not be baptized. The

proposal actually describes a more informal process where a child and/or the

parents of the child seek the guidance and opinion of respected church leaders in

reaching their decision about baptism. The wording of the theological statement

was emended to reflect this intended meaning.

Tabulated Results of the Evaluation

At the third meeting of the Formative/Evaluation Committee, members

submitted their written evaluations of the theological statement. As indicated

above, the evaluation consisted of four questions intended to measure their

response to the (1) organization of the statement, (2) the relevance of the

statement to the situation of children within the Glenwood church, (3) the

theological integrity of the statement, and (4) the practicality of the statement as

the basis for a curriculum. The responses of the committee were recorded on a

five-point Likert scale, with one representing strong disagreement and five

indicating strong agreement. The scores assigned the four questions were averaged for the group. The results are reported in Table 1. These results were interpreted as an endorsement for the continuation of the project based on the theological statement (with minor revisions suggested below). The high score given the practicality of the statement as a basis for a Faith Decisions curriculum reflected the overwhelming opinion of the committee that such a curriculum is needed. The lowest score of the evaluation was given to the integrity of the theology. This again reflected some question as to whether there is much biblical information that is directly applicable to the subject.

Table 1

Evaluation of the Theological Statement

Question	Average	High	Low
1. Organization and clarity of statement.	4.33	5	4
2. Accuracy of statement.	4.33	5	3
3. Integrity of theology.	4.16	5	3
4. Practicality of statement.	4.83	5	4

Final Comments on the Statement

The committee offered both written and verbal comments as the evaluation forms were collected. Some of the written comments referred to typographical

and stylistic errors within the statement, and these revisions were made in the statement. Other comments are summarized below.

1. The case for the shared situation of children of Churches of Christ is overstated and does not allow for individualism.

2. The indictment of Religious Education is not well-supported and is not convincing.

3. This approach for a curriculum preparing children for initiation might exclude some children whose situation within the church differs from the norm.

4. Some of the scriptures referenced in describing the status of children of the church were stretched to address the situation.

5. Some attempt should be made to provide parents with the theological basis for this program before asking their children to participate in it.

The committee agreed to incorporate these comments into the process of developing the curriculum.

Formation of the Curriculum

The committee understood that the writing of the curriculum was primarily the responsibility of the one conducting the project. However, the committee did contribute to the formation of the curriculum in three important areas. First of all, they noted the need for three elements within the program: (1) an orientation session for parents, (2) parental involvement in the class sessions, and (3) a closing ceremony to balance the opening banquet that had been conducted in previous Faith Decisions classes. The orientation session was suggested so that parents would understand the entire process and be able both to encourage their child and to participate in the program. The session would also be enabling for the parents

in that they would not feel threatened by the class but would understand that the intent of the program was to help them succeed in their role. As the committee discussed how parents could become more involved in the process of the class rather than simply in the opening banquet as in previous years, the suggestion was made that the curriculum be written for families instead of for the teenagers only. By including families, the goal of parental participation in catechism set forth in the theological statement would be more nearly met. Finally, the committee recommended that a closing ceremony be conducted in the presence of the entire congregation. This ceremony would serve as a symbol of the changing role of the maturing children and would give recognition for the effort the families had exerted in such an important task.

The second area in which the committee contributed to the formation of the curriculum was in the design of the format that each of the lessons would follow. The theological statement had suggested that the lessons would be based on the concept of story informing and forming ethics and liturgy. In preliminary discussions, the committee had assumed that the first few lessons would be devoted to the Christian story with subsequent lessons devoted to ethics and then to liturgy. One member observed that a better approach would be to utilize the model of I Peter in which portions of the story are applied directly to ethics or worship. The committee adopted a format in which each lesson begins with a portion of the story followed by a study of the ethics and the liturgy directly suggested by that portion of the story. Another observation was that the curriculum would be by its nature very objective. Some members felt that a class

exploring such an emotional subject as initiation should provide time for reflection. To meet this need, the committee recommended that each lesson include a journal section in which the teens and parents could write their personal feelings about the study they had completed. Finally, a summary section was added in which families were to be asked to summarize each lesson in a short sentence addressing a direct question about the lesson. This summary section would serve to preserve the catechetical form of the Reformation tradition and could be utilized by families to recall the important information they had processed.

The last area in which the committee directly contributed to the curriculum formation was in reviewing the rough drafts of the first four lessons. Led particularly by those members with backgrounds in education, the committee restructured objectives and strategies so that they were worded properly and achieved the purposes intended. This activity consumed four committee meetings, and it was an exercise in exactness and direction.

Evaluation of the Curriculum Outline

The curriculum outline was completed in the first week of November and distributed to the Formative/Evaluation Committee. Included with the outline was a copy of the first lesson as it would appear in the student journal. Along with the curriculum was an evaluation form comprising eleven statements designed to measure the theological, educational, sociological and psychological integrity of the curriculum. Committee members were asked to respond to the statements on a

five-point Likert scale, with one representing strong disagreement and five indicating strong agreement. Table 2 presents the results of this evaluation.

One thing should be noted in analyzing the results of the evaluation. The committee conducting the evaluation is recognized as a biased group in that they had already invested personally in the formation of the curriculum. However, their evaluation is significant because the committee was recruited based on the members' expertise in specific areas, and the evaluation reflects their judgments based on these skills. Even though the committee was involved in the initial stages of the curriculum development, their involvement served as much to create certain expectations in their areas of interest as it did to produce bias toward the completed product. Probably the greatest factor affecting the scoring in this evaluation was the relationship of the committee members with the one who produced the curriculum. For this reason, the average scores were higher than might be expected in an unbiased situation. The evaluation is more beneficial when one notices the variances. As will also be the case with the evaluation by the parents and teens, the evaluation is better utilized in determining specific areas of the curriculum that are in need of more attention than in judging the overall effectiveness of the curriculum itself.

All but two of the areas scored on the evaluation form averaged 4.5 or higher. These high scores do indicate that most of the expectations of the committee were met. The area receiving the lowest average score was the statement concerning the age-appropriateness of the curriculum for eighth-grade

Table 2

Evaluation of the Curriculum
(Formative/Evaluation Committee)

Questions		Average	High	Low
1.	The goals of the curriculum are consistent with the basic concepts of the theological statement. (Theological)	4.83	5	4
2.	The teaching goals of the curriculum are well defined. (Educational)	5.00	5	5
3.	The teaching objectives are well defined and attainable. (Educational)	4.66	5	4
4.	The strategies are useful in achieving the teaching objectives. (Educational)	4.50	5	3
5.	The curriculum is consistent with my understanding of Biblical teaching. (Theological)	4.83	5	4
6.	The curriculum is age-appropriate for eighth-grade students. (Psychological)	3.83	5	3
7.	The curriculum is not gender specific. (Sociological)	4.83	5	4
8.	The curriculum is not biased toward race or ethnicity. (Sociological)	4.33	5	2
9.	The organization is logical and easily understood. (Educational)	4.50	5	4
10.	The curriculum should provide an interesting learning experience for families. (Educational)	4.50	5	4
11.	The curriculum will benefit families of the Glenwood Church of Christ. (Educational/ Theological)	4.66	5	4

students. As revealed in the comments, this concern did not reflect a problem with the content as much as with the strategies. Some members wondered if the strategies were too dependent on the willingness of the teens to share with their parents and if they required too high a level of cognitive skills. The recommendation was not to alter goals or objectives but to continue searching for more age-appropriate strategies that achieve the objectives as outlined.

The other score below 4.5 was assigned the statement concerning race or ethnicity. While most committee members did not detect a prejudice within the curriculum, two members noted that Faith Decisions was obviously written for white, middle-class families. This bias does not present a problem with the current Glenwood church, but it should be considered in the future if the composition of the church were to change. This would also be a factor for any other churches who might choose to consider Faith Decisions in implementing their own curriculum.

The comment section of the evaluation elicited many positive comments about the effective manner in which the curriculum reflected the work in the theological statement. Some suggested that the basic curriculum could be reworked slightly and be offered as a course of renewal for those who have long been members of the community. Negative comments centered primarily on the adult nature of some of the strategies (as noted above) and on a concern that some lessons might be too lengthy. These are concerns that must be evaluated as the curriculum is taught for the first time. As with most curricula, much will depend on the efforts of the instructor to involve the class in the strategies and to

translate some of the more difficult theological concepts into the language of the intended students.

Evaluation by Parents and Teens

The evaluation forms submitted by parents and teens measured their responses in three areas: (1) to the curriculum as a whole (questions 1-4); (2) to specific elements within the curriculum (questions 5a - 5f; 5g for parents); and (3) to what they liked most and least about the curriculum. In addition, questions 6 and 7 requested information about their own baptism and the preparation they received before baptism. Aside from the final questions concerning personal information about baptism, the responses were given on a five-point Likert, scale with one representing the most negative response and five indicating the most positive.

Based on the tabulated results of the parent and teen evaluation forms, the following observations can be made:

1. The overall scores were high. The average score of all evaluations was 4.41, with the lowest average score on any one statement being 3.375. This can be attributed in part to the relationship of the parents and teens with the writer of the curriculum. Therefore, any significant conclusions drawn from the surveys should be based on the variances within the scores rather than the relatively high marks given all aspects of the program.

2. The teens scored most categories lower than their parents did with the exceptions of equal scores assigned to participation (2e) and closing

Table 3

Parent/Teen Evaluation of the Curriculum

	Questions	Average	Parents	Teens
1.	Need for curriculum like Faith Decisions in Churches of Christ	4.70	4.83	4.50
2.	The curriculum as a whole . . . a. Interest level	4.35	4.66	3.88
	b. Difficulty	4.05	4.416	3.50
	c. Relevance	4.60	4.66	4.50
	d. Organization	4.55	4.75	4.25
	e. Participation	4.75	4.75	4.75
3.	Comparison with own preparation for baptism	4.20	4.416	3.88
4.	Participants' view of program as threatening or enabling	4.40	4.416	4.375
5.	Specifics within curriculum . . . a. Parents and teens together	4.00	4.417	3.375
	b. Opening banquet	4.75	4.667	4.875
	c. Letter about faith	4.60	4.833	4.25
	d. Closing ceremony	4.25	4.25	4.25
	e. Summary statements	4.30	4.417	4.125
	f. Journal	4.25	4.333	4.125
	g. Parent Orientation		4.833	

ceremony (5d) and the higher score assigned to the opening banquet (5b).

The higher scores recorded on the parent evaluations might be attributed

to their perception of a greater need for such a program (4.83 to 4.5) or to

a natural tendency of teens to be more critical of church programs. Of

course, another consideration is that the Faith Decisions program could be

slanted more toward the parents' point of view than the perspective of the

teens.

3. Two areas of the curriculum were scored at or below 3.5 on the teen

evaluation forms. The first of these indicated that the teens were

concerned that the curriculum might be too demanding (3.5). This

observation is supported by some of the comments recorded on the forms

(see summary below). The area of the curriculum receiving the lowest

score was the proposal that parents participate in the class with the teens.

Though it is not surprising that young adolescents would register concern

about working with their parents in a class environment, the low score

indicates that this is an area that should be carefully evaluated by those

supervising the curriculum in the future.

4. The areas of greatest concern registered by the parents were in the

inclusion of a closing ceremony during a Sunday morning worship service

(4.25), the use of summary statements (4.417) and journals as strategies

(4.333), the degree of difficulty of the curriculum (4.416) and the feeling of

being threatened rather than enabled by the curriculum (4.416). This final

concern can probably be tied to the parents shared concern with the teens that the parents' participation in the class might be difficult (4.417).

5. On a positive note, the teens (3.88) saw the new curriculum as less of an improvement over their previous preparation for baptism than did the parents (4.416) over their own preparation. All but one of the teens in the evaluation process had participated in an earlier curriculum of Faith Decisions, and their response can be measured as an endorsement of the effectiveness of such programs as this. In particular, the teens gave their highest score (4.875) to the opening banquet, an element that was carried over from the previous program.

6. A final vote of confidence by the evaluators can be noted in the overall score of 4.75 on their desire to participate in this new curriculum as measured in 2e on the evaluation forms.

The evaluation forms also provided space for both the parents and the teens to indicate what they liked most and what they liked least about the new curriculum. The most appreciated aspect by the teens was the more detailed and biblically oriented nature of the curriculum. Two teens also expressed appreciation for the opportunity to work through the material with their parents. Parents most often mentioned their appreciation for the opportunity for families to work together. Parents were also appreciative of the exploration of the basic beliefs providing a strong foundation for both teens and parents. Two parents mentioned the relevance of this approach for the situation of children of the church.

The concern which the teens expressed most often was the participation of their parents in the class. They also wondered if the curriculum might be too ambitious, especially for eighth-grade students. The parents most often expressed a dislike of small groups and encouraged that at least two families work together as often as possible. This concern seemed to center more in the prospect of being forced to share rather than in working with their own children. One parent objected to the "process orientation" of the curriculum and felt that the curriculum should stress the lost condition of those outside Christ and the church.

In general, the results of the parent/teen evaluation process were encouraging. The concerns that were registered in both the numerical scales and the written comments will be addressed in the chapter "Implications."

Revision of the Curriculum

The primary work of revision of the curriculum was in the area of correcting mistakes in grammar, syntax and word processing. However, an effort was also made to adjust some of the strategies of the curriculum so that families might work with other families as often as possible.

CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This project began with the analysis of a problem that exists within the

fellowship of Churches of Christ. This problem was identified as the lack of

definition concerning the status of children of the church and how this uncertainty

affects the process of bringing children of the church into its full fellowship. The

study continued by avowing the innocence of all children while also recognizing a

difference existing between children of the church and children outside the sphere

of the church. The difference is community. Those who are children of the

church live within the boundaries of the community and are nurtured and shaped

from birth to assume their roles as adult members of that community. The model

for their initiation into the full fellowship of the community must, by its very

nature, differ from the model of initiation for those who come into the community

from outside.

The project continued by searching for a model for initiation that

recognized the communal status of the children and discovered in the early church

the concept of the catechumenate. Catechumens were community members who

had not yet entered the full fellowship of the community. Ancient catechisms

were surveyed to provide a framework for modern catechetical instruction with the

result being the adoption of a threefold structure of story, ethics, and liturgy. Utilizing this structure, a curriculum was developed for children of the church in their eighth-grade year (12 - 13 years of age) to be studied together with their parents in a classroom setting. The completed curriculum was then evaluated by a committee representing the church and by a group of parents and teens.

The end of this project is but the beginning of another. As the curriculum is implemented within the Glenwood Church of Christ, it will continue to be evaluated and revised. At this point, however, some implications of the study can be projected.

Need for a New Model of Initiation

The results of the evaluations by both the Formative/Evaluation Committee and the Parent/Teen Committee indicate that there is a need for a more intentional and theologically valid approach to initiation of children within Churches of Christ. Through written evaluation and through verbal (often emotional) comments, those who have been children of the church expressed their frustration with a pattern of initiation that was neither realistic for their situation nor deeply meaningful for their lives. The evaluations also demonstrated that members within Churches of Christ can comprehend a new model which is not explicitly outlined in the New Testament but is rooted in the biblical faith. A cautionary note was sounded by one parent in the evaluation process who called for a return to emphasizing the lost condition of the church's adolescents. This serves as a reminder that those who wish to implement a new model for initiation of children must be careful and thorough in communicating the theology and the

reasoning behind their proposed approach. The intended result of helping children enter a covenant community of faith in a well-ordered and purposeful manner depends on the community's ability to recognize their transition with enthusiastic support.

