

Practice for Youth Professions of Faith

Who is this for?

This membership track is for youth, including some high school students, for whom the adult Exploring Membership Class is not a good fit, either because the content is above them, or because they will not feel free to fully participate in a class of adults.

What's the goal?

Our goal is to ensure that children or teens know and embrace the heart of the gospel, understand key facets of the faith, and want to grow in faith so that they can be welcomed to the Lord's Supper.

What's the process?

1. Upon expressing interest in their child's making profession of faith, parents will be given the brochure, "Nurturing Your Child's Faith" which describes how to discern readiness for participation at the Lord's Supper. The following steps assume the parents think their son or daughter is ready after reviewing this brochure and want to proceed.
2. A leader designated by the elders will prepare the students for profession of faith. The amount of time needed for this preparation depends on the students: whatever time is needed for the leader to be sure they have reached the goal stated above. The method for doing this is described below (depending on the age and situation of the students this may involve a parent being present).
 - a. The leader asks the students why they want to make profession of faith.
 - b. The leader shares his/her faith story. An opportunity for the students to share their faith story may be given here.
 - c. The leader interactively shares illustrations of the gospel's core, examples: Isaiah 53.6, The Bridge, Do vs Done
 - d. The leader interactively reviews the three sections of "Q&A: A Summary of Biblical Teachings" at a level fitting for the students as follows:
 - 1) Sin
 - a) What is God's will for us? (Great Commandment)
 - b) Do we obey it? (Romans 3.23)
 - c) Does God care? (Romans 6.23)
 - d) Can we fix our problem ourselves?
 - 2) Salvation
 - a) Interactively cover the key teachings of the Apostles' Creed.
 - b) Discuss Q&A 44-49 which explain the sacraments
 - 3) Service
 - a) Note how the 10 commandments tell us how to serve God
 - 1] relate to the Great Commandment: all are expressions of love which means doing good as well as not doing bad—discuss what's hard here
 - 2] relate to the Great Commission—a key way to love God and others
 - b) Prayer: illustrate good communication
 - e. At whatever time in the preparation process the leader considers best, he/she reviews the handout: "Sharing Faith Stories/Questions of Faith."
 - 1) The leader asks the students to identify 2-3 non-family members they would like as a mentor (someone they know and look up to as a follower of Jesus). The leader informs the students that he/she will help them choose from among these people later. After submitting the names to the elders for approval, the leader allows the students to choose one and informs them that he/she will contact the potential mentor.
 - 2) The leader asks the students to write their faith story and give a copy to him/her and, eventually, to the mentor. When the leader receives the faith story, he/she passes it on to the pastor for a written response.

- f. The leader determines that the preparation is adequate when the students are able to give good answers to “Key Questions of Faith” and understands the meaning of the 6 G’s on the back of the Sunday bulletin. The leader takes care not to turn profession of faith into an academic test; he/she does not motivate the students to learn by saying that they will be tested on questions. The motivation must be that anybody who professes to be a Christian must know and believe basic biblical teachings. Anyone who doesn’t know and believe basic biblical teachings isn’t ready.
3. Each student meets at least twice with his/her mentor. The meetings could be a public place like a restaurant, or a student’s home. The meetings can include something fun, and must cover the following:
 - a. Mentor and student share faith stories.
 - b. Mentor and student share about personal participation in the 6 G’s using discussion guide “Following Jesus in 6 Key Areas.”
 4. Student meets with Elder Team.
 5. Student makes Public Profession of Faith.

Key Questions of Faith

1. Why don't you do what God wants you to do?
2. What does God think of your sin? What is sin?
3. Can anyone other than Jesus save you?
4. How does Jesus save you?
5. Where can you learn about this salvation in Jesus Christ?
6. How do you know the Bible is true?
7. How does salvation in Jesus become your own?
8. What does it mean that you believe in the Trinity?
9. What do you believe about the Holy Spirit? How does the Spirit help the church?
10. What do you believe about "the forgiveness of sins"?
11. What does "the resurrection of the body" and "life everlasting" mean to you?
12. How many sacraments did Christ command? What are they?
13. What does baptism mean to you?
14. What does the Lord's Supper mean to you?
15. How should you live as a Christian?
16. Why do you need to pray?

