

LET'S DIVE INTO
CONNECT!

BRINGING FAITH TO LIFE

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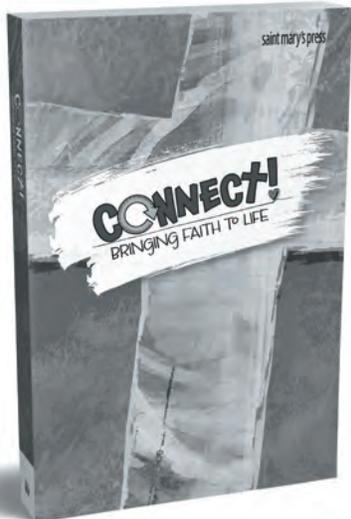
Welcome to *Connect! Bringing Faith to Life*

This three-year program invites sixth, seventh, and eighth graders to explore the Catholic faith and make important connections to their lives.

Each year of the program engages the participants in an exploration of all four pillars of faith (The Creed, Liturgy and Sacraments, Christian Morality and Justice, and Prayer) as well as the Bible. The lessons based on the different pillars of faith make up most of the program and cover the fifty chapters in the *Connect!* book.

Additional chapters in year 2 and year 3 offer life-issue lessons that explore a variety of topics pertinent to the lives of middle schoolers and that reflect the application of faith concepts explored in earlier chapters.

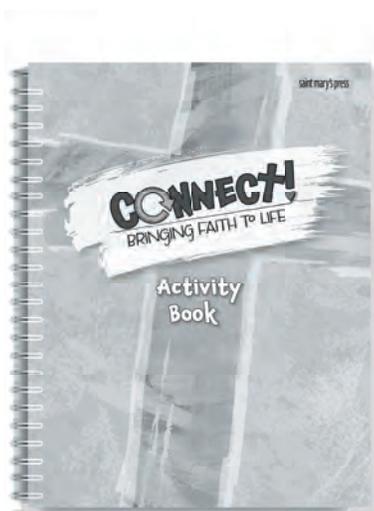
Program Components



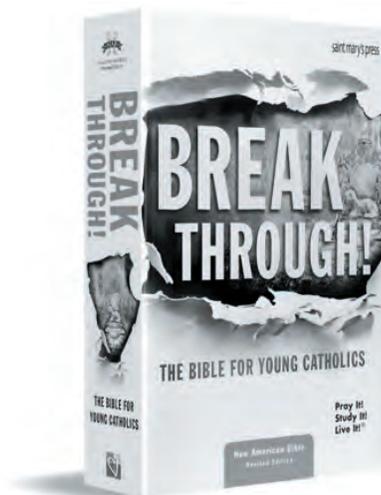
Connect! Book



Catechist Guides



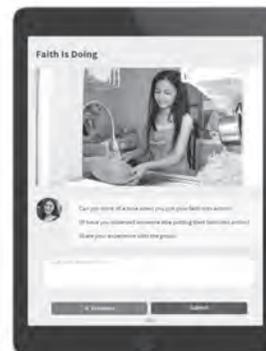
Activity Book



Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics, NABRE



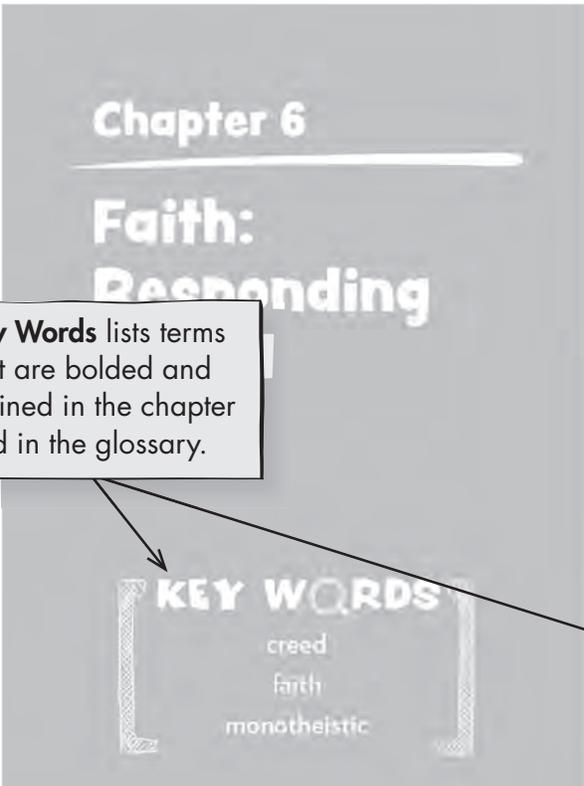
Online Resources



eLearning Lessons

Overview of Components

Connect! Book



Key Words lists terms that are bolded and defined in the chapter and in the glossary.

Often people say you need to have faith. They might say, "Keep the faith" or "Have faith in God." Has anyone ever asked if you have faith in God? Have you ever considered what your response would be? Maybe your first thought was, "Yes, of course I do!" Maybe this is the first time you have ever thought about it, so you do not have a quick answer. Maybe you are just not sure what you believe. Just considering the question is one of the first steps of faith. This chapter looks into what having faith means. Afterward, you may realize you have more faith than you thought you did.

What Is Faith?

Throughout history, God has called upon people to follow his will. Faith is the way people respond to God's call. On a simple level, faith means a



Faith — Believing and accepting that God made himself known to us through his words and actions, especially through Jesus Christ. It is accepting God's truth with our minds and allowing it to guide our entire lives.

Connect with God offers a short prayer for young people to pray alone or together as a group.

CONNECT with GOD

Jesus, I am like the man who cried out to you: "I do believe, help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24). Sometimes it seems like my faith is as small as a mustard seed. But with even that much faith, you said I could do anything. With you nothing is impossible. I place my trust in you, knowing you will not disappoint me. Amen.

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God the Father

Let's explore the First Divine Person of the Trinity—God beyond our human understanding. He is the Father, the one who is the source of all life. He is the Father, the one who is the source of all life. He is the Father, the one who is the source of all life.

God holds each one of us in his loving embrace.

PRAYING TOGETHER

Thanks to the Father

Have you ever noticed that most of our prayers at Mass are directed to God the Father? Although our prayers also address Jesus Christ, his Divine Son, they are mostly spoken to the Father. If you think about it, it makes sense. During Mass, we recall all the good things God the Father has done for us, including sending his Son. His Son, Jesus, is the greatest way for human beings to get to know the Father. We also thank God for doing this. But again, Jesus is a key part of our gratitude. We offer thanks to the Father in the same way we come to know the Father: "through Christ, our Lord."

Praying Together helps young people see the relationship between Catholic beliefs and worship.

CHECK THIS OUT

"Abba": Jesus' Name for His Father

In the Gospels, Jesus addresses God as "Abba." The language Jesus spoke was Aramaic, and *abba* is the Aramaic word for "father." This gives us an idea of the special bond Jesus has with his Father. The Father loves Jesus, much as a human father loves his children by protecting, feeding, and teaching them. Yet the Bible also sometimes portrays God's motherly characteristics: "As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you," says the Lord (Isaiah 66:13). Jesus teaches us to address God as "Father" and to share in his special close relationship with God, our loving Father.

limited understanding of God, we know and profess in faith through our Creed that God the Father is maker of "all things visible and invisible," the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Jesus called God "Father," and we do the same. In calling God "Father," Jesus expresses his unique relationship with him: "All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father, and no one knows anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal himself."

God the Father is most certainly not like us, he is not a human being. It is important to note this difference and remind ourselves that God's ways are not our ways.



Abba — The Aramaic word for the Father.

Check This Out! provides a more in-depth exploration of topics related to the chapter.

Good to Know provides instructive and engaging information.

Third, events in the Gospels often delete or make perfect events that preceded earlier in the Old Testament. Chapter 6 of John's Gospel, for instance, recalls how God provided a kind of manna for his people in the desert so they wouldn't die (see Exodus, chapter 16). Then Jesus reveals that he is the perfect Bread from Heaven that gives eternal life to everyone who believes in him.

Fourth, we do not have to figure out everything ourselves. Many Bibles have helpful notes and comments. Thoughtful Christians have written many commentaries on the Gospels.

good to KNOW

We now have printers and other technology that can reproduce text easily. But before the 1400s, even printing presses didn't exist. Trained people—usually monks and nuns in monasteries—made new copies of the Bible by copying the Scriptures by hand.

What Do You Think? reflects on a topic and provides a question for discussion with the group or at home.

followed, the Apostles. Our bishops have the full power and responsibility to explain Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. But the Church also urges all of us to study and think about Jesus. If we ask in prayer, the Holy Spirit will guide us in our reading.

Reading the Gospels has changed lives. Missionaries have risked their own safety to bring the Good News to those who have not heard. Others have made the lives of those around their homes much better by their Gospel-inspired words and deeds.

