

THE SEVEN L's of LATAH VALLEY

A Catechetical Training
In The Christian Faith
For the Post-Modern World

1. **Latah Lives** —
the fullest life of community that God intends us to live, according to the witness of Holy Scripture.
2. **Latah Listens** —
to the stories of people near and far and especially to God's Story through them.
3. **Latah Lingers** —
in the places where, and in the moments when, people need to hear about the love of God in Jesus Christ.
4. **Latah Laughs** —
at the serious business of the world, knowing that even the best methods of human beings won't make things perfect.
5. **Latah Learns** —
from those humble people who are willing to admit that they don't always know for sure.
6. **Latah Loves** —
by the power of the Spirit of Christ, who trains us in forgiveness, reconciliation and compassion.
7. **Latah Longs** —
for the coming kingdom of the risen Christ where there will be no church, no temple, no suffering, no sighing and no death... "but the Lord God will be their light."

1. Latah Lives —

the fullest life of community that God intends us to live, according to the witness of Holy Scripture.

Focus Areas:

- Covenant Community
- God's Intention: Israel... Jesus of Nazareth... Ecclesia (Churches)
- The Authority of Holy Scripture

Ice Breakers:

Name a funny scene in a film or a book that you really loved.
Describe the last time that you felt really foolish.

Read.

“Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus...” (1 Corinthians 1:26–30, NRSV).

Review.

What are the groups, which are mentioned by the author (the apostle Paul) in the first sentence?

Of the following reasons for coming together with other people, which of the following is easiest for you? *Family Connection. Like-Mindedness. Blowing Off Steam After Work. Similar Economic Status. Friendship. Shared Hobby. Team Sports. Helping Out With Community Projects. Shared Ethnic Background. Drinking Buddies. Alcoholics Anonymous. Similar Illness or Ailment...*

Reflect.

How have your experiences of church community been different from the group encounters mentioned above?

What simple criteria allow those in first century Corinth to gather together? Are these same criteria operative in the churches of your own personal experience?

Latah Valley Presbyterian Church is among those who believe in the unique nature of **COVENANT** as the primary mode for interacting with other people and as a basis for authentic community. We also believe in the unique **COVENANT**, which God has made with the historic people of Israel and confirmed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

Covenant Exercises.

Divide into triads, or smaller groups of three, and do one of the following.

Triad A: Look up the word, "Covenant," in a standard English dictionary.
Write down what you're read.
Re-write a definition in your own words as it may pertain to the church.

Triad B: Use a Bible Concordance to find five references to "Covenant." One of the references should come from Exodus 34:6–9, Jeremiah 31:31–35 or Ezekiel 16:59–63.

Write down the words or phrases which surround the term, "Covenant," consider the following questions: Who is the party that initiates the covenant agreement? What happens when one party breaks the agreement?

Triad C: Consider this quote from *The Oxford Companion To The Bible*:

"The covenants between God and the people are all covenants of divine favor or grace. They express God's gracious commitment and faithfulness and thus establish a continuing relationship. They differ from one another theologically at the point of whether the accent falls upon God's loyalty, which endows the relationship with constancy and durability, or upon the people's response, which is subject to human weakness and sin" (p. 139).

Given this scenario, what is the hope or the benefit of a covenant relationship with God? Why might this benefit support our relationships with other people and with creation?

Extra:

Notice the mention of "covenants" in the plural form. What do these repeated efforts at cutting a deal suggest about God? How are the covenants with Abraham, Noah, Moses and David taken up in the story of Jesus as you understand it?

Discussion: *God's Intention.*

Triads A, B & C are invited to share what each has learned about COVENANT with the larger group. Following that time of sharing, continue in Triads as each group thinks about *the fullest life of community that God intends us to live:*

- Assign to Triad A: The community of Israel and Nehemiah 8:1 – 3; 8
- Assign to Triad B: The community of Jesus' disciples and Matthew 5:17 – 20
- Assign to Triad C: The community of the *Ecclesia* (Churches) and Acts 16:1 – 5

Each Triad is invited to read and reflect upon the passage, and then to fill in the blanks for their respective summary statements:

Triad A:

Nehemiah 8:1 – 3 and verse eight describes a community that gathers around _____, reads and allows for _____.

Triad B:

Matthew 5:17 – 20 suggests a community that gathers around the person of _____, who promises to fulfill _____.

Triad C:

Acts 16:1 – 5 invites us to consider a radical change in community when Jewish believers in Jesus began to worship and serve with _____ believers. The churches in various areas of Asia Minor are _____ and _____.

The Authority of Scripture.

Take a brief break in the discussion and (if possible) set up scene 32 from Franco Zefferrilli's film, *Jesus of Nazareth* (available in DVD). View the scene (or read Luke 4:16 – 30).

