

How Do We Know and Trust God?

The BIG Question

Trusting in the gracious mercy of God,
do you turn from the ways of sin
and renounce evil and its power in the world?

I do.

The opening clause is not a question, but makes a statement about God's basic character: God is merciful. . . . This over-flowing mercy evokes our trust. We trust God, as revealed in Christ, because God is for us in the deepest sense possible (which at times requires God to be against the destructive impulses we fall prey to). When we trust in God's ultimate and reliable mercy, we are in a position to find the courage to stand up for what is right, just, and merciful when we have to.

—Ron Byars, *Embraced and Embracing: Exploring the Foundations of Confirmation*

Continuing the Conversation

Loving us still, God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant. Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child, like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home, God is faithful still.

—A Brief Statement of Faith, II.3

Psalm 105:1-45; Hebrews 11:1-38

When God calls us to covenant loyalty, God calls us to trust. When we understand how God has acted in the past and promises to act today and tomorrow, we can trust in God's promises even in the face of uncertainty.

Key Words

Trusting God means believing that God acts faithfully in the world. The Bible reminds us that loving God is the greatest of all the laws. Loving God and trusting God go hand in hand.

Grace is the love that God gives to us—not because we have earned it but because God loves us despite our mistakes. Grace is a love bigger than we can imagine.

Mercy is God's willingness to forgive us repeatedly even when we break our promises to God and one another.

Covenant is the agreement in which God vows to be faithful to the people and the people promise to be committed to God. The Bible shows us repeatedly that God is trustworthy when it comes to God's promises. God also expects us to be loyal to the covenant.

Your Confirmand

Youth struggle with how and how much to trust God. Are God's promises something on which they can depend? Or are the promises just words written in a book a long time ago, words that don't mean much anymore? Those of us who work with young people play an important part in this struggle. If youth can trust us and they can see our faith, they will find it easier to trust God.

Take time to share your faith story with your confirmand. Your faith story need not be perfect or rehearsed. It should be authentic and honest, reflecting what you believe. Share pictures or search the Internet for images of the church where you were baptized.

Ideas for Connecting with Confirmands at Home and with Mentors

Parents/caregivers and mentors, in collaboration with the confirmands, select activities to explore the themes in each session.

Discussion idea

- When did you first say aloud that you believed in God?
- Is *trust* a good word to describe what it means to believe or have faith in God? Why or why not?
- When has it been difficult for you to trust God?
- Who helped you grow in your faith?
- What are some ways that you practice your faith daily or weekly?
- Do you have a favorite holy place, a place where you feel closest to God?
- Why do you consider yourself a Christian?

Movie idea

Watch *The Polar Express* (2004, G) and reflect on the ways that belief as trust is represented in the film. *The Polar Express* puts belief on trial in several interesting ways, from the “hot chocolate” scene to the boy’s encounter with the ghost train and the quiet revelation surrounding the ringing of the sleigh bell.

Book idea

Madeleine L’Engle’s *Many Waters* tells the story of two boys who travel through time to the ancient world, finding themselves guests of Noah and his family as they prepare for the flood. It is perfect for confirmands who are interested in thinking about what it was like to live in ancient times or even for confirmands who are captivated by science fiction or fantasy.

Movie idea

In this scene from *Les Miserables* (1998, PG-13), a bishop and his wife welcome a known convict, Valjean, into their home. View “Trust Each Other” at bit.ly/2GJFkpy. Discuss:

- How does the scene inform your understanding of belief as trust? How is the trust that the bishop and the convict have for another like/unlike the trust we have for God?
- How is learning to trust another person connected to learning to trust God?

Video idea

Watch “The Old Testament Told in Only 5 Minutes” on YouTube. Listen for reasons that God’s people have been led to trust God. Discuss how human beings are portrayed in the Old Testament, and ask why God would continue to bail us out. Hint: God is faithful to the covenant.

Looking Ahead

Ask the leader of the Confirmation class to share the video for session 3.