If you want to make a difference in the world, try reading the Gospels. You will meet unforgettable, real people like Mary, the Mother of God; Joseph; Peter; James; and John. Above all, you will get to know Jesus. He will enlighten, challenge, encourage, comfort, and amaze you. He will become your hero and ideal. He will make you truly happy in this life and the next.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

"Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Imagine that Christ has just given this mission to you and your friends. Even though you don't have a lot of money or friends in important places or much experience in speaking to other people, you know you want to accept the mission. How would you go about spreading Jesus' teachings to all people? What first steps would you take? How far would you try to spread the message? Through what means would you do so?

LIVING the GOSPEL

How to Read Scripture

God speaks to us personally in Sacred Scripture. We read Scripture to understand God's will for our lives. So, how can we get the most out of reading from Scripture, especially the Gospels?

First, we can ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand and live the Gospel message.

Second, we can read intentionally and carefully. We can imagine the people and events and even "make a movie" of them in our minds.

Third, we can pause to think about what we have read and how we can apply it to our own lives. How does the Holy Spirit encourage, teach, correct, challenge, comfort, or inspire us in this passage?

This way of reading and reflecting on Scripture can yield big insights. Of course, that will not always be the case, but if you keep trying with faith, the fruits will surely be great.

Living the Gospel suggests ways young people can put their faith into action.

roots of faith

The Church and Other Religions

The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions is one of the final documents the Second Vatican Council approved in the 1960s. The document marks a special moment in the Church's history with other religions, including Judaism. It rejects attitudes of contempt for Judaism and the Jewish people, and it rejects anti-Semitic (anti-Jewish) teachings. The Jewish faith, unlike other non-Christian religions, is a response to God's Revelation in the Old Testament. The Church has a profound love and respect for the Jews. While the Church deeply respects other religions, it emphasizes that we can know the fullness of God's Revelation only through the Catholic Church. This does not mean that those who follow other religions are barred from eternal life with God. Many people are not Christian but seek God with sincere hearts. People who try to do God's will, even if they do not know Jesus Christ or his Church through no fault of their own, may also achieve eternal friendship with God, or salvation.

Roots of Faith provides historical insight into Catholic beliefs and practices.

People of Faith offers background on twenty-five of the many people who have strengthened the Church and inspired others with their faith.

PEOPLE OF FAITH

Saint

CATHERINE OF SIENA

Catherine was born in 1347, in Siena, Italy, the twenty-fourth child born to her parents. Having experienced visions of Christ as a young child, she wanted to dedicate her life to Christ. Catherine loved the Church deeply, and she became known for her teaching and writing. She served people who were poor and sick. She ministered to people in prison and those suffering during the plague of 1374. During the papacy of Urban VI, the Church was in chaos and disarray. Urban was power hungry. The cardinals, recognizing their mistake in electing him, elected another pope. However, Urban refused to give up the papacy, so the Church had two rival popes. Catherine suffered, seeing the Church suffer. She prayed that her sufferings might heal this serious rift in the Church.

In 1380, Catherine collapsed from exhaustion and a practice of extreme fasting. Within months she was dead. At her death, the marks of stigmata (the wounds of Jesus) were seen on her body. Catherine is also known for her writings on the spiritual life. She was canonized and was the first layperson named a Doctor of the Church. Saint Catherine's feast day is celebrated on April 29.



Catechist Guides

The **Chapter Summary** provides a concise explanation of the content covered in the chapter.

8 Year 1

Chapter 1

Chapter Summary

"God is love" (1 John 4:8), and love is meant to be revealed. God chooses to reveal God's very life, love, and plan for humanity to us. We call God's sharing of his life, love, and plan Divine Revelation. God has chosen to communicate his Revelation through Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. These together make up the single sacred Deposit of the Word of God, preserved, protected, and passed down through the Church for the sake of the world.

Background for the Catechist

When you hear "God's Word" or "Word of God," what first comes to mind for you? For many people, it is the Bible. Sacred Scripture is a key mode of God's Revelation, but the Bible is not in itself, or solely, God's Word. Help the participants see that like a two-drawer filing cabinet, Scripture is only one part of the sacred Deposit of Faith!

Jesus himself is the *Eternal Word of God* (see John, chapter 1), and the Word has made the Father known to humanity by the power of the Holy Spirit from the very beginning of time. Emphasize to the participants that when discussing "the Word," we're ultimately referring to Jesus as revealed in Sacred Tradition and in Sacred Scripture. Both Tradition and Scripture are essential parts of God's Revelation to humanity. The Church preserves, protects, interprets, and communicates this Good News with the whole world in every generation. This is primarily the role of the Apostles and their successors, the popes and bishops of the Church, and we have the great joy of sharing their work.

Also emphasize that because we are human, we cannot expect to fully know God in this life. But as we live our life, we come to know God more and more until we come to fully know him in Heaven. This year will be a part of that very important journey toward God for the young people in your group, and you will be their guide.

Catechist's Prayer

Good and gracious God, open my eyes to your grace, love, and presence in my life and in the young people in my care. Give me the grace to be a faithful witness to your existence, eternal truth, and loving kindness. Continue to reveal yourself to me that they might know you through me. Amen.

Teaching Tip

When talking about God, it is helpful to use the term *mystery*. God is beyond our complete comprehension, but he is not unknowable. Help the participants see that it's okay to be awestruck and filled with wonder regarding God. It's okay for us to not have all the answers. God continues to draw us close to himself and reveal himself to us, but he remains a mystery. Invite the participants to be open to what God is revealing to them as they learn more about what God has revealed to the Church.

Background for the Catechist offers a point of reflection on a topic related to the chapter.

The **Catechist's Prayer** can be prayed before preparing for or teaching each chapter.

Teaching Tip offers suggestions or points of consideration for the chapter's lessons.

Each core lesson includes step-by-step instructions and follows the same format: **Opening Prayer, Engage Activity, Core Content, Core Learning Activity, Session Wrap-Up, and Closing Prayer.**

Getting Ready lists the core understanding and highlights key information to aid planning.

28 Year 1

Chapter 3 • The Holy Trinity 29

Getting Ready

Connect! Bringing Faith to Life, pages 26–33

Core Understanding

The Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith—namely, that the one loving God has revealed himself in three Persons as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

<p>Materials Needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> index cards, one for each participant <p>Key Words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God the Father • Holy Spirit • Son of God • Trinity 	<p>Catechism Pillar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Creed <p>Catechism Connection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paragraphs 232–267 (The Trinity)
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Chapter 3

Chapter 3

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Make** the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, “Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.” (Pause.)
2. **Pray** the following:
 - Loving God, in your amazing, unquenchable love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Help us appreciate you for the invitation to immerse ourselves in your love. Help us say yes to your invitation, through Christ.
3. **Invite** the participants to offer any special intentions.
4. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

Engage Activity (10 minutes)

1. **Invite** the participants to say aloud together the Sign of the Cross. (“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.”)
2. **Ask** the young people how many times they have said the Sign of the Cross.
3. **Invite** a few volunteers to share with the whole group what the words mean.

Core Learning Activity (20 minutes)

Trinity Spotting

Objective: To help the participants discover evidence of the Trinity all around them—that every time they see three in one, they might think of God.

1. **Explain** in these or similar words:
 - God desires that we know him and that we think of him and pray to him often. He has placed evidence of his loving presence all around us. Unfortunately, we don’t often have eyes to see this. In fact, I’m willing to bet that there is evidence of the Trinity in this room, in your house, and in the natural world that we’ve all been missing—until now.
2. **Ask** the young people to find “People of Faith” on page 33 in their books. Note that Saint Patrick saw evidence of the Trinity in a three-leaf clover and used that clover to teach the people of Ireland about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. **Arrange** the participants into pairs. Each pair should look around the room or, if possible, around the parish grounds to go “Trinity Spotting.” They have only 10 minutes to come up with as many examples of Trinity as they can. Tell them to look for three things that are distinct but closely related or one thing with three parts.
4. **Give** everyone an opportunity to share their findings with the group. Conclude by suggesting to the young people that they use the things they identified to remind themselves that the one loving God has revealed himself as three Divine Persons—Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit—who are in complete union with one another.

Session Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

1. **Invite** volunteers to share key things they learned during the session. Ensure that the following points are made:
 - There is only one God.
 - The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not separate gods. They are three Divine Persons united in the one God.
2. **Distribute** the index cards. Instruct the participants to write the following question on their cards:
 - What questions do I still have about the Trinity?
3. **Invite** the young people to take the cards home and refer to them a few times during the week. Ask them to answer the question for themselves or to share their cards with friends or family members and discuss their answers with them.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Direct** the participants to find “Connect with God” on page 27 in their books. Invite them to read the prayer aloud together.
2. **Close** by making the Sign of the Cross.

