

held a strongly affirmed or sincerely held position, a guideline, a mission or achievement

# CREDO

KNOW YOUR STORY

CONFIRM YOUR FAITH

LIVE YOUR COMMITMENT

**Confirmation Guide for Parents,  
Mentors, and Adult Leaders**

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# Introduction: A Book for You

Congratulations. You are either a parent of a young person who is participating in confirmation classes; or you are an adult who has been asked to walk with a young person by participating in confirmation as a mentor or adult leader. And while the young people will be the ones studying the beliefs of the Christian faith and of United Methodists and making decisions about faith, you are an important part of this experience as well.

Without adult support, it is difficult for a preteen or teen to be present for confirmation classes, to spend the time needed to complete assignments, to feel bold enough to talk with others about faith and the church. Without adult support, this part in a young person's faith journey will feel like a lonely path. Without adult support, a young person going through confirmation may lack courage to ask questions, to try out new ideas, to practice the disciplines of prayer and service.

As you read this guidebook, you will be guided to reflect on the following:

- ✦ the development of preteens and teens;
- ✦ the faith formation of preteens and teens;
- ✦ the role of confirmation in a young person's faith journey;
- ✦ the knowledge and information shared as part of the confirmation experience; and
- ✦ the role of the home in aiding faith formation.

Not only will you be reading information, you will be also be asked to reflect on your own faith journey, write comments about the growth you see in the young person to whom you are relating, and take part in activities that support a young person in confirmation. Use this book as a source of information, as a guide for reflection, and as a tool for practice.

## WHO ARE THESE YOUNG PEOPLE?

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Can you remember looking into the face of a baby soon after birth and wondering: *What will this baby be like? What kind of relationship will I have with this child? As my child, will he or she believe as I do and act as I do? As a church member watching this new baby, will I have an impact on the way this child acts and believes?* As an adult caring for this child, you might have made promissory statements such as: "I will always be part of a nurturing community for you. I will always show you love. I will not ignore you. I will make sure that you have all you need to live life successfully."

Whatever questions you may have had when you became a parent, as that child reaches the teen years, those questions might become:

- ✦ Who is this person living in my house?
- ✦ Will I ever again be able to communicate with my child, without pulling out the information bit by bit?
- ✦ If my mere presence as a parent embarrasses my child, how in the world can I carry on a serious conversation with him or her about faith?

Whatever promises you made as part of the worshiping community in support of children, as those children become teens, those questions might become:

- ✦ Why do these young people have to disrupt our worship?
- ✦ Will I ever see these young people as contributing members of the congregation?

As adults, we often wonder what exactly what our children and youth are learning.

- ✦ Are they old enough or wise enough to understand faith?
- ✦ Is confirmation really necessary?
- ✦ Isn't it enough to simply provide experiences for children and youth to say yes to Jesus?

## **ARE THE PRETEEN OR EARLY TEEN YEARS THE BEST TIME FOR CONFIRMATION?**

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Yes. The years of 11, 12, 13, and 14 are a great time for a young person to participate in confirmation classes. Preteens and teens are experiencing the change from childhood to adolescence. It is a time for reflecting on the “what has been” as well as the “what will be.” This time of changing from a child into a teen is the best time to ask, “What of my childhood (including my participation in church) do I want to carry with me into my teen years?”

## **YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T SEEM TO BE ABLE TO THINK VERY DEEPLY ABOUT ANY TOPIC. WON'T THAT BE A PROBLEM WITH CONFIRMATION?**

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Not necessarily. The teen years are the time when the brain is in high gear, developing and refining reasoning abilities. However, many preteens and early teens are still not ready for deep thinking about theological concepts. But they are more ready to reflect on questions of faith and delve deeper than they were just a few years ago. They can begin asking—and finding their own answers to—questions such as, “Who is God?” “Who is Jesus Christ?” “How should I act as a follower of Jesus?”

## **I NEVER WENT THROUGH CONFIRMATION CLASSES. ARE THEY REALLY NECESSARY?**

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While confirmation classes may not be a required part of a faith journey, they can be a meaningful part of it. Certainly, in The United Methodist Church, we believe that anyone can answer the invitation to Christian discipleship, profess faith in Jesus Christ, and become a member of a congregation, without necessarily participating in proscribed classes. But we do feel that participating with other young people in confirmation; enjoying learning experiences together; meeting with the pastor and other church leaders; and taking part in retreats, field trips, and mission projects allow young people to explore more fully the faith they seek to profess.

