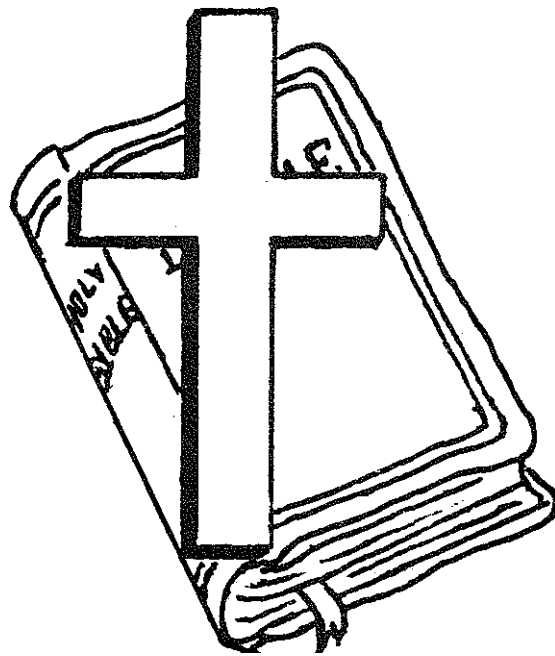


# A WOMAN LOOKS AT THE CONFESSION OF FAITH



An Introductory Study

TEACHER'S SUPPLEMENT

## Supplement for teachers of "Woman Looks at the Confession of Faith"

A personal word from the author to those who will be teaching the study guide.

The study guide, "A Woman Looks at the Confession of Faith," was written at the suggestion of some ministers who felt that women should undertake a study of the doctrines of Scripture as set forth in the Westminster Standards: the Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. Therefore chapters one through eleven of the Confession are included in this, the first of a two-part series with an introduction to the Confession serving as chapter one,

Each woman should have her own study guide. Ideally, and to be encouraged by you, she should have worked the lesson at home, filling in all the questions and blanks possible before you teach.

You should feel challenged and encouraged, not threatened or hindered, that each person in your group has the same material you do. Remember, no one will spend as much time preparing as you. Necessary, of course, is a copy of the Scripture (King James is used unless otherwise noted) and of the Standards, Beside the Bible and Standards you should have one or two, at least, good reformed books dealing with doctrine, Refer to the bibliography in the back of the study guide for suggestions. There are others not listed and perhaps your minister has a favorite he would offer. If you are unable to secure the books you desire, call the CEP Bookstore 1-800-283-1357. The guide itself comes from the Committee for Christian Education and Publications of the Presbyterian Church in America, 1700 N. Brown Road, Suite 102, Lawrenceville, Georgia 30043.

I have been asked by several to write a few suggestions for the presentation of this material. I will try to make this brief.

### General Suggestions:

Be convinced of the truth of the doctrine before you teach it. You cannot believe the world came into being by chance and teach the truth of Genesis 1, etc.

Begin your study with prayer—prayer for yourself as you study that the Holy Spirit will enlighten your mind and heart, and prayer for those you prepare to teach.

Read the entire chapter in the Confession and your study guide through once before writing anything.

Fill in your own book as you study.

Again—have at least one or two doctrinal resource books available for your study and reference.

Allow sufficient preparation time.

Be on the look out for your own illustrative material as you approach each lesson. I keep a manila folder for each doctrine and as I read a Scripture or article I either copy it or clip it out and slip it in the folder for future reference. Look ahead now at each chapter title and keep them in mind.

Many teach using the lecture method exclusively. In a large group this is often the only orderly way to proceed. However, in smaller groups of 25 or less, educators tell us that some participation by the members of the group accomplishes much more. Recently I taught a group of women who the Bible teacher assured me would not speak or contribute one word for they were older and never had participated. I found, however, that by selecting questions with simple and obvious answers the timid began to venture forth, and when one or two questions requiring more thought were asked others were willing to respond. This stimulated more to join in. When it was over one very prominent woman in the city remarked, "Phew, that was different. I usually come and just put my mind into neutral, but today I found myself really thinking," I felt well repaid for all my study. Remember, it is easier for the teacher to lecture, but your women will retain more if there is some participation and thought on their part.

