

PROFESSION OF FAITH CLASS (2008)

FOUNDATIONAL TEACHINGS:

General Revelation & Special Revelation
Trinity
Predestination

FATHER

Providence & Creation
Problem of Evil
Man & Sin

SON

Incarnation
Atonement
Resurrection

HOLY SPIRIT

Holy Spirit & Sanctification
Prayer
Sacraments
Church
Future - Eschatology

PRACTICE OF FAITH

1. Practice of Prayer (3 sessions)
2. Stewardship
3. Evangelism
4. Spiritual Gifts

Philosophy of Profession of Faith Class

The intent of this class is not to instill faith or make perfect Christians out of those who are thinking of doing public Profession of Faith. We are all shaped by different circumstances in our faith-walk with the Lord. Some will do Profession of faith and not truly come to a strong faith until later of life. Profession of Faith indicates a willingness to follow the Lord, not a measurable point in the strength of your faith.

Therefore, the purpose of this class is first of all to talk about the doctrines we hold to so that those who do public profession of faith will have a clear understanding of what the Christian Reformed Church teaches. Secondly, this class will explore what it means to live the Christian life in view of these doctrines. Understanding the doctrines has no value if we do not understand how these doctrines impact our lives. Thirdly, this class will also promote growing in our faith by encouraging the participants to think about their own faith-walk and how they are living for their Lord and Saviour. Finally, each participant will be asked to write their own personal faith statement.

To aid in learning, each participant is expected to maintain a journal of entries reflecting on the substance of the class after every session. These will be collected mid-way through the class for review as well as at the end of the class. Questions that may be raised in your reflections can be addressed in the next session.

NOTE: SWBAT means Student Will Be Able To

LESSON 1: General & Special Revelation

Lesson Goals

SWBAT identify the difference between special and general revelation.

SWBAT define general revelation.

SWBAT define special revelation.

SWBAT explain the Reformed understanding of Scripture inspiration.

Part 1

Use a plant or go outside and observe nature and ask class to find examples of God, anything that tells them about God.

Ask what the object tells them about God. Is it a clear message? Can everyone in the room tell what the message is?

The problem with this object is that it does not tell us in a clear way everything about God. IT may tell us some things, but even those are not always clearly spelled out for us. Through this object, we may be able to see that there must be a higher power, but it does not tell us who that higher power is. Creation leads most humans to worship something greater than themselves, but not everyone worship the Triune Lord God Almighty.

Part 2

Read Romans 1:18-23

What did people worship instead of God?

What does it mean that they are without excuse?

From nature we can tell that there must be a creator and designer of the world (evolutionists differ). It is too complex and too orderly to bring about the beauty and complexity of what we see. In science there is a law that says things will tend toward disorder unless there is a force acting upon them to keep them orderly. This law itself goes against the scientist who may argue for evolution because the chance of complex organisms developing randomly is infinitely small.

This is what the Apostle Paul refers to in Romans 1:20 in saying that all people are without excuse in worshipping God because we can see him through the world he created.

This is general revelation.

Part 3

The problem with general revelation is that we do not gain a clear understanding of God. Things are not made clear about whom what we should worship. Nor do we find out about who Jesus Christ is or how we gain salvation.

So, What do we need? ANS. Special Revelation.

Do you know of an example of special revelation? ANS. the Bible.

The Bible is special revelation because it is revelation that helps us see clearly who is.

“Unless we put on the spectacles of scripture, the world is a fuzzy and unclear revelation to us (John Calvin).”

Part 4

The Bible is special revelation. How was it that the Bible came to be? How was it written? Who wrote it?

READ 2 PETER 1:12-21

READ 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17

Who wrote the Bible? ANS. normal people (prophets and apostles) inspired by God
Did they write the books alone using their own insights and own thoughts without any guidance? ANS. No, the Holy Spirit was there with them. Prompting their hearts to write the truth of God.

What role did the Holy Spirit take? ANS. Inspiration; breathed the Word into these men and women.

Inspiration by the Holy Spirit does not mean that the Holy Spirit dictated the Bible like a boss to his secretary. We should understand that it was not just people's own thoughts, experiences and styles. Rather it was a combination of the two.

The combination of human writer and the Holy Spirit's inspiration equals "Dynamic Inspiration."

Holy Spirit used human writers with their gifts and abilities to write the scriptures. The Holy Spirit revealed what the truth is, and they wrote it down in a way that expressed what was revealed.

Read Belgic Confession Articles 2 and 3.

Conclusion

The basis for our faith is in the revelation by the Holy Spirit who reveals to us the Word of God. The Holy Spirit convinces us of our sin and our need for a Saviour. The creation in general pushes us towards that understanding and that belief. But it is the Word of God that makes clear to us who God is and what he has done for us. The Bible sufficiently contains all we need for our salvation.

The basis for all we say and confess about God is grounded in the Word of God, in the scriptures, in the Bible.

EXTRA QUESTION FOR ABSENTEES

Describe how you would explain to an unchurched friend the fact that God can be seen in nature and how that can bring you to the conclusion that there is an Almighty God in heaven.

LESSON 2: Trinity

SWBAT use everyday examples to help understand the Trinity as well as their shortcomings to explain it.

SWBAT define the Trinity.

SWBAT explain why the doctrine of the Trinity makes a difference in their lives.

