

FOUNDATIONS OF THE THE FAITH: This Is Most Certainly True

Synopsis:

Based on Luther's *Small Catechism* for its structure and using Scripture as the primary text, *FOUNDATIONS OF THE FAITH 1 and 2: This Is Most Certainly True* introduces Confirmation age students to faith and theology in the Lutheran tradition. *FOUNDATIONS 1* is thirty lessons on the authority of Scripture, The Ten Commandments, and the Apostles' Creed with a focus on Law and Gospel. *FOUNDATIONS 2* continues the Law and Gospel emphasis and focuses on prayer and the Lord's Prayer, the Sacraments, an introduction to the Lutheran confessional writings, and the Fundamental Principles of the AFLC.

Each lesson is introduced with a Bible story or passage and text intended to lead the students into the topic of the lesson. The core of each lesson is the study of Scripture as it applies to the topic. The lessons are written in such a way as to allow freedom and flexibility to the teacher. The teacher and students are encouraged to use good educational practices including collaboration, inquiry, reading, and writing. The lessons are modeled after a Cornell notes format in which students are encouraged to ask questions and write summaries of learning.

A teachers' edition suggests possible answers to the questions in the student material. Also included in the teachers' edition are ideas for class structure and process, ideas for introducing lessons, and ideas for supplementing conversation.

Confirmation! For some the prospect strikes fear and foreboding. Such a reaction, I think, is unfortunate. Confirmation is actually a wonderful opportunity to instill in our young people the content of our faith; but more importantly it is a chance, and maybe a once in a lifetime chance, to challenge our young people to faith. It is my hope that the lessons here presented will enhance this opportunity. We have tried to build in a good amount of flexibility in the use of these material offering both the teacher and the student a solid skeleton upon which to build a discovery process. The student material is probably more skeletal than is this teachers' manual thereby making the student material more flexible and the teacher material filled more with ideas and options for the journey.

The lesson content is built around four practical educational elements: writing, inquiry, collaboration, reading (NOTE: the elements are listed in the order of the acronym "WICR" which is used popularly in good educational practices material). Students learn best when all four elements are part of the lesson. The order of the elements is not important as long as they are all present. (NOTE: Be particularly aware of those students who do not work well in groups for whatever reason. True introverts particularly will hate their classes if they are constantly forced to collaborate.)

The most visible part of each lesson may be the reading. Each lesson begins with a Luther or Lutheran documents quote. The thesis and a key question highlight the purpose of the lesson. Each lesson has a primary Scripture text or story. Only the reference is given in the student study pages and is the first place where flexibility is built in. The teacher is free to use these texts as deemed best for the context of the particular class and students. Luther's *Small Catechism* forms the outline and structure for the curriculum. Students are asked to copy from the Catechism the applicable sections. The corresponding H. U. Sverdrup explanation questions are listed but not printed out, again providing a place for flexibility as the teacher chooses or not to include these questions in the lesson. Students might be given the questions (see Sverdrup Questions Only) and asked to copy the answers for homework or warm-up. The lesson is introduced and some core concepts are presented in a half dozen or so paragraphs. Again, the teacher has flexibility with this reading which can be pre-assigned homework, read together in class, or simply referenced as the lesson is introduced. The core of each lesson takes the teacher and students into the Holy Scriptures. While the *Small Catechism* does provide the outline and structure, the Bible should be considered the primary textbook. Students should have

their own copy of each. For ease of reference, the Teachers' Edition does include the text for each of the assigned Bible readings.

The inquiry portion of each lesson is in the exploration of the Scriptures as students read and summarize or read and search for the Biblical foundations of our faith. Often students are asked to find an overall concept presented in the listed verses rather than answer specific questions about those verses. This is also part of the flexibility factor of this material where the texts are given and students are asked to do the inquiry but where a teacher can ask more specific questions about a passage if it is believed such is needed.

Collaboration is one of the more difficult classroom procedures to coordinate and requires the teacher to be aware of what is happening in the classroom. Students can work together with the teacher or in small groups during the inquiry and writing processes as the teacher believes best suits the class and the teacher's comfort level.

The student page formatting is modeled after Cornell notes. <<https://youtu.be/lsR-10piMp4>> Space is provided for students to write their inquiry discoveries in the notes portion of the page. On the left hand side of each page is a column in which students should be encouraged to write questions. Two kinds of questions might fill this space. One form of question might be used in a quiz and should have answers in the lesson material. For example, the teacher might ask the students at the end of class or for homework to write five or ten quiz questions based on the content of the lesson. A second type of question, questions for further discussion, should also be encouraged. As questions come up during class, students should be encouraged to write their questions in the question column. Students will also often have questions about the content come up during their at home review during the week. Students can be challenged to think up such questions and write them in the question column for further exploration in subsequent classes. The teacher should be ready and willing to deal candidly and forthrightly with the faith questions students have. What an incredible opportunity these present for exploring and explaining the faith! At the end of each lesson there is a summary section. Summaries can be three or four sentences indicating what the student learned from the lesson. Summaries are checked by having students share them with the class. In the place of summaries, students may be asked to write simple paragraphs exploring a particular question that arises as a part of the lesson.

One simple paragraph format is called ICE or SEE.