The primary purpose of the study guide is for the individual woman to use it in conjunction with her Bible and the Confession as she studies privately at home. As you teach refer to a question, paragraph, or illustration—this serves as an encouragement to your members, but in no way is the guide to bind you in your teaching. It is to serve as an aid. Your own personality and style must be at God's disposal.

At the conclusion of each lesson some invitation or challenge or thought question is given. The teachers of God's Word must never assume that all women attending Bible studies know Jesus Christ personally. We are to be faithful in presenting the truth in love and the Holy Spirit is the One Who works in the heart.

#### Chapter Suggestions;

##### Introduction: The Confession—How? When? Why?

A few facts:

1. Today in Oxford a monument stands as a silent reminder of the deaths of Ridley and Latimer and also Cramner, martyred soon afterwards.
2. The room in which the Westminster divines met is today called the Jerusalem Room. It is located in Westminster Abbey, but not open to the public for it is in the Abbot's quarters. However my husband and I were guided to it and allowed to reflect on its importance by the Dean's Verger of the Abbey this summer. To the Church of England, which prizes the "Thirty Nine Articles," the Westminster Confession of Faith is virtually unknown.
3. So far as I could find out in London, the original Confession; is -no longer-in existence. At the British Museum an original seventeenth century copy of the Confession was located for me, but this was as close as I came.
4. If you enjoy history this lesson should be easy for you. If not, why not concentrate on introducing your women to the Confession in general. Turn to each chapter with an important thought or two about each doctrine. Explain a little of who John Calvin was and why Presbyterians are known as "Calvinists". The difference between Arminians and Calvinists is worth mentioning.
5. Somewhere in your lesson should be the reason or reasons for studying the Confession.

Study Guide page 5 - "It (the Confession) expresses in systematic form the teaching of Scripture on important Biblical doctrines".

not a "Bible Book" study as such each lesson is centered around the Scripture, making it in reality a Bible study =

— With faithful study by your members each should know more about what she

believes and should be able to give a better answer for her faith to anyone who asks.

— Through your presentation, pray you will be used of the Spirit to lead your women to an understanding of Who God is, who we are, what His promises are, and what • He has done for those who love Him.

## Chapter I - OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

This is such a tremendously important chapter, for all the other chapters stand or fall on the understanding of the infallible, inerrant, and inspired Word of God

Perhaps you will want to take time to explain the difference in these two statements.

- "The Bible is the Word of God"

- "The Bible contains the Word of God"

If you want your women to participate, have references regarding the Scriptures written on slips of paper, pass these out, have them read at appropriate times. Psalm 119 is a good place for you' to start — don't leave out II Timothy 3:16.

Be sure you cover the answer to why the Scripture is so important (sections 1 and 2) and that experience can not be the Christian's authority (section 4) .

## Chapter II - OF GOD, AND THE HOLY TRINITY

Dr. Morton Smith commented to me that if the women would take time to look up the Scripture references on page 12 (1-22), their understanding of God would certainly be greater. I would suggest you go over these with them — amplifying in any way you wish— they may have to be looked up and read for the first time in your group0

The sovereignty of God (page 13) is a basic doctrine of the Reformed faith — study it, pray over it, and don't neglect it in your presentation. Psalm 139 may be helpful to you. Also AW Pink's book on the Sovereignty of God (a paperback).

You may have heard the Trinity explained in " a simple way' Try to help your young women grasp some understanding of it (page 14) for children often have questions hard to explain! We must be careful never to subordinate one Person of the Trinity to another as we seek to make it relevant.

