

SESSION ONE.

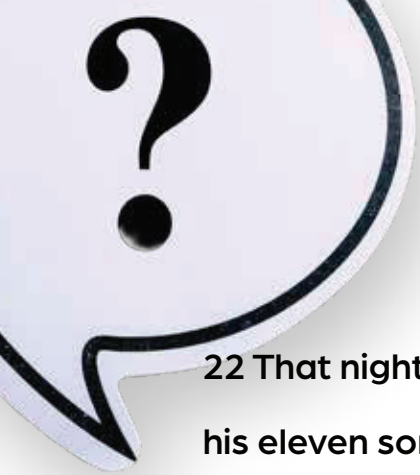
LIVING WITH DOUBT

Conversations about doubt can be difficult, so give both of you the chance to talk, and when you listen, try to listen patiently. It's okay to skip topics if they are difficult, engage to your own comfort level.

For the questions below, be honest, and explain to your comfort level and why you feel that way? Note that different Christian faiths may have a variety of different answers to each question, some of which the Lutheran Church can only say "we don't know".

- Which do you believe in, the 7-day creation story, or evolution?
- Do you think God talks to people?
- Do miracles happen?
- Do demons exist?
- What do you think is after death? Is there a heaven/ a hell/ something else?
- Is communion bread and wine really Jesus blood and body?
- Does God allow bad things to happen to people?
- Does everything happen for a reason?
- Is God speaking through the pastor on Sunday morning?
- Is God real?
- Can multiple religions be right?
- Does the devil exist/ How much power does the devil have?
- If God loves us why do we feel pain/ grief/ sadness? Why do some people get cancer or depression?
- Does God allow suffering?
- Where is God in war?





Let's Read

Jacob Wrestles With God

22 That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23 After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. 24 So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. 26 Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." 27 The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. 28 Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome." 29 Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. 30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared." 31 The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. 32 Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon"

DOUBT

- According to the story about Jacob, what happens to those who 'wrestle' with their faith?
- This story comes from the first book of the bible, telling us that people have been struggling with their faith since the beginning. Have you ever struggled with you faith?
- What is doubt? Can one be faithful while doubting their religion?
- Where is God in your doubt?
- When I 'wrestle' with my faith I...

SESSION TWO.

AFTERLIFE

- When I think about angels, I picture...
- I think God looks like...
- When I picture heaven, I see...
- When I think about the afterlife, I picture...
- On a scale of 1 (never) to 10 (ALL the time), how often do you think about the 'afterlife'? Why?
- Most religions have different ideas of what happens after death, what are some of the things you've heard of?
- There is no way to get physical proof of what happens after death, what if anything helps you to believe an afterlife?
- If you found out you had one week to live, what would you do? What if you had one day?
- When you die and come face to face with God, what question would you most want answered?
- All through history, people have been worried about what happens after death, why do you think this is?



Let's Read

Read the scripture together and consider what Paul is saying about Jesus' resurrection and how it affects us...

6 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? **2** By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? **3** Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. **5** For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. **6** For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— **7** because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. **8** Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. **9** For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. **10** The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. **11** In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

1. What do you think Paul is saying here about the afterlife?
2. What do you think it means to be "baptized into his [Jesus] death"?
3. In the ELCA we often talk about Grace – unconditional loving forgiveness from God – because of grace it means Heaven is open to EVERYONE. Do you think this is fair? Why/ why not?
4. Does Paul's promise in the scripture comfort you? Does it sound too good to be true? Does the unconditional promise make life feel pointless?

SESSION THREE.

FAITH AFTER CONFIRMATION

- What does it look like to be faithful?
- Have you ever made a life decision that was influenced by your faith? What was it? How did your faith influence your choice?
- How can you use your faith at school/work? What would that look like?
- Does faith look differently during Confirmation than it did before? Do you think it will look different after you are confirmed?
- Think back to your earliest idea of what faith was, has your understanding changed over time?
- Do you feel the kinds of things you learn at church are always applicable in your daily life? How are they/ How are they not?
- Have you ever met someone who you would describe as faith filled? What about them makes you feel that way?
- Are there right and wrong ways to display/ live your faith? How do you know the difference?
- God tells us to love our neighbor, and that in doing so, we can share God with them (1 John 4:7-9)... Have you ever met someone who was really good at loving their neighbor, but who you wouldn't consider 'faithful'? Would they make a good faith role model?
- When in your life is it hard to be faithful? When is it easy?
- Can someone have strong faith, without knowing any scripture? Can someone who knows a lot of scripture have little faith?



Let's Read

ACTS 1:4-7 (NLT)

Read the Scripture below about Jesus' promise to us, For Context, this is the last thing Jesus says to his disciples before ascending for the last time in scripture into heaven. This is a promise that isn't just for the disciples, but for everyone in the wake of the resurrection changing the world forever.

4 Once when he [Jesus] was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. **5** John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." **6** So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?" **7** He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. **8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."



1. What do you think it means to be 'baptized with the Holy Spirit'? Who/ What is the Holy Spirit?
2. The Scripture calls us to be a 'my [Jesus] witness' what does that mean? What permissions does that give? What does that look like?
3. To witness something in a court of law means you saw it with your own eyes, what does it mean to witness Jesus who died and resurrected 2000+ years ago?
4. For some "witnessing" Jesus means teaching others about the gospels, but for most, it likely doesn't. What are some other ways you can be a witness to Jesus?
5. If the Bible were to continue and you had to write the book of [insert your name here] what are three things you would want to share with future generations?


FINAL SESSION. FAITH PROJECT

- I think the difference between God and religion is...
- I feel God mostly when
- God always seems absent when...
- God is... Jesus is... Christianity is...
- How do you describe your faith?
- If you had to choose another way of faith/ religion it would be...because...
- I sometimes find faith
 - I sometimes find religion...
 - What is the difference between religion and faith?
 - What does it mean to make a promise?
 - Do you find promises easy or hard to keep?
 - What kinds of promises are hard to keep?
 - Talk about a time someone made a promise to you and broke it... how did it make you feel?



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A faith project is like exploring your own faith and coming up with a way that expresses who you are. It is important as you get ready to make your confirmation promises that you know what faith means to you right this very moment. Someday you may find yourself struggling with or reveling in your faith, your faith project is a clear sign to yourself of how your faith may have changed over time. Your task is to create a faith project. The mentor's job is to help you think about your faith and think about how you might demonstrate it through your project. They can give you ideas and even help you, but ultimately this is your expression of faith. Make it personal! Your faith project can be an artistic expression, but it doesn't need to be. You can also do something inspired by your faith and write about it!

Ideas for Physical Projects:

- Paint/ Draw Something
- Write/ Record a Song
- Make a Collage
- Make Something with Pottery
- Make Something with Wood/ Metal/ etc.
- Make a Video
- Make a Faith Photo Album
- Make a piece of jewelry
- Knit a prayer shawl
- Make a Power Point about Your Faith
- Write a Poem/ Statement of Faith
- Keep a Prayer Journal

Ideas for an Experiential Project:

- *Help Lead Liturgy at Worship*
- *Sing at Worship*
- *Assist a Pastor with a Pastoral Visit*
- *Help Lead a Bible Study*
- *Interview People Who Have Impacted Your Life (the write about it)*
- *Research and Volunteer for a Service Project*
- *Attend a Couple of Other Churches (even of different faiths) – Take Pictures, Write About the Worship, Interview the Pastor, etc.*