1. Read Bible texts: Genesis 1:26-27; Matt. 3:17; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14 (One) and: Deut. 6:4; 1Cor. 8:4; Mark 12:29; Ephesians 4:6 (Three)

2. Can anyone tell me where the word “Trinity” is found in the Bible?

ANS: not possible since it was a doctrine worked out after the Bible was written

- in Councils of Nicea 325, Constantinople 381, Chalcedon 451

Read: Athanasian Creed (1st 2/3rds); LD 8; Belgic Confession Article 8 (&9)

3. Examples of egg, water, family

Divide class into 3 small groups:

GROUP 1 - Example of the egg. In what ways does this show the truth of the Trinity? In what ways does it fall short? ANS: The three make up one, but each part cannot be called an egg.

GROUP 2 - Example of three states of water. In what ways does this show the truth of the Trinity? In what ways does it fall short? ANS: the three are all the same substance, but they are three states of that one substance (Modalism).

GROUP 3 - Example of family. Karen is a Bokma, Brent is a Bokma, and Jeff is a Bokma. They all exist together and are all of the same family; i.e. they are all Bokmas. In what ways does this show the truth of the Trinity? In what ways does it fall short? ANS: All are individuals but part of one family. Some are before others and they are divided. They are not one, even though they are from the same family.

4. What is the significance of the doctrine of the Trinity? Why is it so important that of the 14 things we discuss, I insist we learn this one? ANS: Will of Jesus is the same as the will of the Father as the will of the Holy Spirit. They work together perfectly with the same goal of our salvation. At the heart of many heresies is a denial of the Holy Trinity e.g. Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses (also community of Trinity draw us into community)

Conclusion

Does the doctrine of the Trinity make sense? ANS: Not really.

Does the Bible clearly tell us of the Trinity? ANS: yes. See passages above.

Does the Trinity make a difference? Yes the 3-in-1 works for our salvation.

EXTRA QUESTION FOR ABSENTEES

Explain the doctrine of the Trinity in your own words and reflect on how each member of the Trinity affects your life.

LESSON 3: Predestination

SWBAT explain the difference between predestination and fate.

SWBAT understand predestination as a source of comfort for Christians.

SWBAT explain the difference between election and reprobation.

SWBAT understand the need for evangelism.

1. Ask for a working definition of what predestination is.

2. Read story of Oedipus (p. 360 of Classical Mythology 4th Ed.)

3. Ask for a definition of what fate is.

Fate is: a. Something that unavoidably befalls a person; fortune; lot.

b. the universal principle or ultimate agency by which the order of things is presumably prescribed; the decreed cause of events; time.

c. that which is inevitably predetermined; destiny

Now, what is the difference between fate and predestination?

4. Read 2 Peter 1:3-11 and Romans 9:18-24 (Ephesians 1:3-14; Psalm 139:15-16)

Is our election up to us or up to God?

a. It is up to us. Pelagianism

Pro: Deuteronomy 6:25; Isaiah 1:19; Acts 2:21; 2 Peter 1:3-11

b. It is up to God. (denies human responsibility)

Pro: Rom. 9:18-24; Eph. 1:3-14; Malachi 1:2-3; Jeremiah 1:4-5

What are the advantages of each of these points of view of predestination? What are their disadvantages?

a. AD- importance of our decision, lets responsibility be ours. We are actively working for our own salvation.

DISAD - puts men in control of God. Makes Christ Lord only if he gets the majority of votes. In effect this diminishes the sovereignty of God. Also diminishes God's love to say that he only loves us if we love him (Think baptism)

b. AD - Sovereignty of God. God's love freely given. Emphasizes salvation is from God alone. Explains why so many people are (seemingly) unbelievers.

DISAD - We are no longer responsible for our own salvation (fatalistic). No need for evangelism. No need for us to try to do good because we are either in or out.

5. Predestination has two parts to it: Election and reprobation.

Some are elect, that is, some are called to faith and are given the Holy Spirit of God to accept his grace by faith. Others are passed over in their sin and allowed to remain in their unbelief. These are the reprobates.

Read Canons of Dort I, Art. 1,5,6

6. Election

We are elect because God has chosen us. The reason why God has chosen us is because of his good pleasure and for no other reason.

Read Canons of Dort I. Art. 9, 12, 18

Election is when the Lord enables our will so that we can choose what is right. In our sinful state we are unable to choose what is right. A damaged will (sinful) does not know how to choose what is right and so it needs the electing grace of God to choose what is right and good. For example, I may be thirsty but in my damaged will I will choose to drink a book because that is all I see and all I think is good, but when God elects me I am able to choose what is good and then I see that the book will not quench my thirst, only the cup of water will. In the same way, in our sin we choose what does not satisfy, such as wealth, sex, power, or other religions. The only way we choose what is right and good (Christ) is when God enables our will to choose the Lord, the only one who satisfies our deepest longings. When God chooses us to perfect our will, that is election.

We should rejoice that God has chosen us to be his children. We cannot fault God for not having left others in their sin because we do not fully understand God's ways nor do we know whom he has left out. We accept the doctrine of reprobation and election not because we like it, but because that is what God has revealed in his Word to us.

7. Evangelism

What does this mean for our responsibility for evangelism? Do we still try?

Why or why not?

God still calls us to bring his Word. We do not know who will respond to the Gospel, nor do we know if people will respond long after we have presented the Gospel. Only God knows what is in people's hearts and so we always work from the assumption that God is calling others to the truth through us each day.

EXTRA QUESTION FOR ABSENTEES

Read exodus 6:28-11:10. Note the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. How many times was it hardened? How many times by Pharaoh? How many times by God?

Now struggle with this question: Was Pharaoh's destruction because he rebelled against God or because God caused him to rebel? Who is responsible for Pharaoh's hard heart?