Name: _____

Two or three non-family members of our church I respect as Christians whom I would like to meet with:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Gift I'd like from the church:

____ NIV Study Bible

____ NIV Life Application Bible

____ NIV Commentary on the Whole Bible

Name: _____

Two non-family members in our church I respect as Christians whom I would like to meet with:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Gift I'd like from the church:

____ NIV Study Bible

____ NIV Life Application Bible

____ NIV Commentary on the Whole Bible

Name: _____

Two non-family members in our church I respect as Christians whom I would like to meet with:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Gift I'd like from the church:

____ NIV Study Bible

____ NIV Life Application Bible

____ NIV Commentary on the Whole Bible

Note to Potential Profession of Faith Mentor

Hi [insert name],

Responding to the requests of some parents and students, our elders have (gladly!) put together a process for students to make public profession of faith and participate in the Lord's Supper. The process, and your possible part in it, is outlined below.

As preparation to making Public Profession of Faith, [insert name] has completed a teaching/discussion time to ensure that [he/she] knows and embraces the heart of the gospel, understands key matters of the faith, and wants to grow in faith. Two components of preparation remain: 1) to share and discuss (and possibly expand on) [his/her] faith story and 2) to share and discuss how [he/she] plans to follow Jesus in 6 key areas of discipleship (the 6 G's).

[insert name] has identified you a of our church whom [he/she] respects as a Christian. Being a mentor would mean meeting with the student, probably twice, to discuss the matters above as outlined in the attached sheets.

Your role would be to encourage the student by sharing something of your own experiences in following Jesus and affirming [his/her] own steps of discipleship. Also, you would be encouraged to regularly pray for the student and if willing, to comment on [his/her] faith during worship at the time of public profession of faith.

Are you willing to be [insert name]'s mentor? Please let me know either way. If you're willing, I will ask you to contact [him/her] as soon as possible to set up a meeting date. The student will expect you to initiate the meetings.

Thanks for considering this.

[insert leader's name]

Sharing Faith Stories
(meeting #1 guide for Mentor)

1. Mentor and Student meet in an informal setting.

Meet at a place like a restaurant, or in the student's house, or choose some other public place comfortable for talking. You could even enjoy some activity together (like a sporting event or concert) before you talk on the topics below.

2. Find out something about each other's background. Take some notes to help you remember.

Where were you born? What was it like growing up? What's a normal day like for you? What's it like being you at your house? What are some of your best memories? How about one of your sad memories?

What is school like for you?

What is one thing you really like about your life today?

What do you want to be some day? Any ideas? Any big things you hope for?

3. Share your faith stories with each other. The student will have his/hers written out along the lines of the questions below but talk about more than is written down).

Why do you need Jesus? Can you think of a time when you weren't trusting and obeying Jesus very well and because of that made God or others sad?

I believe that Jesus is....

I love Jesus because...

I want to serve Jesus because...

What verse(s) from the Bible is especially important to me? Why?

4. Set a time for the next meeting, when you will either continue to discuss what's on this sheet, or, if finished, talk about following Jesus in the areas of the 6 G's.

5. Close your time together with each of you saying a short prayer asking God to be with you in this process of preparing for public profession of faith and thanking God for your partner in the process.

Following Jesus in 6 Key Areas
(meeting #2 guide for mentor and student)

1. Follow-up from the previous meeting.

Any further thoughts/questions/comments come to mind after thinking about our last meeting together?

2. One by one, read the description of the 6 G's on the back of our bulletin and discuss them guided by the questions below. Take some notes.

Grace: (for this, focus on *celebrating* grace in public worship as well as *receiving*)

1. Describe some of your experiences of following Jesus in this area.
2. What do you see as your strengths and weaknesses here?
3. How do you plan to follow Jesus in this area?

Growth:

1. Describe some of your experiences of following Jesus in this area.
2. What do you see as your strengths and weaknesses here?
3. How do you plan to follow Jesus in this area?

Group:

1. Describe some of your experiences of following Jesus in this area.
2. What do you see as your strengths and weaknesses here?
3. How do you plan to follow Jesus in this area?