4. **Remind** the participants that at Mass when we recite the Creed, we begin with the words “I believe in one God.” Add comments in light of what was shared in step 3 (For example, if someone expressed the idea that Christians believe in one God, affirm that. If belief in one God didn’t come up, then clarify that the Father, Son, and Spirit are not separate gods.)
5. **Introduce** the term *trinity* and explain that it describes a unity of three things. Draw a picture of a shamrock (a three-leaf clover) that all the young people can see. Ask for volunteers to share why this might be a good symbol for something that is a trinity. (It is made up of three leaves united to make up a single, unique plant.)
6. **Explain** the following information:
 - The earliest Christians were Jewish and worshipped only the God of Israel, but through experience, they realized that the one, true, loving God was revealing himself as three Persons.
 - For Christians, the doctrine of the Trinity is the central truth of faith: There is one God in three Divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (If accurate, remind them that they read a little about this in chapter 2.)
 - The love and unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit flow out to us and fill us so that we can share that love with others.

Core Content (15 minutes)

1. **Engage** the young people in a review of pages 27–32 in the *Connect!* book by dividing the material into sections, such as the following:
 - “One God, Three Divine Persons,” pages 27–29
 - “The Work of the Trinity,” pages 29–31
 - “The Trinity is a Communion,” pages 31–32
2. **Assign** each young person one of the sections of material. They can read silently to themselves or gather in small groups with others who share the same assigned material. If opting for small-group reading, ask one person from each group to read the material aloud.

P If a choice for your group, consider having participants read the chapter during the session. This activity incorporates the key points listed on page 33 of this guide.

Chapter 3

Optional Activities are offered at the end of each core chapter, providing ways to adapt or extend lessons.

40 Year 1

Optional Activities

Genesis on God and Creation (15 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Bibles, one for each participant

Objective: To explore what Genesis tells us about God and creation.

1. **Arrange** the participants into small groups of three or four, and distribute the Bibles. Instruct everyone to find Genesis 1:24–2:4 and read the passage silently.
2. **Instruct** each group to appoint a recorder to write down its ideas. Give the groups the following task:
 - List at least five things the story tells us about God and creation that do not contradict what science tells us.
3. **Invite** each group to present its list to the large group. After each group has presented, affirm and build on their responses as necessary. Include the following things if the reports don't include them:
 - God created everything.
 - God is all powerful.
 - Human beings are made in the image of God.
 - Human beings are essentially good.
 - All of creation is good.
 - God shares his creative power with us.
 - Humans are responsible to care for God's creation.

God's Ongoing Creation (15 minutes)

Materials Needed

- markers
- newsprint, one sheet for each small group of three or four

Objective: To reflect on how God's creative power can be found at work in the world today.

1. **Arrange** the participants into small groups of three or four. Distribute some markers and a sheet of newsprint to each group. Ask the participants to brainstorm how God's creative power can be found at work in the world today. If they need some assistance, ask: "Where can you find people working to bring about new life? How do natural events help bring about new life?"
2. **Invite** the groups to illustrate their examples.
3. **Direct** each group to present its illustration and emphasize that God's creation continues.

Chapter 4 • Creation 41

Caring for Creation (20 minutes)

Materials Needed

- the video "CST 101: Care for God's Creation" (3:05), available on YouTube

Objective: To reflect on the gift of creation and the call to care for this gift.

1. **Read** aloud, or invite one or more participants to read aloud, Genesis 1:26–31. Highlight the following idea from the passage:
 - God gave human beings dominion over the animals—all the fish, the birds, and the creatures that walk on land.
2. **Write** *dominion* where all can see. Ask for volunteers to share their understanding of the common meaning of *dominion* (control, superiority, domination).
3. **Explain** to the young people that the Book of Genesis was written in Hebrew and that our text is a translation. Note that scholars who study the Hebrew language and how best to translate it emphasize that the common English language notion of dominion isn't an exact translation. Instead of thinking about control and domination, the idea of "taking care of" something is closer in meaning.
4. **Announce** that you are going to show a 3-minute video on caring for the Earth. Let everyone know that after viewing you will ask them to describe one scene or idea that especially caught their attention. Play the video "CST 101: Care for God's Creation."
5. **Facilitate** the participants' sharing of the aspects of the video that caught their attention.
6. **Highlight** the idea that caring for the Earth and caring for other people are related. Consider reshooting the segment in which Carolyn Woo talks about poor people being hurt most when creation suffers (begin at 1:27).
7. **Conclude** by reminding the young people about the theme of gift. Recall that we hear that theme in Genesis and also in the video: All creation is a gift from God, and we are called to take care of this gift.

The **Chapter Summary** provides the key ideas covered in the lessons. It may be used as a catechist reference, copied and distributed to the young people, or sent home with the participants as helpful information for their families.

Chapter 4 Summary

Creation

1. God created the entire universe out of nothing and without help.
2. The role of science is to figure out the physical nature of the universe, but only God can reveal that creation is a gift of God's love.
3. Evil exists, but God's love continually turns evil into good.
4. In Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we see the triumph of good (the Resurrection) over evil (his suffering and death on the cross).
5. God created us in his image, as free and loving beings, so that we can freely choose between good and evil.
6. Sin is the choice of evil (even on a small scale) over good. Sin separates us, even in a small way, from God and from one another.
7. We can sin by omission—that is, by not doing something we know we should do.
8. The Word of God, Jesus Christ, became man to save us, to give us new life, and to restore and deepen our union with God.
9. God continually guides creation toward greater love, and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can cooperate with God in his plan.
10. In the Nicene Creed, we summarize what has been revealed about God and his plan for us, including the creation of the "invisible," the angels.

The life-issue lessons that are part of the catechist guides for year 2 and year 3 follow a slightly different format: **Opening Prayer, Engage Activity, Core Learning Activity 1, Core Learning Activity 2, Session Wrap-Up, and Closing Prayer.**

158 Year 3

Life Issue G

Getting Ready

Core Understanding
The saints and other Christian role models show us how we can love God, others, and ourselves.

Materials Needed

- a Bible
- sticky notes, six for each participant
- newsprint, two sheets for each small group of three or four, plus three extras
- markers
- dictionaries, one of each for each small group of three or four
- copies of the handout "Guidance in Living Our Faith," page 000, one for each participant (optional)
- scissors, one for each small group of three or four
- rolls of tape, one for each small group of three or four
- several magazines for each small group of three or four
- other craft supplies

Catechism Connection

- Paragraph 2030 (Saints as Examples of Holiness)
- Paragraph 1477 (The Value of the Good Works of the Saints)
- Paragraphs 750–752, 771, 899 (The Church as Communion)
- Paragraph 1102 (Faith and Community of Believers)

Life Issue G

Life Issue G

Engage Activity (15 minutes)

1. **Distribute** six sticky notes to each participant. Instruct the young people to list the qualities and values that are most important to them (honesty, caring, strength, and so on), one per note.
2. **Collect** all the notes, read each one aloud, and then stick each to a sheet of newsprint, posted where all can see. Have another sheet of newsprint posted next to this one.
3. **Direct** the participants to find "Living the Gospel" on page 144 in their books, which lists the fruit of the Spirit. Invite a volunteer to read it aloud. Then ask the following question:
 - What qualities and values do people who are filled with God's Spirit possess? (*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control*)
4. **Write** the responses on the sheet of newsprint posted next to the one with the sticky notes. Point out the qualities and values that are the same or similar to those on the sticky notes and those that are different. Facilitate a discussion by asking the following questions:
 - The things we have posted here reflect what we value and what we believe, and what disciples of Jesus Christ value and believe. How do we put these values and beliefs into action?
 - Who do you know who demonstrates one or more of the qualities we have posted here? How do their lives reflect those qualities?

Core Learning Activity 1 (15 minutes)

Guidance in Living Our Faith

Objective: To seek saints and Christian role models who we can look to as our guides.

1. **Arrange** the young people into small groups of three or four. Distribute a sheet of newsprint, a marker, and a dictionary to each group. Ask for one person in each group to write the phrase "Role Model" at the top of the newsprint. Explain the task as follows:
 - Each group has 3 minutes to come up with a dictionary definition for *role model*.
2. **Invite** each group to share its definition for *role model*. Comment as follows:
 - Role models are people who possess qualities that we want to imitate.
3. **Encourage** the groups to refer back to the qualities that were listed earlier on the newsprint. Instruct each group to develop a list of qualities and values found in a Christian role model and to share their lists. Ask the groups to name some people they consider Christian role models. (Suggest that they add names of role models they listed earlier or names of the people of faith featured in the *Connect!* book.)
4. **Invite** each group to share their role models. Write these names on another sheet of newsprint. Comment as follows:
 - Many of the role models in the media today are trying to sell us things. Sport figures and pop stars are role models who are sometimes glorified despite their bad behavior. Being a winner can be so valued that some people cheat to obtain this status. This contradicts the message of Jesus.
 - The saints and Christian role models are people we look to as our guides. Their attitudes and actions show us how we can love God, others, and ourselves.