Please return your answer to me. Give it some thought before you write your answer.

LESSON 4: Creation and Providence

SWBAT understand that God is Creator of all so all are responsible to him.

SWBAT understand and explain sphere sovereignty.

SWBAT recognize that all things come from the hand of God (providence).

1. Allow 10-15 minutes for students to make whatever they want with Lego.

Discussion: What did you make? Why? How did it feel to make whatever you wanted to make?

Explain that they are now creators in their own right.

2. What areas of life does God all control? ANS: Everything.

What areas does God not control? ANS: Nothing.

Does anyone know what this is called? ANS: Sphere Sovereignty.

Sphere sovereignty includes all areas of life. The three basic areas are 1) State, 2) Society, and 3) Church.

These areas overlap in that we participate in all three, but they do not overlap in that they do not have control over the other. The State cannot tell the church what to believe nor tell a family how it is to interact unless these two act against the public interest or God's law.

The same goes for the social sphere and the church sphere. The church should not tell the state what it should do unless the state acts contrary to God's law. And the social sphere of our lives cannot dictate to the state nor the church how it should act.

BUT, all three are responsible to God and must be accountable to God and his law.

Give examples of areas or spheres of life where other spheres of life may not interfere.

Give examples of where they may interfere. (Capital Punishment, child discipline, etc.)

Read Romans 13:1-7; Luke 20:20-26; 1 Peter 2:13-17; 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1

3. PROVIDENCE

Joke: In the United States people quite often asked what providence I came from. I always answered "God's."

What word can you find in "Providence?" ANS: Provide

Give examples of the way God provides for us.

e.g. changing seasons, employment, education, profession of faith class, spiritual mentors, Christian Parents, food, toilet paper.

What does God provide for us? ANS: everything we need for our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being.

If that is true, then why do some Christians go hungry while others are persecuted?

Read LD 10, Belgic Confession Art. 13

THINK ABOUT IT (Come prepared next week to discuss):

Why do bad things happen to good people if God is loving and all-powerful?

EXTRA QUESTION FOR ABSENTEES

Some people believe and teach that God created the world and has set it in motion so that now if bad things happen it is because of being at the wrong place at the wrong time. If someone would say that to you, how would you answer her?

(Hint: Proverbs 16:33; James 1:2-3; Hebrews 12:4-11)

LESSON 5: The Problem of Evil

SWBAT understand the problem of evil when God loves us and is all-powerful.

SWBAT explain possible solutions for the problem of evil.

SWBAT apply these solutions to their own lives.

1. Show a picture of Henry and talk about him and some things about him. Then tell them that 2 weeks before his birthday he died in a motorcycle accident.

2. Logical problem:

a. God is all good.

b. God wants his creatures to be happy.

c. God is all-powerful; he can do whatever he wants.

d. The creatures are not happy.

e. CONCLUSION: Either God lacks goodness or power or both.

How do we resolve this problem? Suggestions?

a. Atheism - there is no God

b. Pantheism - the universe is actually God, but God is more than the universe, therefore, what happens is happening within the being of God and so God is both good and evil (e.g. digestion).

c. Modern Naturalism - God is getting better.

d. Ancient polytheism - many gods battling.

e. Hinduism, Buddhism, Christian Science, New Age - there is no real evil, we just misunderstand and need to be enlightened to see the good.

f. Christianity - the first four premises are valid and not contradictory. The terms of good, evil, all-powerful and happy are ambiguous and need to be clarified.

3. The basic source of evil in the world is sin. What is the source of sin? If the devil would be removed from the world, what would change?

ANS: The basic source of sin is our own free choices to choose sinful things (LD 3). As a result of our choices as humanity, God has also cursed nature to be affected by the sin the infects us. That is why animals attack humans and floods and earthquakes take human lives. We cannot blame the devil for every bad thing that happens. That is removing the responsibility from ourselves. (See Cooper Handout)

4. The best of all possible worlds?

It is possible that this is the best of all possible worlds where we still have free will to choose what we want and yet be directed into true faith in God.

How does this help you in dealing with bad things that happen in your life.

EXTRA QUESTION FOR ABSENTEES

Someone once said, "After the World War II Holocaust of the Jews, no one can believe in a loving, all-powerful God." How do you answer this?

The following is a defence of how evil is allowed in the world as a greater good. This was taken from notes given by Professor John Cooper of Calvin Seminary in 1997.

The Greater Good Defence

The strategy here is to show that it is possible that all the evils God allows or inflicts are consistent with his goodness because they are necessary/unavoidable for attaining greater goods than would be possible without them. Consider these greater goods, suggested by Scripture, which are logically consistent with evil. All these goods ought to be taken together. No one by itself can account for all the evil there is.

- a. **Free-will.** A moral creation/universe containing covenant partners is a greater good than a creation/universe without morals even if the moral universe would include some evil. So it is consistent with God's goodness to create a world he foreknew would fall because of our free choices. (See Lord's Day 49; Canons of Dort III.1)
- b. **Redeemed Creation.** Achieving the redemption of a fallen creation, including all the evils it unavoidably contains, is a greater good than destroying it or not creating it in the first place. In order to save the creation, God must maintain the original identity of the creation intact with the freedom of choices. So although God could miraculously prevent and overcome the consequences of the fall, he cannot override the order of creation so regularly that the creation-order is compromised. God, by his providence, does uphold the fallen creation, performing occasional miracles, but waiting until the second coming to make all things new. Conclusion: Redeeming the fallen creation is better than destroying it or not creating it at all. (See Lord's Day 9)
- c. **"Soul Building."** Some challenges, adversity, suffering are necessary for fallen human beings to grow in faith, hope, love, knowledge, justice and self-discipline. (see Romans 5.4f; Canons of Dort V.4-7)
- d. **Prevention of Greater Evil.** The threat of pain and suffering is necessary to keep fallen creatures from further harming themselves.
- e. **Maintenance of Justice.** A good God is just. It is just that responsible people suffer as retribution for their wrong-doing.
- f. **Other Reasons?** It is likely that there are other reasons known only to God why certain evils are unavoidable for the greater good in a fallen world. Like Job, we do not know what they are. Yet, like Job, we are called to live obediently in faith that a good God has reasons for all that happens.