Gifts:

1. Describe some of your experiences of following Jesus in this area.
2. What do you see as your strengths and weaknesses here?
3. How could you plan to follow Jesus in this area?

Giving:

1. Describe some of your experiences of following Jesus in this area.
2. What do you see as your strengths and weaknesses here?
3. How do you plan to follow Jesus in this area?

Gathering:

1. Describe some of your experiences of following Jesus in this area.
2. What do you see as your strengths and weaknesses here?
3. How do you plan to follow Jesus in this area?

3. Close your time together with each of you saying a short prayer asking God to help you follow Jesus and thanking God for your time together.

Note to Parents of Student Desiring to Make Profession of Faith

Dear [insert name],

We are glad [insert name] wants to profess [his/her] faith in Jesus, and that you think it fitting to encourage [him/her] toward this step.

Our goal as elders is to ensure that [insert name] knows and embraces the heart of the gospel, understands basic biblical teachings, and wants to grow in faith so that [he/she] can be welcomed to the Lord's Supper. Our process for doing this has three parts:

- 1) A time of instruction/discussion in which [insert name] will cover basic biblical teachings, write [his/her] faith story, and review the meaning of the 6 G's on the back of our bulletin.
- 2) Two meetings with a member of our church [insert name] respects as a Christian. The mentor and [insert name] will share their faith stories with each other and will also discuss how to follow Jesus in the 6 G's.

Let me know if you have any questions. Let's keep praying, and giving thanks for [insert name].

Thanks,

[insert leader's name]

Key Questions of Faith

(with # references to Q&A booklet, core answers, secondary comments in parentheses)

1. Why don't you do what God wants you to do? (#4)
Because I naturally tend to sin, due to the Fall.
2. What does God think of your sin? What is sin? (#6)
God hates it. Sin is failing to love God above all and my neighbor as myself.
3. Can anyone other than Jesus save you? (#7)
No.
4. How does Jesus save you? (#8)
He died for my sins; he took my punishment in my place (He could do this because he was both true God and true human).
5. Where can you learn about this salvation in Jesus Christ? (#9)
From the Bible (and other Christians).
6. How do you know the Bible is true? What story does it tell? (#10, 12)
*The same Holy Spirit who inspired it tells me in my heart that it's true (and also told the church which books to include in the Bible).
The Bible tells the story of creation, fall, and redemption.*
7. How does salvation in Jesus become your own? What is faith? (#17,18)
*Through true faith in Jesus.
Trusting in Jesus for forgiveness and new life so that I can live as God's child.*
8. What does it mean that you believe in the Trinity? (#20)
The one God is revealed in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
9. What do you believe about the Holy Spirit? How does the Spirit help the church? (#33, 36)
*The Holy Spirit is God, and given to me personally to be with me and make me like Jesus.
The Holy Spirit equips the church to carry out its mission of making new and better disciples of Jesus.*
10. What do you believe about "the forgiveness of sins"? (39)
That by dying for us, Christ paid the price God demands for our wrong-doing; so, for Jesus' sake, God pardons us (to receive forgiveness, we must confess our sins and turn away from them).
11. What does "the resurrection of the body" and "life everlasting" mean to you? (#40)
*That when Jesus returns I will receive a new body—like his.
That even after death I will continue to experience life as God's child; in fact, when Jesus returns, my life will get much better.*

12. How many sacraments did Christ command? What are they? (#45)
Two. Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
13. What does baptism mean to you? (# 46)
The water of baptism is a symbol that Jesus' death and resurrection wash away my sins and give me new life.
14. What does the Lord's Supper mean to you? (#48)
*The bread is a symbol of Christ's body—that Jesus gave his body for me.
The cup is a symbol of Christ's blood—that Jesus shed his blood for me.*
15. How should you live as a Christian? (#50)
I should show thanks for God's gift of salvation, and aim to know and please God better, by loving God above all and my neighbor as myself.
16. Why do you need to pray? (#74)
If you love somebody, you talk to him. Communication is at the heart of any relationship—including our relationship with God. We need God and God's gifts; God promises to give us what we need when we pray.