

# TINY GROUPS

## HEIDELBERG CATECHISM Q&A 1

Adapted from

Sam Gutierrez and Sandy Swarzenruber, "The Big Question: Growing Spiritually with Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 1" (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2017)



## ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

“What is your only comfort in life and in death?” That’s a powerful question. It’s a question whose relevance only increases as the world around us becomes more complex.

*The Big Question* is a new kind of catechism-based course that incorporates faith formation practices into the exploration of doctrine, so that heart and head work together as young people discover their “only comfort.” These four sessions are designed to encourage people to examine and strengthen their faith using Q&A 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism as a guide.

### COURSE SETTING

These sessions have been designed for use in tiny small groups of three people. One person should be the leader. Ideally, this person will have already been a participant in a tiny small group using this same curriculum. The leader and the two participants should agree on a time and place where they can meet for about an hour four times. The participants can be encouraged to become leaders of a group afterwards if they find the course beneficial.

### SESSION FORMAT

Sessions are designed to run for about an hour.

**Opening Discussion** (5 minutes): Discuss which of the take-home Bible readings were most meaningful and why. Read Q&A 1 together before transitioning to the Catechism Exploration.

**Catechism Exploration** (30 minutes): For tiny small groups, it’s recommended that you watch a video together (on a phone or computer) and talk through some discussion questions. There are options for other activities, too.

**Faith Stories** (25 minutes): It’s important to include time to share brief stories of how the session theme impacted you in real life. Each group member should be encouraged to prepare for this by thinking through what story they will tell the others each week. Telling and hearing faith

stories is one of the best ways to encourage each other on our faith journey.

**Take-Home:** For each session we've provided a take-home sheet with thought/discussion questions, Scripture passages, and a spiritual practice to guide individual devotional times during the week. You can print these take-home sheets or send participants a link to them.

## **MATERIALS NEEDED**

We've tried to keep things simple, so the only materials required are this outline, pens and paper for the first session, and a phone or computer connected to the internet to watch the videos.

If you are reading this guide electronically on your internet-connected device, you can click on the links in the guide. If you are using a paper copy of this guide, you can type the web addresses into your phone or computer. You can also try opening your device's camera app and pointing it at the square symbols like the one to the right (called a QR code). Your device might allow you to follow the links that way. You can try it with the QR code to the right. Your device should prompt you to follow a link to a Google search. (If you do not have access to the internet for the videos, you can skip that portion of the sessions and choose an activity from the list of optional activities.)



One thing you will need for each session is the text of Q&A 1 for everyone to see. You can print out the next page so that everyone can see it during each session.

# HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

## QUESTION AND ANSWER 1

### QUESTION:

What is your only comfort in life and in death?

### ANSWER:

#### Session 1

That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death--to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

#### Session 2

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.

#### Session 3

He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

#### Session 4

Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

## TIPS FOR LEADERS

Here's some good news: you don't need to be a catechism expert to lead these sessions. Today's effective group leader is a fellow explorer, not a "sage on the stage." The approach in these sessions is active and participatory, not lecture-based.

Allow yourself to be vulnerable. If you struggle with one of the ideas in these sessions, don't be afraid to say so. Invite people to wrestle with tough questions just as you do. Tell your own faith stories when appropriate, and invite others to share their stories as well.

- If you're not a pastor, feel free to call your pastor in for help if difficult theological questions arise during discussion. And it's always OK to answer by saying, "That's a really good question, and I don't know the answer. Let me do some digging, and we'll talk more in our next session."
- There are some activity options in each session. You can do what is recommended, or choose something that fits your available time and the learning styles of the group. If you'd like to learn more about identifying the different learning styles of the people in your group, check out this [learning styles guide and quiz](https://tinyurl.com/jno39s9) (tinyurl.com/jno39s9).
- [Several versions](https://tinyurl.com/y7p3ghxr) (tinyurl.com/y7p3ghxr) of the Heidelberg Catechism are available from Faith Alive if you'd like to purchase copies. If you're a member of a Christian Reformed church, you can access a digital version free in the CRC's Digital Library at [library.crcna.org](https://library.crcna.org)—just follow the easy account setup instructions.



## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CATECHISM

- Read the Khan Academy article [An Introduction to the Protestant Reformation](https://tinyurl.com/zjo6fa7) (tinyurl.com/zjo6fa7) for an excellent summary of the historical background to the Heidelberg Catechism. You might also consider sending this link to group members before the first session.
- For a slightly irreverent but informative video history of the Protestant Reformation, view this [Crash Course video](https://tinyurl.com/n9ucwdf) (tinyurl.com/n9ucwdf).
- For a brief historical overview of the catechism itself, read [this summary](https://crcna.org/sites/default/files/the_big_question_hc.pdf) (crcna.org/sites/default/files/the\_big\_question\_hc.pdf)



## MORE RECOMMENDED READING

If you're looking for some in-depth background to the Heidelberg Catechism, check out these resources:

- Body and Soul: Reclaiming the Heidelberg Catechism by M. Craig Barnes
- Comfort and Joy: A Study of the Heidelberg Catechism by Andrew Kuyvenhoven
- Our Only Comfort: A Comprehensive Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism by Fred Klooster
- Catecismo de Heidelberg — Una explicación by Herman Hofman
- The Good News We Almost Forgot by Kevin DeYoung. And check out the [awesome rap](https://tinyurl.com/yawqcr6e) (tinyurl.com/yawqcr6e) that Curt "Voice" Allen wrote about this book.



## OTHER CATECHISM COURSES

If you'd like to go farther in catechism study with your group, here are some other options to consider:

- HC & Me by Bob Rozema, a two-year classic course on the Heidelberg Catechism for teens
- The New City Catechism, with introduction by Tim Keller. Visit [newcitycatechism.com](http://newcitycatechism.com) for more information. This also includes a simplified catechism for young children.



## SESSION 1: WHAT IS YOUR ONLY COMFORT

### SESSION FOCUS

This session explores the ultimate comfort that we find only in Jesus Christ.

### CATECHISM FOCUS

**Q&A 1:** Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death? **A. That I am not my own, but belong— body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.**

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- The text of Q&A 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism (see page 3). You'll need this for all four sessions.
- Paper and pen for each person.
- A phone or computer connected to the internet to watch a video.

### NOTE FOR LEADERS

Your group members have doubts and fears. Perhaps they don't know Jesus. Remember that your job is not to convince them to intellectually assent to the truths presented in this lesson. It's to present the truths and "prepare the ground" for the Holy Spirit to work in their hearts.

## OPENING DISCUSSION

### 5 Minutes

Introduce this study by explaining that over the next four sessions, you're going to explore a question that gets at the very heart of our beliefs about God, salvation, and our ultimate purpose in life. It's a question that's simple but very deep at the same time. The question is this: "What is your only comfort in life and in death?"

The Heidelberg Catechism is a teaching tool that Christians have used for hundreds of years. It uses questions and answers to explore the deep truths of

the Christian faith. This question is the very first question the catechism asks us.

And do you know what? The way we live out our answer to this question can change our lives completely.

### **READ Q&A 1**

Read Question and Answer 1 together all the way through. You can read in unison, or each take a sentence. It is up to you.

## **CATECHISM EXPLORATION**

**30 Minutes**

### **VIDEO (RECOMMENDED)**

Watch this brief [video](https://tinyurl.com/5swuope) (tinyurl.com/5swuope) together.



- How did Bethany experience God’s comfort?
- How did the assurance that God will never leave her affect Bethany’s life?
- Have you ever had a similar experience where you felt God’s comfort very clearly?

### **DISCUSSION (RECOMMENDED)**

- I wonder why the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism made this the opening question? Is that how you would have started a tool designed to teach people about the Christian faith? Why or why not?
- “Belong”—what does this word mean to you? Remember a time when you felt like you really belonged, and share that experience if you’re willing. (Leader, for more about the importance of belonging in faith formation, read this article by Laura Keeley and Robert Keeley.)
- Make of a list of what you think are the three most important words in Q&A 1.
- Why did you choose those words? Share your thoughts with the group.

## ACTIVITIES (OPTIONAL)

- Imagine that you were hired by a marketing firm to communicate this first part of Q&A 1 on a freeway billboard. Drivers only have a few seconds to glance at it as they speed by, and they won't be able to read more than a few words. What key image(s) or words would you use to convey the main idea or feeling behind Q&A 1?
- Rewrite the first part of Q&A 1 in the form of a haiku using this syllable pattern for the lines: 5, 7, 5, 7, 7 (31 syllables total). Example:
 

The most important (5)  
thing that anyone could know (7)  
is summed up like this: (5)  
friend, no matter what happens—(7)  
God is love, and you are his. (7)
- Imagine that you had to adapt Q&A 1 to someone in a specific situation: someone sick at the hospital, a couple getting married, someone in prison, after winning/losing a championship game, getting a rejection letter from a college, breaking up with a boyfriend/girlfriend, getting cut from a sports team or play, getting an “F” on a test. Write a letter to that person. Acknowledge their situation and then write some encouraging words based on Q&A 1.