This doctrine of God and the Trinity is especially important at this time in history when so many, especially youth, are seeking. Many contend that you can put your faith in anything.,: just as long as you believe in something and

are sincere. The mystical, meditational religions of the East hold fascination for some while still others follow obviously fallible men, Christianity is unique and one of its distinctives is the triune God. It is central to our faith.

Be sure as you teach that the Bible is your textbook. You might use Isaiah 55:8,9 as you approach this weighty, yet very necessary chapter. The Athanasian creed, formed early in the Church's life, expresses this doctrine so beautifully. "So the Father is God;

the Son is God; and

the Holy Spirit is God

And yet there are not three gods

but one God.

Neither confounding the persons

nor dividing the substance!"

### Chapter III - OF GOD'S ETERNAL DECREES

There may be more doubts in the minds of your women over this doctrine than over any other. Undoubtedly it is because it is not understood\*. Often women write it off as "too deep," or leave it to the "theologians" But, it is part of Scripture and Paul speaks of it again and again.

Remember at the same time that we are told clearly that there are mysteries in Scripture and only in heaven will we understand all. This is not to be an excuse, however, for neglecting it, for the Holy Spirit would have us at peace with God's Word. Find a quiet time and place as you delve into the truth of God's eternal decrees.

You may be able to use the Scriptures from page 16 and Dr. Smith's five facts from page 17 as you speak of the general subject of God's Decrees or Predestination. However, within the context of His decrees is that of ELECTION (section 3—8) This should occupy much of your time. Depend on Scripture for help. Each woman in your group has some opinion or question regarding these subjects. See if you can draw them out. Know your Confession well and have the Scriptures to substantiate what you say. Be careful not to take a text out of context. It then becomes, as seminary students are told a "pretexts"

Through, above, around, beneath all of God's Decrees is His SOVEREIGNTY. This brings peace to the believer. Our God knows the end from the beginning, He cares, He keeps and it is "He that hath made us and not we ourselves". Upon this only wise, sovereign God, infinite and unchangeable, we can rest for He doeth all things well.

### Chapter IV - OF CREATION

Have you been able to locate articles which may help in this area? Your minister may have special books he is willing to lend you. There has been much written from the Christian viewpoint which can be most helpful. Be as current and up to date on this as you are able. The Scripture, of course, is the best commentary on itself, but God has enabled godly men to write in recent years very relevant material in this area which serves to amplify and also to enlarge a woman's vision who might otherwise not be concerned.

There are many areas of discussion within this chapter: the Trinity (section.. }

the purpose of God in creation (section 1 } the length of time involved in creation (section 1) what makes man different from other creatures (section 2) man's original "freedom" (section 2)

the law of God as it relates to man before the fall (section 2) the purpose behind God's negative command to Adam and "Eve (section 2) what was life really like without sin—worries, stress, strain, problems,

rebellion, death, etc,! (section 2) etc.

Because this chapter in the Confession is brief, but solid with great thoughts, you should have a good time with it, Try asking some of the questions in the study guide from page 23 which are simply factual ones. Use a concordance., look up "create" and use some of these in your presentation.

Once again, your lesson should point to the sovereign God Who brought it all into being for the manifestation of His glory.

#### Chapter V - OF PROVIDENCE

Very logically we move from creation in chapter IV to the keeping or providing for that creation.

Have a good definition of providence. Ask your women what providence means as they relate it to the reality of their lives. Is God's infinite providence always easy for us in the finite sphere to understand? What does He say about His ways and our ways? Is there a real purpose behind His acts?

Be sure to deal with questions 6, 7 on pages 28, 29.

Relate God's sovereignty to His providence. Explain that He cannot be surprised since He has foreordained it all.

From section 3 be able to give every day illustrations of the "means" God uses. This is a very important area to make clear to your women.