A Viable Model for Initiation

The evaluation process also revealed that the Faith Decisions curriculum and its accompanying theological statement present a viable model for initiation of children of the Glenwood Church of Christ. Because of the autonomy of congregations and the variety that exists within the Restoration tradition, one cannot assume that Faith Decisions represents an acceptable approach for all Churches of Christ. However, those churches who perceive a conflict between the model of crisis conversion and the life experience of their children can find in Faith Decisions impetus for their own evaluation of the initiation of children into full fellowship.

Effect of Faith Decisions on Ministry to Children

As the model for Faith Decisions was developed, its effect on the ministry of families and of the church to children became apparent. If a developmental or communal approach is adopted, the early experiences of children and their families must conform to the message which they will hear when the children reach adolescence. The congregation as a whole, and parents of young children in particular, must embrace a theology of children that provides the basis for the church's ministry to children. Otherwise, the children will be exposed to conflicting messages. The status of children of the church and the process by

which they will enter the full fellowship of the church should be explained to parents of young children so that the parents can work with the church in nurturing children to maturity. The programs of the church should be informed by the same theology so that in the educational experiences of early childhood children of the church receive the foundation to hear and understand what it means to grow up in a faith community.

Shape of the Baptismal Ceremony

The Faith Decisions curriculum creates certain expectations surrounding the initiation of children of the church into the full fellowship of the community of faith. Since baptism is seen as the focal point of the initiatory process, many of these expectations will center on that rite. If a church employs the Faith Decisions curriculum or a similar program of preparation, that church must shape the baptismal ceremony so that it is congruent with what the child has been taught. Every effort must be made to have the ceremony reflect the significance of the event in the life of the child and the life of the community as promised in the teaching. This significance should be apparent both in the commentary surrounding the event and in the manner in which the baptism is conducted. Ample time must be devoted to the ceremony and to the preparation of both the candidate and the congregation. The congregation should be encouraged to respond in a formal act of welcoming its newest member into full fellowship. Perhaps nothing can more quickly undermine the efforts of bringing a child of the church into a full and productive adult life of faith than a hurried, ill-prepared baptismal service that is quickly passed over by the church. To adopt a

community model of initiation implies that the community must fulfill its responsibility in initiating.

Incorporation into the Adult Community

If baptism marks the beginning of a person's life as a full member of the community of faith, then the community must be prepared to offer full rights and responsibilities to that new member. While it is true in one sense that the new member is a child once again, it is equally true that a new status of maturity has been granted. As members of the community, young Christians must be fully incorporated. Otherwise, the promise of full fellowship is hollow. Young Christians, particularly those who have been children of the church, must be included in all congregational processes. Too often young people are baptized and included on the church roll but passed over when the time comes to participate in the selection of elders and deacons, submit involvement commitments, sign pledge cards, lead in worship, serve on committees, visit the sick, and take part in the many other tasks of the church. To promise full fellowship is to open all doors.

Continued Revision of the Curriculum

As the Faith Decisions curriculum is taught, it will continue to undergo refinement. Its founding cry was to bring the good news of God's new covenant to the reality of the lives of children of the church. As it encounters that reality, the curriculum must remain pliable to the lives of the children rather than forcing them to accept the curriculum's perspective of their lives. Another concern is that the curriculum was written for use by the current ministry staff of the Glenwood

Church. If it is to continue to be utilized, a more complete set of instructions and guides for the teacher should be developed.

Conclusion

As this project closes, the Glenwood church stands ready to implement the Faith Decisions curriculum as outlined in Appendix I. It is our sincere prayer that we stand within the will of God and that our children will lead us to even greater awareness of what the community of faith can be and can accomplish.

APPENDIX I

CURRICULUM OUTLINE FOR FAITH DECISIONS

Introduction

Faith Decisions is a course of study designed for families of the Glenwood
Church of Christ. The intended participants in the program are eighth-grade
students (thirteen to fourteen years of age) and their parents. In particular, the
course of study was written for those eighth-grade adolescents who were born into
Christian families and have been reared in the nurture of the church. The
purpose of the curriculum is to inform and to encourage the decision of these
young people to enter the full fellowship of the church through the act of baptism.
The curriculum is *not* designed as a method to lead one from outside the church
into Christ and his fellowship; rather, it is intended to enable those who have been
coming to Christ all their lives to make informed and meaningful decisions. The
curriculum was written to be taught in thirteen one- to one-and-a-half-hour weekly
sessions.

The concepts, objectives and strategies of the curriculum were written from
the perspective established in the preceding document. Those interested in the
theological basis for the curriculum are referred to the second chapter, "Theology."
The basic premise of the curriculum is that the Christian Story shapes and gives
meaning to ethics and liturgy. Since the curriculum was written primarily for

children of the church, it was written with the assumption that the students know the basic Christian story, possess character shaped by a Christian family and the community of faith, and are acquainted with the liturgy of the church.

The design of the curriculum assumes that it will be taught by a minister, an elder, or another who is well-informed theologically and highly esteemed by the church. Choosing such a high-profile personality as the instructor will communicate to the families that the church values the decisions the young people are being called to face. Also, the curriculum does not offer detailed information on important teachings of the Christian faith that will be mentioned either in the curriculum or questioned by the class. The instructor must be one, who through personal study and faith, can address such issues competently.

<div align="center">Curriculum Outline Structure</div>

The following outline of the Faith Decisions curriculum includes (1) a proposal for a Parents' Orientation Session; (2) suggestions for opening and closing ceremonies; (3) a list of the main concepts or teaching goals of the lessons; and (4) lesson plans for each of the thirteen lessons in the program of instruction. It was from this outline that the student journals were developed. The teacher will find the outline helpful in class preparation since the outline also includes suggested lecture notes and some help in making transitions from one portion of the lesson to the next.

<div align="center">Curriculum Structure</div>

Most of the lessons within the curriculum contain six elements: Getting Ready, Story, Ethics, Liturgy, Summary Statement, and Journal.

Getting Ready: This section informs the class members of the assignment to be completed before attending class. Most assignments prepare the students to work with the story section of the lesson.

Story: Each lesson is built upon a portion of the Christian Story. The story begins with creation and continues through key events in the Old and New Testaments. The story also includes the history of the church with a special look at the history of Churches of Christ. The final lesson offers a glimpse into the future story of God's people. These portions of the Christian Story do not serve simply as illustration for the lesson, but rather they demonstrate that the daily lives and worship of Christians grow directly from the story.

Ethics: The ethics section asks what the story of the lesson has to say about how a Christian relates to the others around him/her. In the student journal, this section is labeled, "Our Life Together."

Liturgy: The liturgy section asks what the story of the lesson has to say in a Christian's relationship with God. This includes acts of personal piety, corporate worship and doctrinal considerations. In the student journal, this sections is labeled, "Our Life with God."

Summary Statement: Each of the first eleven lessons ends with a question that requests a brief statement (one or two sentences) summarizing the main concept of that lesson. The purpose of the summary statements is two-fold. First of all, the statements bring closure to the lessons and reinforce the messages of the lessons. Secondly, the summary statements reflect the catechetical nature of the curriculum. By reading all eleven questions and

summary statements, a family can progress through the basics of the Christian faith and story. This is the intent of the exercise at the conclusion of Lesson XII.

Journal: The journal is an optional activity provided for the class members to work on privately. Suggested topics for the journal section primarily explore how a student feels about issues within the lesson. These writings are never shared with the class. The family share their journals only through a mutual decision.

PARENTS' ORIENTATION

The success of Faith Decisions depends on the support of the parents.

Parents will participate in the program only if they understand its purposes and

realize its significance for their children. In addition, some parents might feel

threatened or inadequate in their discussion of spiritual matters. In order for

parents to be well-informed and confident in their participation, the teacher may

schedule a Parents' Orientation Session. The purpose of the orientation would be

to inform the parents about the program so they may prepare themselves for it

and to assure the parents that the program is designed to enable them to share

confidently in the spiritual development of their children. The orientation session

should be conducted several weeks in advance of the first class session. An

excellent time for most churches to devote to orientation would be the class time

on one or two Wednesday evenings. A one-hour session is sufficient, although two

30-45 minute sessions might be more practical.

Agenda for Parents' Orientation:

1. The teacher will introduce the theology behind the Faith Decisions Class
    using as a guide the chapter on "Theology" in this document.

2. Student Journals will be made available for the parents to examine to become
    familiar with the process to be utilized in the class.

3. The teacher will instruct the parents to write a letter to their child in which
    they pass on their faith. The letter should be written as a couple and should
    contain one specific truth they treasure about God and one specific truth they
    treasure about the church. The teacher might also wish to provide quality
    paper for this letter, explaining that the letter is meant to be a lifelong
    possession of their child. These letters will be read by the parents to the
    child at the opening ceremony.

OPENING CEREMONY

GOALS:

The goals of the opening ceremony are as follows:

1. To emphasize the importance of the Faith Decisions Class and establish the tone for the sessions together
2. To provide parents with a formal opportunity to begin this particular process of passing their faith to the children
3. To provide opportunity for the elders to issue a charge or commission to the class
4. To receive a statement of commitment from the teacher of the class
5. To introduce the class to students and distribute student journals

PREPARATIONS:

1. Make arrangements for a formal evening meal to be held one week before the first class meeting. A private dining room in a local restaurant is recommended. The arrangements for the meal should communicate that Faith Decisions is a program that will be a significant event in the life of the family.

2. Send invitations to all families of eighth-graders in the congregation. The entire family is invited to the meal.

3. If there have been no parent orientation sessions (as described above), send a letter to parents detailing the process of writing a statement of faith to be passed to their children.

4. Invite an elder of the church to attend the meal in order to issue a charge or commission to the class.

5. The teacher should plan to express the level of commitment he is offering to this class.

SCHEDULE FOR MEAL:

1. Welcome
2. Prayer of Thanksgiving
3. Meal
4. Teacher introduces the class, passes out journals, makes statement of commitment.
5. Elder issues charge to the class.

6. Letters of faith are read and presented to children. It is recommended that both parents and the teen stand for the reading of the letter by one of the parents. After the reading, the parents present the letter to the teen.
7. Prayer for wisdom and commitment is led by elder.

TEACHING GOALS

Lesson I: From the story of the creation, we learn that God is Creator of all and that he created humans in his own image. This moves us to praise him and to seek community with him and with each other.

Lesson II: In the story of the Fall, we learn that we humans have chosen to place our will above God's will, and we have suffered the separation from our Creator. We are called to repentance and confession.

Lesson III: As seen in the example of Abraham, God has chosen graciously to count faithfulness and loyalty as the righteousness we cannot attain.

Lesson IV: In the story of the Exodus, God has revealed his will for the behavior of his covenant people.

Lesson V: In the story of the Exodus, we learn that God seeks community with his people through covenant.

Lesson VI: In the story of Jesus, we learn that God has called his people to love.

Lesson VII: In the story of the death of Jesus and in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we learn that God has restored his relationship with humanity through a new covenant.

Lesson VIII: In the story of the beginning of the church, we learn that through the sacrament of baptism God places us in his covenant community.

Lesson IX: Through a study of 1 Peter, we learn the interrelationship of the story, ethics, and liturgy.

Lesson X: Through the story of the church through history, we learn of God's care and preservation of his people.

Lesson XI: Through the story of the American Restoration Movement, we find our identity as the Church of Christ.

Lesson XII: By reviewing the Christian Story and our experiences in the church, we learn of the advantages of growing up in a covenant community.

Lesson XIII: Because of the end of the Christian Story, we celebrate the present.

LESSON I
CREATION

GETTING READY:

After reading Genesis 1 - 2, read and complete the assignment under Story. Parents, think about how the creation accounts in Genesis shape your views of sex and marriage. (See 1:27-28; 2:18-25 in particular. The article on "The Image of God" might also be of help.) Be prepared to share your insights with your child.

STORY:

Objective 1: Class will list probable intentions of the author of the creation accounts found in Genesis 1-2.

   Strategy: An explanation of the assignment will be printed in the journal.

   In most literature, the author writes to address specific needs and to answer specific questions. If we know what those questions are, we can better understand the writing. If we ask the wrong questions, then we will probably misunderstand the writing, or we will be frustrated that our questions were not answered. This is true when we read the Bible. Each passage in the Bible answers some questions, but it does not answer others. After reading Genesis 1 - 2, list in the space below some of the questions you think are being answered in these chapters. Then, list some questions you might have about the beginning of the universe that are not answered in these chapters.

Objective 2: Class will discuss the major messages of the Genesis creation accounts.

   Strategy: Class shares from their lists of questions. Discussion is led by teacher.

   Some questions answered by text:
   Who created everything?
   What is the rank of humans in creation?
   Is creation good or evil?
   What is God's plan for marriage and sexual relationships?
   What is the relationship between God and humans?

Some questions not answered by text:
    When was the world created?
    How long did creation take?
    When did dinosaurs live?
    Is there life on other planets?
    Why are there different races of people?

ETHICS:

Objective 1:   Class members will be able to explain what it means to be created in the image of God.

    Strategy: In single-family groups, class reads and discusses the printed article in journal and the scriptures relating to the image of God.

        The following article is adapted from *Christian Doctrine*, by Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr. (Atlanta: John Knox, 1968), 188-191.

Like all other animals, humans are born, breathe, eat, sleep, eliminate, fight a losing battle with death, and return to dust. What is it that makes them distinctive? Christian theology has answered that it is that they are created "in the image of God" (Gen. 1:26). This phrase has been interpreted in different ways. Three interpretations are frequently heard:
1.   Humans have the ability to reason and act according to what is reasonable.
2.   Humans have a spiritual nature, or a soul.
3.   Humans have the capacity to make moral judgments.

These interpretations are popular, but they are based on self-analysis; they only confirm what we already know. It is difficult for fallen humanity to determine what the "image of God" is.

A better approach than analyzing ourselves is to look to the one man who revealed the image of God throughout his whole life. Scripture describes Jesus as "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15) and "the likeness of God" (2 Cor. 4:4). He is the only man who ever was in fact what the first man refused to be. Pilate spoke more truly than he himself knew when he looked at Jesus and said, "Here is *the* man" (John 19:5).

The image of God can be seen in Jesus in the way he lived. He was the one human who ever lived (1) completely for God and in complete obedience to God, and (2) completely for others and in complete identity with them. To be human in the image of God is

to be humans-in-relationship, humans-in-community. These are the qualities we discover in God. From the beginning, God has been a God seeking man, a covenant-making/community-creating God. We read in Genesis 1:27, "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." This is a poetic way of saying that being made in the image of God is connected with being male *and* female. Humans were created for relationship. No human being can find the fulfillment of humanity in self or for self. Human beings can be human only in relationship with an "other" outside themselves. Only as humans seek relationship with God and with fellow humans can they learn of the image of God.

Objective 2: Class will discuss what bearing the image of God implies for moral behavior.

   Strategy: The teacher will lead a class discussion based on the following questions.

1. Had you ever heard any of the three classical suggestions explaining the "image of God?"
2. What do you think of Guthrie's view? Does it include the other three views?
3. If Guthrie is correct, what are the implications for our lives?

Teacher will list suggestions on board and encourage class to write those they find helpful in their journals.

Objective 3: Parents will verbally share a statement reflecting their own understanding of how the creation accounts influence their own views of sex and marriage.

   Strategy: 1. Journal assignment instructing parents to prepare a statement based on scriptures from Genesis 1-2.

2. In single-family groups, parents share and discuss their statement.

Objective 4: Class will identify and discuss statements that inform a Christian perspective on ecological concerns. (Note: This activity is optional, depending on the time available.)

Strategy: Teacher draws attention of class to section in journal that asks the question, "Do God's people care about ecology?" Teacher solicits from class any statements from the creation accounts that might indicate a concern for ecology. Class is encouraged to make note of these statements in their journals.

Possible verses include 1:26,28,31; 2:15.

