

With All My Heart

A GUIDE TO THE
PROFESSION OF FAITH

Donald Van Dyken

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INTRODUCTION

TO TEACHERS

THIS BOOK IS WRITTEN TO ASSIST YOU to prepare Christians for public profession of faith. It is primarily addressed to covenant youth, that is, those who have been baptized as infants and raised within the church, and come to maturity in the faith. With some amendment, however, it can also be used for those converted to the Christian faith, or for those from other churches who should affirm the Reformed faith.

This book has twenty-three lessons and would normally take twenty-three weeks to complete. The first four lessons cover important introductory material. The following nineteen lessons are based on the four questions in the Form for the Public Profession of Faith used by many Reformed churches.

Some churches, however, may prefer to complete a pre-confession class in six to eight weeks. This book is structured to accommodate such a schedule. In the table of contents you will see that the twenty-three lessons are grouped into six sections.

You will find further explanation of the aim of this book in the next section addressed to your students.

TO STUDENTS

This guide is primarily written for covenant youth, those who have been baptized and taught in the covenant community, the church of Jesus Christ. Most of you who open this book have finished a study of the Heidelberg Catechism. Whether the church began your catechetical instruction when you were five or thirteen, when you finished the Heidelberg Catechism your formal training was nearly complete.

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THE CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS OF THE CHURCH

MEMORY:

- 1. Name the three ecumenical creeds of this church.**

The Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed.

- 2. Name the three Reformed confessions of this church.**

The three Reformed confessions of this church are: the Belgic Confession, the

Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. They are often called the “Three Forms of Unity.”

ASSIGNMENT:

Study the introductory surveys of these creeds and confessions in Appendix A of this book.

LESSON DISCUSSION:

We have designed these lessons to help you understand the responsibilities and duties of a mature member of this church. As you consciously identify with this church you must realize that this is a confessing church. Through confessions we join ourselves to the church in history and keep a straight course in the face of various winds of doctrine. In this lesson we will look at what creeds and confessions are and how they relate to the Bible. We will also survey the origins and some of the uses of our creeds.

DEFINING OUR TERMS

We use the words *creeds* and *confessions* when describing the documents the church has written in response to the Word of God. We have three ecumenical creeds and three Reformed confessions. The word *creed* comes from the

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WHAT IS RELIGION?

MEMORY:

1. What is religion?

Religion is man's response to God as God reveals Himself to man in creation and through His redemptive Word (Rom. 1:19-20; John 20:30-31).

2. What response is God looking for?

God looks for a true response of obedient love in all our life (Matt. 22:37-40).

3. Is it possible for us to give this response?

We can give this right and true response only through faith in Jesus Christ, having been born again by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14-17).

LESSON DISCUSSION:

In this chapter we will explore the meaning of religion; first as it is currently defined, and then as the Bible defines it.

A DANGEROUS TOPIC

Many years ago polite society ruled that two topics were forbidden at the dinner table: politics and religion. People found these topics were inflammatory. People got aroused, they became excited, they hurled insults and wine glasses at each other, and dinner was ruined. There was a very good reason these subjects were volatile—they were important to people. Positions on these subjects were dear to people's hearts so opposition or agreement brought a reaction of fear or favor.

What about today? Is religion so flammable a topic today? Would you ignite passions by asking a religious question? Ask a Muslim what he thinks of Jesus, the Son of God. Ask a public university professor of biology to explain his

3

THE REASONS FOR PUBLIC PROFESSION OF FAITH

MEMORY:

1. Why must we confess our faith before men?

The Lord makes clear that He demands public confession of our faith for He said, “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also *confess* before My Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32).

2. Is it not enough that we believe in Christ with our heart?

The Holy Spirit tells us through the Apostle Paul in Romans 10:9, “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

3. Does profession of faith make me a member of the church?

It does not; nothing I do makes me a member of the church. God in Christ made me a member of the church in baptism and profession of faith is my mature response to what God has done and formally marks my commitment to Christ.

ASSIGNMENT:

Read Psalm 116, 1 Timothy 6:11-16.

LESSON DISCUSSION:

Why should anyone, why should you, make profession of faith? In this discussion we will answer by pointing out four relationships that press us into making a public profession of faith. As we take up this very important question of the “why” of profession of faith, we first should discard some wrong answers.

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WHEN TO MAKE PROFESSION OF FAITH

MEMORY:

1. How does Christ challenge His people?

Christ asks us, Who do you say that I am?
(Matt. 16:15).

2. What is required of me that I may make public profession of my faith before Christ's church?

I must believe with all my heart in the Lord Jesus Christ, I must be able to give a mature account of my faith, and I must show that I

am able to take full responsibility for a walk of faithful obedience before the Lord.

3. Why should I want to make profession of faith as soon as possible?

I should want to reach maturity of faith and to express it by taking the body and blood of Christ as my own.

4. How can I know when I am ready to make public profession of faith?

God has not left me to decide on my own, but has appointed parents, elders, and minister to judge the maturity of my faith and life.

ASSIGNMENT:

Hebrews 5:12-14; Heidelberg Catechism, LD 12; Matthew 16:13-20.

LESSON DISCUSSION:

By making public profession of faith you announce that you have reached covenant maturity; you are ready to take your place as an active adult member of the church. Remember, though, that this is first of all a profession of **faith**; you are saying that you believe. If you have serious trouble believing, you must never say that you do believe. At the same time you should be aware that if you do not believe you

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THE OBJECTIVE BASIS OF OUR FAITH

“Do you heartily believe the doctrine contained in the Old and the New Testament...?”

MEMORY:

1. What is meant by “the basis of our faith?”

Faith is placing our confidence and trust in someone that results in a relationship of love and obedience. Where we place our faith is its basis, and that basis must be in our Triune God.

2. How can we have faith in God?

God commands us to have faith in Him because He has included us in the Covenant of Grace, makes Himself known to us in creation and in His Word, and promises His Spirit to create faith within us.

ASSIGNMENT:

Read John 1:1-18, Hebrews 1:1-4, 1 John 1:1-4; Belgic Confession, Arts. 2-4.

LESSON DISCUSSION:

In this lesson we will begin to look carefully at what we believe and why. We will begin by asking ourselves what we mean by faith, and then go on to examine where our faith is placed, where it rests, and what is its foundation or basis. Is the faith we will profess subjectively or objectively based, that is, do we find assurance in something we find in ourselves or outside of ourselves? Are there different kinds of truth?

FAITH: BLIND OR SEEING?

When considering faith some people make the mistake of thinking it has little to do with reason, evidence, or reality. Some think faith belongs exclusively to religion and has nothing to