CONCLUSION

We do not need to know or prove God's reasons for allowing evil. When answering others we need only to offer logically possible reasons to show that it is possible to have an all-powerful, loving God while evil also exists. From Scripture we do know by faith at least some of God's good reasons for allowing evil. But these are not likely to be accepted by unbelievers. There are also many questions about evil for which we do not have specific and direct answers even from Scripture. (see Belgic Confession Art. 14)

LESSON 6: Man & Sin

SWBAT explain that our nature is as embodied souls.

SWBAT explain what has changed in us because of the fall.

SWBAT explain that sin now pollutes our lives, but is not a necessary part of us.

1. What are we? How would you describe what our essence is? For instance, how are we different from the animals? How are we the same?

E.G. Created, sinners, finite, limited to time and space, body and soul, etc.

What does it mean that we are “Created Persons?”

1. We are dependent on our creator.
2. We are individuals who are independent of others.

How many parts are we made up of? Read Matt. 10:28; 1Corinthians 7:34

ANS: Two. A body and a soul.

NOTE: Our spirit is another term for our soul.

What is the relationship between bodies and souls? Read 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11

ANS: Our souls and bodies exist together. But the soul can exist if our body has died.

But, the ideal is that our soul and body exist together.

Summary - we are created persons with embodied souls. That means that we must live in a relationship with the Creator and be individuals in that we take responsibility for our actions. As individuals we are able to make decisions outside of our Creator. We do not need his approval or his input. We are still individuals. As individuals we have free-will to make whatever decision we want to.

2. What has changed in us since the fall (GROUP 1)? What has stayed the same (GROUP 2)?

CHANGED:

not possible to sin

Free-will bound by sin

mind polluted by sin so we cannot make good judgements

death now the natural end to this existence

not able to relate to creation as we once did

(BC Art. 14; Canons of Dort III/IV Art 1,2,3)

SAME

image bearers of God

still have free-will

still embodied souls, though after death we are only souls

still grow and learn (it may be that our existence here helps us grow so that one day we will have no desire to sin)

- our structure/essence is the same, but the way we function has changed.

- was *posse non peccare*; now *non posse non peccare*; will be *non posse peccare*.

We were created in the image of God. What effect has man's fall in to sin had on that image?

1. Broken relationship with God
2. Broken relationship with our neighbour.
3. Broken relationship with (Poor governing of) God's creation.

This affects all persons in the world because we are all from the one man, Adam.

3. Effects of sin in our lives.

How did sin come into the world (Genesis 3:1-7; LD 3)?

ANS: Through Adam and Eve's disobedience.

How come we are guilty of that sin (1 Corinthians 15:21-22)?

ANS: Two reasons: We were represented by Adam and we are the seed of Adam. In Adam's place we would have done the same thing. We all come from the same source (Adam) which is polluted so we, too, are polluted.

What is the nature of sin? Is it a thing? Is it an action? A series of actions? If God created everything, then did he create sin also?

ANS: Sin is a twisting of God's good creation for our own sinful pleasure. Satan did it. We do it. e.g. delighting in doing a good job is TWISTED into being better than the next guy. (use two Twizzlers to show twisting of something good)

Has sin become a "necessary" part of us? That is, has sin become one of the things that is part of our essence, or is it something that is not a part of us, something that can be removed like a piece of clothing or glue/grease on our hands?

ANS: Sin is accidental. It is a wounding of the good. For this reason, it can be healed and removed or else our whole being will need to be destroyed to get rid of it. (BC Art. 14; Canons of Dort III/IV Art 1,2,3)

How is sin removed from us?

ANS: Forgiveness through Jesus Christ. God's grace. (LD 7)

EXTRA QUESTION FOR ABSENTEES

All of us bear the image of God upon ourselves. Explain why it is that Christians bear a clearer form of the image of God than unbelievers do. In other words, what is different about us compared to the rest of mankind with respect to the image of God?

LESSON 7: Incarnation of Jesus Christ

SWBAT explain why it was necessary that Jesus Christ became incarnate.

SWBAT explain that Jesus is both fully God and fully man.

SWBAT explain why he/she can have forgiveness that their sins are forgiven.

1. Who is Jesus (Mark 8:27)? ANS: Fully God, Fully man, One Lord, Our Redeemer.

Read the Athanasian Creed, the second half.

Read these heresies concerning Jesus Christ and explain what is wrong with each one and how it affects our redemption.

Modalism Jesus is one stage of God, just as the Father and the Holy Spirit are different stages of his life. The one God takes on different “modes” in the history of salvation.

Subordinationism Jesus is less than God (Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons). Jesus is considered to be a created being who is less than God, but more than man. That means that he is a created being between God and man.

Lutheran *communicatio idiomatum* this teaches that some of the “God qualities” of the second person were transferred to the human person of Jesus.

Kenosis Theory At the incarnation, Jesus lost all his divine qualities and was reduced to a mere potentiality and then developed into a divine-human person.