LITURGY:

Objective 1:   Class will identify acts of worship, both corporate and private, that honor God as Creator.

Strategy: Families list acts of worship that honor God as Creator. Each family then has three minutes to compare its list with that of another family. The two family groups become four, etc. until entire class is back together.

Objective 2:   Class will read definition of "praise" in the student book and listen as the teacher relates "praise" to the awareness of God as Creator.

Strategy: 1.   Definition of praise printed in journal.

Praise: when the awareness of the majesty of God and His works so fills your heart that you must speak of the power and glory, the love and grace that truly belong only to God.

2.   Teacher discusses with class how meditating on God's activity as Creator generates praise. (Teacher might refer to Psalm 8.)

Objective 3:   Class members choose either (a) to write a verse (at least four line in length) expressing praise and adoration to God as Creator, or (b) to plan a 20-30 minute praise service.

Strategy: 1.   In the space provided in the journal, families may work together to write a verse (free or rhyming) that expresses praise and adoration to God. If time permits, the families may want to share their verses with the class before dismissal, or the statements can be used to begin the next class session.

2. Working in single-family or two-family groups, class members are to plan a 20-30 minute praise service. They may choose to envision it as a praise service for the whole congregation, for a house-church setting, or for the class.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

What do the creation accounts teach us about our God, our world, and ourselves?

JOURNAL:

Write a letter to God thanking him, praising him, and adoring him as your creator.

LESSON II
A BATTLE OF WILLS

GETTING READY:

Read Genesis 3 and answer the questions in the Story section of journal.

STORY

Objective 1: Class brings written answers to questions on Genesis 3 to class.

    Strategy: Questions in journal with instructions to read Genesis 3 and prepare answers before class time.

        1.   What lie did the serpent tell the woman?
        2.   What truth did the serpent tell the woman?
        3.   What three things about the tree tempted the woman?
        4.   What happened immediately after the man and woman ate the fruit?
        5.   What curses were placed on the man and woman?
        6.   How did God show mercy on them?

Objective 2: Students will compare their answers with one another and with the answers proposed by the teacher.

    Strategy: 1.   Class divides into pairs (two teens, two men, two women) and shares their answers with each other.
           2.   Class listens to answers proposed by teacher and discusses with teacher any differences of opinion.

ETHICS:

Objective 1: Families will each write a one sentence definition of "sin."

    Strategy: 1.   Class divides into two-family groups to discuss questions printed in journal.

           (1)   Based on the story of Adam and Eve, which of the following statements offers the most comprehensive definition of sin?
                a.   Doing something God said was wrong
                b.   Not doing something God said to do
                c.   Intending to be as evil as possible
                d.   Living as if we were in control of our own lives
                e.   Doing harm to other people

(2) Read Matthew 22:37-39. How is sin the opposite of these two greatest commandments?

(3) Discuss how we can demonstrate our sinfulness in each of the following situations.
  a. Choice of career
  b. Deciding how to spend free time
  c. Choice of husband or wife
  d. Choice of friends

2. Teacher leads a class discussion on the meaning of "sin."

The teacher should emphasize that sin is primarily an issue of control. We are all sinners not because we all commit the same number of sins or sins that are equal in depravity but because we all seek our own will rather than the will of God.

3. Class members write their definition of "sin" in their journals.

Objective 2: Class members can explain how "sin" leads to "sins."

Strategy: 1. Families combine into two-family groups. One person in each group reads aloud the following story.

Cody couldn't believe he was sitting in a police station waiting for his parents. He could only imagine what they were planning to do to him when they got there. The whole thing was really stupid. Would they at least believe him when he told them it wasn't his idea? He hadn't wanted that CD. He didn't even like Def Leppard. Cody kept replaying in his mind the events of the last hour. All he could see were the faces of Jason and Tim as they laughed at him while he was trying to look so calm walking past the cashier, hands stuffed in his jacket, hiding the evidence. He could also remember how big their eyes had gotten just when he had felt the security guard's hand on his shoulder. But what could he do now? The store wasn't impressed that he had offered to pay for the CD, and the police didn't seem to understand that Jason and Tim were the coolest guys in the eight grade--and it was the first time they had ever asked him to go anywhere with them.

2. Groups discuss the questions printed in the journal: "Who was in control of Cody's life? What were his goals on this day?"

3. Teacher reads and paraphrases Romans 1:18-32, emphasizing the definition of sin found in v. 21 and the resulting list of sins in the remainder of the chapter. Main point: Sin (not honoring God as God) leads to sins.

Objective 3: Class members compare their own experience of the consequences of sin with the experiences of Adam and Eve.

Strategy: 1. Two-family groups discuss the statement and question printed in the journal: The consequence of sin is isolation from God. What actions of both God and the humans show that they had become separated from each other?

2. Teacher leads brainstorming session in which all suggested consequences are collected from the class.

3. Using as a guide the multiple-choice statement in the journal, class members share with their two-family groups their own experience of separation from God.

How does the separation from God show most often in your own life?
a. Feelings of loneliness
b. Feelings of inadequacy
c. Difficulty in prayer life
d. Long periods of time with a little thought of God or his will
e. Fear
f. Other _____

LITURGY:

Objective 1: Class members will demonstrate the connection between the doctrine of repentance and the story in Genesis 3.

Strategy: 1. In single-family groups, class members read Acts 3:19; 17:26-30; 26:19-20 and discuss how repentance can be defined in terms of being the opposite of their definition of "sin."

2. Teacher leads class as families share with other families how repentance is the opposite of sin. Main point: As sin is a failure to honor God as God, repentance is the decision to put self aside and honor God as the God of our lives.

3. Class members write their definition of repentance.

4. Based on their definition of repentance, parents share with teens how in reality repentance is an everyday commitment and experience rather than a one-time event.

5. "Extra Credit": Class may want to explore how the familiar passage in Mark 8:34-38 interacts with their definitions of sin and repentance.

Objective 2: Class members will demonstrate the connection of the doctrine of confession with the story in Genesis 3.

Strategy: In single-family groups, class discusses the following questions.

1. Confession seems to have two meanings: (1) we confess our sins, and (2) we confess God is God and Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Considering your definitions of sin and repentance, how can these two acts of confession actually be one?

2. How can we confess in public worship and private devotion?

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

What is sin and how do we repent of sin?

JOURNAL:

On a scale of 1 to 100 (1 being absolutely dissatisfied and 100 being completely satisfied), how do you feel about your relationship with God? When do you feel closest to God? When do you feel far away from God?

LESSON III
A FAITHFUL FRIEND

GETTING READY:

Read Genesis 11:31-12:20.

STORY:

Objective: Class will view video depicting chapter 12 of Genesis and discuss their answers to questions about the story.

Strategy:
1. Show first twelve minutes of *The New Media Bible: Genesis II, Abraham* (Gen. 11:31-12:20).
2. Answer questions listed in workbook.
   a. What promises did God make to Abraham?
   b. How did Abraham demonstrate he believed God would keep his promises?
   c. Which of the following words describe Abraham's initial response to God? Give examples from the story for each of your answers.

1) Faithful	6) Obedient
2) Suspicious	7) Excited
3) Frightened	8) Sad
4) Loyal	9) Unfaithful
5) Resentful	

   d. Which of the words describe Abraham's actions when he went to Egypt?
   e. Which of the words describe God's actions toward Abraham throughout the whole story?

Transition: One of the remarkable things about the story of Abraham is the faithfulness of Abraham and God in their relationship. This story can serve as an example for us as we strive to show faithfulness (loyalty) in our relationships with one another.

ETHICS:

Objective 1: Families will discuss among themselves how the attribute of faithfulness can be illustrated in various interpersonal relationships.

Strategy: In two-family groups, families discuss specific actions that would demonstrate faithfulness (loyalty) in a relationship in various life situations.

    a.   One friend tells you a rumor about another friend.

    b.   A friend calls in the middle of the night to let you know of a serious illness in the friend's family.

    c.   You make friends with a new group who do not like one of your old friends.

    d.   Two of your friends have a fight with each other.

Objective 2: Families will list and discuss the elements of faithfulness.

Strategy: 1. In their two-family groups, class lists the elements of faithfulness and compares their lists with the teacher's list.

Suggested list:
a. believing in the other
b. trusting the other
c. sharing concerns of the other
d. being consistent in relationship
e. enjoying of relationship
f. other _____

2. Teacher explains that these elements of faithfulness describe what it means to have faith in God.

Transition: The same quality of faithfulness that we show toward friends and family is what God wants from us in our relationship with him. Sometimes we might feel that God expects perfection in our obedience to him in order for our relationship with him to be secure. We are not called to offer him something we cannot be (perfect), but we are called to offer him our best efforts in being a true and faithful friend.

LITURGY:

Objective 1: Families will write a definition of "righteousness," and they will read and discuss scriptures about righteousness.

Strategy: 1. In two-family groups, class reads the definition of "righteousness" in the dictionary and discusses its meaning.

2.   Class reads the following scriptures and discusses the necessity and possibility of righteousness: Psalm 119:137-144; Matthew 5:17-20; and Romans 3:10.

3.   Class writes their own definition of righteousness in terms of their relationship with God.

Objective 2:   Families will explore God's teaching in order to develop a concept of his willingness to accept our faithfulness as righteousness by reflecting on Abraham's friendship with God.

    Strategy: 1.   Read the following verses: 2 Chronicles 20:7; Romans 4:1-3.

                    2.   Answer the following questions:

                      a.   Why was Abraham described as God's friend?

                      b.   Was Abraham always faithful to God?

                      c.   Was God always faithful to Abraham?

                      d.   How is God able to accept our faithfulness (faith/loyalty) in place of righteousness? (Read Romans 3:21-25.)

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

Why is it so important that God accepts our faithfulness (loyalty) and counts it as righteousness?

JOURNAL:

Reflect on how you can demonstrate your friendship with God through your loyalty to him in public worship and in daily life.

LESSON IV
LIVING AS GOD'S PEOPLE

GETTING READY:

The class will discuss the exodus story. Class members might want to look back over Exodus 1-20.

STORY:

Objective: Families will share their memories of the story of the Exodus.

Strategy: 1. Teacher prepares "cue cards" with following titles: (a) Slavery in Egypt; (b) Birth of Moses; (c) Moses Flees Egypt; (d) Moses at Burning Bush; (e) Moses Returns to Egypt; (f) Plagues; (g) Passover; (h) Crossing the Sea; (i) Manna; (j) Water; (k) Mt. Sinai.

2. Teacher holds up cards in order listed above. Families volunteer to tell the part of the story indicated by the card. Teacher supplies any important points omitted by families.

Transition: Upon arrival at Mt. Sinai, God established a covenant with the people of Israel. Within this covenant we find the Ten Commandments, which served as a basis for behavior within the covenant community.

ETHICS:

Objective 1: Family members will work together to list from memory as many of the Ten Commandments as they can.

Strategy: 1. Working in single-family units, class lists in journal as many of the Ten Commandments as they can remember.

2. Teacher collects commandments through a "brainstorming" activity, listing them before the class in correct order using contemporary language.

Objective 2: Families will restate the commandments as positive statements and illustrate with concrete, realistic examples how each might be accomplished.

Strategy:
1. In family groups, class restates the commandments in positive statements. (Sabbath command stated negatively.)
2. In brainstorming session, teacher collects restated commandments and writes them next to record of the Ten Commandments.
3. Each family is assigned one or two restated commandments to illustrate with concrete examples how that positive statement might be accomplished.
4. Families share examples with class.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

How do the Ten Commandments reveal God's will for our lives?

JOURNAL:

Which commandments (negatively or positively stated) are the most challenging to you, and what can you do to make progress in these areas?

LESSON V
A PROMISE FOREVER

GETTING READY:

Class will read Genesis 15:7-21 and Exodus 24:1-8.

STORY:

Objective 1:   Class will verbally answer questions about the process of making a covenant as described in the two stories.

    Strategy: In two-family groups, class will discuss the answers to the following questions. Each person in the group must respond to each question.

    1.   Which **two** of the following words best describe your reaction to the stories of God's making a covenant with Abram and with the people of Israel.

        a. bloody   f. scary
        b. gruesome   g. unrealistic
        c. fascinating   h. hopeful
        d. impressive   i. reassuring
        e. exciting   j. holy

    2.   Which of the following words are related to the process of making these covenants? (Circle the words you choose and then share them with your group.)

        a. promises   f. escape clauses
        b. written agreements g. ceremony
        c. solemn   h. reciprocal
        d. vows   i. binding

Objective 2:   Class members will write a definition of the term "covenant."

    Strategy: 1.   Teacher will explain that a covenant produces a relationship.
            2.   Utilizing their selected words in describing the covenant, class works in their two-family groups to write a definition of covenant.

3. Groups report their definitions to class. Teacher writes composite definition on board. (Definition should reflect that a covenant binds together two parties in a firm relationship through a ceremony involving solemn vows and promises.)

Objective 3: Class members will identify contemporary relationships that are covenant relationships.

Strategy: Teacher leads brainstorming session for entire class to suggest and discuss contemporary relationships that are covenant relationships (or similar). Suggested answers include marriage and adoptions.

Objective 4: Class members will read and comment on a short essay about God's new covenant with his people.

Strategy: The following paragraph will be printed in the student journal. Two-family groups appoint a reader for each group to read the paragraphs to the group. Teacher will then solicit comments and questions about the paragraph.

Though the covenant God made with his people at Mt. Sinai had a dramatic and promising beginning, the nation of Israel did not prove to be a faithful covenant people. They continually abandoned God to worship idols. Their kings looked for their security in treaties with other nations, not in the covenant relationship with God. Eventually, their disobedience led to the loss of their nation. Speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, God promised that he would make a new covenant:

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt--a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD.

Jeremiah 31:31-32.

Jeremiah continues to describe the covenant as one that would be a covenant written on the heart that would make God known to his people and bring forgiveness of their sins.

In the night before he died, Jesus spoke of this covenant as he instituted the Lord's Supper:

This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

Luke 22:20.

God was fulfilling his promise to make a new covenant with his people, a covenant that would be eternal, a covenant not of law but of the Spirit.

Objective 5: Class members will list the differences between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant as related in Hebrews 9:11-28.

Strategy: 1. Another member of each two-family group slowly reads the Hebrews passage. Group members stop the reader when a difference is noted, and group members write the difference in the journals.
2. If time allows, the teacher may discuss these differences.

LITURGY:

Objective: Class members will each choose a phrase that is most meaningful to them in describing the covenant relationship offered by God through his Son.

Strategy: 1. Working in single-family groups, each family member selects and shares his or her answer to the following question.

Which one of the following statements offers you the greatest assurance about living in a covenant relationship with God?
a. God will be faithful to his covenant.
b. God's covenant is open to all, from the least to the greatest (Jer. 31:34).
c. The covenant draws near those who are far away from God (Eph. 2:11-13).
d. The covenant promises forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:15).
e. The covenant promises eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15).
f. Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 12:24).
g. The covenant is everlasting (Heb. 13:20).
h. It is a covenant of Spirit, not law (2 Cor. 3:6).

2. The teacher explains that a covenant calls for a response or acceptance. Though God is the one who initiates and provides the covenant, his people are called upon to accept it. In God's covenant with

Abraham, Abraham and his descendants are called on to circumcise their sons. In the covenant on Mt. Sinai, Israel pledges obedience. None of these actions are powerful in themselves, nor do they earn the gracious benefits of the covenant, but they are responses requested by God.

3. The teacher instructs the class to read Col. 2:11,12 and answer the question: What is the response requested by God as a sign of our acceptance of the new covenant? (The teacher should explain that this is not a complete picture of baptism, but it does show that baptism is a covenantal act.)

ETHICS:

Objective 1: Class will describe how the new covenant produces community.

