

Confirmation Lesson #4 - *Preparation for Covenant Service – Part 1*

Lesson Preparation

Topic: The Biblical Understanding of Covenant

Theme: A covenant calls for commitment.

Core Teaching: To help class members appreciate and understand the Biblical idea of covenant, the nature of the covenant we will be making during the covenant service, and begin the process of preparing for the covenant service.

Scripture: **Genesis 17:1-7**

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

Jeremiah 33:31-3

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. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Jeremiah 34:18

*And those who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make **like the calf when they cut it in two and passed between its parts.***

Small Group Supplies:

- Copies of the Covenant Service for each class member
- copies of the covenant cards
- flip chart
- a copy of each of the three scripture cards
- scotch tape
- spirals

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Large Group Supplies and Preparation:

You will need a large hand saw. Familiarize yourself with the Covenant service and the background reading material.

Large Group Time

Singing: Music team sings 2-3 high-energy songs.

Offering: Two students bring the offering collection box to the leader.

Doxology: Sing Doxology.

Affirmation of Faith: Have the class join together in reciting the “Apostle’s Creed”.

Introduction to Class Session:

Have a supply of little treats available (hard candy, etc.). Teach the class today’s theme: “A covenant calls for commitment”. Repeat it several times. Challenge the class: every time you use the word “covenant,” the first person to say: “A covenant calls for commitment!” will get a treat. Practice once with the class. Have an adult ready to respond and get the treat, just in case no one responds. Be prepared to have fun with this. As you proceed, tease the class - try to think of as many ways of saying “covenant” without saying the word as you can (eg., contract, agreement, arrangement, etc.) But say the word every so often in what follows to keep the tension going.

Ask the class: Does anyone know what a “covenant” is? [*Use the real word here*].

Share with the class: A “covenant” is a contract or agreement.

Ask the class: Can you think of any contracts or agreements that we have in our society today?. [*Examples include: marriage; adoption; buying a house, etc.*] **Ask them** if they can think of who is involved in a couple of these contracts and what each party needs to do. You might ask some small group leaders to answer, i.e., *What is involved in a marriage covenant?*

Tell the class: A “covenant” is an important idea in the Bible and in our faith. The Bible is divided into two “covenants” - an Old covenant (or “testament”) that God made with the Jewish people, and a new covenant (or “testament”) that God made with us through Jesus. In fact, the whole Bible can be read as the story of the covenant between God and God’s people.

Relate the following information:

Warn them that this is not for weak stomachs, but that this is really the way covenants used to be made between God and God’s people. [**Acting out the sacrifice with great dramatic flair improves the point**].

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Large Group Time

“Cutting” A Covenant

In the Old Testament the term for making a covenant was literally “cutting” a covenant. Here is the way it was originally done. [Take out the saw and hold up so that it is visible.] When the people wanted to make a covenant or agreement with God they took an animal (a cow, a lamb, etc.). They then “sacrificed” the animal (killed it). Then they cut the animal in half. [Pretend to cut the imaginary animal in half with the saw.] They put half on this side. Then they put the other half on the other side. [Again, act it out.] Then they walked between the two parts. [Walk through the two halves.] As they walked between the two parts of the sacrificed animal they said something like: “God, if I break the covenant that I make with you this day, may the same thing happen to me that just happened to this animal. Making a covenant with God was no light matter. It was serious. Very serious!

Let the class know: We will be “cutting” a covenant with God and with each other next Sunday at 2:00 in the afternoon. **Tell them that** fortunately we no longer “cut” a covenant in a literal sense. But it is still serious business. Today we are going to explore the nature of covenant in the Bible and the confirmation covenant we will be making next Sunday.

Remind them:

- 1) They can invite their entire family to the service.
- 2) It will be a communion service, but in the Methodist Church anyone can take communion, so even if your guests belong to another church they are welcome to take communion with us.
- 3) The service will be led by class members. We get a chance to volunteer to help today. We can be readers, greeters, ushers, assist in communion, and other jobs.
- 4) We will have a rehearsal for the service and rehearse any leadership roles we may have next Sunday during our class time.

Prayer: Large group leader closes with a prayer.

Dismiss to small groups: Students follow newly assigned small group leaders.

Small Group

Opening Prayer: Begin the small group session with a prayer. You may want to do a sentence completion prayer, a “build a prayer”, or ask for a volunteer to pray. The main idea is for the youth themselves to pray. This is how they learn and how they become comfortable with prayer.

Discuss the Opening Session: **Ask** the group:

- 1) *What do you think about the way covenants used to be made?*
- 2) *Why do you think we begin the year with a “covenant service”?*
- 3) *What is it - exactly - that we are promising to do?*

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Small Group

The Biblical Idea Of Covenant:

Ask the group:

- 1) *What does it mean to make or "cut" a covenant?*
- 2) *What are some covenants people make today?*
- 3) *What happens when we break a covenant?*

For dramatic effect, take the three scripture cards and tear each into **several** pieces. Mix up the pieces and tell the group that a broken covenant loses its meaning. Sometimes we do break the covenants we make and we have to deal with the consequences.

Challenge the group to reassemble the pieces into the three scripture cards.

Jeremiah 34:18

Genesis 17:1-7

Jeremiah 31:31-34

When they have reassembled them, have them tape them back together and read the three passages. After each is read, **ask:**

- 1) *What does this tell us about "covenant"?*
- 2) *What does it tell us about the covenant we will make at our service?*

Our Covenant:

Have class members look at and read **the covenant they will be making and signing** during the covenant service. You'll find a sample of these in this curriculum as "sample covenant cards" following the Covenant Service. Have the group members read and comment on the **parents' covenant** and the **leaders' covenant**, as well as their own. See if there are any questions.