# My Commitment as Parent

**Name of the young person:**

(Check all that apply and explain as necessary.)

\_\_\_ **has been baptized.**

\_\_\_ **has not been baptized.**

\_\_\_ **was not baptized as an infant. The reasons for this are:**

\_\_\_ **was baptized as an infant. This is because:**

**My hope or dream for my child as he or she participates in confirmation is:**

# My Commitment as Mentor or Adult Leader

**Name of the young person:**

**Years I have known this youth: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Ways we have built a relationship thus far:**

**If he or she has been baptized, at what age did that occur? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Why was he or she baptized/not baptized?**

**My hope or dream for the young person I am mentoring and in ministry with as he or she participates in confirmation is:**



# Who Are These Young People?

So just who are these young people? How are they growing and developing at this stage in their lives?

Before you read further, use the space provided to describe what this young person is like as he or she begins confirmation. If your relationship with the young person is not yet developed, these questions can become a guide to your early conversations.



✦ **If someone were to describe what this young person looks like, he or she would say ...**

✦ **This young person prefers to spend his or her time ...**

**✦ This young person says that he or she does/does not enjoy school because ...**

**✦ I think that this young person would say that our church ...**



✚ If asked to describe his or her family, this young person would say ...

✚ At the beginning of this confirmation experience, this young person says that he or she feels ...

An individual congregation sets the age for confirmation classes. More and more congregations are scheduling confirmation for young people who are seventh grade or older. However, some congregations may have sixth (or even fifth) graders participate in confirmation. That means that young people as young as 10, 11, or 12 may be in confirmation as well as those who are 13 or 14. And as we know, there can also be a wide variety of ages in any one grade. The following information will help you as you consider the weeks, months, or even years ahead with the young people in confirmation.

In our culture, adolescence is the bridge from childhood to adulthood. It might start as early as age 10; and, certainly, with the way maturity has been pushed downward, this can be the case.

The attitudes and commitments made in adolescence help shape the character of young adulthood. This is an important time in a person's journey of growth and development.

Adolescence is a time of rapid physical changes. Parts don't always grow at the same rate; so some youth have big noses, big ears, and big feet. Many of these young persons are embarrassed about their bodies that are growing in these uneven ways.

This is a time of gaining new cognitive skills. Adolescents enter into another phase of rapid brain growth (the first being in infancy and toddlerhood). French psychologist Jean Piaget, long considered the foremost authority on development, spent years developing a theory of how our thinking changes as we mature. Along with Piaget, we once thought that adolescence arrived with the full-blown ability to think abstractly. What more recent studies on brain development

teach us is that adolescence brings rapid development in that area, but it is just the beginning of this phase—not completed at this stage of life.

Adolescents are working to acquire their own values. "My parents think that church is important. My friends think it's boring. Where am I? What do I think?"

**The attitudes and commitments made in adolescence help shape the character of young adulthood.**

While debate continues about the strength of peer pressure on the youth in our society, there is no debate about the importance of peer culture. Ron Tassel calls this “the second family.” His argument is that because so many adults are always working, always busy, always on the run, our youth are left to form family support with a second family—their peers. While the youth might not make decisions based on whether their peers will like them, once they make a decision to experiment with sex or drugs or other (often risky) behaviors, their peers surround them to help them with this experience. They behave as family.

**Adolescents are working to acquire their own values....**  
**“Where am I? What do I think?”**

## **PRETEENS**

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We refer to 11 or 12 year olds as preteens. It has been said that the 10 to 12 year olds today are going through many of the life experiences that 12 to 14 year olds went through twenty years ago. Certainly, our schools have become more demanding. The sports our children participate in are more competitive. Even physically, our preteens are maturing and entering puberty at an earlier age than we adults did. In our culture, companies aggressively market to preteens because youth of this age have larger sums of discretionary money to spend on items such as clothing, music, games, entertainment.

Many youth receive their first cell phone at this stage in life. And many parents can attest to the unexpected costs related to texting and twittering that reveal a group in constant communication with peers and others who are important in their lives.