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Make** the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God." (*Pause.*)
2. **Tell** the young people that this session will begin with a reading that speaks of the qualities of a Christian role model. Ask a volunteer to read Colossians 3:12–17 aloud. Pray the following:
 - Lord, bless our gathering today. We thank you for the saints and the people in our lives who show us how to live with love. Help us be good Christian role models for others. Amen.
3. **Invite** the participants to offer any special intentions for which they would like to pray.
4. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

160 Year 3

Optional Add On: Distribute a copy of the handout "Guidance in Living Our Faith" to each participant. Use the handout to help the young people reflect on the role of the saints in their own lives.

Core Learning Activity 2 (15 minutes)

What Is a Role Model?

Objective: To reflect on the most important qualities of the ideal Christian role model for young people.

1. **Arrange** the participants into small groups of three or four. Distribute to each group a sheet of newsprint, scissors, a roll of tape, a marker, several magazines, and other craft supplies. Explain the task as follows:
 - Each group will use the large sheet of newsprint to trace the outline of a group member's body and then cut out the figure.
 - Use the magazines and craft supplies to create a group "role model."
 - Your role model will reflect the most important qualities of the ideal Christian role model for young people. You may refer to the people of faith in the *Connect!* book.
 - Be as creative as you'd like in introducing your role model to the large group.
2. **Invite** the groups to present their role models to the large group.

Session Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

1. **Invite** volunteers to share key things they learned during the session. Ensure that the following point is made:
 - The saints and other Christian role models show us how we can love God, others, and ourselves.
2. **Distribute** the index cards. Instruct the participants to write the following questions on their cards:
 - Who is one of my role models? Why?
3. **Invite** the young people to take the cards home and refer to them a few times during the week. Ask them to answer the questions for themselves or to share their cards with friends or family members and discuss their answers with them.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Ask** the young people to spend several minutes praying for those who have been role models for them. Pray the following:
 - Lord God, you have given us your Son Jesus, to show us the way to you. Thank you for sending us role models who show us how to love you, ourselves, and others. May the fruits of the Spirit shine in our lives as we become lives as we become role models for others. Amen.
2. **Close** by making the Sign of the Cross.

Life-issue lessons include a **handout** that corresponds to one of the learning activities with the lesson. A **chapter summary** is also included and can be used as a catechist reference, copied and distributed to the young people, or sent home with the participants as helpful information for their families.

I Am God's Gift to the World

I am _____, I am made in the image of God,
write your name

not because of what I can do or what I look like, but simply because I am his child. God has given me a light to shine by giving me the gifts of _____.

list two or three of your gifts and talents

During this life, I will have many roles. I may not always know what my role is, but right now I know that I am _____.

list a few important roles you have: son, daughter, sister, brother, friend, student, volunteer, tutor, scout, team captain, and so on

But I cannot do everything on my own. God has also placed _____

list your family members

in my life. They are people I love and who love me by _____.

list what your parents and others have done for you

I am a member of the communities of _____

and _____

name

I am a temple of the Holy Spirit to whom God has given the qualities of _____

list a few of your qualities: joy, honesty, courage, curiosity, loyalty, humor, and so on

I am not God's gift to myself. I was not placed here to seek my own pleasure, but to serve. I serve others by _____.

list a few good things you do for others

I am God's unique gift to the world. I am _____

write your name



Life Issue A Summary

Feeling Alone

1. Being identified with a group is fine. It is good to be a part of a larger community. In fact, much of our faith is about being part of something larger than ourselves.
2. Nonetheless, we are more than what we like, where we live, the school we attend, or the race or races we are.
3. To find out who we truly are, we can turn to God. God speaks to us through the Church, through the Bible, and through prayer.
4. Human beings are good. There is nothing we or anyone else can do to take this goodness away.
5. Though we are always good, we do not always do good things. There is a difference between being good and doing good things.
6. God made each of us differently. Each of us has a particular role that no one else can accomplish. Some of us have gifts and talents that others do not. Our job is to share our gifts and talents with one another.
7. Every human being is a creature of God and is therefore loved by God, regardless of nationality, race, gender, or religion.
8. All of our lives are gifts. Your life is not just God's gift to you; it is God's gift to everyone else.
9. Your gift and responsibility is to develop the gifts and talents God gave you to the best of your ability.

Activity Book

The **activity book** offers two activities to supplement each chapter in the *Connect!* book. These activities can be incorporated into the lessons in a variety of ways.

Year 1
1A

Revelation

Thoughtfully and reflectively respond to the following questions.

Think about the events of a typical day for you—your classes in school, sports or other activities you participate in, and time with family and friends. How do you experience the presence of God in your day?

Describe how your own artistic depiction of Creation would look. What elements would you include to convey God's power?

Choose one of the elements you selected, and explain how it conveys God's power.

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Year 1
1B

Scripture and Tradition

Complete the following sentences, and then find each answer in the word search below. Words can appear in any direction.

- The part of the Mass in which we hear readings about what God has done for our salvation is the Liturgy of the _____.
- The _____ is another name for Sacred Scripture.
- The Bible's authors were guided by the _____ to record without error what God wants us to know for our salvation.
- At the Council of Trent, the bishops made clear that both _____ and _____ are necessary for our salvation.
- The Bible contains the forty-six books of the _____ and the twenty-seven books of the _____.
- God's Revelation is complete in _____.
- In _____, we are called to be prophets by sharing God's Word with others in our words and actions.

Word Search:

N	O	I	T	I	D	A	R	T	T	E	
G	L	T	P	N	S	H	Y	D	E	N	L
K	D	S	I	Q	R	T	V	W	R	E	B
K	T	I	U	U	L	I	F	O	U	M	I
Y	E	R	M	Y	F	R	A	R	T	A	B
P	S	H	S	W	J	I	Q	D	P	T	O
O	T	C	I	D	C	P	S	X	I	S	L
O	A	S	T	F	O	S	B	E	R	E	N
H	M	U	P	K	O	Y	V	J	C	T	H
V	E	S	A	F	O	L	W	S	W	E	
E	N	E	B	S	M	O	R	T	Q	E	S
D	T	J	C	S	K	H	Y	I	P	N	S

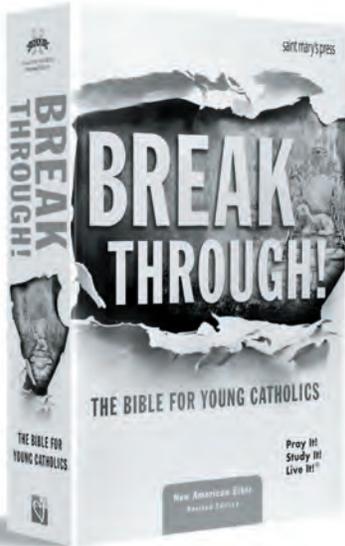
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Bible

Young people will get the most from the lessons if they have their own Bible. The program works best with the *New American Bible Revised Edition (NABRE)*. The NABRE translation of **Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics** (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2016) is highly suggested for use with this program as it was developed specifically for adolescents and can enhance the study of Scripture with its special features.

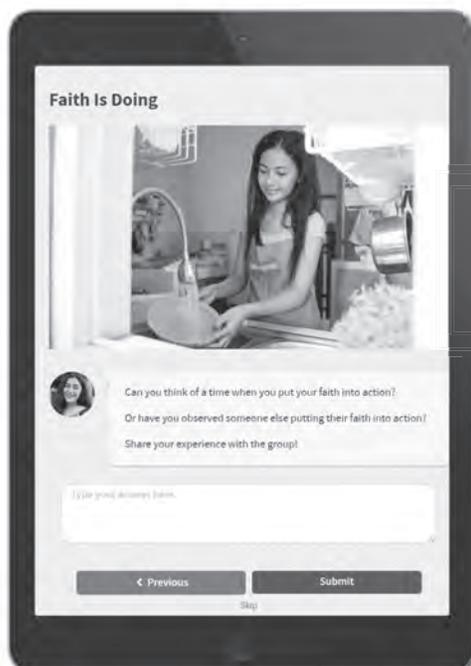


Online Resources

Online Resources specific to each catechist guide can be found at www.smp.org/connect_parish.

These resources include:

- a scope-and-sequence chart
- a digital version of the catechist guide
- catechist and parent tip sheets
- digital versions of all handouts
- web links to recommended digital media



eLearning Lessons

Interactive **eLearning lessons** provide a digital learning option for the gathered sessions or at home.

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Chapter 1

God's Plan for Salvation

Chapter Summary

In this session, the young people see that from the beginning of Creation God has had a plan of salvation for the whole human family. This plan can be found throughout Sacred Scripture. The *Connect!* book divides salvation history into eight stages, beginning with the Creation of all that exists and culminating with the founding of the Christian Church. The young people see that they too have a role to play as members of Christ's Church in sharing the Good News of salvation in Christ Jesus.

Background for the Catechist

God's desire is never that his children be separated from his life and love. Unfortunately, too often humanity has rejected God's friendship and love and has separated themselves from him. We call this sin. Sacred Scripture offers plenty of evidence of humanity's rejection of God's love and guidance, expressed through the covenants. God's grace, friendship, and love triumph over sin and wrongdoing time and time again—and this is the great story of salvation.