Sign-up to Help With the Covenant Service:

Hand out copies of the Covenant service. Briefly go over the service with the group so that they know what is in the service and its basic flow.

Ask for volunteers to do the various parts. Remind them that we need 50 people to help with the service. We cannot promise that each person will get the part they want, but we will use everyone who wants to help.

When we come back into the large group setting, hand in your sheets to the lead teacher. He or she will quickly go over the sheets to make sure that we have enough volunteers. If we don't, we will announce that we need additional help.

Wrap up: Briefly summarize the main points of the lesson.

Joys & Concerns: Ask students to share any Joys & Concerns for the week.

Lord's Prayer: Lead the small group in the Lord's Prayer.

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Large Group Closing

Announcements/Birthdays

Signing Up To Help With Covenant Service

Hand in the sheets that record what your group members have volunteered to do in the service, so we can check and make sure we have enough people signed up to help in the service.

See if there are any questions about next week's service or the rehearsals.

Sanctuary

UMYF Benediction

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The Biblical Idea Of 'Covenant'

Jeremiah 34:18

Making A Covenant Was Serious Business - Very Serious!

And those who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make like the calf when they cut it in two and passed between its parts.

The Biblical Idea Of 'Covenant'

Genesis 17:1-7

God Is The One Who Initiates The Covenant

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. ²And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." ³Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, ⁴"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you

The Biblical Idea Of 'Covenant'

Jeremiah 31:31-34

God Will Make A New Covenant - Not Of Stone, But On Our Hearts

³¹The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It 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. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

*Highland Park
United Methodist Church
Dallas, Texas*

*Lord, make me what you will.
I put myself fully into your hands:
put me to suffering,
let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,
let me be full, let me be empty,
let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and with a willing heart
give it all to your pleasure and disposal.*

John Wesley
Covenant Service, 1780

Confirmation Covenant Service
2:00 PM
Sunday

Sanctuary

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Confirmation Covenant Service

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

OPENING VOLUNTARY

CALL TO WORSHIP

Grace and peace from God our Creator
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Come let us worship the Lord who established a new covenant
through Jesus Christ.

We come in spirit and in truth.

HYMN "*Here I Am, Lord*" #593

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH #881: "*Apostles Creed*"

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Let us pray:

Merciful God,

we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have failed to be an obedient church.

We have not done your will,

We have broken your law,

We have rebelled against your love,

We have not loved our neighbors,

And we have not heard the cry of the needy.

Forgive us, we pray.

Free us for joyful obedience,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Silent Prayer

Words of Assurance:

This is the message we have heard from God and proclaim to you,
that God is light and in God there is no darkness at all.

If we walk in the light, as God is in the light,
we have fellowship with one another,

and the blood of Jesus the Christ cleanses us from all sin.

May almighty God, who caused light to shine out of darkness,

shine in our hearts, cleansing us from all our sins,

and completing in us the light of the knowledge of God's glory,

This we pray through Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE LESSON I Corinthians 1:18, 23-28

SERMON *Walt Marcum*

COLLECT

Let us pray.

**Gracious God, you have appointed our Lord Jesus Christ
as Mediator of a new covenant;**

give us grace to draw near with fullness of faith

and join ourselves in a perpetual covenant with you,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE COVENANT

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Youth read aloud in unison their covenant.

Parents read aloud in unison their covenant.

Teachers read aloud in unison their covenant.

Please sign your covenant cards at this time and bring them to the alter as you come for communion.

PASTORAL PRAYER

THE PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us share signs of reconciliation and love with one another.

Greet each other with signs of God's peace.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

OFFERTORY

DOXOLOGY

HYMN *"One Bread, One Body"* #620

GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing . . .

. . . we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you . . .

. . . as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit . . .

. . . now and forever.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

BREAKING OF BREAD AND TAKING OF THE CUP

GIVING OF THE BREAD AND THE CUP

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us give thanks to the Lord.

Lord we give thanks for the gift of this holy meal.

**We praise you that you sent your Son,
that through him we might be reconciled completely to you.**

**Christ sacrificed himself for us;
grant that all we are and all we do be a response to him,
in whose strong name we pray. Amen.**

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HYMN

"Sanctuary"

Bulletin Insert

DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING

POSTLUDE

Readers (10):

Leading The Covenant Pledge (3):

Youth: _____
Parent: _____
Teacher: _____

Acolytes (6):

Assisting With Serving Communion (8):

Adults Needed

Coordinate Readers:

Coordinate Communion Helpers:

Coordinate Greeters:

Coordinate Ushers:

Coordinate Acolytes:

Greeters Handing Out Bulletins (8):

Ushers Taking The Offering (18):

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Sample Covenant Cards

Class Member's Covenant

I pledge, with God's help and the support of my family, to enter fully into the confirmation journey. I will attend regularly and participate fully in class sessions, in worship and in all related activities. I will be open and honest about my own questions, and will endeavor to understand what it means to be Christian. I will also respect, support and help others in their own questions. This is the covenant I make this day, so help me God.

(Class Member's Signature)

Parent's Covenant

With God's help I pledge to assist my child on the confirmation journey. I will encourage and support my child's participation in confirmation. I will, to the best of my ability, be a role model of what it means to be Christian. This is the covenant I make this day, so help me God.

(Parent's Signature)

Leader's Covenant

I pledge, with God's help, to surround each class member with an environment of love and support. I will model the faith I teach. I will encourage, challenge, and share the confirmation journey with those I work with. This is the covenant I make this day, so help me God.

(Leader's Signature)