Age 11 marks the beginning adolescence, particularly for girls. Behavior you can expect of many preteens includes challenging adult authority. And this confrontation will escalate as they move deeper into the teen years. Saving face is important to 11 year olds. They do not want to be proven wrong or ridiculed. So those funny stories we remember from their childhood become sources of embarrassment, especially when told in the presence of their peers

At age 12, boys and girls alike need enormous amounts of sleep, food, and exercise. Their bodies and brains are growing rapidly.

While 12 year olds do exhibit from time to time great ability to be responsible, the on-again-off-again nature of their responsible behavior at this age makes adults wonder when they can expect the responsible behavior to become the norm. Showing a sense of being responsible is a selective behavior for many 12 year olds. The same young person who shows no sense of care for space at home can be deeply committed to working on a service project for confirmation.

A great need of this age is to be with friends. Girls, in particular, are at the height of forming and belonging to cliques. So if your child's best friends are not a part of the confirmation class, this drive to be among friends might present a challenge for parents, particularly parents of girls. So again, the issue of friends in confirmation can be one that will either delight the 11 or 12 year old or be a source of dismay or discomfort, depending on who else is in the class.

## EARLY TEENS

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**Early teens continue to distance themselves from parents and align themselves with peers, as they seek to define an emerging sense of self.**

We classify those who are 13 or 14 years old as being in the early teen years. Youth of this age are still developing; and indeed, some 13 year olds physically still look like some 11 or 12 year olds. Not only do some still have that elementary-age look, they still have some of the same interests and concerns. Often, however, they seek to hide any of those activities that their peers may see as babyish.

A great word to characterize 13 year olds is *confused*. Many of them are confused about their appearance and about who their friends are. Thirteen year olds can be excited about being a teen and, at the same time, sensitive and tentative.

Most 13 year olds want to talk to their parents but despair about how to start the conversation. Since by now, many of them have

retreated to their rooms and insisted on being left alone, parents who also desperately want to talk with their teens despair at not being able to do so. The desire to separate is natural for 13 year olds. So it is important for those of you who are parents to keep having those painfully slow conversations—for your sake and for the sake of your teen.

**Teens ... need forums for thinking and talking.... Having adults who will let them state their opinions ... is very important.**

For those of you who are mentors, you may be the most accessible adult for many youth in this age group. Because you are not the parent, you may be able to have deeper conversations with this age group than the parents will be able to have.

By 14, most girls are coming to the end of puberty just when many boys are still in full grip of puberty. The issue of “Who am I?” becomes dominant. Early teens continue to distance themselves from parents and align themselves with peers, as they seek to define an emerging sense of self.

For teens, moral reasoning goes beyond “Will I be punished?” In fact, sometimes their decisions seem to be made in spite of consequences.

Teens are risk takers. Exploring the dangers of the world excites them. They see themselves as indestructible, however, and will take life-threatening risks, without apparent thought to consequences.

For adolescents, self-absorption is taken to new heights: “*my hair, my clothes, my needs, my wants, my schedule.*” And through all of this, there is often uncertainty. James W. Fowler, Ph.D., author of *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, sums it up with this verse: “I see you seeing me; I see the me I think you see.” However, adolescents might add: “But is that really me?”

Sexuality and sexual encounters cannot be ignored if we truly want to understand the world of teens. To devalue this dimension of the developing self is to close our eyes and our minds to an important part of who teens are as maturing human beings.



Teens need a group to belong to. They wonder, *Which group am I in?* In some school settings, we can still see the delineation of jocks, scholars, nerds, cheerleaders, partyers, thespians, and so forth. However, this is not always easy to see because there is cross over in many of these groups in schools today. However, group is still important.

Teens really do relish adults who will listen to them. They need forums for thinking and talking. Often adults move directly into a “telling mode” with teenagers. Having adults who will let them state their opinions, try out ideas, and question what they see going on around them is very important.

Family can be very confusing for teens. They may be thinking, *I’m not just like them, but I still need them! Am I still a part?*

## **THE ADOLESCENT BRAIN IS DOING WHAT?**

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**Matters of faith and religion—if not anchored in emotional thought—are less likely to steer behavior later in life.**

We now know much more about brain development and function than we have ever known before. What we have learned affects what we can expect with respect to certain aspects of reasoning behavior, memory, and, emotions. This information helps explain and illustrate behavior of those between the ages of 12 and 16.