Salvation history is this most amazing story of God's pursuit of his beloved, the human race. The story of salvation is the greatest love story ever told, is recorded from cover to cover in the Bible, and continues today through the Church. To properly understand this story, we need to practice good biblical interpretation, under the guidance of the Church. For example, primeval history (see Genesis, chapters 1–11) is not meant to be interpreted literally, but instead offers the truth of God's grace and love through symbolic language and story. These first eleven chapters of Genesis offer us a glimpse of our own brokenness and continual rejection of God.

The Tower of Babel completes primeval history and begins the second stage of salvation history, the patriarchs, with the call of Abraham, the Father of Faith. From Abraham to Moses to David and then to Jesus and the Church, God has been unfolding this amazing plan to transform sinners into saints!

Catechist's Prayer

Loving Father, thank you for inspiring men and women to share and record your loving plan for humanity through Scripture. Help me see myself in that story of salvation that I may in turn help the young people I teach see the important part they have to play in that great story. Amen.

Teaching Tip

When discussing God's plan of salvation, it may seem that God is trying to usurp our freedom to reject him. Salvation history is not a move on God's part to usurp or undermine our freedom but instead a means whereby God makes a path for those who have chosen wrongly, are sorry for their poor choice, and desire to return to him. Help the young people see that we stray from God in a variety of ways—unique to each person—but that in his great love, God offers the opportunity for each of us to return if we choose.

Getting Ready

Connect! Bringing Faith to Life, pages 224–236

Core Understanding

We can appreciate God's love in his plan for our salvation, presented in eight stages, from primeval history to the Church in our current day.

Materials Needed

- a large sign for each stage of salvation history, with number and title, as in the *Connect!* book
- a list of facts (or sentences from the book) cut up, three or four for each stage
- a hat to hold the slips of paper
- index cards, one for each participant

Key Words

- covenant
- the Exile
- Exodus
- Gentiles
- salvation history

Catechism Pillar

- The Creed

Catechism Connection

- Paragraphs 54–73 (Stages of Revelation)
- Paragraphs 120–141 (The Canon of Scripture)
- Paragraphs 758–769 (The Church's Origin, Foundation, and Mission)

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Make** the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, "Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God." (*Pause.*)
2. **Pray** the following:
 - Father, throughout history you have guided us. Though sometimes it is difficult to hear you, we still listen. Though sometimes we make the wrong choices, you give us a second chance and call us back home to you. You made all of us good. You made all of us to be with you. We love you and are thankful for all you have given us from the first moment of Creation until now. We lift up this prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
3. **Invite** the participants to offer any special intentions for which they would like to pray.
4. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

Engage Activity (10 minutes)

1. **Engage** the young people's experience by asking the following questions:
 - What are the most complicated directions you have ever followed? What are the most important steps to giving good directions? (*Answers may vary but should focus on being organized, having a clear beginning, and having clear steps leading to the desired result.*)
 - Are you aware that God has a plan too—one that he has given us to follow? What do you think is the desired result of God's plan?
 - How do we know what God's plan is? Where can we find that plan? (*If the young people answer, "The Bible," explain that this is one source of God's plan, Sacred Scripture. Mention that the other source of God's plan is Sacred Tradition. Together, they form a road map of God's plan in a pattern of events that we call salvation history.*)
2. **Conclude** by explaining that we will be studying the whole Bible to get "the big picture" of salvation history. Explain that just as a road map can be broken into stages, we will break the Old Testament into six stages and the New Testament into two stages.

Core Content (15 minutes)

1. **Engage** the young people in a review of pages 227–234 in the *Connect!* book by dividing the material into sections, such as the following:
 - "Stage 1: Primeval History," pages 227–228
 - "Stage 2: The Patriarchs," page 228
 - "Stage 3: Egypt and the Exodus," pages 228–229
 - "Stage 4: The Promised Land the Judges," page 229
 - "Stage 5: The Kings and the Prophets," page 230
 - "Stage 6: The Exile and the Return," pages 231–232
 - "Stage 7: The Life of Jesus Christ," pages 232–233
 - "Stage 8: The Church," pages 233–234
2. **Assign** each young person one of the sections of material. They can read silently to themselves or gather in small groups with others who share the same assigned material. If opting for small-group reading, ask one person from each group to read the material aloud.
3. **Invite** volunteers to report key ideas from each section of the material to the large group. Be prepared to expand on the participants' reports as necessary to ensure key concepts are covered.
4. **Draw** a simple time line where all can see, as each group reports, with an arrow showing forward movement at every stage. Emphasize that God's loving plan is always moving forward, little by little, over long periods of time.

Teaching Tip

If collaborative reading and reporting is not the best choice for your group, consider using one of the following options or another of your choosing:

- **At-home reading option:** Invite the young people to read the chapter prior to the session.
- **In-session individual reading option:** Ask the participants to read the chapter during the session, or read it aloud to them.
- **Presentation option:** Give a short presentation that incorporates the key points listed on the handout “Chapter 1 Summary” on page 15 of this guide.

Core Learning Activity (20 minutes)

Salvation History Pop-Up

Objective: To provide a living illustration of the various stages of salvation history.

1. **Ask** the participants who read the same section of the *Connect!* book to sit together in one area of the room. There should be eight groups. Give a sign labeled with the number and name of each stage of salvation history to the corresponding group. (If the number of total participants is small, there may only be one person representing one or more sections.)
2. **Explain** that you will read aloud facts drawn from a hat. Each fact is about one of the eight stages of salvation history. When a group hears a fact about its “own” stage, that group will stand up, hold up its sign, and say together, for example, “Stage 2: The Patriarchs!” Then the group will sit down again.
3. **Draw** a slip of paper and read the fact. Give the groups 5 seconds to think about the fact and decide if it applies to their group. If no group stands up, put the fact aside (not in the hat) and choose another fact. If the wrong group stands up, say, “Sorry, that’s not your fact,” and give another 5 seconds for the correct group to identify itself. If it does not, put the fact aside and continue.
4. **Allow** the large group to discuss the facts that were put aside the first time around and to help identify the correct stage of salvation history. Explain that all through salvation history, God is a God of second chances. So this is everyone’s second chance to help one another match the facts with the correct groups.

Session Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

1. **Invite** volunteers to share key things they learned during the session. Ensure that the following points are made:
 - God's loving plan to prepare his people for the Messiah, Jesus, kept moving forward, little by little, over centuries.
 - We divide God's plan into eight stages. We are currently in the stage of the Church and are doing our part to move God's plan forward to include all people.
2. **Distribute** the index cards. Instruct the participants to write the following Scripture quotation and question on their cards:
 - "Try to understand what is the will of the Lord" (Ephesians 5:17).
 - What is my part in God's plan of love today?
3. **Direct** the young people to take the cards home and refer to them a few times during the week. Ask them to answer the question for themselves or to share their cards with friends or family members and discuss their answers with them.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Direct** the participants to find "Connect with God" on page 225 in their books. Explain that the group will be praying together in various ways, but today you will simply read this prayer. Explain that they may simply listen and follow along in their books. Ask the participants to make a Sign of the Cross and sit in silence for a moment. Read the prayer slowly.
2. **Close** by making the Sign of the Cross.

Optional Activities

Salvation History Markers (20 minutes)

Materials Needed

- index cards, eight for each participant
- markers or crayons
- Bibles, one for each participant

Objective: To use salvation history markers as a visual aid to help find particular sections of the Bible.

1. **Distribute** eight index cards and a few markers or crayons to each participant. Ask the young people to draw and then color a large number on each card, from number 1 to number 8. Demonstrate where all can see how to make open numbers with space inside for coloring. Instruct the young people to write their own name on the other side of each card, at the bottom.
2. **Distribute** the Bibles to the participants as needed. Ask the young people to find the beginning of each section of the Bible, from 1 to 8, as given in their *Connect!* book, and place a card there. You may want to have them write the titles of each of the books of the Bible in that section on the back of the card. Books listed according to type can be found in the front of most Bibles.
3. **Explain** that (if these Bibles are part of a set) each participant should pick up the same Bible for each session, and can check the name on each card to be sure.

The Story of the Bible (20 minutes)

Materials Needed

- the video "The Story of the Bible in 8 minutes" (8:16), available on YouTube

Objective: To use the video as a visual summary of the eight stages of salvation history, as outlined in the *Connect!* book.

1. **Introduce** this activity by asking the young people to open their books to page 227, "Stage 1: Primeval History." Ask the participants to follow the stages of salvation history as they are presented in the video by turning the pages in their book to match the books of the Bible that the video presents.
2. **Show** the video "The Story of the Bible in 8 Minutes," and help the participants as needed to match their *Connect!* book pages with the video presentation. Pause the video as necessary if some young people need to catch up.
3. **Conclude** by asking the participants to pause, close their eyes, and picture an illustration or part of the video they recall. Ask volunteers to share their impressions, and direct them to identify what stage of salvation history connects to the part of the video they are describing.