## FAITH STORIES

### 25 Minutes

Several days before this session, ask the participants to think about a time when belonging to Jesus has comforted them. Invite them to share their stories now, if they would like. It might help if you, as the leader, begin.

## TAKE HOME

[Click here](http://crcna.org/sites/default/files/the_big_question_handout_1.pdf) (crcna.org/sites/default/files/the\_big\_question\_handout\_1.pdf) for a link to today's take-home sheet. Feel free to print out the sheet for group participants or send the link in a text or email.



## SCRIPTURE PASSAGES TO MEDITATE ON AND DISCUSS IN THE COMING WEEK:

Choose one of these passages to ponder each day of the coming week. Read each slowly, letting it sink into your spirit deeply.

- **Psalm 23:4:** Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
- **Psalm 119:50:** My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life.
- **Isaiah 49:13:** Shout for joy, you heavens; rejoice, you earth; burst into song, you mountains! For the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.
- **Isaiah 51:12:** “I, even I, am he who comforts you.”
- **Matthew 5:4:** “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”
- **2 Corinthians 1:5:** For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.

## QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT IN THE COMING WEEK:

- Do you experience the comfort of belonging to Jesus in your everyday life? If so, how?
- The people, places, and things that God created do often bring us comfort. But can we rely on them to be our only comfort? Why or why not?
- Do you fear death? Why or why not? n What does it mean to you that your body belongs to Jesus?
- What does it mean that your soul belongs to Jesus? n Do you have a story about how belonging to Jesus has comforted you? Who might be blessed by hearing that story?

## THIS WEEK’S SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Every morning in the coming week, try using the song “Psalm 62: My Soul Finds Rest in God Alone” for morning devotional time. You’ll find a video of Aaron Keyes leading the singing of [this song](https://tinyurl.com/aaronkeyessong) at [tinyurl.com/aaronkeyessong](https://tinyurl.com/aaronkeyessong). Then pray that God would help your soul rest in him.



## SESSION 2: FULLY PAID AND SET FREE

### SESSION FOCUS

Jesus' sacrifice means that we are truly free.

### CATECHISM FOCUS

**Q&A 1:** “He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.”

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- The text of Q&A 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism (see page 3). You'll need this for all four sessions.
- A phone or computer connected to the internet to watch a video.

### NOTE FOR LEADERS

The idea that we must do or be certain things to “cement” our salvation is a persistent one. Pray that your group members will leave this session amazed by God's free gift of salvation through Jesus' sacrifice.

## OPENING DISCUSSION

### 5 Minutes

Look back at the recommended Bible verses from the previous lesson's Take-Home sheet. Discuss which of the readings was most meaningful and why.

### READ Q&A 1

Read Question and Answer 1 together all the way through. You can read in unison, or each take a sentence. It is up to you. Point out that the focus of this session is on this line: **“He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.”**

# CATECHISM EXPLORATION

30 Minutes

## VIDEO (RECOMMENDED)

Watch [this video](https://iamsecond.com/struggles/prison) from the website “I Am Second” (iamsecond.com/struggles/prison).



- How did James experience the freedom that Christ brings? What is the connection between freedom and surrender?
- What does it mean that Jesus fully paid for all of his sins?

## DISCUSSION (RECOMMENDED)

- Many people in prison have heard the good news and given their lives to Christ. How might the word “freedom” take on a new meaning to those who may live the rest of their lives behind bars?
- We live in an addictive society. Drugs, alcohol, phones, video games, food, sugar, caffeine, approval, achievement, being busy, favorite ways of thinking or feeling, etc. What would it look like to be “free” from an addiction you might have? How would people know you’re free?
- Have you ever owed someone money? How much? How does it make you feel when you hear the words “fully paid for all my sins”?
- Tyranny is defined as “cruel or oppressive government or rule.” What does the phrase “the tyranny of the devil” mean to you? Are there areas of your life or the lives of people you care about where you see evidence of the oppressive rule of evil?

## ACTIVITIES (OPTIONAL)

- Pretend that you are writing a letter to someone in prison. Write a short but encouraging note about true freedom in Christ and how the person might experience that freedom while behind bars.
- The freedom Christ brings sets us free to serve. Make a list of practical ways you could serve someone this week. (Offer to wash the dishes, clean out the car, help a friend with homework, or whatever.) Be creative but practical. You have one minute to make your list.