What we need to be most aware of in our work and interactions with teens is development of the frontal lobe of the brain. We call the functions of this section of the brain the “executive” functions. This area of the brain directs the capacities of the mind. It cues the use of other mental abilities. And it directs and controls perceptions, thoughts, actions, and, to some degree, emotions. Related to these functions are self regulation, self awareness, self determination and goal-setting. The growth explosion for the front lobe of the brain occurs between the ages of 12 and 16. Until this area is fully developed, adults must do lots of external regulating for young people. This means that parents and mentors are very important in asking the kinds of questions that lead young people to make good



decisions. We don't leave them without support, because their brains are not ready for that. We walk alongside, encouraging, pointing out information that might be missed, setting up scenarios to consider.

At the same time that we're considering the frontal lobe of the brain, we can't ignore the limbic system. The limbic system is the site of primal emotions: fear; flight; aggression; fight. And as preteens and teens enter into and are fully engaged in puberty, they are bombarded by surging hormones. These surging hormones cause surging emotions. Thus there are more extremes of emotions expressed, more aggression, and more risk-taking behavior.

As parents and mentors, we want to recognize that emotions can serve the young person well as it relates to learning. In real learning, cognition and emotion are never taken apart. Emotion pushes our minds into needed areas of knowledge. But there needs to be a balance. The goal in learning is to stimulate emotions without always playing them out. Moral and ethical decisions are already made in emotional thought before they get to rational thought. Matters of faith and religion—if not anchored in emotional thought—are less likely to steer behavior later in life.

**As parents and mentors, what do you need to know most in relating to young people out of this brain research?** This age group needs active experiences. Simply talking about the concepts covered in confirmation will not be as meaningful as we might hope. Direct service, talking while working on a project, illustrating through activities will all help young people both learn and express their faith.

How youth feel is as important as how youth think. While the language to express those feelings might not yet be in place, the feelings will indeed be there. Parents and mentors can help youth name their feelings, recognize their feelings, and claim that learning is both feeling and “fact.”

## **WHAT ABOUT GENDER?**

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As we learn more about the brain, we have an increased knowledge about the role gender plays in the ways girls and boys learn. Be clear that there is no difference in *what* girls and boys can learn.

However, there may be big differences in the best way to reach and teach boys and girls.

When talking about paying attention to gender in Sunday school and church settings, we can just about see the questions running through listener's mind: *Isn't that prejudicial? We've worked so hard to bring equality to our boys and girls, doesn't this defeat that equality? Isn't this stereotypical? Are we talking about blue/pink color-coding again?*

**There is no difference in *what* girls and boys can learn. However, there may be big differences in the best way to reach and teach boys and girls.**

All of those questions are legitimate because we have had a rough time bringing about equality in the way we educate boys and girls, men and women. And the need for this struggle may have not been seen as well through the eyes of the church as it has been seen in public education. It might be helpful to remember some of the past in order to understand the future.

One place to start the discussion is with the question of equality in educational opportunities. By the middle to late '60s, although coeducation was an accepted practice, there remained some vestiges of gender-stereotypical education. For instance, in some schools, it was assumed that all girls would take home economics and all boys would take shop. Even though this wasn't the thrust of any kind of major protest in the '60s, it did indicate some of the gender-based inequities that were still in vogue. It isn't the courses so much but the assumption that it is more appropriate for girls to take home economics than chemistry or unnecessary for a boy to sew.

Many who do not remember separate education for boys and girls do remember the inequity of sports in school programs. Before 1972, a the majority of schools did not offer girls an opportunity to play on sports teams. Girls participated in sports mainly through physical education. But this was the limit. Girls who were talented and determined in athletics rarely found a place to advance their skills and to compete.

The answer to this issue of inequity was Title IX. However, some educators worried about how addressing the needs of girls in athletics might be detrimental to boys. The fear was in some way there would not be enough—enough equipment, enough money, enough personnel to really address the needs of both boys and girls. And so there was fear. There was resistance. There was fight-back. And many, many years spent debating the wisdom of this legislation.

The debate also led to an interesting question. Is providing the same of everything what is necessary? Or are there gender differences that need to be considered in order to create equal opportunities?

The prejudicial view of what boys and girls can or should learn is what we need to leave in the past. And this book stands against such prejudices. However in the years since Title IX, there has been a recognition that same is not equivalent to equal.