Materials Needed

- several sheets of colored construction paper
- a blindfold

Open Your Ears! (20 minutes)

Objective: To help the participants understand that we can listen to and hear God's voice, and that this is not always easy!

1. **Choose** one pair of participants to leave the room. Scatter the sheets of construction paper on the floor, leaving enough space in between for a pair of participants to walk.
2. **Blindfold** one member of the pair, assuring safety. Bring the pair back into the room.
3. **Explain** that the blindfolded person will walk among the papers without stepping on them, guided only by their partner's verbal directions.
4. **Repeat** this activity until everyone has had a turn as part of a pair.
5. **Discuss** how the young people felt while negotiating this activity. Lead with the following questions:
 - What did you have to do to follow your partner's directions? (*listen and follow the directions*)
 - Who or what helps us hear God's directions in our lives? (*our parents, teachers, the Church through the Pope, bishops, and priests*)
 - What do we have to do to follow God's plan in our lives? (*listen and follow his directions*)
6. **Conclude** by explaining that the people who followed God's plan in the past listened to God and followed his directions. The writers of Sacred Scripture wrote down their stories and experiences for our benefit, and the Sacred Tradition of the Church carries the teaching of the Church forward until today.

Chapter 1 Summary

God's Plan for Salvation

- 1.** Salvation history is the pattern of events through which God reveals himself and his saving actions to us.
- 2.** Salvation history can be divided into eight stages—six stages found in the Old Testament, and two stages found in the New Testament.
- 3.** The Old Testament stages are the following:
 - (1) primeval history
 - (2) the patriarchs
 - (3) Egypt and the Exodus
 - (4) the Promised Land and the judges
 - (5) the kings and the prophets
 - (6) the Exile and the return
- 4.** The New Testament stages are the following:
 - (7) the life of Jesus Christ
 - (8) the Church
- 5.** The final stage of salvation history continues today through the Church.
- 6.** The Church will continue to share the Gospel until the end of time.
- 7.** We, as members of the Church and with the help of the Holy Spirit, take part in Christ's mission today.



Chapter 2

The Old Testament

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the young people appreciate the importance of the Jewish Scriptures in the life of the Christian community and identify the four major divisions of the books of the Old Testament: the Pentateuch, the historical books, the wisdom and poetry books, and the books of the prophets.

Background for the Catechist

What is your favorite Old Testament book? Are you inspired by the stories of our origins in Genesis or of God's saving power in Exodus? Are you fascinated by the actions and words of Israel's prophets? For many people, the Old Testament is an unexplored ocean, and they are only familiar with a few popular islands. It is a wonderful and broad testimony to the saving action of God in the life of his Chosen People, Israel. The books are faith testimonies that span hundreds of years, told by a variety of people or communities from a variety of places.

The books of the Old Testament reflect the faith of God's people and the way their faith informed their understanding of God's action in their lives. They are not eyewitness testimonies documented the moment the events occurred, but are instead reflections on the past—some recent, some distant. They are written through the lens of the authors' faith and cultural situation.

The Old Testament books reflect geographical disputes, social and political realities, pride and nationalistic concerns, and prejudices both within and outside the community. They are all written through the lens of how God is saving us through, in spite of, and because of this lived experience. The Hebrew Scriptures (the Christian Old Testament) were written by the Hebrew people for the Hebrew people. The books are thoroughly theirs and, because of Jesus, are now ours.

Catechist's Prayer

Loving Father, you inspired men and women to share their experience with you in Sacred Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that they might share with every generation your power and love. Inspire me by that same Holy Spirit, so I might share my experience of you with my group of young people as well. Amen.

Teaching Tip

Our young people may come to us with a variety of interpretive methods they've learned from home. It is our responsibility to teach the Catholic way of interpreting Scripture, while recognizing that the young people may have heard other interpretations of a particular passage. Allow them to safely express what they were taught or the way they understand the passage. Be particularly careful to honor their parents as their primary educators in faith, knowing that some instruction may need to be expanded upon or gently corrected.

Getting Ready

Connect! Bringing Faith to Life, pages 237–251

Core Understanding

We can better understand the Old Testament if we see it as divided into four major parts: the Pentateuch, the historical books, the wisdom and poetry books, and the prophets.

Materials Needed

- blank paper, one sheet for each participant
- Bibles, one for each participant
- index cards, one for each participant

Key Words

- Baal and Asherah
- judges
- Pentateuch

Catechism Pillar

- The Creed

Catechism Connection

- Paragraphs 101–141
(Sacred Scripture)

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Make** the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, “Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.” (*Pause.*)
2. **Pray** the following:
 - Good and loving Father, in your great love for us, you have shared your life with the Hebrew people and revealed yourself in their life and story. Help us see you in the experience of their lives, in their words, and in their hearts, that we might experience you in our lives, words, and hearts. Amen.
3. **Invite** the participants to offer any special intentions for which they would like to pray.
4. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

Engage Activity (10 minutes)

1. **Engage** the participants in a discussion about their own roots by referencing the Public Television series *Finding Your Roots*, hosted by the historian Henry Louis Gates Jr.
 - It’s exciting to learn the history of our families. We like to know where we come from and who our ancestors were. This is the theme of the TV series *Finding Your Roots*. Celebrities are amazed at the stories of their ancestors’ lives.

- Let's share where we come from. I will write down every country that our ancestors came from. Unless our ancestors were Indigenous, we all came from somewhere else. (And it is said that even Indigenous peoples are descended from people who traveled from the Far East to this continent when the continents were closer together.) *(Write your own ancestral country or countries where all can see, and ask volunteers to share their families' country or countries of origin.)*
 - How did your family preserve their heritage? Through letters? Pictures? Stories? Special dances or other customs? Special foods? All these ways are valuable in preserving family heritage. The same is true of the Scriptures. People in the Old Testament did not have cameras. Only some could read or write. But they told their stories, over and over again, and eventually these stories were written down. That is how God prepared his people, and us, to recognize and accept Jesus as the Messiah, the Chosen Son of God.
2. **Conclude** by noting that Jesus was a Jew, and our faith is built on the Jewish faith practiced by Jesus. Explain that this chapter provides an overview of the Old Testament, divided into four sections: (1) the Pentateuch, (2) the historical books, (3) the wisdom and poetry books, and (4) the prophets.

Core Content (15 minutes)

1. **Engage** the young people in a review of pages 240–250 in the *Connect!* book by dividing the material into sections, such as the following:
 - “The Pentateuch,” pages 240–242
 - “The Historical Books” (first seven paragraphs), pages 242–245
 - “The Historical Books” (eighth paragraph to the end), pages 245–246
 - “The Wisdom and Poetry Books,” pages 246–248
 - “The Prophets,” pages 249–250
2. **Assign** each young person one of the sections of material. They can read silently to themselves or gather in small groups with others who share the same assigned material. If opting for small-group reading, ask one person from each group to read the material aloud.
3. **Invite** volunteers to report key ideas from each section of the material to the large group. Be prepared to expand on the reports as necessary to ensure key concepts are covered.
4. **Write** where all can see the name of the part of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch, etc.) that is being reported on and discussed.

Teaching Tip

If collaborative reading and reporting is not the best choice for your group, consider using one of the following options or another of your choosing:

- **At-home reading option:** Invite the young people to read the chapter prior to the session.
- **In-session individual reading option:** Ask the participants to read the chapter during the session, or read it aloud to them.
- **Presentation option:** Give a short presentation that incorporates the key points listed on the handout “Chapter 2 Summary” on page 23 of this guide.

Core Learning Activity (20 minutes)

God at Work

Objective: To help the young people understand that God is at work in their lives and in their personal history, just as he worked through the lives of the people of Israel.

1. **Invite** the young people to make a time line of their lives. Distribute a sheet of blank paper to each participant. Tell them to set the paper horizontally and to draw a line across the middle. Direct them to write their date of birth at the left end of this line. Ask them to write the subsequent years along the line. Then, ask them to write down important events of their lives along the time line, especially events that brought them closer to God. Assure them that they do not have to have an event for every year, but that the years are there to serve as reminders. (*Suggested events: Baptism, First Communion, starting school, changing schools, births of younger siblings, moving to a new home, favorite teachers, special vacations, meeting special friends, deaths of loved ones, etc.*)
2. **Explain** that this is something like what the writers of the Old Testament did: They wrote down important events and explained how these brought the people closer to God or farther away from God and his plan for them.
3. **Allow** time for volunteers to share their time lines. Remind the group that God is at work in each and every one of their lives. Distribute the Bibles, and direct the group to find Psalm 139:1–18,23–24. Remind the group that this psalm comes from the third section of the Old Testament, the wisdom and poetry books. Share the reading of this psalm by taking turns, each person reading a verse.