Strategy: 1. The teacher explains that while the old covenant had many commandments, the new covenant has only one. The teacher instructs the class to read John 13:34-35 to discover this commandment.
2. The teacher asks the class to respond to the question, "How does such a commandment produce community?"

Objective 2: Class members will locate and read the scriptures listed below, and they will record the actions or attitudes these scriptures describe that illustrate the community created by covenant.

Strategy: The journal lists the following scriptures with space for recording responses. The class should work in single-family groups. Galatians 6:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Ephesians 4:1-3; Romans 12:10,13,15,16,17-21; Romans 15:7; 1 Peter 4:10; Colossians 3:12-13,16; Ephesians 6:18-19; Hebrews 10:24-25.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

What does it mean to live in a covenant relationship with God?

JOURNAL:

Reflect on your own experiences in the covenant community (church). What have you found this community to be? What would you like for it to be? What can you do to make it more of a community for more people?

LESSON VI
JESUS SHOWS US THE FATHER

GETTING READY:

Class will read the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

STORY:

Objective 1: Families will share with class their favorite stories from the life of Jesus.

    Strategy: 1.   In two-family groups, the class will discuss their favorite stories from the life of Jesus (other than the crucifixion and resurrection).

                  2.   The teacher will collect the class's favorite stories and display them before the class.

Objective 2: Class members will determine which of the stories mentioned by the class reveal the humanity and which reveal the deity of Jesus.

    Strategy: Teacher will read aloud the title of each story and ask class to respond whether that story reveals that Jesus was as human as we or whether it reveals that Jesus is the Son of God. (Some stories may reveal both.)

Transition: A part of Jesus' mission was to reveal to us God's will for our lives. Jesus came to show us the Father and to teach us Godly living. Jesus taught us that God is concerned with the condition of our hearts (Mark 7:20-23) and that a change of heart is more important than just keeping a list of rules.

ETHICS:

Objective 1: On a simplified version of Lawrence Kohlberg's chart of the six stages of moral decision making, the class will locate the motivation of the Old Testament (Ten Commandments) and the motivation taught by Jesus (Sermon on the Mount).

    Strategy: 1.   The teacher will point out the chart printed in the journal and work through with the class the explanations given below the chart.

