

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."

2. Latah Listens —

to the stories of people near and far and especially to God's Story through them.

Focus Areas:

- Crucial Story-Themes In The Bible
- Creeds & Confessions
- Challenges From The Outside

Ice Breakers:

Do A Little 'Whisper Down The Lane' Exercise.

Have One Person Whisper A Full Declarative Sentence Which Includes Three of These:

His/Her Parents' Names. Dream Vacation Destinations. Favorite Hobbies. Jobs Held Over The Last Ten Years. Make of First Car. Last Time You Said, I Love You. Movies Starring Tom Hanks.

Read.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord our God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates..." (Deuteronomy 6:4–9, NRSV).

Review.

How does the command, "Hear," relate to the activities and to the relationships which are signified in the passage? Why might hearing be favored over seeing?

Reflect.

What connections are there between the phrase "Hear, O Israel" and what Jesus often says, following a parable, "Let anyone with ears to hear, listen"?

Consider the recurring pattern in Revelation 2:7;11,17 & 29: "Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches..." Does that indicate a dramatic *change* in the conversation or a *continuation* of what God wanted Israel to hear in Deuteronomy?

Latah Valley Presbyterian Church listens for certain themes or story-patterns as we read the Bible and as we pay attention to the various Creeds and Confessions that deliberate on the Bible's essential message. We also maintain that each person we encounter has "a story" that may be, and indeed must be, heard, if we are to truly participate in God's efforts to bring about a happy ending.

Story-Theme Exercises.

List the following themes and invite each person to rank them in order of importance (not necessarily in chronological order):

- _____ Creation of The Cosmos.
- _____ Blessing of Abraham.
- _____ Exodus From Egypt
- _____ Sinai Revelation: Ten Commandments
- _____ Establishment of Israel As Sovereign Nation
- _____ Construction of The Temple
- _____ Exile: Deportation To Babylon
- _____ Return From Exile Under King Cyrus of Persia
- _____ The Story of Jesus' Birth
- _____ The Miracles of Jesus
- _____ The Sermon On The Mount
- _____ The Story of Jesus' Death and Resurrection
- _____ The Rise and Growth of the Early Church
- _____ The New Heaven and New Earth
- _____ Other: [Name An Important Theme Not Mentioned Above]

Divide into triads, or smaller groups of three, and invite each member to share her/his top five. Discuss briefly why certain themes were chosen above others and name one theme of which all members of the triad have never heard, or about which the triad would like to learn more.

Triad A: Using a Bible Concordance as well as other provided reference materials, discover one or more passages in the Bible which may pertain to the theme for which group members had a question. Identify them in writing below.

Triad B: Read Psalm 136:1 – 26. To which themes does this text speak? What is the consistent refrain that we are encouraged to offer?

Triad C: Read Psalm 137 and Isaiah 65:17 – 25. What themes are represented in each passage? What do the specific details suggest about our participation in God's Story?

Discussion: *Creeds & Confessions*.

Triads A, B & C are invited to share what each has learned about the various STORY-THEMES in the Bible. Following that time of sharing, continue in Triads as each group thinks about the ways these themes are advanced and perhaps enhanced in each Creed or Confession below:

- Assign to Triad A: *The Nicene Creed*
- Assign to Triad B: *The Apostles' Creed*
- Assign to Triad C: *A Brief Statement of Faith*

Each triad is invited to read and reflect upon the passages of the following Confessions:

The Scot's Confession – Chapter V:

We must surely believe that God preserved, instructed, multiplied, honored, adorned and called from death to life his Kirk in all ages since Adam until the coming of Christ Jesus in the flesh. For he called Abraham from his father's country, instructed him and multiplied his see; he marvelously preserved him and more marvelously deliver his seed from the bondage and tyranny of Pharoah; to them he gave his laws, constitutions, and ceremonies; to them he gave the land of Canaan; after he had given them judges and afterwards Saul, he gave David to be king, to whom he gave promise that of the fruit of his loins should one sit forever upon his royal throne. To this same people from time to time he sent prophets, to recall them to the right way of their God, from which sometimes they strayed by idolatry. And although, because of their stubborn contempt for righteousness he was compelled to give them into the hands of their enemies, as had previously been threatened by the mouth of Moses, so that the holy city was destroyed, the temple burned with fire and the whole land desolate for seventy years, yet in mercy he restored them again to Jerusalem, where the city and temple were rebuilt, and they endured against all temptations and assaults of Satan till the Messiah came according to the promise.