Gradual Incarnation Incarnation did not begin with conception, but was a gradual incarnation of the divine Christ into the man Jesus until they joined in ot a new creation, Jesus Christ (similar to Nestorianism).

Nestorianism the divinity of Christ entered the man Jesus at his baptism and assumed the humanity of the man Jesus.

Apollinarianism The very life in Jesus was not a normal human life, but was the Logos himself. Christ has a human body and soul, but the spirit is the spirit of the second member of the trinity (Synod of Constantinople 381 denied this teaching).

Gnosticisim Jesus did not really become human, but only appeared to be human.

Helpful hints from “Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions”

Athanasian Creed, last section

Heidelberg Catechism LD 5*, 6, 13, & 14

Belgic Confession Article 18* & 19*

Definitions

The Incarnation is the doctrine that the second member of the Trinity assumed human form in the person of Jesus Christ.

Logos is the name of the second member of the Trinity before he became incarnate as Jesus Christ.

ANSWER:

The basic problem with all these heresies is that they somehow deny either the full divinity or the full humanity of Jesus Christ from conception. To deny either is to deny that Christ can fully be our mediator (See Philippians 2:5-11 & LD 6)

2. Why was it necessary for Jesus to take upon himself our human nature?

ANS: it is only by being fully God that Jesus could bear the punishment of our sin and be in full fellowship with God by his own righteousness, and it is only by being fully man that he could justly be punished for the sins of humanity. Punishing another creature would be wrong and inadequate to true justice.

See Hebrews 2:11-17; Romans 5:17; Romans 3:21-26

3. Explain how Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human.

ANS: this is one of the mysteries of Christ. But we do know the limits in talking about his incarnation, By taking upon himself humanity the two natures are:
not changed not separated not divided not indistinguishable

4. How can you be sure that now your sins are forgiven?

ANS: Sins are forgiven because God accepts the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We can be sure that we are forgiven when we respond to Jesus because “Jesus loves me, this I know for the Bible tells me so.” This is the summary of the Gospel.

LESSON 8: The Atonement

SWBAT define the atonement for sin.

SWBAT explain what three things the atonement accomplishes.

SWBAT explain the difference the atonement makes from our daily lives.

1. Why did Jesus have to die? (i.e. begin a working definition of atonement)

ANS: to save us, pay for our sin, make us righteous, blot out our sin.

2. Our discussion so far has been to try and explain what is meant by atonement.

Atonement has been described as “making us one with God,” or . . .

AT - ONE - MENT

Atonement means that we no longer have anything that is between us and our God.

Read: BC Art. 21; HC LD21 Q&A 56 (See Romans 6:5-14)

3. When Christ has atoned for our sins and all sins are cleared away, paid for, gone and we become righteous. This atonement works in three basic ways:

a) Christ paid the price that was expected for our sins. Because we had sinned against God we had to pay the penalty for our disobedience. Like a ticket that needs to be paid for, someone else pays the fine.

b) Christ’s blood blots out our sin so that it is as though it had never been there.

(Use example of pen mark on a sheet of paper and then drop yoghurt/jam/salad dressing on both. Ask students if they can tell which piece of paper had the pen mark of the two sheets.)

c) Christ’s own righteousness is credited to us as though it was our own righteousness.

That means that just as Christ did everything right, when we are atoned for, it is as though we have done everything right in our lives.

(Point to the two sheets of paper and ask which had the pen mark? Right, we do not know. In the same way we are considered righteous as though we had never had a mark of sin OR ask students if they can retrieve a file on the computer after it has been deleted.

ALSO: $-5 + 5 = 0$. But Christ’s righteousness = infinity (infinite goodness)

4. How do we get atonement for ourselves? ANS: faith

Faith in what? ANS: Jesus Christ

What about him? That he lived? That he died? That he rose? What?

ANS: that his payment takes away all my sin (Romans 10:9)

i.e. faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ for our sin.

READ Q&A 60,61; BC Article 22

What difference does this atonement make in our lives?

ANS: Our shame is gone. Our guilt is gone. Our joy is complete because there is nothing between us and God anymore. (see Romans 8:1, 33-39)

QUESTION FOR ABSENTEES

Reconciliation is to make someone to be kind to another. Both still remember the problem, but live on despite it. How is atonement different than reconciliation?

Profession of Faith

Profession of Faith Review (The First Half)

1. What is the difference between “special revelation” and “general revelation”?
2. What is the Bible? How did it get here?
3. How did the world get here?
4. What does it mean that God is triune? (or explain the Trinity.)
5. Why are there bad things in the world today?
6. What does predestination mean?
7. What is sin? How does sin affect us and our relationship with God, others & nature?
8. Who is Jesus Christ?
9. What did Jesus do for you?
10. What does “atonement” mean? What three things does it accomplish?

LESSON 9: Review and Resurrection

SWBAT define the resurrection.

SWBAT explain the significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

SWBAT explain how she/he knows it is real.

1. Review - Review answers of the questions that were given for homework last week.

2. What is a resurrection? What is the resurrection?

ANS: The raising to life of a dead being e.g. Frankenstein, Pet Cemetery. The resurrection is the raising to life of Jesus Christ.

3. What is the significance of the rising from the dead of Jesus Christ? How is it different from the rising from the dead of Lazarus?

Sample Group for answers.

Now Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19; LD 17

Also LD 22

Because God raised Christ from the dead, we can be assured that Christ has won the victory over death. Christ is alive and so our righteousness is assured. In fact, we are already now resurrected to new life in Jesus Christ and can look forward to our own glorious resurrection what Christ returns. The greatest importance is not in the confession that Christ rose, but that Christ is risen.

