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Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

## A Teacher's Guide to Lutheran Confirmation

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### Lesson 1: Introduction to Confirmation

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#### What is Confirmation?

A common definition of the word "confirm" is to "establish the truth or correctness of something." When a young person is confirmed in a Lutheran church this means:

- He has received instruction in the basic teachings of the Bible and is able to show that he has learned these things.
- He can declare his faith in Jesus Christ as his Savior and promise to dedicate himself to live his life as a faithful child of God.
- He can show that he understands the true meaning and value of the Lord's Supper, and that he is able to "examine himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28-29) in preparation for Holy Communion.
- He is now becoming an adult member of the church. As a child he learned about Jesus and attended church because his parents made these choices for him. As he becomes an adult, the Holy Spirit leads him to make these choices for himself. He is then able, with the help of God, to promise to be faithful to Jesus and His Word for his whole life.

In this way the congregation, through its pastor, trains young people so that they are ready to *confirm* the faith which the Holy Spirit has given them in their baptism and strengthened through His Word.

The church's Rite of Confirmation involves the examination of students and (usually) a ceremony during the worship service. God has not commanded this in the Bible, but it is a beneficial tradition which has been practiced in many churches for centuries. The Bible does, however, make it clear that it is the Lord's will that young people should be instructed in Bible truths:

*You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. - Deuteronomy 11:18-19*

*We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might and the wonders that he has done. Psalm 78:4*

*Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6*

It is true that the primary responsibility for instructing the young belongs to their parents, as we read in Ephesians 6:10, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." But the pastor has a responsibility for instructing all of the church's members. He assists the parents by instructing young people so that they can become adult church members who are able "examine themselves" for the Lord's Supper.

*Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. Acts 20:28*

*This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. 1 Corinthians 4:1-2*

*Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 1 Corinthians 11:28-29*

### **Who should receive Confirmation instruction?**

Children who are baptized members of the church should be instructed as they are approaching the age of being an adult. There are no firm rules for how old the children should be. Many churches begin a program of classes when the children are eleven years old. The weekly classes then continue for two (or perhaps 3) years, after which the students are confirmed. In this way they are prepared to participate in the Lord's Supper. Customs may vary, but keep in mind that 1) At the time they are confirmed, the young people should be old enough to understand the teachings of Scripture, and especially to understand the meaning and value of the Lord's Supper; 2) Confirmation should not be delayed too long. The young person who is prepared should not be kept from the Lord's Supper, which is a tremendous blessing.

### **Short Answer Study Questions:**

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1. What does the word "confirm" mean?
2. List the four things that confirmation means for a young person in a Lutheran church.
3. Has God commanded the Rite of Confirmation in the Bible? Explain your answer.
4. According to Ephesians 6:10, who has the primary responsibility for instructing children? What other Scripture passages reveal this same truth?
5. At what age do many churches begin confirmation instruction?