Read and Discuss Question 56 & 57 of *The Study Catechism (Full Version)*:

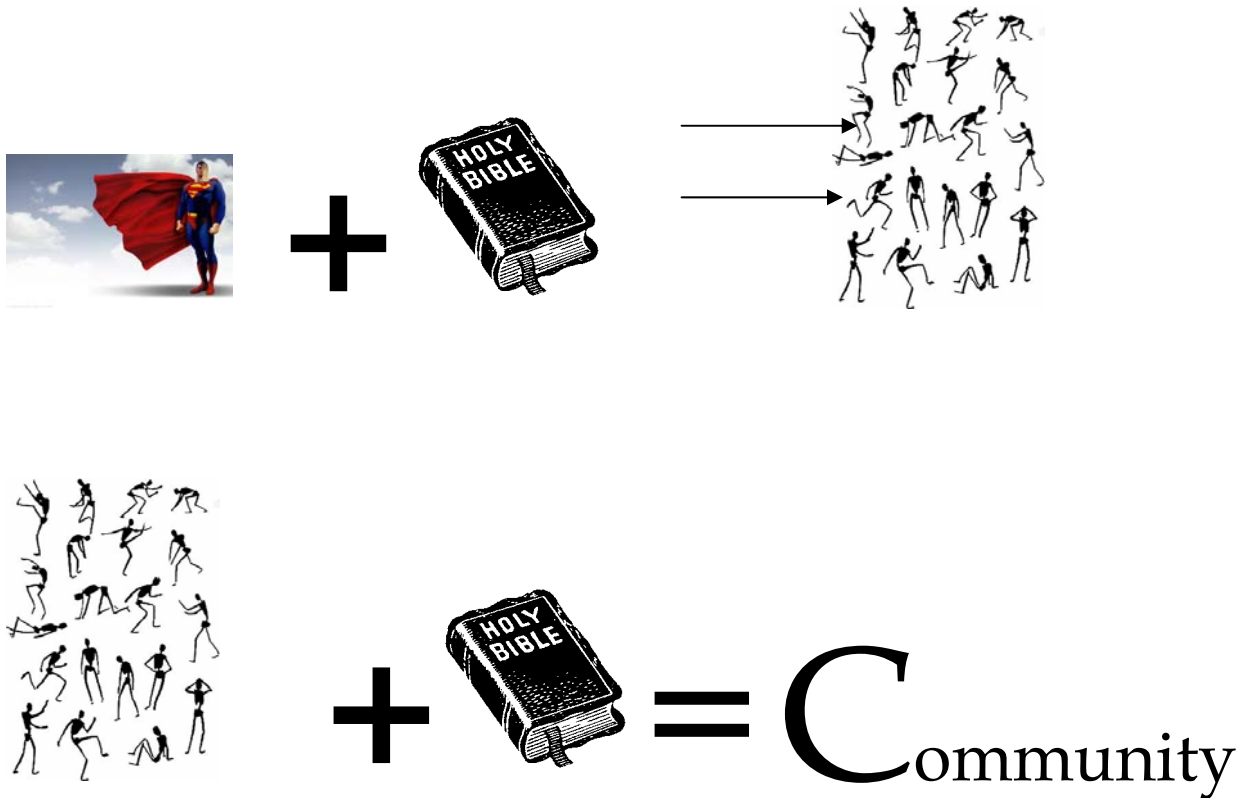
56: What do you mean when you speak of "The Word of God"?

"Jesus Christ as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture is the one Word of God whom we have to hear, and whom we have to trust and obey in life and in death..."

57: Isn't Holy Scripture also the Word of God?

Yes. Holy Scripture is also God's Word because of its content, its function, and its origin. Its central content is Jesus Christ, the living Word. Its basic function is to deepen our love, knowledge and service of him as our Savior and Lord. And its ultimate origin is in the Holy Spirit who spoke through the prophets and apostles, and who inspires us with eager desire for the truths that Scripture contains.

After reviewing the Q & A of *The Study Catechism (Full Version)*, spend the remaining time talking and listening to one another regarding the connection between the Bible and the community that the Bible summons into existence.



If you're stuck, please read this paragraph from Eugene Peterson, *Working The Angles*:

"And the written and printed word of Scripture has become synonymous with the word of God. We assume that if we have it in print we have it, period. Bible equals word of God without discussion and without the faintest realization that to equate the bound book 'Bible' with the 'word of God' would not have been comprehensible to most of our Christian ancestors. There was no individualized 'I' or 'me' in relation to Scripture; it was always 'we' or 'us.' There was not taking a 'stand' on it as if it were a thing, for it was always the occasion of a sounding forth, a speaking out that the community sat *under*..."

Pray.

Help us, as followers of Jesus in Latah Valley, to live the fullest life of community that you intend us to live according the witness of Holy Scripture. When we are confused, give us the courage to seek guidance. When we feel strongly convicted of a position or point of view, give us the humility to wait upon your Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.