The Confession of 1967 – from Section B.

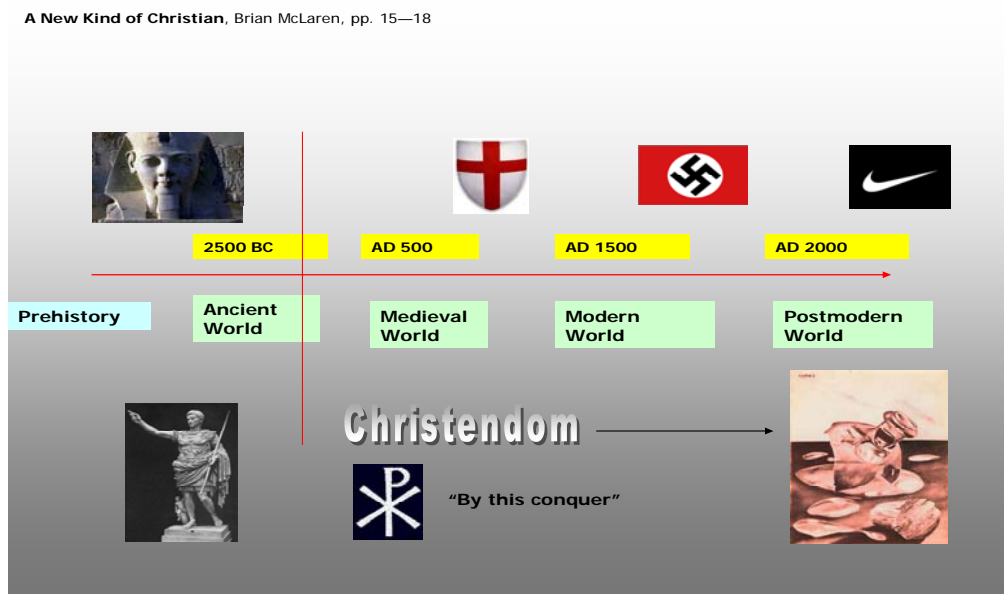
God expressed his love for all mankind through Israel, whom he chose to be his covenant people to serve him in love and faithfulness. When Israel was unfaithful, he disciplined the nation with his judgments and maintained his cause through prophets, priests, teachers, and true believers. These witnesses called all Israelites to a destiny in which they would serve God faithfully and become a light to the nations. The same witnesses proclaimed the coming of a new age, and a true servant of God in whom God's purpose for Israel and for mankind would be realized.

How does each of these excerpts continue the themes we discussed earlier?

What are the similarities and the differences between the *Scot's Confession*, written in 1560, and the *Confession of 1967*?

Challenges From The Outside.

In considering the timeline below, name at least three challenges to the Christian world-view:



1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Read what Lesslie Newbigin writes in *The Open Secret*. Do you agree? Why? Or why not?

Today the situation is different. The question, 'What right do you have to preach to us?' is one that is asked with a confidence and a vehemence unusual fifty years ago. To this question it is useless to answer by quoting the Great Commission or other texts of Scripture. Why should a Hindu accept the authority of the Christian Scriptures? It is useless to point to the achievements of Christianity in human history; the record is too ambiguous for that. Nor is it enough to speak of being constrained by love, for what has to be shown is that it is truly a work of love to call men and women out of their traditional allegiances, and to invite them to accept – with all the cost involved – the yoke of obedience to Christ (p. 12).

The Christian who enters into dialogue on the basis of his or her own 'confession' must recognize that others will do the same... A confession of faith is the starting point for their truth-seeking. A person meets his or her partner with the expectation and hope of hearing more of truth, but inevitably will seek to grasp the new truth by means of those ways of thinking and judging and valuing that he or she has already learned and tested (p. 168).

Pray.

Allow us to hear, O God. Give us ears and hearts to listen for your story in the Bible, in the Creeds & Confessions, but also in the voices of so many others with whom we interact. Keep the dialogue open for ourselves and for others. Deliver us from being overly defensive and perhaps from being too agreeable. In Jesus' name. Amen.