Chart and exercise adapted from <u>Confirming Faith</u>, by Kieran Sawyer (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1982).
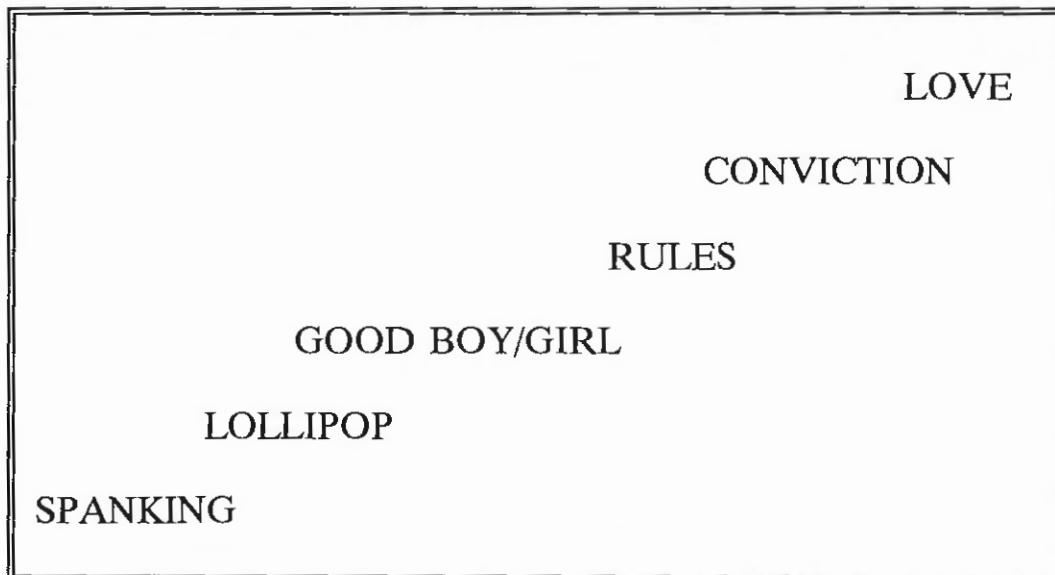
```
                                                      LOVE

                                          CONVICTION

                                  RULES

                     GOOD BOY/GIRL

            LOLLIPOP

   SPANKING
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spanking level--The person does the right thing to avoid punishment.
lollipop level--The person does the right thing to receive a reward.
good boy/girl level--The person does what the group (family, friends, neighbors) expects.
rules level--The person obeys the rules because he or she sees the need for rules for an orderly society.
conviction level--The person obeys the rule because he or she sees the reason behind the rule. Even if there were no rule, the person would do the right thing.
love level--The person is free from rules because agape (love for God and others) controls his or her choices. Note: the person does not violate rules but rather exceeds rules.

    2.   The teacher asks the class to locate the level of moral decision making asked for by the Ten Commandments.

    3.   The teacher asks the class to locate the level of moral decision making asked for by Jesus. The class will give examples from the Sermon on the Mount.

Objective 2: The class will identify the level of moral decision making represented by common statements.

Strategy: 1.   Using the first letter of each level on the chart, class members identify in the first blank to the left of each statement the level of moral decision making represented by the statement. Class works in family groups.

___ ___	1.	How's that going to look?
___ ___	2.	He (she) made me do it.
___ ___	3.	I don't care. You decide.
___ ___	4.	I promised to, and I will.
___ ___	5.	It's against my principles.
___ ___	6.	She (he) had it coming.
___ ___	7.	I think I ought to.
___ ___	8.	Who's gonna make me?
___ ___	9.	What's in it for me?
___ ___	10.	What would Jesus do?
___ ___	11.	What'll happen if I don't?
___ ___	12.	How would I like to be treated?
___ ___	13.	Do I hafta?
___ ___	14.	Everybody's doing it.
___ ___	15.	What's right is right.
___ ___	16.	There's no law against it.
___ ___	17.	We always do it that way.
___ ___	18.	I owe it to him (her).
___ ___	19.	Nobody'll ever know.
___ ___	20.	What can I do to help?
___ ___	21.	That isn't fair.
___ ___	22.	That's so boring.
___ ___	23.	How can I help?
___ ___	24.	She (he) needs me.
___ ___	25.	That's the rule.

2.   In the second blank, class members (working individually) indicate how often they use each phrase (or one very similar).

V - very often
O - often
S - sometimes or seldom
N - never

3.   The teacher reveals the recommended answers to the first part of the exercise. Class should feel free to present differing opinions.

1. - 3	6. - 1	11. - 1	16. - 4	21. - 1-6
2. - 1	7. - 4/5	12. - 4/5	17. - 3/4	22. - 2
3. - 3	8. - 1	13. - 1	18. - 4/5	23. - 5/6
4. - 5/6	9. - 2	14. - 3	19. - 1/3	24. - 5/6
5. - 5	10.- 3/6	15. - 4/5	20. - 5/6	25. - 4

4.   Class members share with their family group those phrases they indicated they use very often and often. Family members help each other in discussing their level of moral decision making.

LITURGY:

Objective 1:   In single-family groups, class will write the Lord's prayer (from memory).

Objective 2:   Class members will list the characteristics of the Lord's Prayer.

Strategy: The teacher will lead the class in a discussion of the following two points.

a.   How did Jesus intend the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13) to be used?
(1)   Memorized and said as our only prayer
(2)   Memorized and recited as our prayer on occasion
(3)   A model for us to compose our own prayers
(4)   A way to close our prayers

b.   If the prayer is used as an example, list the elements that a prayer modeled after it would contain.

Objective 3:   Family groups will write prayers based on the Lord's Prayer as a model.

Strategy: Each family group will write a prayer in their own words that contains the elements of the Lord's Prayer.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

What does God expect from us in our interpersonal relationships?

JOURNAL:

Honestly describe your prayer life including your feelings of joy and/or disappointment. What can you do to improve your prayer life?

LESSON VII
JESUS BRINGS US TO THE FATHER

GETTING READY:

Read one of the Synoptic Gospel accounts of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus: Matthew 26-28; Mark 14-16; Luke 22-24. (For this lesson, please do not read from John because it contains no account of the Last Supper.)

STORY:

Objective: Class will discuss the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus from the viewpoints of the Jewish leaders, the Jewish crowd, the disciples, and God and Jesus.

Strategy: In two-family groups, the class will discuss the following multiple-choice questions. Each person in each group should give a response to each question.

1.   Why did the **religious leaders** of the Jewish people think Jesus should be crucified?
   a.   They knew he was the Messiah and that the Messiah must be killed to fulfill scripture.
   b.   They were afraid he would cause so much trouble that the Roman army would attack the Jews.
   c.   They were jealous of Jesus' influence and authority over the people.
   d.   They were protecting the Jewish law from what they thought was Jesus' false teaching.
   e.   Other _____

2.   Why did the **crowds**, who had welcomed Jesus a week before, join the religious leaders in calling for the crucifixion?
   a.   They decided that Jesus was a false prophet and his teaching was in error.
   b.   They were disappointed that Jesus had not gathered an army to fight the Romans.
   c.   Their leaders convinced them that Jesus was a threat to their nation's security.
   d.   They had no real convictions but simply "went with the flow."
   e.   Other _____

3. What do you think the **disciples** felt when it became apparent their teacher was about to be executed?
    a. They were sad because they thought their dream of the Kingdom of God was ruined.
    b. They were angry because they felt Jesus had deceived them.
    c. They were hopeful because they understood that Jesus' death was necessary and that he would rise from the dead.
    d. They were confused because they thought Jesus would call an army of angels to help him.
    e. Other _____

4. How do you think God and Jesus viewed the crucifixion and resurrection?

    To answer this question, assign each person in your group one of the following scriptures. After silently reading assigned scriptures, let each person bring to the discussion the truth found in his/her passage.

    Romans 3:21-26   Hebrews 2:10-18
    Romans 5:6-11   1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:18
    2 Cor. 5:18-21   1 John 4:9-11; Titus 2:11-14

5. Look back at the final section of Lesson III. How does the death and resurrection of Jesus make possible God's counting our faith as righteousness?

Transition: The two liturgical events most intimately connected with the death of Jesus are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence, while the Lord's Supper is a weekly event. Let's explore this frequent yet profound act of worship.

LITURGY:

Objective 1: Class members will share with the class personal stories about the Lord's Supper.

Strategy: 1. Teen class members share their earliest impressions of the Lord's Supper.
             2. Adult members share stories of when the Lord's Supper was especially meaningful and emotionally moving.

Objective 2: Class members will listen to an explanation of "sacrament," view a chart of the various images and meanings found in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and share their own experiences with the Supper.

Strategy: 1. Teacher explains that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are called "sacraments" and that the function of a sacrament is "to make visible what is real, but invisible."

2. Class listens as the teacher explains the chart of the invisible realities that the Lord's Supper makes visible.

Our memory of Jesus Christ	1 Cor. 11:24-25
Our proclamation of the death of Jesus	1 Cor. 11:26
The communion of the church	1 Cor. 10:16-17 1 Cor. 11:27-32
Our thankfulness to God	Luke 22:17,19
Our anticipation of the Messianic Banquet	Luke 22:16 1 Cor. 11:26

3. Class members share with whole class which of the realities of the Lord's Supper are most real to them and how we can make the others a part of our consciousness as we partake of the Supper.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

In one sentence, what is the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus in your life?

JOURNAL:

Jesus said, "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Reflect on how Jesus, your Lord, served (and continues to serve) you and what that means for your own attitude about serving others. Be specific in how you can serve others, and don't forget to include your service to those nearest you.

LESSON VIII
GOD'S PEOPLE CALLED OUT

GETTING READY:

Read Acts 2.

STORY:

Objective: Class members will listen as the teacher briefly retells the story of the Day of Pentecost down to the point of the baptism of the three thousand.

Strategy: Outline of Peter's sermon printed in journal.

Objective: Class will read and revise a definition of the word "church."

Strategy: 1.   Teacher introduces the idea that Acts 2 marks the beginning of the church.
2.   Teacher instructs class to read the definition of "church" printed in the journal.
3.   Teacher asks the class to contribute any further ideas that define what the church is.

ETHICS:

Objective: The class will describe how the actions of the early church show that it was a covenant community.

Strategy: 1.   The class will locate Acts 2:42-47 and follow the text while the teacher reads the passage.
2.   The class will turn in their journals to the Ethics section in Lesson Five and compare the actions of the early church described in Acts to the characteristics of a covenant community.

Transition: The coming of the Holy Spirit initiated the activities of Pentecost that led to the establishment of the church. Jesus had promised that the Spirit would come (1:8), and the Spirit continued throughout the events of Acts to lead and push the apostles and the church into new realms. The work of the Spirit continues today. Peter promised his listeners they would receive the Holy Spirit when they were baptized.

LITURGY:

Objective 1: Class will gather information about the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of baptized believers by reading assigned scriptures and recording the work of the Spirit mentioned in each scripture.

Strategy: 1. The following scriptures are listed in the journal: 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 5:18-20; Romans 12:4-8; Romans 5:1-5; 2 Corinthians 1:21,22 and Ephesians 1:13,14; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 and Galatians 5:22-26; Romans 8:12-17; 1 Corinthians 2:11-14.

2. Teacher collects information in brainstorming session and displays the information to class.

Transition: The Holy Spirit is discussed in scripture in the context of baptism. We have discussed baptism already in the context of the covenant and in comparison with Jesus' baptism. Now baptism and repentance are the responses given by Peter to the question, "What should we do?" Let's explore the meaning of baptism as revealed in this passage and in the remainder of the New Testament.

Objective 2: Class will review and discuss their definitions of repentance, listen to a brief lecture on baptism and analyze a chart listing several images of baptism. Lecture notes and the chart are printed in the journal.

Strategy: 1. Lecture: In Acts 2:38, Peter connects repentance and baptism with the forgiveness of sins and the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Look back in your journal at your definition of repentance and discuss how it applies in this context.

On the day of Pentecost, baptism stood as the door into the new covenant community, the church. As the church grew and spread throughout the world, we have many stories of others hearing the gospel and being baptized. In the epistles of the New Testament, the apostles often discussed baptism, especially when they urged Christians to reflect on their experience of baptism so they could understand the rich meanings of that act. Often, rather than defining baptism or explaining its meaning, the writers of the New Testament gave verbal pictures of baptism. These images reveal the many truths about baptism

as it relates to different life experiences. All truth about baptism is not found in any one image, but sometimes one or two images speak most effectively to different individuals. As we look at the chart below, remember that baptism is a sacrament which means the invisible God is accomplishing these things as we see the visible act of baptism.

BAPTISM IS PICTURED AS . . . .

Union with Christ in his death, burial, resurrection	Rom. 6:3-4 Col. 2:12

A washing or bath
  -- regeneration (new life)
  -- washes away sin
	
	Tit. 3:5
	Acts 22:16

A new birth	John 3:5
Adoption	Gal. 3:26,27
An act of consecration to God	1 Cor. 6:11
A covenantal act (as circumcision was in OT)	Col. 2:11-15
Incorporation into Christ's body on earth, the church	1 Cor. 12:13
Renewal	Tit. 3:5
A change of clothes	Gal. 3:27 Col. 3:1-17
A rescue experience, as in the flood	1 Pet. 3:21

2.   In family groups, class discusses following:
(1) Which of these images is (are) most relevant to your life now?
(2) Parents share with children which images have been meaningful at different times in their own lives.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

What is the meaning of baptism?

JOURNAL:

If you have been baptized, write about your experiences with the Holy Spirit in your life. If you have not been baptized, write about how you imagine your baptism will take place and what your life after baptism can be like.

LESSON IX
EARLY YEARS OF THE CHURCH

GETTING READY:

This lesson is based on the epistle of 1 Peter. You may want to read through this short letter before class.

STORY:

Objective 1: Class will listen to brief introduction to 1 Peter and, in the journal space provided, take notes about the nature of this epistle.

    Strategy: 1.   Teacher introduces 1 Peter. Peter wrote his letter to encourage young Christians who were facing difficult circumstances of persecution and exclusion. Many scholars believe that in his letter Peter utilized some of the basic instruction given to all new Christians immediately before and immediately after their baptism. This instruction was called *catechism*. By reminding them of what they had already been taught, Peter was encouraging the young Christians to make application of the basic teachings of the church to their life situation. Notice how the first two verses of the letter appear to be a reminder of what happened to the readers when they were baptized.

Objective 2: Class will read assigned sections of 1 Peter and write down scriptures and notes pertaining to three categories of information within the sections.

    Strategy: 1.   Teacher assigns each family one of three sections of 1 Peter: 1:3-2:3; 2:4-3:7; 3:8-4:19. Class may use their own Bibles, or the teacher can make copies of the three sections in a modern speech translation. (Eugene Peterson's translation, The Message, works well in this exercise.) Families working on the same section may work together in a group.

                  2.   In the journal are three columns labeled Story, Ethic, Worship. As the three groups read their assigned sections, they are to write down examples of each of these categories that they find in the text. To assist them in this task, the following explanations are printed in the journal:

Story: any references to events in the Christian story, whether from the Old Testament, the life of Jesus, actions of the apostles, or future events.

Ethics: any conclusions that are drawn on how we should live and how we should treat each other based on the Christian story.

Worship: any references to spiritual or church events (e.g., baptism, Lord's Supper, prayer, worship). These events are not necessarily named but may be implied by the context.

3. When Peter connects events of one column with events in another column (e.g., slaves should be willing to suffer unjustly because Jesus suffered unjustly--2:18ff.), class members should draw arrows on their chart demonstrating those connections.

4. Teacher concludes with reading of 5:6-11, noting connections.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

How are our Christian story, the way we live, and our worship all interconnected.

JOURNAL:

How does it make you feel when you think about being a part of a continuing story with a past spiritual heritage, present responsibilities, and a future that is already provided by God, our Father and author of our story?

LESSON X
THE CHURCH THROUGH TIME

GETTING READY:

1. Read the following summary of church history.
2. Each family will develop a brief (three-minute) presentation on the life of a prominent person in church history. Families will be given a copy of *Great Leaders of the Christian Church*, John D. Woodbridge, ed. (Moody Press, Chicago), 1988. Families may use any other resource they choose. Assignments will be made from the list below.

STORY:

Objective 2: Class members will read the printed account of church history and respond verbally to discussion questions.

    Strategy: 1.   Adaptation of William Willimon's "A Crowd of Witnesses" (The Way, Nashville: Graded Press, 1981) printed in journal to be read before class time.

                2.   Teacher will lead a discussion of the story utilizing the questions printed in the journal.

          a.   What part of the story did you find most interesting?

          b.   What part of the story was most confusing?

          c.   Do you think God has guided the church throughout its history?

          d.   Did the church sometimes stray from God's guidance?

          e.   What were some positive results of the Protestant Reformation?

          f.   What were some negative results of the Reformation?

          g.   After reading this brief history of the church, I feel

             (1) Encouraged

             (2) Discouraged

             (3) Curious

             (4) Better informed

             (5) Unaffected

Objective 2: Families will present a brief overview (three-minutes) of the life of a great person in church history.

Strategy: 1. Families will be given a copy of *Great Leaders of the Christian Church*, John D. Woodbridge, ed. (Moody Press, Chicago) 1988. They may also use any other resource they choose.

2. Teacher will make assignments of church history characters at the close of prior class time. Teacher may assign specific characters, give families a choice from entire list, or divide list into smaller groups and allow families to choose specific character during the week. Assignments will be made from the following list:

Ignatius of Antioch	Francis of Assisi
Justin Martyr	Thomas Aquinas
Irenaeus	John Wyclif
Tertullian	Catherine of Siena
Origen	John Hus
Athanasius	Martin Luther
Basil the Great	Ulrich Zwingli
Jerome	William Tyndale
John Chrysostom	John Calvin
Augustine of Hippo	Ignatius Loyola
Leo the Great	Menno Simons
Patrick	John Knox
Gregory the Great	Teresa of Avila
The Venerable Bede	Blaise Pascal
Boniface	Jonathan Edwards
Anselm	William Wilberforce
Bernard of Clairvaux	Elizabeth Fry
Peter Abelard	Soren Kierkegaard

3. All family members should be involved in the presentation. Presentations will be made in chronological order.

LITURGY:

Objective: Family groups will discuss the Apostles' Creed and identify both strengths and weaknesses of such creeds.

Strategy: 1. The teacher will introduce the Apostles' Creed.

The word "creed" comes from the Latin *credo* which means "I believe." Creeds were statements of faith meant to define in what or whom a person believed.

As such, creeds served different purposes. During much of the church's history, those wishing to be baptized were required to recite a creed detailing their faith. Sometimes instruction prior to baptism was based on the phrases of a creed. Creeds were also used to attack heresy (religious error) and protect the "true faith." This is why some creeds began as simple statements but grew to be long and complex. With each new heresy, a new phrase was added to the creed to attack the error, and each religious group would require its adherents to swear allegiance to its particular creed.

The Apostles' Creed remains one of the simplest of all creeds, even though it is itself an expansion of an even simpler creed: the Old Roman Creed from the Second Century. For hundreds of years, many people believed that the apostles had written the creed, but most now recognize that the Apostles' Creed reached its present form in about 700 A.D. The Apostles' Creed is still used in the public worship of many religious groups.

2. Family groups read the Apostles' Creed aloud and discuss what possible errors it could have been written to oppose. Does it address any errors in the Christian world today?

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hades; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