4. Case Study: You meet a friend at work and he says that the whole idea of the resurrection is a bunch of hogwash. Jesus never did rise from the dead. As his argument he makes five possible suggestions. Each group is to answer one. (See Kreeft Handbook of Christian Apologetics, pg. 176-197).

a. Swoon Theory - Jesus was not really dead when they laid him in the tomb. Rather, Jesus was unconscious (swoon) and he woke up from the coma on the third day. (HINT - know the process of Roman crucifixion)

b. Conspiracy Theory - Apostles deceived everyone so that we would believe that Jesus did rise. This would be the most famous and successful conspiracy in history. (HINT - ask "What motivated the conspiracy? What did they gain?")

c. Hallucination Theory - The apostles only believed they saw Jesus when actually it was just a hallucination or a ghost. (HINT - see 1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

d. Myth Theory - The Apostles meant this as a myth and not as reality. The importance is not that Jesus rose from the dead, but that people believe it. (See 2 Peter 1:16) (Note: Webster's defines a myth as a traditional legendary story, esp. one that involves gods and heroes which explains a cultural belief or practice)

e. Scientific Theory - It is impossible to raise someone from the dead. In fact, I have never heard of anyone rising from the dead, therefore, Jesus could not have risen from the dead.

LESSON 10: The Holy Spirit

SWBAT identify the Holy Spirit as the third member of the trinity.

SWBAT explain the work of the Holy Spirit.

SWBAT understand how we look to the Spirit's leading.

1. Who is the Holy Spirit? What is his relationship with the Father and Jesus Christ?

ANS: 3rd member of the Trinity. Proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Why don't we talk all that much about the Holy Spirit?

ANS: Holy Spirit points away from himself to the work of Christ and the Father.

2. What does the Holy Spirit do for you?

a. John 14:16-18 - My link to Christ (like a powerline)

b. Romans 8:15-16 - Assures me I am God's child (See also LD 1)

c. John 3:3-5; 1 Corinth. 12:3 - gives me saving faith (See also LD 7 & 20)

d. Acts 28:25 - inspired the Word of God

e. Romans 8:26-28 - helps us in our weakness by asking God for what we need

f. 1 Corinth. 12:13 - unites the church to be one

g. Galatians 5:2-25; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 3:3-7 - SANCTIFICATION

3. Sanctification

What does it mean to be sanctified (Titus 3:3-7)?

How is it different from being justified (think atonement)?

Look up B.C. Article 24; Canons of Dort III/IV Article 11; H.C. Q&A 127 & 124
Sanctification is not a once for all event like justification. It is a process. When we are converted to Christ, we come to the point where we commit to live for our Lord. That means that we begin to make steps to live for our Saviour. The problem is that this does not happen overnight. It takes time. We need to be constantly changing our lives so that they are more and more in step with Christ. The Holy Spirit helps us do that by strengthening our wills and renewing our spirits. There are times when we slip. There are times when we stubbornly follow our own wills, but that does not mean that God is not working within us. God still works to transform us so that we do become better Christians in the way we live for the Lord and conform to his will.

This is why I often talk about it that you do not have to be perfect Christians to make profession of faith. Profession is a commitment that you will try to live for Christ, that you will try to make changes in your life to be in step with the Lord. When you do, the Holy Spirit will empower you so that you will be better able to do what God has called you to do and to be. As you live the Christian life, it will become easier and easier to show the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5). Amen? AMEN!

EXTRA QUESTION FOR ABSENTEES

Read Q & A #1 of the Heidelberg Cat. If I do not feel as though I am "wholeheartedly willing" to live for Christ, does that mean that I do not have the Holy Spirit in me?

LESSON 11: Prayer

SWBAT explain why we pray.

SWBAT explain how God changes and how we change in prayer.

SWBAT see prayer as a part of our covenantal relationship with God.

SWBAT pray using the “ACTS” model.

1. Why do we pray?

ANS: Because we have to, because we should, to ask for forgiveness, to bring our requests, to bring our praise, to be in communication with God, to feel good, to be closer to God, to do the “ACTSI” (Adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, intercession)

2. PROBLEM: God is all-knowing. God is all-loving. God is all-powerful. If God knows our needs, is able to care for them and is willing to do so because he loves us, then why do we need to pray and ask him for these things? Isn't God unchangeable?

Break into two groups to struggle with this question.

ANS: H.C. LD 45; Read Mark 14:36 & 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Prayer affects us in such a way that we bring before our God our praises and our concerns. When we do so, we tell God how we want things to be changed, but also we thank him for how he has been there for us in the past. The problem for many of us is that we only think of the things we can ask of God and forget to say “Thank-You.” Prayer becomes a wish-list that needs to be fulfilled.

Do you guys ever remember asking for something as a kid that was really rather foolish or petty?

That is something like what prayer becomes. But we need to see that through prayer not only does God change and give us what we want, but he also changes us so that through our talking to him we come to accept things the way they are, or better yet, we come to understand that God's grace is more than all we need to face each day of our lives. It is not only that God changes, but we also change.

3. Prayer as a Relationship

We change even now. Let's talk about those who are dating or who have close friends. How do you maintain that relationship?

ANS: write letters, call, e-mail, talk.