Session Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

1. **Invite** volunteers to share key things they learned during the session. Ensure that the following points are made:
 - The Old Testament consists of four different kinds of books (the Pentateuch, the historical books, the wisdom books, and the prophetic books).
 - God works in the events of our lives, just as he worked in the events of the lives of the Israelites of the Old Testament.
2. **Distribute** the index cards. Instruct the participants to write the following sentence starter on their cards:
 - I felt God was working in my life when . . .
3. **Direct** the young people to take the cards home and refer to them a few times during the week. Ask them to complete the sentence starter for themselves or to share their cards with friends or family members and discuss their answers with them.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Direct** the participants to find “Connect with God” on page 238 in their books. Divide the group in half to make side 1 and side 2. Ask the group to make the Sign of the Cross together, and then alternate reading the prayer, beginning with side 1. Explain that each verse ends with a period, so the sides should stop at the period. Inform the group that this is an ancient method of praying the Psalms, and it is still used by monks and nuns today.
2. **Close** by making the Sign of the Cross.

Optional Activities

Materials Needed

- thank-you cards and envelopes, one for each participant
- extra thank-you cards and envelopes (*optional*)

Honoring a Prophet (20 minutes)

Objective: To identify and thank a person who has been a source of God's truth, life, and love.

1. **Remind** the young people that a prophet is a mouthpiece for God, delivering God's truth to those who need to hear it.
2. **Instruct** the participants to identify the person in their life that God has been using most often to speak the truth to them. It could be a person who has had to reprimand them for something they did that was unloving, or it could be a person who has been a constant source of encouragement and hope.
3. **Distribute** the thank-you cards and envelopes, and direct the young people to write a thank-you note to the person they identified. The note should say something like, "Thank you for being God's prophet in my life." The note should then go on to be specific in thanking the person by describing the event or the words that were said.
4. **Remind** the participants that the person may not even have realized that they were being a mouthpiece for God at the time. In other words, their words of advice or encouragement probably didn't start with "Thus says the Lord."

Teaching Tip

You may wish to have some extra cards on hand in case some of the young people would like to thank more than one person. Check with the participants to see if they have a plan for delivering their thank-you notes, and help them create a plan if necessary.

God, Are You Near? (20 minutes)

Materials Needed

- text or video of the poem "Footprints in the Sand," available on YouTube

Objective: To identify how God has been acting in the everyday experience of the young people's lives.

1. **Introduce** this reflection activity in these or similar words:
 - The historical books of the Old Testament show us that the ancient Israelites recognized God working in their lives and history. They even saw God at work during their times of greatest suffering, when their kingdoms were destroyed and they were taken into captivity.

- This is an important spiritual skill to have, to be able to see God's actions in our lives. In a few minutes, we are going to write on this topic, but first I want to share with you an inspirational poem you may have heard.
2. **Read** the text or show the video of "Footprints in the Sand."
 3. **Share** a time in your life (as a teacher, parent, friend, etc.) when you recognized God's active presence. Explain that God is always active in our lives, but we often don't discover it until later and upon reflection.
 4. **Give** the following directions:
 - I would like you to write about how God might have been present during an experience in your life—pleasant or unpleasant.
 - You may have come to recognize his presence through events like an unexpected act of love by another person. Or perhaps you heard something you really needed to hear at just the right time.
 - Your writing is private and will only be read by me unless you choose to share it with someone else.
 5. **Invite** the participants who feel comfortable sharing their stories to do so.

That's Great Advice! (20 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Bibles, one for each participant
- blank paper, one sheet for each participant
- markers or crayons
- internet access (optional)

Objective: To discover the Hebrew Wisdom tradition and make a sign for a "wisdom wall."

1. **Distribute** the Bibles, blank paper, and markers or crayons. Assign each young person a chapter from the Book of Proverbs. If necessary, you can also assign chapters from Ben Sira (Sirach). It would be easiest to simply have the young people count off and then assign them that chapter number.
2. **Share** these or similar words:
 - Even though the wisdom and poetry books were written thousands of years ago, some of their advice is surprisingly relevant today. Look through your assigned chapter for a verse or a saying that you believe people need to follow today. Choose one that, if followed by everyone, would make our world a better place.
 - After you have decided on your verse, use the paper and markers or crayons to make a sign with both the words of the verse and the citation (book name, chapter number, and verse number). For example: "For the LORD gives wisdom, / from his mouth come knowledge and understanding" (Proverbs 2:6).
3. **Post** the verses on a wall or on a bulletin board display in the parish hall or other prominent area for all to see.

Chapter 2 Summary

The Old Testament

1. Jesus was a Jew. Our faith is built on the Jewish faith practiced by Jesus. We are the spiritual descendants of the Jewish people.
2. To understand our faith better, it helps to understand the Chosen People's relationship with God. We do this by studying and praying with the Old Testament.
3. The Old Testament is divided into four major sections: the Pentateuch, the historical books, the wisdom and poetry books, and the prophets.
4. The Pentateuch is the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These books teach us about God's plan for salvation.
5. The historical books were written to emphasize God's actions in history.
6. The wisdom and poetry books include teachings on ways to be a wise person. The poetry books include songs of praise, wise sayings, advice on living a good life, and a song celebrating the love between a man and a woman, symbolizing God and his people.
7. The books of the prophets reveal the preaching of various prophets, usually touching on the failures of God's people: idolatry, injustice, and false worship. The messages of the prophets also include messages of hope: God is faithful, the faithful will survive, and God will send a Messiah. The prophecies of Isaiah were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.



Chapter 3

Biblical Covenants: Old and New

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the young people encounter the God who keeps his promises as they learn about the covenants found in Sacred Scripture. Beginning with the covenants made with Abraham, Moses, and King David, and culminating with their ultimate fulfillment in Christ Jesus, God makes and keeps his promise to bring salvation to the world. God's saving action fulfilled in Jesus continues to be fulfilled by the power of the Holy Spirit acting through the Church.

Background for the Catechist

Do you consider yourself to be a trusting person? Do you give your word and keep it? What is the most significant promise someone made to you but did not keep? The danger of living in a world of broken promises and broken contracts is that we might begin to harden our hearts toward others and even toward God. We might begin to take on an untrusting attitude toward God and believe that it is acceptable to break our promises with him.

Sacred Scripture gives testimony that from the beginning, God has entered into sacred agreements, called covenants, with humans. God promises that those who keep his covenants will experience blessing and abundance, but those who reject his promises will experience hardship, pain, and suffering. We should not look at these as rewards or punishments but as the natural consequences of living in sync or out of sync with the will of God. Scripture explains these consequences as "blessings" (see Deuteronomy 28:1–14) and "curses" (see 28:15–69).

Scripture reveals that time and time again human beings are the unfaithful ones and, despite this, God always keeps his promises! God is forever faithful, trustworthy, and true and remains so not because of who we are or what we do, but because of who he is and what he's done. In other words, God keeps his end of the bargain even if we do not! That's good news.

Catechist's Prayer

God, keeper of promises, help me not to grow hard of heart. Help me be willing to trust, willing to believe, and willing to act on your promises so that I may be ever hopeful and ever joyful. As your minister to young people, empower me to share that hope and joy with my group and their families. I ask these things through Christ Jesus, the Lord. Amen.

Teaching Tip

It will not be hard for the young people to appreciate the idea of "broken promises," as middle school life and friendships are often chock-full of them! Young people often promise friendships, help, or time with one person and then quickly break that promise for what seems like a better offer. It will not be difficult to connect their experience with how much this hurts to the idea that it should not be done! This is a great time to offer God's unconditional, uncompromising, and unending promise of love and salvation. Earthly friends, family, and even parents fail us, but God never does! Celebrate this truth with the young people.

Getting Ready

Connect! Bringing Faith to Life, pages 252–261

Core Understanding

God entered into sacred agreements, called covenants, with his people through Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David; in Jesus, God made a New Covenant with us, a covenant that will last forever.

Materials Needed

- four Bibles
- index cards, one for each participant

Key Words

- Chosen People
- New Covenant
- Satan
- Ten Commandments

Catechism Pillar

- The Creed

Catechism Connection

- Paragraphs 612–614
(The Sacrifice of the New Covenant)
- Paragraphs 839–840
(Old Covenant)

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Make** the Sign of the Cross, and lead everyone in saying, “Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.” *(Pause.)*
2. **Pray** the following:
 - God of second chances, thank you for your love, your faithfulness, and your great mercy. Help us, Father, to be like you in loving our friends and family. We pray for your continued mercy toward us as we journey toward greater wholeness, through Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.
3. **Invite** the participants to offer any special intentions for which they would like to pray.
4. **Close** with the Sign of the Cross.

Engage Activity (10 minutes)

1. **Engage** the participants’ experience by asking the following questions:
 - Have you ever experienced a time when someone broke a promise to you? Maybe a friend or family member? Briefly think about what the circumstances were and how the situation made you feel.
 - What would the world be like if we were always lied to by others and we couldn’t trust anything that anybody said? Do you think this is the world God intended for us? Or do you think God has something better in mind?