3. Teacher leads a class discussion on the following questions:
    a. Do you think a statement of faith such as the Apostles' Creed can have any value?
    b. As we will discuss next week, Churches of Christ have chosen not to have any written creeds. Can you see how such creeds can be dangerous?
    c. Can there be such a thing as an unwritten creed?

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

Why and how has the church endured through almost two thousand years?

JOURNAL:

Write how you feel about the varied history of the church and about the many beliefs, opinions, and divisions that exist in Christianity today.

LESSON XI
THE CHURCH OF OUR YOUTH

GETTING READY:

Families will discuss their family history in Churches of Christ.

STORY:

Objective 1: Some of the families will share a portion of their family history in Churches of Christ.

Strategy: The teacher will lead a class discussion among the families about their history in Churches of Christ. The teacher may attempt to determine (1) which family has the longest history in Churches of Christ; (2) the shortest history; (3) the family member most prominent in their religious history; (4) an unusual or interesting story related to their religious history.

Objective 2: Class will view a video presentation about the American Restoration Movement.

Strategy: Teacher will show the first segment of Dr. Bill Humble's video series, Our Restoration Heritage.

LITURGY:

Objective: Class will verbally identify characteristics of the Churches of Christ that are a direct result of the influence of the Restoration Movement.

Strategy: 1. Teacher will ask class members to read in journals the list of characteristics of Churches of Christ that differ from many other religious groups.
    a. Baptism as a necessary portion of a believers' response to God's offer of salvation
    b. No infant baptism
    c. A cappella music in worship
    d. Ministers do not wear robes, not called "Pastor" or "Reverend"
    e. Lord's Supper celebrated weekly

2.   Teacher invites class to add to list. (Possible additions: elders over each congregation, no synod or convention, no written creed, no written liturgy)

3.   Teacher invites class members to share with class how some of these characteristics can be directly traced to the agenda of the American Restoration.

4.   Teacher asks if any class members are puzzled by any of these characteristics. Teacher may then lead class discussion, stating both biblical and historical reasons for the characteristics.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

What was the intent and purpose of the American Restoration Movement?

JOURNAL:

Describe how being a member of (or a child in) the Church of Christ has contributed to your self-identity.

LESSON XII
GROWING UP IN THE CHURCH

GETTING READY:

Parents: Spend some time remembering and discussing with each other the story of the birth (or adoption) of your child and any memories of your child's involvement with the church. Bring a baby picture of your child (8 x 10 if possible) to class with you.

Teens: Spend some time remembering your childhood in the church. Think of events that have impressed you, funny stories, and people in the church (other than your parents) who have made an impact on your life.

STORY:

Objective 1: Parents will tell the story of the birth (or adoption) of their children and stories about their young children in the church.

Strategy:
1. As parents arrive, the teacher collects the baby pictures and displays them on a table or shelf.
2. One parent from each family briefly relates to the whole class the events surrounding the birth of his/her child.
3. The other parent (if participating) shares a story from the child's early years in church.
4. The teens write in their journals anything about their birth or childhood they heard for the first time.
5. After all families have participated, teacher holds up one picture at a time as teens guess the identity of the baby.

Objective 2: Teacher will present a lecture on the meaning of being born into a Christian family.

Strategy: The lecture should include the following points:

1. We believe all children are born in innocence because sin is the willful act of rejecting God. (Recall Lesson II.)
2. Since all children are innocent, they are members of the kingdom or community of God (cf. Matt. 19:14).
3. Children born to Christian parents are special. In 1 Cor. 7:14, Paul indicates they are holy.

      4.   Children of Christian parents are holy in that their faith is nurtured from birth and their character is trained in Godly living from an early age (cf. Eph. 6:4).

      5.   Children of the church begin becoming Christians from they day they are born.

Objective 3: Families will list some of the advantages of growing up in the church, and teens share memories of growing up in the church.

    Strategy: 1.   In two-family groups, class lists advantages of growing up in the church.

            2.   Teens share names and stories about individuals in the church (other than parents) who have been influential in their lives. Parents take notes. (Parents may consider writing a note of appreciation to those mentioned by their children.)

Objective 4: Families will list changes they are currently observing in their maturing teens.

    Strategy: 1.   In single-family groups, parents affirm positive changes they are observing in their teen as their "baby" grows up.

            2.   Teens share ways in which the family treats them differently now than they did a few years or months ago (more responsibility, expectations, freedoms)

LITURGY:

Objective 1: Class will listen to presentation of how the covenant community has recognized adolescence as the age of entering the full fellowship in the community.

    Strategy: The teacher will present the following information.

            1.   The Jewish community affirmed the maturity of its children into adults at the age of thirteen (Bar Mitzvah).

            2.   The example from the life of Jesus shows him attending the Passover in Jerusalem for the first time with his parents at the age of twelve (Luke 1:41ff).

            3.   The church now affirms the faith of the teens and eagerly awaits their decision to enter as adult members into its full fellowship.

Objective 2:   Drawing from their study over the past weeks, class members will list what is necessary for a child of the church to become a full member of the body of Christ.

    Strategy: Teacher will ask, "From our study over the past weeks, what do you think is necessary for a child of the church to do in order to be recognized by God and the church as a member of the body of Christ.?" Discussion should center around the meaning of the events mentioned.

Objective 3:   Class members will discuss the ways in which they will know they are ready for baptism.

    Strategy: 1.   Printed in the journal under the title "How will I know when?" are suggested scenarios for young believers.
   a.   Some young believers experience a sudden moment of conviction.
   b.   Some young believers experience a gradual growth in awareness of their sin and their need for the grace of God.
   c.   Some young believers recognize their desire to be full members of God's covenant community that has nurtured them.
   d.   Some young believers realize how much God loves them, and they want to respond to that love with their commitment to him.
   e.   Some young believers seek the full fellowship of the church and the Spirit.

    2.   The teacher will affirm all these scenarios as valid and ask the class for other experiences.

    3.   If time permits, parents may want to share their own experience of reaching the decision for baptism.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

This lesson brings to an end the classroom work of the curriculum. As a closing ceremony, the teacher will assign lesson numbers to families and ask those families to turn back to the summary statements of their assigned lessons. In the order of the lessons, one parent from a family will stand and read the printed question of that lesson and the teen will stand and read the answer written by the family. Continue through the eleven questions and answers. Close with a prayer for guidance and wisdom.

JOURNAL:

What experiences in this class have been the most meaningful or helpful to you?

LESSON XIII
CELEBRATING THE FUTURE

Faith Decisions ends in celebration. The teacher should arrange for a meal, preferably in a private dining room at a restaurant. If the class has been taught on Sunday mornings, the meal may be breakfast before worship or a noon meal following worship. This should also be the Sunday that the class is presented to the congregation for affirmation. Invite the class to bring their entire families (even extended family if possible). Also, invite some of the elders of the church and even a few of the "senior members" of the church.

The order of events will be as follows:

1. Prayer of thanksgiving is offered for the meal.

2. The teacher expresses a brief word from teacher of appreciation for the families' participation.

3. Teacher announces that this is a celebration of the future. The future of the church is assured, and it is a glorious future. Close remarks with reading of 1 Thessalonians 5:13-18.

4. During the meal, the participants are encouraged to stand one by one and share with the group their vision of heaven. Each should be received with applause or other affirmation.

5. At close of meal, an appropriate song can be sung.

6. Group is dismissed with a benediction from an elder (Heb. 13:20-21).

CLOSING CEREMONY

In addition to the final class session, the close of the Faith Decisions program should be recognized by the entire congregation. A simple ceremony to bring closure to the program can be conducted during a Sunday morning worship hour.

1. Families can be recognized by having them stand or by having them come to the front of the auditorium.

2. The teacher or an elder delivers a word of affirmation.

> We, your church family, affirm you as families who have responded to the grace of God with love and commitment. We affirm you as parents who continue to seek every means to nurture the faith of your children. We affirm the example you set before them; we affirm the word you speak to them; we affirm your participation in Faith Decisions. And we affirm you young believers who have demonstrated that you are growing in faith and love. We eagerly anticipate the day that each of you will take your place as an adult in the covenant community of faith through baptism. May the Lord bless you and keep you. And let the congregation say, "Amen."

3. The congregation can join in this affirmation through the singing of "We Are Called to Be God's People."

APPENDIX II

STUDENT JOURNAL

Creation   Lesson One

Getting Ready:
Read Genesis 1-2 and complete the assignment in the *Story* section. Be prepared to share your answers in class. (Parents: Look in the section *Our Life Together* for a special assignment. Please come to class ready to share with your teen about this important area of our relationships with others.)

Our Story:

Assignment:
In most literature, the author writes to address specific needs and to answer specific questions. If we know what those questions are, we can better understand the writing. If we ask the wrong questions, then we will probably misunderstand the writing, or we will be frustrated that our questions were not answered. This is true when we read the Bible. Each passage in the Bible answers some questions, but it does not answer others. After reading Genesis 1-2, list in the space below some of the questions you think are being answered in these chapters. Then, list some questions you might have about the beginning of the world that are not answered in these chapters.

Answered Questions	Unanswered Questions
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Our Life Together

In the Image of God he created them....

Like all other animals, humans are born, breathe, eat, sleep, eliminate, fight a losing battle with death, and return to dust. What is it that makes them distinctive? Christian theology answers it is that they are created "in the image of God" (Gen. 1:26). This phrase has been interpreted in different ways. Three interpretations are frequently heard:
1. Humans have the ability to think or to reason.
2. Humans have a spiritual nature, or a soul.
3. Humans have the capacity to make moral judgments.

These interpretations are popular, but they are based on self-analysis; they only confirm what we already know. It is difficult for fallen humanity to determine what the "image of God" is.

A better approach than analyzing ourselves is to look to the one man who revealed the image of God throughout his whole life. Scripture describes Jesus as "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15) and "the likeness of God" (2 Cor. 4:4). He is the only man who ever was in fact what the first man refused to be. Pilate spoke more truly than he himself knew when he looked at Jesus and said, "Here is *the* man" (John 19:5).

The image of God can be seen in Jesus in the way he lived. He was the one human who ever lived
(1) completely for God and in complete obedience to God, and (2) completely for others and in complete identity with them. To be human in the image of God is to be humans-in-relationship, humans-in-community. These are qualities we discover in God. From the beginning, God has been a God seeking mankind, a covenant-making/community-creating God. "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." This is a poetic way of saying that bearing the image of God is connected with being male *and* female. Humans were created for relationship. No human being can find the fulfillment of humanity in self or for self. Human beings can be human only in relationship with the "other" outside themselves. Only as humans seek relationship with God and with fellow humans can they learn of the image of God.

How does our being created "in the image of God" affect the way we relate to each other?

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FAMILY TIME   Parents' Assignment

The reading of Genesis 1-2 reveals the basis for relationships. It also sets the parameters and gives meaning to the most fundamental human relationship--marriage. After reading these chapters, write a statement about how the story of creation informs and shapes your views on sex and marriage. Be prepared to share this statement with your teenager in class. (You will not be asked to share it with the entire class.) Also, be ready to discuss how our culture is abandoning God's plan for sex and marriage.

Do God's People Care About Ecology?

Notes:

Our Life With God:

How do we worship God as our creator? As a family, list things we can do in church, with our families, and alone that honor God as Creator. (When you finish, compare your list with another family's list.)

As a family, write a verse (at least four lines long) praising God as Creator.

PRAISE . . . . when the awareness of the majesty of God and the wonder of His creation so fill our hearts that we must speak of the power and glory, the love and grace that truly belong only to God and to His Son.

Plan a short praise service honoring God as Creator. The service may be for the entire congregation, a small group, or your family.

Instructions:
As a family, choose either the activity above or the one to the right. If you choose to plan a praise service, you may work together with another family.

Summing Up: In one or two short sentences, answer the question below.

What does the creation account teach us about our God, our world, and ourselves?

My Journal: This is your own page to write about your feelings. No one will read this page without your permission. The question given is a suggestion, but you may write about any feelings you have about our first lesson.

Write a letter to God thanking him, praising him, and adoring him as your creator.

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A Battle of Wills   Lesson Two

Getting Ready:
Read Genesis 3 and answer the questions in the *Story* section of the Journal.

Our Story:

Questions from Genesis 3:

1. What lie did the serpent tell the woman?

    _____

2. What truth did the serpent tell the woman?

    _____

3. What three things about the tree tempted the woman?

    _____

4. What happened immediately after the two ate from the tree?

    _____

5. What curses were placed on the man and the woman?

    _____

    _____

6. How did God show mercy on the man and woman?

    _____

Our Life Together:

In two-family groups discuss the following questions. (Each person in the group should answer each question.)

1. Based on the story of Adam and Eve, which of the following statements offers the most comprehensive definition of sin?
   a. Doing something God said was wrong to do
   b. Not doing something God said to do
   c. Intending to be as evil as possible
   d. Living as if we were in control of our own lives
   e. Doing harm to other people

2. Read Matthew 22:37-39. How is sin the opposite of these two greatest commandments?

3. Discuss how we can demonstrate our sinfulness in each of the following situations:
   a. Our choice of careers
   b. Our choice of how to spend our free time
   c. Our choice of husband or wife
   d. Our choice of friends

Our definition of Sin:

Who was in control of Cody's life?

What were his goals on this day?

Cody couldn't believe he was sitting in a police station waiting for his parents. He could only imagine what they were planning to do to him when they got there. Would they at least believe him when he told them it wasn't his idea? He hadn't wanted that CD. He didn't even like Def Leppard. Cody kept replaying in his mind the events of the last hour. All he could see were the faces of Jason and Tim as they laughed at him while he was trying to look so calm walking past the cashier, hands stuffed in his jacket, hiding the evidence. He could also remember how big their eyes had gotten just when he had felt the security guard's hand on his shoulder. But what could he do now? The store wasn't impressed that he had offered to pay for the CD, and the police didn't seem to understand that Jason and Tim were the coolest guys in the eighth grade -- and it was the first time they had ever asked him to go anywhere with them.

Sin and Consequences:

The consequence of Sin is isolation. What events in the story about Adam and Eve show that their sin separated them from God? What events show that the relationship between themselves had changed as well?

_____

_____

How does the separation from God show most often in your own life?

a. Feelings of loneliness
b. Feelings of inadequacy
c. Difficulty in prayer life
d. Long periods of time with little thought of God or his will
e. Fear
f. Other _____

_____

_____

Our Life With God:

Repentance

With your family, read Acts 3:19; 17:26-30; and 26:19-20. Thinking about what these scriptures say about repentance, define repentance as being the opposite of your definition of sin?

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Our definition of repentance:




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Parents: Share with your teenager how you have found repentance to be a lifelong activity rather than a one-time experience.

Extra Credit!! What does Mark 8:34-38 have to do with your definitions of sin and repentance?

Confession

Confession seems to have two meanings: (1) we confess our sins (1 Jn. 1:9), and (2) we confess God is God and Jesus is the Christ (Rom. 10:9,10), the Son of God. Look at your definitions of sin and repentance. How can these two acts of confession really be one?

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Our definition of confession:




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How can we confess in public worship?

How can we confess in private devotion?

Summing Up: In one or two short sentences, answer the question below.

What is sin, and how do we repent of sin?

My Journal: This is your own page to write about your feelings. No one will read this page without your permission. The question given is a suggestion, but you may write about any feelings you have about our lesson.

On a scale of 1 to 100 (1 being absolutely dissatisfied and 100 being completely satisfied), how do you feel about your relationship with God? When do you feel closest to God? When do you feel far away from God?

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A Faithful Friend   Lesson Three

Getting Ready:

Read Genesis 11:31-12:20.

Our Story:

Discussion questions:

1. What promises did God make to Abraham?

2. How did Abraham demonstrate that he believed God would keep his promises?

3. Which of the following words describe Abraham's initial response to God? Give examples from the story for each of your answers.

a. Faithful   f. Obedient
b. Suspicious   g. Excited
c. Frightened   h. Sad
d. Loyal   i. Unfaithful
e. Resentful

4. Which of the words describe Abraham's actions when he went to Egypt?

5. Which of the words describe God's actions toward Abraham throughout the story?

Our Life Together:

Discuss specific actions which would demonstrate faithfulness (loyalty) in a relationship under these circumstances.

a. One friend tells you a rumor about another friend.
b. A friend calls in the middle of the night to tell you of a serious illness in the friend's family.