That is also why God calls us to prayer. Prayer is not like a letter or even e-mail. There is no pause in God hearing our requests and praises. Rather, they go directly before him and he hears and responds to those prayers. It is a dialogue. We pray and tell him about our day and about the things that concern us. God responds by strengthening us and giving to us what we need. But he also responds by not giving us things that would hurt us or stunt our spiritual growth.

TALK ABOUT PRAYER WHEN HENRY DIED. - I didn't get what I wanted, but I grew.

4. Structure of Prayer

What structure should prayer have?

ANS: Whatever way you want to talk with God. Pray from the heart, not because someone told you to pray this way or that way. The benefit of structure, though, is that you can remember some of the important aspects of prayer: Adoration of God and who he is, Confession of our sin and our need for a Saviour, Thanksgiving to God for what he has given to us and how he has provided for us not only now but throughout history, and Supplication not only for our own needs, but for God's church and all of humanity and creation too. This is called ACTS

Reading through the Psalms gives a good idea of what it means to pray. It shows the range of all these things.

Closing Prayer:

Evening Prayer #3 BCW p. 509

EXTRA QUESTION FOR ABSENTEES

If we pray hard for something, but do not get what we want, does that mean that we did not pray hard enough or that God thinks it best that we do not receive what we have prayed for? Why or why not?

LESSON 12: Sacraments, the Means of Grace

SWBAT define a sacrament and list the sacraments of the CRC.

SWBAT explain why infants should be baptised.

SWBAT explain how we participate in baptism.

SWBAT understand the Lord's Supper as a means of grace.

1. How many sacraments are there in our denomination? ANS: two

What are they? Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Why only these two? Christ instituted only these 2 (Last Supper, his baptism)

What are sacraments? What happens spiritually in a sacrament?

ANS: In a sacrament we are given the real grace of God by his spirit and the elements (water, bread, wine) not only provide that grace but also show to us that it actually happens. The reality of the grace received is as real as the physical elements themselves.

(READ H.C. LD 25; BC, Art 33.)

2. Why should infants be baptised?

Read Genesis 17:1-14; Colossians 2:9-15; Acts 2:38-39

We as well as our children are part of the covenant. Baptism is the sign and seal that God does actually extend his grace to us as his children. When we see a little child being baptised, we are reminded again that we come without offering anything to God, but that he comes and offers us salvation when we do not even respond to his grace.

Infants are supposed to be baptised because they are part of the covenant. Each of you is part of the covenant. The reason you do profession of faith is not because you are then joining the church, but because you are "officially" responding to the call God made to your when you were baptised.

3. Who receives grace from God in baptism? ANS: we all do.

How do we all receive this grace? ANS: we receive it through Christ's Spirit who lives in us all. We do not fully understand how it comes to us, but we do receive it.

In baptism we all receive grace. Both professing members and baptised members. We experience God's grace because we all are there as a part of the baptism. When we see the baby baptised we are reminded again of God's grace to all of us. We see again and are reminded again how we are washed by Christ's blood and that we are already dead to our sins.

4. What does celebrating the Lord's Supper accomplish?

- a. Remembering our Lord's death
- b. Sign and seal of our faith
- c. Real presence of Christ.

How is the Lord's Supper a means of grace (ie. how do we receive the presence of Christ)?

ANS: Read BC, Art 35 (1st full paragraph pg 115)

The Lord's Supper is not just a memorial, nor even just a sign and seal of our faith. Rather in the celebration of the Lord's Supper we actually experience the real presence of Jesus Christ. In fact, we believe that our Lord Jesus is present in the bread and wine as we eat and drink these elements. It is not just that we are taking the sign and seal of his body and blood. Nor is it that we just remember his sacrifice as we chew the bread and swallow the wine.

Over the years people of the Reformed faith have put all the emphasis on the two ideas that the feast is only a memorial and that it is a sign and seal of grace. What we have been guilty of neglecting is that Christ is also present in the sacrament.

I believe that the main reason why this has been neglected is that it is so hard to understand just how it is possible that Christ is present. Quite often when we hear of the concept of Christ being present many of us automatically reply that this is a Roman Catholic idea and not Reformed. If that is what you think, then you do not have the full picture.

Article 35 of the Belgic confession clarifies the Heidelberg Catechism by stating that we [QUOTE] "truly receive in our souls...the true body and true blood of Christ, our only saviour." And later on it goes on to say that "we do not go wrong when we say that what is eaten is Christ's own natural body and what is drunk is his own blood."

With regards to the Lord's Supper this comes out in the understanding of how we receive grace from Christ. When we eat the bread and drink the wine we are receiving Christ's natural body BUT the manner in which we eat it is not by our mouths, but by the Holy Spirit through faith. As the bread and wine enter our mouths we, as believers, are lifted up, by the Spirit, to participate in the body and blood of Christ as he sits in heaven.

EXTRA QUESTION FOR ABSENTEES

We believe that when a baby of Christian parents dies, it goes to heaven. If a baby is baptised and grows up to reject Christ, does that mean that he was never saved? If so, what does that mean about our baptism? Does our baptism only work for a while? Or does it only "take" with some babies? (Hint: Read about Achan a circumcised Israelite in Joshua 7; also read II Peter 1:3-11)

Profession of Faith
LESSON 13: The Church

SWBAT explain what is meant by “one holy catholic and apostolic church.”

SWBAT describe how the CRC is governed.

SWBAT list the three marks of the church.

SWBAT explore different ways in which the church helps us in our faith-walk.

1. Read Nicene Creed section on the Holy Spirit. Explain each of the descriptive words of “one holy catholic and apostolic church.

one – there are not many churches, but only one true spiritual church

holy – we are set apart by God and are righteous like God is b/c of Christ

catholic – literally “of all times and all places”

apostolic – the church follows in the tradition of the apostles by following their teaching as they are set out in the New Testament of the Bible. It also reminds us that we are “sent out” just like the Apostles were.