2. **Ask** the participants to make two columns on a sheet of paper. Explain that the heading for column 1 should be “Trustworthy Characteristics.” The heading for column 2 should be “Untrustworthy Characteristics.” Direct the young people to think of the characteristics that fit each category and write them down—what makes someone trustworthy or untrustworthy. Ask for examples of each characteristic: trustworthy (someone who tells the truth) and untrustworthy (someone who lies). Then give the group time to fill in their columns. Discuss the columns by asking the following questions:
 - What are the trustworthy qualities in column 1?
 - What are the untrustworthy qualities in column 2?
3. **Explain** that some people are trustworthy and some are not. Tell the group that we gradually learn the character, or inner self, of the people we know. Remind the participants that other trustworthy people, like our parents and teachers, can help us see the truth about people.
4. **Share** with the young people that God is the ultimate trustworthy Person because he is all love and mercy and wants the best for us. Explain that because God is faithful to his promises, we can trust him to save us from sin and death if we hold fast to him.

Core Content (15 minutes)

1. **Engage** the young people in a review of pages 254–260 in the *Connect!* book by dividing the material into sections, such as the following:
 - “God Gives Second Chances,” pages 254–256
 - “God’s Covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David,” pages 257–259
 - “The New Covenant,” pages 259–260
2. **Assign** each young person one of the sections of material. They can read silently to themselves or gather in small groups with others who share the same assigned material. If opting for small-group reading, ask one person from each group to read the material aloud.
3. **Invite** volunteers to report key ideas from each section of the material to the large group. Be prepared to expand on the reports as necessary to ensure key concepts are covered.

Teaching Tip

If collaborative reading and reporting is not the best choice for your group, consider using one of the following options or another of your choosing:

- **At-home reading option:** Invite the young people to read the chapter prior to the session.
- **In-session individual reading option:** Ask the participants to read the chapter during the session, or read it aloud to them.
- **Presentation option:** Give a short presentation that incorporates the key points listed on the handout “Chapter 3 Summary” on page 32 of this guide.

Core Learning Activity (20 minutes)

Covenants Alive!

Objective: To act out and thus gain a better understanding of the initiation of each of the covenants presented in this chapter.

1. **Introduce** the activity by reviewing the following information:
 - God entered into a covenant relationship with Abraham and later into a covenant relationship with the Israelites. God made his covenant with Abraham directly with Abraham, but he made his covenant with the Israelites through Moses.
 - The covenant with David was important because it pointed toward the covenant with the Son of David, Jesus, who gave us the New Covenant.
 - These covenants are an important part of bringing salvation to the whole world through Jesus Christ. We're going to act out each of these important covenants initiated by God.
2. **Arrange** the young people into four groups, and distribute the Bibles. Assign each group one of the following Bible stories. The participants will need to work together to read through the story, create a simple script, assign parts, and be ready to act out their skit. They will have only 10 minutes to prepare. Each person in the group must be a part of the action. The participants will need to be creative to get everyone involved.
 - Genesis 12:1–9 (the call of Abram)
 - Exodus, chapter 3 (the call of Moses)
 - 2 Samuel 7:8–17 (God's promise to David)
 - Luke 22:14–20 (The Last Supper; Jesus gives a New Covenant)
3. **Create** a "stage" in the front of the meeting space. Ask the groups to present their events in "covenant order."
4. **Conclude** with praise for all the groups and their efforts. Remind the participants that we are part of the New Covenant in Jesus, and we affirm, or say yes to, that covenant every time we receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion.

Session Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

1. **Invite** volunteers to share key things they learned during the session. Ensure that the following points are made:
 - God entered into sacred agreements, called covenants, with Abraham, Moses, and David.
 - Jesus is the New Covenant, and we agree to this covenant every time we receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion.
2. **Distribute** the index cards. Instruct the participants to write the following Scripture quotation and question on their cards:
 - "I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jeremiah 31:33).
 - Is God's Law written on my heart? How do I know?

3. **Direct** the young people to take the cards home and refer to them a few times during the week. Ask them to answer the question for themselves or to share their cards with friends or family members and discuss their answers with them.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

1. **Direct** the participants to find “Connect with God” on page 253 in their books. Invite volunteers to each read one sentence of this prayer aloud, including one participant to read the Amen.
2. **Close** by making the Sign of the Cross.

Optional Activities

The New Covenant (20 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Bibles, one for each participant

Objective: To discover the meaning of the New Covenant through discussion of passages in Scripture.

1. **Share** the following with the young people, using these or similar words:
 - Throughout the Old and New Testaments, there are hints about the way God will fulfill the covenants he made in the Old Testament and extend the promises of those covenants with all people. We are going to do a little Scripture search to see what some of those passages tell us about the New Covenant.
2. **Write** the following passages where all can see:
 - Romans 6:23
 - Jeremiah 31:31–33
 - John 3:16
 - Matthew 5:17
 - Luke 22:20
 - Hebrews 9:15
3. **Distribute** the Bibles, and arrange the participants into groups of six. Each group member is to look up one of the passages and write it down. The group members are then to read their passages to the group in the order listed. The final step is for the group to create a summary statement about the New Covenant informed by the ideas or statements found in the Scripture passages.
4. **Conclude** by inviting each small group to share their summary statement with the large group.

Keeping the Covenant with God (15 minutes)

Materials Needed

none

Objective: To give the young people an opportunity to reflect on their relationship and commitment to Christian discipleship, and then to make a commitment to seeking a stronger relationship with God.

1. **Explain** in these or similar words:
 - God desires to enter into a relationship with each one of us. Like our relationships with our family, friends, teachers, and coaches, sometimes we do a better job in our relationship with God than at other times.
 - This activity provides you with an opportunity to think seriously about your relationship with God. What are your commitments in your relationship with God? What are some things you can work on?

2. **Direct** the young people to find and read “Living the Gospel” on page 256 in their books. Ask them to write answers to the questions. Encourage them to take their time and to answer as seriously as they can.
3. **Conclude** by asking the participants to share some of their promises and commitments to God, and ask them to give themselves a grade on how well they’ve been doing!

Feast of Freedom (20 minutes)

Materials Needed

- the video “The Story of Easter (The Last Supper)” (3:29), by Saddleback Kids

Objective: To recognize that the Last Supper was a “feast of freedom” celebrating God’s covenant with Moses, and that the Mass is our feast of freedom celebrating the New Covenant.

1. **Engage** the group in a discussion of celebrating freedom by asking the following questions:
 - When do we as Americans celebrate freedom? (*July 4*)
 - What do we do on July 4? (*We have parades, fireworks, and picnics or barbecues.*)
 - We have mentioned that we often have a meal on July 4 to celebrate our freedom. This is what Jesus and the disciples were doing on the Feast of Passover—sharing a feast day meal together.
 - Sharing a meal on a festive occasion is not just eating because we are hungry. It is a renewal of the bonds of family, friendship, or national ideals.
2. **Show** the video “The Story of Easter (The Last Supper).”
3. **Review** and extend the video by asking the following questions:
 - What feast were Jesus and the disciples celebrating? (*Passover*)
 - What happened on Passover? (*God gave the Jewish people freedom from slavery in Egypt.*)
 - What part of the Last Supper most reminds you of our Mass today? (*When Jesus says, “This is my Body and this is my Blood, given for you.”*) In the Gospel of Luke we read, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (22:20). Remember that a covenant is a solemn agreement, and sharing a meal is a renewal of bonds. What agreement do we make with God when we receive the Body and Blood of Christ? What bonds do we renew when we share a meal with Jesus? (*We agree to live as Jesus wants us to live. We share the ideals of Jesus. We agree to love one another and to care for others in need.*)
 - How is the Mass the celebration of our freedom in the New Covenant? (*Jesus gives us himself, and we live with his life in us. This makes us free to be more loving and giving, like Jesus. We are freed from the bonds of sin and death. We are free to look forward to eternal life.*)

Chapter 3 Summary

Biblical Covenants: Old and New

1. God is faithful to his promises; therefore, we can trust him.
2. Covenants are promises made between God and human beings.
3. The covenant with Noah is the first covenant described in the Bible. The rainbow is identified as the symbol of that covenant.
4. In the covenant with Abraham, God promises to make Abraham's descendants a great people, and Abraham promises to be faithful to God.
5. In the covenant with Moses, God promises to be the God of the Chosen People and to protect them. In turn, they promise to obey God's Law.
6. In the covenant with David, God promises to establish David's throne forever. This covenant was fulfilled through Jesus Christ.
7. The covenant fulfilled through Jesus Christ is called the New Covenant. It is really the fulfillment of the covenants God made with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David.
8. In the New Covenant, God promises salvation through his Son, Jesus Christ. Through the first Apostles and the Church today, this promise of salvation is preached to all, with the help of the Holy Spirit.
9. When Christ returns, God's promise of salvation will be complete.