Through personal experience with gender specific education and in-depth reading on the pros and cons of such educational systems, we can be more and more convinced that the church is missing out on wonderful faith formation opportunities when we don't plan gender-specific experiences as well as coeducational experiences.

While there may or may not be gender-specific experiences as part of your church's confirmation classes, **here are some things to keep in mind as parents and mentors with young people:**

**The church is missing out on wonderful faith formation opportunities when we don't plan gender specific experiences as well as coeducational experiences.**

The way we talk with boys and girls can be perceived either as challenging or comforting, depending on the way we have our talks. Many boys will feel challenged by eye-to-eye conversations. They are more comfortable with shoulder-to-shoulder conversations. Did you ever feel that you got more information from a young man while riding in a car instead of facing one another across a table? That car ride is shoulder-to-shoulder conversation. You may want to conduct conversations about meaningful parts of confirmation as you participate in another activity, such as while

working side by side in a food pantry. Eye-to-eye contact seems to be more comfortable to girls. This implies relationships and more often girls seek first to build a relationship then move into deeper sharing and thoughtful conversation.

Gender differences exist in how we hear. Many boys do not hear the softer voice tones and so will either appear to ignore or disregard instructions. Speaking more loudly and clearly will often elicit better responses. On the other hand, many girls are bothered by loud voices. A girl may experience a voice as being about 10 times louder than how a boy experiences the same voice. Raising your voice with girls can actually inhibit their learning and participation, causing them to retreat from the interaction.

**For boys, asking for help might be perceived as weakness.... While girls might ask for help, they also might be less willing to take a risk or to try a solution on their own.**

Be aware of the differences in how boys and girls form friendship. Boys' friendships are formed usually among 2–12 boys, focus on a shared interest in a game or activity, have as central to the friendship specific activities, aren't often conversation based, and don't include self-revelation. Girls, on the other hand, form friendships based more on a "best friend" or small group of friends, rely heavily on conversation and self-revelation. These friendship patterns show something about

preferred ways of relating beyond a "school" experience. A small group sharing time as part of a confirmation class might work well with girls but be only tolerated or disrupted by boys. Turning a learning experience into a game may be preferred by boys and the conversation around the game can then lead to the confirmation topic of the day.

Many times, girls and boys approach asking for help from two different perspectives. For boys, asking for help might be perceived as weakness. Thus they might withdraw from the activity, disrupt the activity, or be frustrated while they try to muddle through without help. While girls might ask for help, they also might be less willing to take a risk or to try a solution on their own.

## THIS GENERATION

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In addition to knowing something about how preteens and early teens are developing, it helps to know about their generation. All of us are part of a generational group, which is determined by the years when we were born and by life events that happen when we are in our youth and young adult years.

### **Particularly important for you, the parent, mentor, or adult leader of a preteen or teen, are these traits:**

**Experience:** This generation is creating a worldview based on experience. This could be both actual and virtual. In exploring faith and truth, life experience becomes their filter. Heart knowledge is important. “Does this touch my soul?” is a question of this generation—even if they don’t know how to articulate the question itself.

**Relationships:** As a parent or mentor you may feel young people are obsessed with “screens” - television, videogames, computers, cell phones. But for young people, these screens are ways to connect with others. They seek and appreciate strong relationships with others. When the confirmation experience includes building relationships within the family and within the congregation, it has more meaning for young people.

All of this leads us to ask, “What does faith look like for preteens and teens?”

- ✦ **God is with me as friend.** At a time in life when adolescents may feel unsure about themselves, about their friends, and about their family, having God as a steadfast friend is important.
- ✦ **I take comfort in what I know, without appearing to do so.** We sometimes call teens “nonconformist conformists.” They may have pierced eyebrows, tattoos on their ankles, and spiked hair; but they often still find comfort in the dependability of a familiar worship service.
- ✦ **I seek and question.** While not quite ready to declare where they find themselves, they do need the space to ask questions and talk about doubts.

- ✦ **Let me tell you what I think I believe.** They seek places to express what they feel and believe.
- ✦ **I explore what is meant by *call*.** This is the time when we begin talking with youth about calls to ministry, calls to service. Although confusing, as youth deal with other life issues, they also reflect on what their faith calls them to do and to be. This is true also in the world of school. Many youth are told to have a sense of their desired career by their junior year in high school in order know which colleges to apply to. The church needs to be a part of those conversations too. Call, vocation, and direction—all of these influence and are influenced by the faith of the youth.