2. Why, then, are there many denominations?

ANS: because of sin. The father in heaven grieves over the physical separation of his church. But he also rejoices over the variety of worship styles. We need to be careful that we do not breakdown God’s church by wasting our energy attacking other Christian churches. Instead, our energy should be used to attack the work of the Devil and how he is trying to advance against God’s church.

Is it right or wrong that we should try to be one denomination? How would we do that? What should our role be in relation to other denominations?

ANS: opinion question.

3. Describe how the CRC is governed.

ANS: Christ is our head. Under him, Elders and deacons serve the church and its members by leading them in their spiritual walk and by encouraging us to use our gifts for the Lord’s work.

The elders, with the minister(s), shall oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation and fellow officebearers, shall exercise admonition and discipline along with pastoral care in the congregation, shall participate in and promote evangelism, and shall defend the faith.

The deacons shall represent and administer the mercy of Christ to all people, especially to those who belong to the community of believers, and shall stimulate the members of Christ’s church to faithful, obedient stewardship of their resources on behalf of the needy—all with words of biblical encouragement and testimony which assure the unity of word and deed.

Article 25, b&c of the Church Order, 1995

NOTE: The role of the Minister of the Word is that this is a person who is set aside by the church to minister to the members. This person has the gifts and abilities to minister, feels an inward call to ministry, and is ordained by the church as an outward confirmation of the need and use of his/her gifts. (S)He functions as an elder.

Is this form of government biblical?

ANS: yes and no. We do not know how the early church was governed. For instance, the NT talks about elders, but we do not know what they did or how they functioned. But it is biblical in that we have the offices of spiritual leadership (elders) and mercy leadership (deacons). Leadership is not prescribed by the Bible and so we understand that the leadership should be done in a way that is appropriate to the local situation.

4. What are the marks of the true church? B.C. Art 29

ANS: There are three: True preaching of the Word, right administration of the sacraments and discipline.

Why is discipline necessary?

ANS: It maintains the honour of God, removes offense from the church of Christ, and leads the erring one to repentance. (Form for Excommunication, Psalter Hymnal, p. 989)

We do this in accordance to God's Work – Matthew 18:15-18; I Corinthians 5:1-5, I Timothy 5:20.

5. What do you see as the church's role in your everyday life?

ABSENTEES – Answer Question 5.

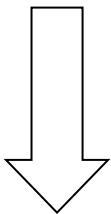
CHURCH ASSEMBLIES

The Synod
4 delegates from each classis

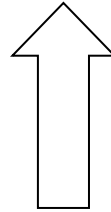
**M
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47 Classes
2 delegates from each council

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1057 Councils
Ministry Associates, Elders, Deacons



Profession of Faith
LESSON 14: The Future

SWBAT explain what happens to us when we die.

SWBAT describe what will happen when Christ returns.

SWBAT describe the final judgment.

1. Describe what happens to us when we die.

ANS: In death, our bodies are separated from our souls. Our souls then go to be with Jesus and enjoy fellowship with him until Jesus returns. In this intermediate state we long for the time when our bodies will be re-united with our souls, but it is still a time which is more wonderful than anything we can imagine right now.

2. Bible Study. Look up these passages and formulate a picture of what the final judgement will be like and what heaven will be like. If you feel artistic, draw a picture.

Group 1 Read Revelation 21-22:6

Group 2 Read Zechariah 8:1-8; Joel 3:17-18 Ezekiel 48:30-35; Isaiah 65:17-25; Isaiah 25:6-9; Isaiah 11:6-9

3. Review and answer any questions remaining.

Profession of Faith – Summary Questions

1. What is the difference between “special revelation” and “general revelation”?
2. What is the Bible? How did it get here?
3. How did the world get here?
4. What does it mean that God is triune? (or explain the Trinity.)
5. Why are there bad things in the world today?
6. What does predestination mean?
7. What is sin? How does sin affect us and our relationship with God, others & nature?
8. Can we avoid God's judgement on sin on our own? What do we need?
9. Who is Jesus Christ?
10. What did Jesus do for you?
11. Why do you call yourself a Christian?
12. Why do you call Jesus your Lord? Are you willing to surrender your whole life to him? Are there parts of your life which still rebel against his Lordship? [P]
13. What does “atonement” mean? What three things does it accomplish?
14. Can you be saved by good works alone? Can you be saved without ever doing any good works?
15. Who is the Holy Spirit?
16. What is true faith?
17. What do you expect from God in this life? Has he kept his promises so far? [P]
18. How do you grow in your faith? [P]
19. Do you always feed on God's Word? How? [P]
20. Do you pray? What are your prayer habits? What does prayer do for your spiritual life? [P]
21. What are the sacraments?
22. Should infants be baptized? Why?
23. What is the Lord's Supper? Why do we need to participate in it?
24. What will the Lord's Supper do for you?
25. What is the church?
26. What are the marks of the true church?
27. What are the special offices of the church? How can you help officebearers do their tasks?
28. Is discipline important in the church? Would you submit to it?
29. What life-style should you adopt as a professing member of Christ's church? Will you? What do you expect will happen if you don't? [P]
30. What happens to you when you die?
31. What will happen when Christ returns?
32. What gifts has God given you to share with his church?[P]
33. How does God call you to treat others, both Christian and non-Christian? [P]
34. Why do you want to do public profession of faith? [P]