- Imagine communicating this lesson’s key concepts to a group of people who don’t understand English. Instead of using words, create silent gestures to communicate these key truths: Christ has fully paid your debt. Christ died for all your sins. Christ’s death brings true freedom. Christ saves you by laying down his life. Christ loves you.
- Try writing a short poem that summarizes what you’ve learned in this lesson. Play around with a “lanturne”—a medieval Japanese poetry form consisting of lines with a syllable count of 1, 2, 3, 4, 1. The poem is centered and resembles an oil lantern (hence the name “lanturne”).

Here’s an example:

sin (1)  
 fully paid (2)  
 by Christ’s blood (3)  
 for all my sins— (4)  
 Love! (1)

## FAITH STORIES

### 25 Minutes

Several days before this session, ask the participants to think about how Jesus has freed or could free them from something that oppresses them. Invite them to share their stories now. It might help if you, as the leader, begin.

## TAKE-HOME

[Click here](http://crcna.org/sites/default/files/the_big_question_handout_2.pdf) (crcna.org/sites/default/files/the\_big\_question\_handout\_2.pdf) for a link to today’s take-home sheet. Feel free to print out the sheet for group participants or send the link in a text or email.



## SCRIPTURE PASSAGES TO MEDITATE ON AND DISCUSS IN THE COMING WEEK:

Choose one of these passages to ponder each day of the coming week. Read each slowly, letting it sink into your spirit deeply.

- **1 Timothy 2:5-6:** There is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

- **1 Peter 1:18-19:** For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed . . . but with the precious blood of Christ.
- **1 Corinthians 6:19-20:** Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.
- **1 John 2:1-2:** But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.
- **Ephesians 5:2:** Walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a . . . sacrifice to God.
- **Hebrews 10:10:** We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

### QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT IN THE COMING WEEK:

- How does it make you feel to know that Jesus willingly gave his life for you?
- What does it mean to you that Jesus “bought” and “paid for” you?
- Do you treat your body as if it belongs to you, or as if it belongs to Jesus?
- Has anybody ever made a big sacrifice for you? What was it, and how did it affect you? n In what specific ways has Jesus’ sacrifice set you free?
- Do you feel like you have been “made holy”—set apart and dedicated to God—by what Jesus did? Why or why not?

### THIS WEEK’S SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Carry a coin with you wherever you go this week to remind you that you were “bought” by Jesus. Put it in a place where you’ll see or feel it often—your pants pocket, your shoe. Or, if you’re crafty, follow [these instructions](https://tinyurl.com/y9tsggtx) (tinyurl.com/y9tsggtx) to make a wire-wrapped coin pendant you can wear around your neck this week. Just substitute a coin for the stone in the instructions.



## SESSION 3: ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER

### SESSION FOCUS

Since God made us and paid for us with his own Son's blood, we can trust that God cares for us deeply when we struggle and experience pain. Our joys and sorrows are lived in the palm of God's good and caring hand.

### CATECHISM FOCUS

**Q&A 1:** "He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation."

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- The text of Q&A 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism (see page 3). You'll need this for all four sessions.
- A phone or computer connected to the internet to watch a video.

### NOTE FOR LEADERS

This part of Q&A 1 can raise some complicated issues about the will of God and the problem of evil. Don't avoid those discussions, but keep pointing group members back to the fact that God loves us and we can trust in his care for us even when life is painful or difficult. Jesus calls us to trust him and to follow him, and we don't have to have all the answers to our tough questions to do that. If you'd like to explore the problem of evil in depth before this session, Tim Keller devotes an excellent chapter to it in his book *The Reason for God*.

## OPENING DISCUSSION

### 5 Minutes

Look back at the recommended Bible verses from the previous lesson's Take-Home sheet. Discuss which of the readings was most meaningful and why.