## SO WHAT ARE YOU TO DO?

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Whether the young person with whom you are working is a preteen or teen, **it is important for you as parent or mentor to do these things:**

- ✦ **Model acceptance and openness.** As you do so, you will be told more about what actually goes on in the world of young people.
- ✦ **Talk about feelings.** Help young people define their feelings. Boys and girls of this age know that they have feelings but struggle to know what these feelings mean. Preteens and teens are often unclear about acceptable ways to express feelings. You can provide examples of how to show acceptance, understanding, and caring in socially acceptable ways.
- ✦ **Listen often.** Most adults like to talk and have others listen to them. Maybe as adults we've done more talking than listening with young people. Preteens and teens are eager for adults who will listen to them.
- ✦ **State your own beliefs.** Even as we listen to our preteens and teens, they need to hear from us what we believe in and how we strive to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- ✦ **Be prepared for deep emotion and deep convictions.** For many youth, this is the time when something strikes them for the first time as deeply unfair. They are then ready to fight to right these injustices, but they need help in making good decisions and exploring the best ways to make a difference.



## **THE PLACE OF THE FAMILY IN FORMING FAITH**

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As Christians, we seek ways to help us grow in faith. Six denominations, with Search Institute's help, researched the answer to the question, "What makes a church's Christian education program effective?" The denominations included the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), the Southern Baptist Convention, the United Church of Christ, and The United Methodist Church.

As part of the project, the denominations sought first to define mature faith. Their measure was the degree to which persons showed "both a deep, personal relationship to a loving God and a consistent devotion to serving others" (page 9, *Effective Christian Education*). An image to keep in mind that captures that definition is the cross: a vertical dimension of loving God and a horizontal dimension of loving others.

Then they asked the question, "What helps people grow in faith?" From the data came information that looks both at what happens in the formal Christian education program of a church and what happens in the home that nurtures faith.

Through the study, the research team determined that being consistently involved in effective Christian education programs over a long period of time is a key to an individual's growth in faith.

Christian education included Sunday school, Bible studies, confirmation, camping and retreats, youth ministry, and youth groups, to name just a few settings.

Alongside the individual's participation in Christian education, the study also noted the importance of the family's involvement in faith to promote faith maturity. Of the two factors—family religiousness and Christian education—the family was cited as the more important.

**An image to keep in mind that captures that definition [of mature faith] is the cross: a vertical dimension of loving God and a horizontal dimension of loving others.**

**The experiences in the family that are most tied to faith maturity are:**

- ✦ the frequency with which an adolescent talked with mother and father about faith;
- ✦ the frequency of family devotions; and
- ✦ the “frequency with which parents and children together were involved in efforts, formal or informal, to help other people” (page 38, *Effective Christian Education*).

**Subsequent studies have added to the above list the following:**

- ✦ the importance of family rituals for nurturing faith in the home. These family rituals include such things as
  - lighting a candle at meals to remind one another of the presence of Christ;
  - lighting an Advent wreath during the season of Advent;
  - praying at meal times;
  - offering blessings to one other when leaving or entering the home; and
  - special prayers of blessing for the honoree at birthday celebrations.



## **FOR PARENTS: OUR FAMILY RELIGIOUSNESS**

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Using the four points listed above, think about your own home. When do you take the time to talk with one another about faith? When the family drives home after a worship service? When a current event causes the family to struggle together to understand what has happened? When a question of faith is on the mind of a family member? In these conversations young people are often able to link “something I believe” with “something I do.”

**Of the two factors—  
family religiousness and  
Christian education—  
the family was cited as  
the more important.**

The structure of family devotions was not defined in the research. Having family devotions could include elements such as a very simple meditation, the reading of a Scripture, and/or prayer together.

Family service projects were not defined either. They were simply classified as projects to help others. Families today have a range of possibilities for helping others.

Consider the four areas: faith conversations as a family, family devotions, family projects to help others, and family rituals. What do you do now? What could you do in your family? Take some time to thoughtfully answer the questions on pages 26–29. Use the questions as a guide for creating or further developing intentional faith habits among your family members.