c. You make friends with a new group who do not like one of your old friends.
d. Two of your friends have a fight with each other.

List below words and phrases that describe what it means to be faithful or loyal to a friend.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Our Life With God:

What the dictionary says about righteousness:	What the Bible says about righteousness: Psalm 119:137-144; Matthew 5:17-20; Romans 3:10.

Our definition of righteousness:

"Accepting Faith for Righteousness???"   *A Family Discussion*

Summing Up: In one or two short sentences, answer the question below.

Why is it so important that God accepts our faithfulness (loyalty) and counts it as righteousness?

My Journal: This is your own page to write about your feelings. No one will read this page without your permission. The question given is a suggestion, but you may write about any feelings you have about our lesson.

If our faith in God is something like loyalty and faithfulness in friendships, how do you show your faithfulness to God in public worship and in your daily life?

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Living as God's People   Lesson Four

Our Story:

The story of the exodus of the people of Israel from the slavery of Egypt to become a nation of God's people in the wilderness is our story as well. Help the teacher tell this important story in the history of our salvation.

Our Life Together:

When the people of Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai, God established a covenant with them. Within this covenant we find the Ten Commandments, which served as a basis for behavior within the covenant community.

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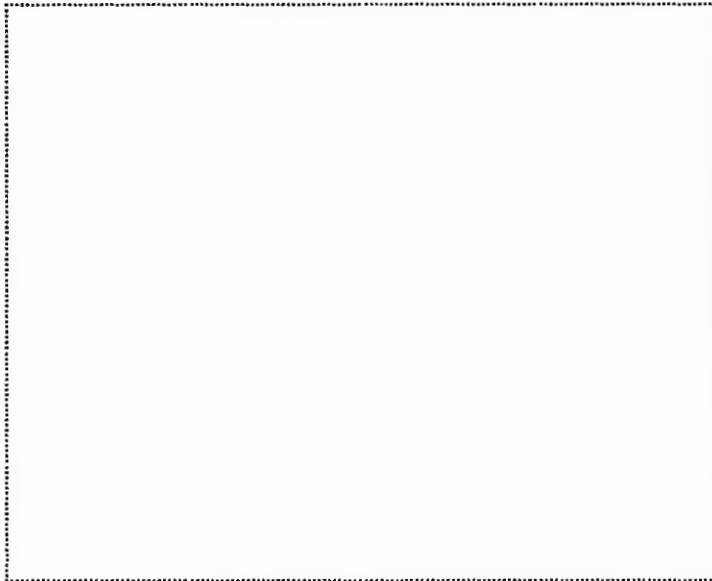
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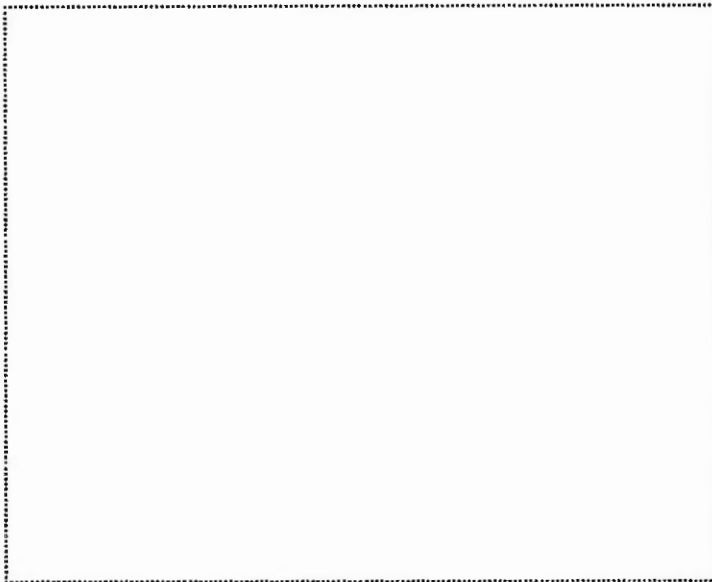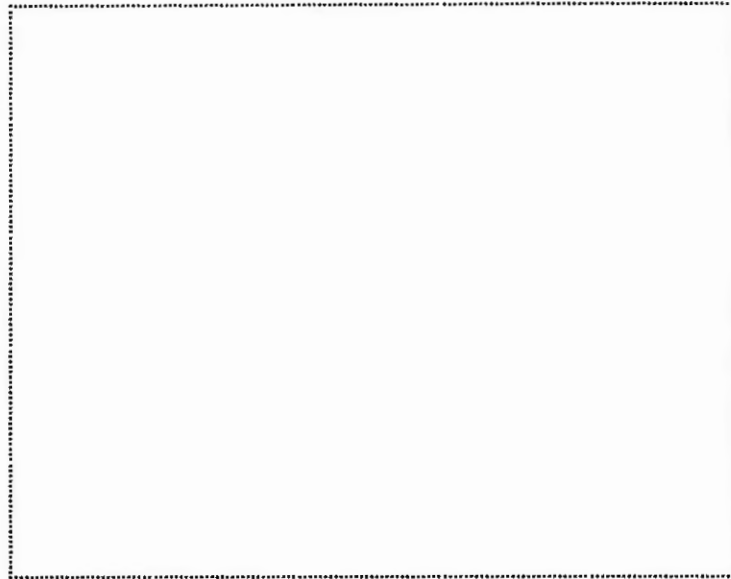
Ten

Commandments

in

Reverse

Examples for living a reversed commandment:

Summing Up: In one or two short sentences, answer the question below.

How do the Ten Commandments reveal God's will for our lives?

My Journal: This is your own page to write about your feelings. No one will read this page without your permission. The question given is a suggestion, but you may write about any feelings you have about our lesson.

Which commandments (negatively or positively stated) are the most challenging for you, and what can you do to make progress in these areas?

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A Promise Forever   Lesson Five

Getting Ready:

Read Genesis 15:7-21 and Exodus 24:1-8.

Our Story:

1. Which **two** of the following words best describe your reaction to the stories of God's making a covenant with Abram and with the people of Israel?

   a. bloody
   b. gruesome
   c. fascinating
   d. impressive
   e. exciting
   f. scary
   g. unrealistic
   h. hopeful
   i. reassuring
   j. holy
   k. other _____

2. Which of the following words are related to the process of making these covenants? (Circle the words you choose and share them with your group.)

   a. promises
   b. written agreements
   c. solemn
   d. vows
   e. escape clauses
   f. ceremony
   g. reciprocal
   h. binding

Our definition of a covenant is:

Covenants we make today:

Though the covenant God made with his people at Mt. Sinai had a dramatic and promising beginning, the nation of Israel did not prove to be a faithful covenant people. They continually abandoned God to worship idols. Their kings looked for their security in treaties with other nations, not in the covenant relationship with God. Eventually, their disobedience led to the loss of their nation in captivity. Speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, God promised that he would make a new covenant:

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt --a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, say the LORD. (Jer.31:31-32)

Jeremiah continues to describe the covenant as one that would be a covenant written on the heart that would make God known to his people and bring forgiveness of their sins.

In the night before he died, Jesus spoke of this covenant as he instituted the Lord's Supper:

This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. (Luke 22:20)

God was fulfilling his promise to make a new covenant with his people, a covenant that would be eternal, a covenant not of law but of the Spirit.

Our Life With God:

Which one of the following statements means the most to you when you think about living in a covenant relationship with God? Select your statement and share it with your family.

1. God will be faithful to his covenant.
2. God's covenant is open to all, from the least to the greatest (Jer. 31:34).
3. Through the covenant God draws near to him those who were far away from him (Eph. 2:11-13).
4. The covenant promises forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:15).
5. The covenant promises an eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15).
6. Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 13:20).
7. The covenant is everlasting (Heb. 13:20).
8. It is a covenant of Spirit, not law (2 Cor. 3:6).

We Respond to the Covenant. . . . . Colossians 2:11,12

Notes: _____

_____

Our Life Together:

John 13:34-35	*The*
	One
	Commandment

How does the new commandment produce community?

What Life in the New Covenant Community is Like:

1. Galatians 6:1-2 _____

2. 1 Thess. 5:11 _____

3. Ephesians 4:1-3 _____

4. Romans 12:10 _____

5. Romans 12:13 _____

6. Romans 12:15 _____

7. Romans 12:16 _____

8. Romans 12:17-21 _____

9. Romans 15:7 _____

10. 1 Peter 4:10 _____

11. Colossians 3:12-13 _____

12. Colossians 3:16 _____

13. Ephesians 6:18-19 _____

14. Hebrews 10:24-25 _____

Summing Up: In one or two short sentences, answer the question below.

What does it mean to live in a covenant relationship with God?

My Journal: This is your own page to write about your feelings. No one will read this page without your permission. The question given is a suggestion, but you may write about any feelings you have about our lesson.

Reflect on your own experiences in the covenant community (church). What have you found the community to be? What would you like for it to be? What can you do to make it more of a community for more people?

_____

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Jesus Shows Us the Father   Lesson Six

Getting Ready:
1. Read the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).
2. Think about some of your favorite stories in the life of Jesus (other than his death and resurrection). List these stories in the Story section below.

Our Story:

My favorite stories about Jesus . . . .

Our Life Together:

LOVE

CONVICTION

RULES

GOOD BOY/GIRL
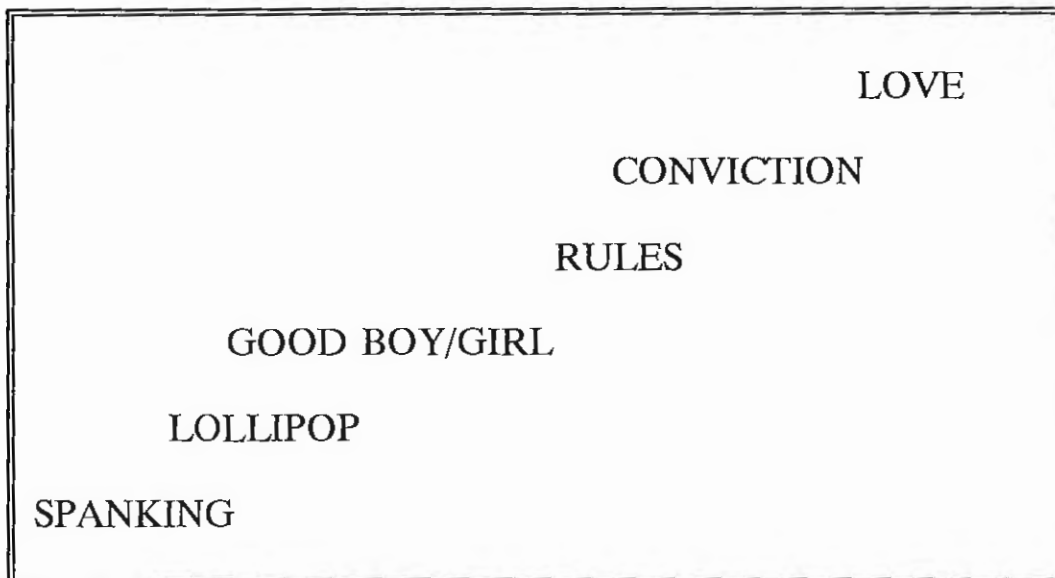
LOLLIPOP

SPANKING

Chart and following exercise adapted from <u>Confirming Faith</u>, *by Kieran Sawyer (Ave Marie).*

Explanation of Levels:

Spanking level--The person does the right thing to avoid punishment.

Lollipop level--The person does the right thing to receive a reward.

Good Boy/Girl level--The person does what the group (family, friends, neighbors) expects.

Rules level--The person obeys the rules because he or she sees the need for rules for an orderly society.

Conviction level--The person obeys the rule because he or she sees the reason behind the rule. Even if there were no rule, the person would do the right thing.

Love level--The person is free from rules because agape (love for God and others) controls his or her choices.

On what level do I live? . . . .

Using the first letter of each level on the chart, identify in the first blank the level of moral decision making represented by each statement.

___ ___	1.	How's that going to look?	___ ___ 13.	Do I hafta?
___ ___	2.	He (she) made me do it.	___ ___ 14.	Everybody's doing it.
___ ___	3.	I don't care. You decide.	___ ___ 15.	What's right is right.
___ ___	4.	I promised to, and I will.	___ ___ 16.	There's no law against it.
___ ___	5.	It's against my principles.	___ ___ 17.	We always do it that way.
___ ___	6.	She (he) had it coming.	___ ___ 18.	I owe it to her (him).
___ ___	7.	I think I ought to.	___ ___ 19.	Nobody'll ever know.
___ ___	8.	Who's gonna make me.	___ ___ 20.	What can I do to help?
___ ___	9.	What's in it for me?	___ ___ 21.	That isn't fair.
___ ___	10.	What would Jesus do?	___ ___ 22.	That's so boring.
___ ___	11.	What'll happen if I don't?	___ ___ 23.	How can I help?
___ ___	12.	How would I like to be treated?	___ ___ 24.	She (he) needs me.
			___ ___ 25.	That's the rule.

In the second blank, indicate how often you use each phrase (or one very similar):

V - very often
O - often
S - sometimes or seldom
N - never

Our Life With God:

Write (from memory) the Lord's Prayer. (If you need help, check Matthew 6:9-13).

In your opinion, how did Jesus intend for us to use the Lord's prayer?

1. Memorized and said as our only prayer
2. Memorized and recited as our prayer on some occasions
3. As a model for us to use in composing our own prayers
4. As a way to close our prayers

If we use the prayer as an example in composing our own prayers, what does the Lord's prayer teach us to include in our prayers?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Our family's prayer using the Lord's Prayer as an example . . . .

Summing Up: In one or two short sentences, answer the question below.

What does God expect from us in our interpersonal relationships?

My Journal:

Honestly describe your prayer life. Include your feelings of joy and fulfillment and/or disappointment and frustration. How do you envision your prayer life in the future?

Jesus Brings Us to the Father   Lesson Seven

Getting Ready:
Read one of the Synoptic Gospel accounts of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus: Matthew 26-28; Mark 14-16; or Luke 22-24. (For this lesson, please do not read from John because it contains no account of Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper.)

Our Story:

1. Why did the **religious leaders** of the Jewish people think Jesus should be crucified?
a. They knew he was the Messiah and the Messiah must be killed to fulfill scripture.
b. They were afraid he would cause so much trouble the Romans would attack the Jews.
c. They were jealous of Jesus' influence and authority over the people.
d. They were protecting the Jewish law from false teaching.

2. Why did the **crowds**, who had welcomed Jesus earlier, join their leaders in calling for crucifixion?
a. They decided Jesus was a false prophet.
b. They were disappointed that Jesus had not gathered an army to fight the Romans.
c. Their leaders convinced them Jesus was a threat to their nation's security.
d. They had no real convictions but simply "went with the flow."
e. Other _____

3. What do you think the **disciples** felt when they saw Jesus crucified?

a. They were sad because they thought their dream of the Kingdom of God was ruined.
b. They were angry because they felt Jesus had deceived them.
c. They were hopeful because they believed Jesus would rise from the dead as the scriptures prophesied.
d. They were confused because they thought Jesus would call an army of angels to help him.
e. Other _____

4. In your opinion, how did God and Jesus view the crucifixion?

To answer this question, each person in your group silently reads one of the scriptures below and contributes the truth of that scripture to the discussion.

Romans 3:21-26
Romans 5:6-11
2 Cor. 5:18-21
Hebrews 2:10-18
1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:18
1 John 4:9-11; Titus 2:11-14

Our Life With God:

A sacrament is _____

_____

The Lord's Supper makes visible....

Our memories of Jesus Christ	1 Cor. 11:24-25
Our proclamation of Jesus' death	1 Cor. 11:26
The communion of the church	1 Cor. 10:16-17 1 Cor. 11:27-32
Our thankfulness to God	Luke 22:17,19
The coming Messianic Banquet	Luke 22:16 1 Cor. 11:26

Summing Up: In one or two short sentences, answer the question below.

What is the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
in your life?

My Journal: This is your own page to write about your feelings. No one will read this page without your permission. The question given is a suggestion, but you may write about any feelings you have about our lesson.

Jesus said, "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Reflect on how Jesus, your Lord, served and continues to serve you. What can this mean for you as you try to serve others? Be specific in how you can serve others. (Don't forget to include your family in your service.)

God's People Called Out   Lesson Eight

Getting Ready:

Read Acts 2:1-47.

Our Story:

Peter's Sermon:

1. What you are seeing and hearing is the fulfillment of God's promise made through the prophet Joel (14-21).

2. You crucified Jesus of Nazareth, even though you could see that he was a man attested to you by God with deeds of power and signs.

3. God has raised Jesus from the dead just as David had prophesied.

4. We are witnesses that Jesus has arisen from the dead and is now exalted at the right hand of God.

5. Jesus has now poured out the Holy Spirit.

6. "Therefore, let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (v 36).

When the people cried out, "What can we do?" Peter replied, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Church: The English word "church" comes from the Greek word *kyriakon*, which means "of the Lord," or "the Lord's house." In the New Testament, the word translates the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means "a public assembly." In the Hebrew Old Testament the word *qahal*, which means "the assembly or calling out of God's people" was often translated into Greek by the word *ekklesia*. So, what *does* "church" mean to you?

Our Life Together:

Discussion: Look at the description of life in the early church found in Acts 2:42-47. Turn back to the section "What Life in the New Covenant Community is Like" in Lesson Five. How do the two descriptions compare?

_____

_____

_____

Our Life With God:

The Holy Spirit in the Covenant Community

Peter promised that those who repented and were baptized would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. What is the purpose of the Spirit in the life of a believer? Read the following scriptures and note the work of the Spirit mentioned in each one.

1 Cor. 12:12-13 _____

Eph. 5:18-20 _____

Rom. 12:4-8 _____

2 Cor. 1:21-22;
Eph. 1:13-14 _____

2 Cor. 3:17-18;
Gal. 5:22-26 _____

Rom. 8:12-17 _____

2 Cor. 2:11-14 _____

Repentance in the New Covenant Community:

Images of Baptism in the New Covenant Community	
Union with Christ in death, burial, resurrection	Rom. 6:3-4
	Col. 2:12
A washing or bath	
-- regeneration (new life)	Ti. 3:5
-- washes away sin	Acts 22:16
A new birth	John 3:5
Adoption	Gal. 3:26,27
An act of consecration to God	1 Cor. 6:11
A covenantal act (as circumcision in OT)	Col. 2:11-15
Incorporation into Christ's body on earth, the church	1 Cor. 12:13
Renewal	Ti. 3:5
A change of clothes	Gal. 3:27
	Col. 3:1-17
A rescue experience, as in the flood	1 Pet. 3:21

FOR TEENS ONLY:
Which of these images is (are) most relevant to your life now?

FOR PARENTS ONLY:
Share with your teen the images of baptism most meaningful in your life.

Summing Up: In one or two short sentences, answer the question below.

What is the meaning of baptism?

Early Years of the Church   Lesson Nine

Our Story:

Introduction to 1 Peter -- Notes:

STORY:
any reference to events in the Christian story, whether from the Old Testament, the life of Jesus, actions of the apostles, or even future events.

ETHICS:
any conclusions that are drawn on how we should live and how we should treat each other based on the Christian story.

WORSHIP:
any references to spiritual or church events (e.g., baptism, Lord's Supper, prayer, worship). These events are not necessarily named but may be implied in the context.

Assignment:

Read the section of 1 Peter assigned to your family noting in the columns below references to the story, ethics and worship. Peter often connects events in one column with events in another column. For example, slaves should be willing to suffer (ethics) because Jesus suffered (story). When this happens, draw lines connecting the events.

Circle your assigned passage: 1 Peter 1:3-2:3; 1 Peter 2:4-3:7; 1 Peter 3:8-4:19

STORY	ETHICS	WORSHIP

Summing Up: In one or two short sentences, answer the question below.

How are our Christian story, the way we live, and our worship all interconnected?

Important Assignment for Next Lesson

For the next class session, each family is to select a name from the list below and prepare a brief (3- to 5-minute) presentation on the life of that important character in church history. The teacher will distribute a resource to each family, but families can find other sources of information if they choose.

Ignatius of Antioch	Francis of Assisi
Justin Martyr	Thomas Aquinas
Irenaeus	John Wyclif
Tertullian	Catherine of Siena
Origen	John Hus
Athanasius	Martin Luther
Basil the Great	Ulrich Zwingli
Jerome	William Tyndale
John Chrysostom	John Calvin
Augustine of Hippo	Ignatius Loyola
Leo the Great	Menno Simons
Patrick	John Knox
Gregory the Great	Teresa of Avila
The Venerable Bede	Blaise Pascal
Boniface	Jonathan Edwards
Anselm	Wilber Wilberforce
Bernard of Clairvaux	Elizabeth Fry
Peter Abelard	Soren Kierkegaard

My Journal: This is your own page to write about your feelings. No one will read this page without your permission. The question given is a suggestion, but you may write about any feelings you have about our lesson.

What comes to your mind when you think about how we are a part of a continuing story with a past spiritual heritage, present responsibilities, and a future that is already provided for by God?

The Church Through Time   Lesson Ten

Getting Ready:
1. Read the brief summary of church history in the Story section.
2. As instructed by your teacher at the close of the last lesson, prepare your family's presentation on the life of a prominent person in church history.

Our Story:

The following article is adapted from "A Cloud of Witnesses," by William Willimon (*The Way*, Graded Press).

Catacombs and House Churches (A.D. 32-312)

Christianity was first viewed by outsiders as a group within Judaism. In places such as Jerusalem and Antioch, small groups of Jews led by people such as Paul and Peter proclaimed that Jesus of Nazareth was, indeed, the long-awaited Messiah who would redeem Israel. These Jewish Christians eventually broke their Jewish ties and emerged as a separate body.

Early Christian leaders like Paul helped the young church see that its missionary mandate to "Go . . .make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . ., teaching them (Matt. 28:19-20) applied even to Gentiles who had not been part of Israel and her covenant. "God shows no partiality" (Rom. 2:11), proclaimed Paul.

Even the Gentiles, who had no claim to make on God's love, were now, through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, claimed as God's own people:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ . . . So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.
Ephesians 2:13,19

They gathered for worship in homes, choosing to worship on Sunday, the first day of the week, the day of Christ's resurrection, rather than on the Sabbath (Saturday). Every Sunday was like a little Easter. They called Sunday, "the Lord's Day," the day when they celebrated the Lord's Supper and heard the Scriptures read and interpreted, sang their joyful hymns, and baptized new converts. They buried their dead, at least those who died near Rome, in catacombs, underground burial caves, because they were excluded from the official cemeteries.

At times the Christians suffered persecution by the Roman government, who looked on them as troublemakers and subversives. But the Christians refused to bow to the wishes of Caesar. Persecution only made them stronger. They went to death with a confidence that impressed their pagan neighbors. With Paul, the early martyrs could say, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phi. 1:21).

During this period, Christianity spread

rapidly throughout the Roman Empire, in spite of frequent persecutions. When Christians gathered for worship, the Lord's Supper was celebrated as a full meal, with the congregation offering gifts of bread and wine and other foods which an elder blessed and then the deacons distributed to the congregation. Later, the Lord's Supper was compacted into a more ritualized ceremony in which only small portions of bread and wine were consumed.

Baptism was the rite of Christian initiation. It is surprising that, at a time when the church was fighting for its life, the church had such stringent membership requirements. Soldiers, government officials, artists, attenders of pagan games were rejected or else accepted only after vowing to change their ways. Initiates went through a long period of instruction and training (usually three years' duration) in which they were carefully examined, given moral guidance, and taught the basics of the Christian faith. Those who completed this period of training, called the "catechumenate" (from the Latin word for "hearers") were initiated by baptism.