## READ Q&A 1

Read Question and Answer 1 together all the way through. You can read in unison, or each take a sentence. It is up to you. Point out that the focus of this session is on this line: **“He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.”**

Explain that this echoes what Paul writes in Romans 8:28: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

## CATECHISM EXPLORATION

30 Minutes

### VIDEO (RECOMMENDED)

Watch and discuss [a video](#) about the story of Job from the folks at The Bible Project called “Wisdom Series: Job.” ([youtu.be/GswSg2ohqmA](https://youtu.be/GswSg2ohqmA))



### DISCUSSION (RECOMMENDED)

- Life can sometimes feel like a puzzle: we experience pieces that don’t seem to fit. Have you ever experienced something difficult or painful that didn’t make sense to you? Do you have a sense of how God might have used that experience for your salvation?
- Sometimes people misunderstand the part about “God’s will,” and they end up attributing tragic events to God. What is the difference between God “causing” and God “allowing”? What does it mean for God to be involved in our lives without controlling every single aspect?
- Why does God allow evil? Why does God allow us to experience sadness and pain? Psalm 88 was written by someone in deep despair. Read it aloud and talk about how Romans 8:28 relates to this lament.
- What does it look like to radically trust in God’s care and provision and to live in a world filled with pain, war, and trauma?

## ACTIVITIES (OPTIONAL)

- Create a timeline of your life and mark some of the occasions when God was opening a door for you, when you could sense God’s provision in your life, or when God carried you through difficult times. Share your timeline with the group.
- Write a prayer. Express to God how difficult it is to live in this broken world. Express to him your trust, but be honest about your pain too and feel free to express your confusion about how God loves us and allows evil at the same time. Share your prayer or parts of your prayer with the group.
- Try putting what you learned this week into a simple poetic form by writing a cinquain (5 line poem). The structure goes like this: the first line is one word, the second line uses two adjectives, the third line has three words with “ing” at the end, the fourth line uses four words that make a complete sentence, and the fifth line is one word that expands upon the first word. Here’s an example:

God  
 good, trustworthy  
 protecting, allowing, holding  
 working in all things  
 Father.

## FAITH STORIES

### 25 Minutes

Several days before this session, ask the participants to think about a time when they felt God’s loving care very deeply. Invite them to share their stories now. It might help if you, as the leader, begin.

## TAKE-HOME

[Click here](http://crcna.org/sites/default/files/the_big_question_handout_3.pdf) (crcna.org/sites/default/files/the\_big\_question\_handout\_3.pdf) for a link to today’s take-home sheet. Feel free to print out the sheet for group participants or send the link in a text or email.



## **SCRIPTURE PASSAGES TO MEDITATE ON AND DISCUSS IN THE COMING WEEK:**

Choose one of these passages to ponder each day of the coming week. Read each slowly, letting it sink into your spirit deeply.

- Isaiah 43:1: But now, this is what the Lord says. . . . “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.”
- Zephaniah 3:17: “The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing” (NIV, 1984).
- John 10:27-28: “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.”
- 2 Thessalonians 3:3: The Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.
- Matthew 10:29-31: “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”
- Psalm 138:7: Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life. You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes; with your right hand you save me.

## **QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT IN THE COMING WEEK:**

- When you’re afraid or in trouble, does it help you to know that God cares deeply for you?
- Do you believe that God takes great delight in you? n What does it mean to you to hear God’s voice? n What does it mean to you that God will “protect you from the evil one”?
- Do you believe that “even the very hairs of your head are all numbered” in God’s eyes? How does that help your faith?
- Do you feel God with you when you “walk in the midst of trouble?”

**THIS WEEK'S SPIRITUAL PRACTICE**

Watch [this video](https://tinyurl.com/pianodad): (tinyurl.com/pianodad). As you do, imagine yourself as the baby and God as the father who is holding you and lovingly caring for you. Then draw a picture of God holding the whole world in his hands. Meditate on it every day this week. Allow yourself to affirm God's involvement and provision without needing to know the details of how it all works together.



## SESSION 4: WILLING AND READY

### SESSION FOCUS

Belonging to Jesus “body and soul” shapes both our eternal life and our daily earthly life.

### CATECHISM FOCUS

**Q&A 1:** “Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.”

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- The text of Q&A 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism (see page 3). You’ll need this for all four sessions.
- A phone or computer connected to the internet to watch a video.

## OPENING DISCUSSION

### 5 Minutes

Look back at the recommended Bible verses from the previous lesson’s Take-Home sheet. Discuss which of the readings was most meaningful and why.

### READ Q&A 1

Read Question and Answer 1 together all the way through. You can read in unison, or each take a sentence. It is up to you. Point out that the focus of this session is on this line: **“Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.”**

## CATECHISM EXPLORATION

30 Minutes

### VIDEO (RECOMMENDED)

Watch this [I Am Second](http://iamsecond.com/struggles/purpose-in-life) (iamsecond.com/struggles/purpose-in-life) video of baseball player David Murphy sharing his desire to serve and live for God. Talk about how our lives can be our testimony of faith. What does that look like? Is it different for everybody? Do you know someone in your church or community who lives their life as a testimony? How can you tell?