In an ICE paragraph, the student Introduces the topic (topic sentence), Cites a text that will be used to prove the topic, and Explains how the citation proves the topic. In a SEE paragraph, the student makes a Statement, provides an Example (can be a citation), and Explains how the example proves the statement. Both paragraph forms are essentially the same but with different acronyms. A good paragraph might have one statement sentence, two example sentences, and three explanation sentences in which case the paragraphs are called "SEE 123 paragraphs."

Paragraphs can be shared with the class to check for content. Sample summary questions are included at the end of each Teacher's Edition lesson.

The confirmation classroom is not like the educational classroom. Grades are usually not given. The teacher has a different relationship to the students. Attendance is to an extent voluntary. Nevertheless, there are some management practices that can be used to enhance the learning atmosphere.

The confirmation teacher should establish classroom principles from the beginning. While a pastor wants to have a pastoral relationship with the confirmation students, it is important that the students understand the class has a purpose and that there are expectations. It might be good for the pastor/teacher to establish those expectations along with the church council and the parents. Students who choose not to cooperate with confirmation instruction should be admonished gently and privately first. If a gentle and private conversation does not bring about the desired behavior, a meeting should be held with the parents. Yelling or raising one's voice almost never accomplishes the goal a teacher might have for doing so.

Some students will want to willingly participate in discussions and others will be more reserved. A good way to ensure all students participate particularly in reading texts and answering questions is for the teacher to use “opportunity cards.” These cards ensure all students have an equal opportunity to be involved and ensure the teacher calls on all students equitably. Write the names of the students on 3x5 index cards, one name per card. Shuffle the stack of cards before class. Use the cards to call on students to read texts or answer questions. Either shuffle the cards after each time the stack is used or place used cards randomly back into the stack to keep a random call order. This opportunity system works best with slightly larger classes. For very small classes, the teacher can have students take turns as they are comfortable.

Students look for consistency, order, and routine in good classroom management. Students should be treated as fairly as possible. Classes are best if they follow a pattern and routine that is consistent from week to week.

The pastor and congregational leaders will also have to decide what kind of assessments will be used to ensure or verify the material is being learned. Quizzes and tests might be given, though it should carefully be considered how much like and how much different from the school classroom instruction toward Confirmation ought to be. One alternative assessment idea is to use the questions students are asked to write for their quizzes and tests. This can even be done orally during the class where students are called on to ask questions. Students enjoy making testing a competition to see which side of the room or which group of students can answer more questions.

We have tried to include as much supplemental material as necessary in the Teacher’s Edition or at the end of each lesson. For example, we have included the Bible story text for each lesson, the Creeds, and the applicable articles of the Augsburg Confession. Be aware that the three Ecumenical Creeds and the Augsburg Confession are also included in the *Ambassador Hymnal*. There is a list of all the Sverdrup questions without answers attached in an Appendix. We have also included the Fundamental Principles at the end of the lesson on AFLC history and principles. It is recommended as you plan for the Year 2 instruction that you get a copy of the AFLC published *Standing Fast in Freedom* for each of your students to be used as a supplement to the history and principles lesson. It is also suggested you have copies of your congregation’s Constitution and By-Laws for the lesson on membership.

The following suggested order for class is just that, a suggestion. Teachers may use this order or parts or an adaptation of it or create an order that is their own.

Greeting and Opening prayer: (2-3 minutes) Free prayer by the pastor/teacher and/or prayer by a volunteer or designated student and/or short prayers by some or all students.

Warm-up or review: (5-10 minutes) Consider having something for the students to do as they come into the classroom. It may be finishing up or following up with writing from the previous lesson: quiz questions, summary, SEE or ICE paragraph. Check to see if there are any unanswered questions or items from the previous lesson that need clarification.

Or, give a quick review quiz.

Introduce new lesson: (5-10 minutes) Each student page has a Scripture passage or two that can be used in a variety of ways. Students can be asked to read these at home in preparation for the lesson. Students can be asked to read these as they come into the classroom as part of the warm-up. The passages are selected to present the topic of the lesson and can be used to introduce the lesson.

The written material in the student pages can be used to introduce the topic for the new lesson. The Teacher Edition also has information and ideas that can be used as is or as a springboard for you to

introduce the new material.

Lesson: (25-30 minutes) The basic premise of this material is that the Catechism comes from and is supported by Scripture. The core of each lesson is the exploration of Biblical texts that build the truths upon which the Catechism was written. The pastor/teacher's primary responsibility will be to guide the inquiry process as students discover what God has to say about the lesson topic. Sample answers are provided in the Teacher Edition. Students should write summaries of the study verses that focus on how the texts support the lesson. Be patient with this process as most students will take longer to do the writing than we might expect. Check student summaries for clarity, completeness, and right understanding of the text.

Summaries: (10-15 minutes) Students learn best when they are asked to draw conclusions from their learning. Writing quiz questions, writing three to four sentence summaries, and/or writing response paragraphs are good ways to help students think about the key ideas of the lesson.

Closing prayer: (1-2 minutes)

May God richly bless you and the students in your classes as you explore God's Word and allow the gift of faith to find root.

To God be the glory,
Rev. J. Christian Andrews