## **TALKING WITH ONE ANOTHER ABOUT FAITH**

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- ✦ **When do we talk with one another about faith? When are we most likely to do this?**

- ✦ **When could our family intentionally plan to talk with one another about faith issues?**

## **FAMILY DEVOTIONS**

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✚ **What kind of devotion schedule would work in our family?**

✚ **What resources might we use for our family devotion?**

## **FAMILY PROJECTS TO HELP OTHERS**

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✦ **What could we do as a family to help others in our congregation?**

✦ **What could we do as a family to help others in our neighborhood?**

## **FAMILY FAITH RITUALS**

✚ **When do we (or could we) pray together as a family?**

✚ **What rituals could we practice in our home that would help us build faith?**

## **AND WHAT ABOUT MENTORS?**

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These areas of religiousness can also inform your relationship with the young person. Some of these might be part of the one-on-one relationship you develop with the young person. Others will more likely be part of the experiences of the entire group with mentors. It is important to ask yourself and those leading the confirmation experiences about these four areas:

- ✦ How will you talk with one another about faith?
- ✦ Will there be times during the confirmation experience when worship or devotional time together would be beneficial?
- ✦ What helping projects will the confirmation class be engaging in together? Will mentors be included? How will you encourage the young people to reflect on these helping experiences and what they have to say about faith?
- ✦ What rituals will be part of the confirmation experience? Will there be times to mark such important experiences as the selection of a mentor; progress made in the confirmation experience, and the conclusion of the experience?

## **WHAT ABOUT BUILDING ASSETS?**

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Another Search Institute study of students in grades six through twelve also produced important information for adults who work with young people and parents. In analyzing the surveys, Search Institute discovered that the difference between troubled teens and those leading productive and positive lives was the presence of what they called “developmental assets.” The determined assets help answer the question, “What can we add to the lives and experiences of young people that will lead them more toward the productive and positive and help guard against those behaviors that are destructive to self and others?” These assets provide guidance to families, as well as congregations in supporting youth.

Assets have a cumulative effect. The more assets young people have, the better the chance for them to lead productive and healthy lives. Conversely, the fewer assets they have the more likely they are to be involved in risk-taking behavior.

Search Institute has identified forty assets for adolescents (ages 12–18). All of them are important and worth finding out more about; visit their website ([www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)) or ask your pastor or youth director to follow up with more information for you. Search Institute provides numerous resources for helping parents, mentors, teachers, and congregations be more aware of and effective in building assets in youth.

Assets are divided into the categories of “external” and “internal.” External are part of the environment in which the young person operates. In reading about those related to the community, think of your congregation as part of the community that surrounds each youth. Internal assets are part of the young person’s own being.

You might choose to refer to this list as you read through the lessons and opportunities that are part of the confirmation experience. It is hoped that there will be many places where you can see how what is planned reinforces these assets.

Confirmation does lend itself to enriching the lives of young people. It is much more than simply a series of lessons where youth learn about church. The learning is important; so is the experience and the support of adults as the youth participate and begin to make significant decisions.



**Of the forty assets for adolescents, the ones listed here align most closely with the confirmation experience.**

## **EXTERNAL ASSETS**

- 1. Family Support**—Family life provides high levels of love and support
- 2. Positive Family Communication**—Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
- 3. Other Adult Relationships**—Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
- 7. Community Values Youth**—Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
- 8. Youth as Resources**—Young people are given useful roles in the community.
- 9. Service to Others**—Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
- 11. Family Boundaries**—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
- 14. Adult Role Models**—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
- 16. High Expectations**—Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.
- 19. Religious Community**—Young person spends one hour or more per week in activities in a religious institution.
- 20. Time at Home**—Young person is out with friends “with nothing special to do” two or fewer nights per week.



## INTERNAL ASSETS

- 26. Caring**—Young person places high value on helping other people.
- 27. Equality and Social Justice**—Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
- 28. Integrity**—Young person acts on convictions and stands up for his or her beliefs.
- 29. Honesty**—Young person “tells the truth even when it is not easy.”
- 30. Responsibility**—Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
- 31. Restraint**—Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
- 32. Planning and Decision Making**—Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
- 33. Interpersonal Competence**—Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
- 39. Sense of Purpose**—Young person reports that “my life has a purpose.”

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