### DISCUSSION (RECOMMENDED)

- If you had to circle the three most important words from this section of Q&A 1, which ones would you choose and why?
- What does it mean to be willing to live for God? What does it mean to be ready? How are these words different? Why are they both important?
- “Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life. . . .” How? Is this a feeling? A quiet knowing? An audible voice? A Scripture passage? Head knowledge? The voice of a friend, parent, or mentor?
- If you woke up tomorrow and decided to live every minute of your life for God, how would your friends and family know? What would be different? Give concrete ways of living, thinking, and speaking differently.
- Have you ever done something half-heartedly? What was it? What was the outcome? Why use the word “whole” when referring to the heart?
- In these four sessions we’ve talked about the deep comfort that comes from knowing that we belong to Jesus, whose sacrifice sets us free from the power of sin and evil and causes us to live grateful lives of service. Share any “aha moments” or new insights that you’ve experienced.

### ACTIVITIES (OPTIONAL)

- Here’s a contemplative “breath prayer” activity you can do as a group.  
Place your hand over your heart. For one minute, do the following, taking slow deep breaths:

As you breathe in, think to yourself: I will rest . . .  
 As you breathe out, think to yourself: . . . in God's love

For the next minute, use this breath prayer:

Breathe in: My whole heart . . .

Breathe out: . . . beats for God

For the next minute, create your own breath prayer:

Breathe in:

Breathe out:

If you're comfortable sharing your breath prayer with the group, do so.

- Imagine you were going to hire a plane to fly with a banner that summarizes this portion of Q&A 1. What message would you want people to read? Remember it would have to fit on a banner, so be concise and clear.
- Process and integrate this week's lesson by writing a simple poem called a clarity pyramid. Its structure goes like this: The first triplet has 1, 2, 3 syllables. The first word is the title of the poem and is in all caps. The second and third words clarify the first word. The second triplet has 5, 6, 7 syllables. Its design is based around a life event which expands the first line. The last line is 8 syllables and is in quotations and defines the first word. Here's a sample about the cross:

CROSS (1)

Rugged (2)

Solid beam (3)

Roman soldiers drive (5)

spikes of iron into (6)

hands and feet of criminals (7)

"Heaven's redemptive instrument" (8)

- When we feel afraid and unsure, we tend to look down at the ground. Practice feeling the calm and confidence of God's love by standing and raising your head and your eyes toward heaven (raise your hands too if you like). Hold this pose and feel the feelings that come into your body as you embody this stance. Have someone slowly read out loud this week's section of Q&A 1: "Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him."

- Have someone else say a prayer on behalf of the group, thanking God for his grace and for the fact that we can live for him with purpose and passion. Share with the group what this experience was like for you..

## FAITH STORIES

### 25 Minutes

Several days before this session, ask the participants to think about a time when they realized that they wanted to dedicate their life to serving God. Invite them to share their stories now. It might help if you, as the leader, begin.

## TAKE-HOME

[Click here](http://crcna.org/sites/default/files/the_big_question_handout_4.pdf) (crcna.org/sites/default/files/the\_big\_question\_handout\_4.pdf) for a link to today's take-home sheet. Feel free to print out the sheet for group participants or send the link in a text or email.



## SCRIPTURE PASSAGES TO MEDITATE ON AND DISCUSS IN THE COMING WEEK:

Choose one of these passages to ponder each day of the coming week. Read each slowly, letting it sink into your spirit deeply.

- 2 Corinthians 5:15: And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.
- Colossians 3:23: Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.
- Philippians 4:13: I can do all this through him who gives me strength.
- Galatians 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.
- Romans 6:4: We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.
- 1 John 2:5-6: This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

**QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT IN THE COMING WEEK:**

- Do you live your life for Jesus, for yourself, or for others?
- Do you do the work God gives you “with all your heart”?
- In what areas of life might you need to ask for God to strengthen you?
- What does being “crucified with Christ” mean?
- If you have been baptized, what does that mean to you?
- What types of situations give you a desire to make a difference in the name of Jesus?

**THIS WEEK’S SPIRITUAL PRACTICE**

“Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life— and place it before God as an offering” (Romans 12:1, *The Message*). For an entire weekday, track how you spend your time. Write down how much time you spend sleeping, getting ready in the morning, going to school or working, eating, watching TV or gaming, reading, exercising, and more. The next day, take a look at your list. What patterns do you notice? How do you feel about your choices? Are there any changes that you’re “willing and ready” to make?