All was not peaceful within the early church. Paul's letters show there was much dissension. Divisions arose over disputes about correct belief. *Gnosticism* taught that some Christians had special secret wisdom that made them superior to other Christians. Gnostics claimed that all flesh and matter were evil and that Christ was not really a man of flesh and blood. *Docetism* taught that Christ only appeared to be human and that he was really pure God.

The church reacted to these heresies in two ways. First, they began to define which writings were inspired and authoritative. This is called the development of the *Canon*, which became the list of books in our New Testament. As time went by, some churches began to develop official creeds which they believed stated the church's basic, historic belief. The Apostle's Creed affirmed, "I believe in . . .Jesus Christ his only son our Lord: who was . . .born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate . . ." in order to say that even though Jesus was God's son, he was a full human being born and suffering like other humans so that he might be able to

liberate and save humanity.

Christianity spread in spite of persecution from outside and dissension within. It gave a demoralized Roman Empire something powerful to live for. It gave people of all races and classes something worth dying for. Christians preached and practiced love for all, even those who persecuted them. Their churches exhibited fellowship and optimistic hope that even their critics saw and praised.

In 312, the Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity. The persecuted movement on the fringes of Roman society became the official religion. Christ had conquered Caesar.

Controversy and Growth (325-590)

Constantine had hoped to unify the empire by making Christianity the official religion. but bitter theological arguments split the church into opposing factions. In Egypt, a church leader named Arius taught that although Christ was the greatest and best man in creation, he was still a creature and therefore could not be the eternal God. Arius was opposed by Athanasius, who argued that Arianism threatened the very basis of Christian salvation.

Constantine summoned church leaders to Nicaea, in Asia Minor, for the first ecumenical council in 325 to debate the issue of the nature of Christ. The Council of Nicaea decided in favor of Athanasius--the Son is eternal and unchangeable as the Father. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constitute the Trinity, a doctrine that seeks both to affirm the different ways we experience God and to uphold the essential unity of God.

During this period, some Christians withdrew from an increasingly worldly church to form their own communities they called monasteries. The word *monk* comes from the Greek word meaning "alone." These monks gave the church an example of the self-discipline, devotion, and commitment the church had known in earlier days. Some monasteries translated and copied Scripture; some served the poor and the sick; some devoted themselves to prayer and meditation.

In 410 Rome was destroyed by the barbarians. That event signaled the collapse of the classical world. Augustine wrote his *City of God* in an attempt to come to terms with the fall of the empire. In this book, he urged his fellow Christians to look beyond the faded glories of Rome to a new empire, a new city that God was building, the "City of God."

But the city of God in the church was not peaceful. Controversy broke out again over the precise relationship of the divine and human nature of Christ. In 451, the Council of Chalcedon declared that the human and divine natures of Christ were distinct but inseparable. Christians who disagreed with this formulation left to form the Nestorian, Coptic, and Jacobite churches of the East. In 1054, the church split into two major divisions, the Eastern Church centered at Constantinople and the Western Church with its center at Rome.

Even though this period was torn by schism and controversy, it was a time in which the church hammered out its beliefs in a continuing effort to make the faith accessible to the world. The church, at an early date, found that when we argue over important beliefs, our arguments are heated. Out of these arguments, Christians more clearly defined what they believed. Even the divisions that split Christendom into many different factions served to spread the faith into new lands.

The Early Middle Ages (590-1150)

Monasticism continued to grow during this period. For many persons, the monasteries became a place of order and refuge from the chaotic world of the early Middle Ages. In a time when there was much social disorder and decay, monasteries became centers of learning and culture.

The new foe of Christianity was no longer Caesar but a prophet named Mohammed, who appeared around 610. Mohammed was influenced by Judaism and even considered Jesus a great prophet. But Mohammed preached that there is but one powerful God, Allah, and launched his disciples on a fervent drive to convert the world. North Africa, Spain, the Middle East, and Southern Italy were conquered by the followers of Islam. At the same time, Christianity was doing some conquering of its own, using, we must admit, some of the same questionable, forceful methods of Mohammed's followers. France, England, and Germany became Christian during this period.

The Later Middle Ages (1200-1500)

The Crusades were launched in an attempt to wrest the Holy Land from the Muslims. While the Crusades had a host of mixed motives--from brutal religious fanaticism to greed for new wealth--it was a period in which commerce, art, and national spirit expanded.

The Pope, the bishop in Rome, grew in power in the thirteenth century, extending a vast and wealthy papal empire that exceeded any secular monarch in Europe. The veneration of Mary, the mother of Jesus, had been growing in popularity. This veneration reached its zenith during the Middle Ages. Perhaps Mary became so popular because she was seen as an alternative to the austere portrayals of Christ at this time. Christ was depicted as the aloof, powerful judge of the wicked. Mary was believed to be the compassionate, understanding mother of God. In a world devastated by the Black Death and plagued by wars and chaos, people sought a faith that would give them escape and consolation.

The Middle Ages was a time of contrasts. The great Gothic cathedrals and the popular pilgrimages are evidence of the spiritual vitality of the period, a time when the church dominated society. But the misery within society and the corruption and decay in the church, show that this was also a period that desperately needed reform. The common folk often felt alienated from an increasingly self-satisfied and extravagant church. The religion of the Middle Ages stressed faith as a set of rules, a burden to be borne in hope of escaping future punishment rather than a joyful lifting of burdens that made this life worth living. Reform was needed. Reformers were coming.

The Reformation (1500-1600)

The fifteenth century represented a low

ebb in the life of the church. The popes of this period were noted more for their extravagance, military adventures, and immorality than for their spirituality. The church as a whole was demoralized.

Many voices raised cries of protest. The immorality of the worldly clergy, the extravagance of the popes and their demands on the poor, the neglect of the local churches, the heretical theology, and the abuse and superstition that infected public worship were attacked by those wishing reform.

In Germany, a monk name Martin Luther was aroused when he saw the pope's representatives selling indulgences (forgiveness for a sinner in order to free the sinner from eternal punishment) to help finance St. Peter's basilica in Rome. A popular slogan of the day said,

As soon as the coin in the coffer rings,
The soul from purgatory springs.

Luther rejected the doctrine of papal infallibility. No church leader is the ultimate authority for the church. Authority rests only in Scripture, Luther said. Salvation is not through papal indulgence or even personal good works but through God's grace alone. "The righteous shall live by faith" (Hab. 2:4; also Rom. 1:17), said Luther. Faith, trust in God, is our only hope, not good works done by us or the church.

Other reformers followed Luther. In Germany and Switzerland, Zwingli called for radical reform of worship. Zwingli, unlike Luther, urged less frequent celebrations of the Lord's Supper and more emphasis on preaching and simple Sunday services. In Geneva, John Calvin formed a city government on New Testament principles and wrote many volumes of theology, putting forth the Protestant principle that Scripture alone governs belief. In England, Henry VIII broke with the papacy and established himself as head of the Church of England; John Knox formed the Presbyterian movement in Scotland.

In less than a century the Western church was split into many different churches. A new spiritual vitality had risen in Europe. The Reformation brought forth great diversity in the Christian church. Protestantism restored the Bible and preaching to great prominence. The place of baptism and the Lord's Supper, however, which many reformers sought to accentuate, were left in doubt because of many questions and disputes among the reformers over the significance of these sacraments. Individual conscience was given more prominence as a result of the individualism of the Reformation and the "priesthood of all believers" doctrine.

The Roman church, while in some ways becoming more rigid and reactionary as a result of the blows it suffered during this century, did much reforming and renewal of its own during the Council of Trent (1545). Ignatius Loyola founded the Jesuits, a zealous and dedicated missionary force that spread its teaching into the New World, insuring that most of the newly discovered lands would be Catholic.

The Post Reformation Era
(1600 to Present)

In the century after the Reformation, Europe was torn by bitter religious strife. Catholics persecuted Protestants in the Inquisition. Protestants persecuted Catholics and other Protestants. Many religious groups such as the Quakers and the Baptists came to America fleeing religious persecution. Diversity of religious expression became a part of American life from the beginning.

The eighteenth century is sometimes called the Age of Enlightenment. The prevailing thought of the age optimistically taught that reason and natural inclinations could solve all human needs. This optimistic humanism was a false hope. Negro slavery, bloody revolution and war, and the horrors of the fledgling industrial revolution challenged the optimistic belief that humanity could make progress solely by its own efforts.

Great awakenings swept through the American frontier. These revivals of religion were intense periods of religious enthusiasm and fervor that contrasted with the rather demoralized, cold rationalism of the intellectuals of the Enlightenment. The frontier camp meetings and revivals transformed the young nation from a vast land of the unchurched into one of the largest, thoroughly Protestant areas in the world. During this period, the American Restoration Movement was born.

> **Questions about the story....**
>
> 1. What part of the story did you find the most interesting?
> 2. What part of the story was most confusing?
> 3. Did the church sometimes stray from God's guidance?
> 4. What were some positive results of the Protestant Reformation?
> 5. What were some negative results of the Reformation?
> 6. After reading this brief history of the church, I feel
>   a. encouraged
>   b. discouraged
>   c. curious
>   d. better informed
>   e. unaffected

Family Presentations of Characters from Church History

Our Life With God:

> ### The Apostles' Creed
>
> *I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth:*
>
> *And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hades; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*
>
> *I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.*

Summing Up: In one or two short sentences, answer the question below.

Why and how has the church endured through almost two thousand years?

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My Journal: This is your own page to write about your feelings. No one will read this page without your permission. The question given is a suggestion, but you may write about any feelings you have about our lesson.

Write how you feel about the varied history of the church and about the many beliefs, opinions and divisions that exist in Christianity today.

_____

_____

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The Church of Our Youth   Lesson Eleven

Getting Ready:
Before class time, spend some time as a family discussing your family roots in the Church of Christ. How many generations have been members? Are there any interesting stories about your family in the church? Come to class prepared to share some of your history. (You may use the box below for notes.)

Our Story:

Our family in the Restoration heritage . . . .

Our Life Together:

After viewing the video, *Our Restoration Heritage*, discuss the following characteristics of Churches of Christ. Can you think of others?
- a. Baptism as a necessary portion of a believers' response to God's offer of salvation
- b. No infant baptism
- c. A cappella music in worship
- d. Ministers do not wear robes, not called "Pastor" or "Reverend"
- e. Lord's Supper celebrated weekly
- f. Others . . . .

Summing Up: In one or two short sentences, answer the question below.

What was the intent or purpose of the American Restoration Movement?

My Journal: This is your own page to write about your feelings. No one will read this page without your permission. The question given is a suggestion, but you may write about any feelings you have about our lesson.

Describe how being a member of or a child in the Church of Christ has contributed to your self-identity.

_____

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_____

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_____

_____

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_____

_____

Growing Up in the Church   Lesson Twelve

Getting Ready:

Parents: Spend some time remembering and discussing with each other the story of the birth (or adoption) of your child and any memories of your child's involvement with the church. Bring a baby picture of your child (8 x 10 if possible) to class with you.

Teens: Spend some time remembering your childhood in the church. Think of events that have impressed you, people in the church (other than your parents) who have made an impact on your life, and any funny stories about your life in the church.

Our Story:

Notes on "Growing Up in the Church":

Our Life Together:

What must a child of the church do to be recognized as a full member of the body of Christ?

> ## How Will I Know When?
>
> Some young believers experience a sudden moment of conviction.
>
> Some young believers experience a gradual growth in awareness of their sin and their need for the grace of God.
>
> Some young believers recognize their desire to be full members of God's covenant community that has nurtured them.
>
> Some young believers realize how much God loves them, and they want to respond to that love with their commitment to him.
>
> Some young believers seek the full fellowship of the church and the Spirit.

Summing Up:

As the class reaches the end of its study, your family will share their summary statements with the other families.

My Journal: This is your own page to write about your feelings. No one will read this page without your permission. The question given is a suggestion, but you may write about any feelings you have about our lesson.

What experiences in this class that have been the most meaningful or helpful to you?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

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_____

_____

APPENDIX III

EVALUATION OF THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT

1.   I found the theological statement to be a clear and well-organized proposal for addressing the needs of children of the church.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Strongly
Disagree

Strongly
Agree

Comments:

2.   The theological statement accurately reflects the realities faced by children of Churches of Christ as they prepare for baptism.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Strongly
Disagree

Strongly
Agree

Comments:

3.   The theological statement is consistent with my understanding of Biblical teachings.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Strongly
Disagree

Strongly
Agree

Comments:

4.   The theological statement can serve as the basis for a curriculum for young adolescents in Churches of Christ.

        1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Strongly   Strongly
Disagree   Agree

Comments:

APPENDIX IV

CURRICULUM EVALUATION
Formative/Evaluation Committee

1. The goals of the curriculum are consistent with the basic concepts of the theological statement.

        1   2   3   4   5
     Strongly   Strongly
     Disagree   Agree

2. The teaching goals of the curriculum are well defined.

        1   2   3   4   5

3. The teaching objectives are well defined and attainable.

        1   2   3   4   5

4. The strategies are useful in achieving the teaching objectives.

        1   2   3   4   5

5. The curriculum is consistent with my understanding of Biblical teaching.

        1   2   3   4   5

6. The curriculum is age-appropriate for eighth-grade students (and parents).

        1   2   3   4   5

7. The curriculum is not gender specific.

        1   2   3   4   5

8.   The curriculum is not biased toward race or ethnicity.

                    1   2   3   4   5

9.   The overall organization of the curriculum is logical and easily understood.

                    1   2   3   4   5

10.   This curriculum should provide an interesting learning experience for families.

                    1   2   3   4   5

11.   The curriculum will benefit the families of the Glenwood Church of Christ.

                    1   2   3   4   5

Comments:

APPENDIX V

TEEN EVALUATION FORM

1.   I agree with the basic premise that such a curriculum as Faith Decisions is needed for children who grow up in Churches of Christ.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

2.   Describe the proposed Faith Decisions Curriculum on the following scales.

    a.

1	2	3	4	5
Very Boring				Very Interesting

    b.

1	2	3	4	5
Too Demanding				Stimulating

    c.

1	2	3	4	5
Misses the Point				Shows understanding of children of church

    d.

1	2	3	4	5
Confusing				Well-organized

    e.

1	2	3	4	5
Glad I missed it				Wish I had it

3.   Compare this curriculum with the preparation you had for baptism.

1	2	3	4	5
Much Worse		About the Same		Much Better

4.   If I were a teenager in this program, I would find the Faith Decisions class . . . .

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Threatening   Enabling

5.   Evaluate the following elements of the proposed curriculum.

a.   Parents and teens together in class

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Bad Idea   Great Idea

b.   Having a banquet to begin the class

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

c.   Parents' presenting a letter about their faith to their son/daughter

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

d.   A closing ceremony during Sunday morning worship

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

e.   Summary statements

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

f.   Journal

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

6.   Did you participate in a Faith Decisions class at Glenwood?   Yes ___   No ___

7.   Have you been baptized?   Yes ___   No ___

8.   What do you like most about this new curriculum?

9.   What do you like least about this new curriculum?

APPENDIX VI

PARENT EVALUATION FORM

---

1. I agree with the basic premise that such a curriculum as Faith Decisions is needed for children who grow up in Churches of Christ.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

2. Describe the proposed Faith Decisions Curriculum on the following scales.

   a.
1	2	3	4	5
Very Boring				Very Interesting

   b.
1	2	3	4	5
Too Demanding				Stimulating

   c.
1	2	3	4	5
Misses the Point				Shows understanding of children of church

   d.
1	2	3	4	5
Confusing				Well-organized

   e.
1	2	3	4	5
Glad I missed it				Wish I had it

3. Compare this curriculum with the preparation you had for baptism.

1	2	3	4	5
Much Worse		About the Same		Much Better

4.　　If I were a parent in this program, I would find the Faith Decisions class . . . .

1	2	3	4	5
Threatening				Enabling

5.　　Evaluate the following elements of the proposed curriculum.

　　a.　　Parents and teens together in class

1	2	3	4	5
Bad Idea				Great Idea

　　b.　　Having a banquet to begin the class

1	2	3	4	5

　　c.　　Parents' presenting a letter about their faith to their son/daughter

1	2	3	4	5

　　d.　　A closing ceremony during Sunday morning worship

1	2	3	4	5

　　e.　　Summary statements

1	2	3	4	5

　　f.　　Journal

1	2	3	4	5

　　g.　　Parent orientation session before classes begin

1	2	3	4	5

6.　　Were you a child of the Church of Christ?　　Yes ___　　No ___

7.　　How old were you when you were baptized?　　_____

7a.　　Briefly describe how you were prepared for baptism.

8.　　What do you like most about this new curriculum?

9.　　What do you like least about this new curriculum?

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