Section 5 should be a comfort to any you teach who may be going through testings and real difficulties. I Peter 5:7; Proverbs 3:5,6; Psalm 37:5; Philippians 4:6,7 are great, but there are countless others to uses Take into consideration those you teach. If you are aware of real difficult situations you need to spend much time in prayer (in fact whether you are aware or not), that as you speak of the great and gracious providence and dealings of God with those who love Him, you will be a real comfort and encouragement., Pray that" each Christian will leave having been aware that God is very personal and very concerned about the lives and needs of each one of His children,, Turn your women to their Lord and His Word for their guidance and help.,

Illustrate God's general providence (sun, rain, etc0) which extends to all men everywhere, and His special providence (section 7) extended only to those who love Him. Here is a grand way to close your lesson with a graphic picture of the one within the concept of God's special care and the one outside that special sphere.

Remember the call of the Gospel is open to all. Trust the Holy Spirit to bring those God has chosen to Himself.

## Chapter VI - OF THE FALL OF MAN ,, ,, ,,

The story of Genesis 3 is undoubtedly familiar to each member you teach, so that you will enjoy going a little deeper into the doctrine of sin.

Perhaps you will want to review the story by asking basic, factual questions in order to have the group prepared for what you have to give them0

There are many questions with which people wrestle in this realm. Why would a good God permit sin? Did God create sin? Can we inherit sin?

Is anyone ever totally free of sin? Where do we place the blame for sin?

Why, if Satan brought sin to our first parents; were they punished? Is it fair that the posterity of Adam is included in the fall? When is something sin?

The Confession is very clear in section 1 as to—• where sin came from who sinned how they sinned God's reason for permitting it.

Paul pictures it clearly in Romans 5;19-21

If it would help, turn them back to page 19 of the study guide and review "T" under the acrostic TULIP. This doctrine of the total depravity of man John Calvin made very clear as he expounded Scripture. The psalmist writes of it in Psalm 14 and Paul reemphasizes it in Romans 3. As a lost sinner, man (or woman) is totally unable to do any good toward meriting salvation. Do not miss this opportunity with your women. Our hopeless estate outside of Christ should be made clear, but then, do not leave them without the remedy of salvation through Christ presented clearly.

## Chapter VII - OF GOD'S COVENANT WITH MAN

It has been said that the covenant is the key to the unfolding of God's plan of the ages, Over and over again we read of God's covenant with His people,, It all began in the garden. The chart on page 39 may serve to make this clear as you teach. If your members bring their books, have them turn -to it as you discuss this.

While you may be teaching women who have heard of the covenant all their lives,

it is sad to say that many do not understand it at all! Assume this to be so.

Whether in a church group or community Bible Study, almost always there are

women totally unfamiliar with the Confession. I was until after I married a

Presbyterian. Many have not even had he basics in "doctrine". They

may know something of sin and salvation, but the Covenant is foreign to them.

In very simple, concise language explain the Covenant of Grace as different from

the Covenant of Works. Be sure that the administration of this covenant (section 5)

during the old and new dispensations is clearly presented,, The same Holy Spirit worked throughout the entire Covenant of Grace, and the elect were redeemed purely by grace during the Old and New Testament times. The last paragraph in the study guide holds tremendous possibilities for teaching and discussion. What are some of the blessings available and promised the one who is under this covenant?

#### Chapter VIII - OF CHRIST THE MEDIATOR

I would beg of you to deviate from the lecture method if you use it exclusively and try getting your women to think by asking them questions. (If necessary call one or two ahead of time to get it started.)

From section 1 why not have them give all the facts listed concerning Jesus Christ. Enlarge on any or ask further questions. They should have a better understanding of Who Jesus really is if you do this. Have them tell you how He was a "prophet," or how He could have been a priest and how does this pertain to believers today and if He is king, of what does His government consist? Of what is He heir and how are Christians joint-heirs? When will He judge the world and who are the people that are His seed? Do challenge them to think—the possibilities are limitless. Use as much Scripture as you can when teaching this doctrine of Christ the Mediator, He is our Friend, our Brother, our Mediator, but He is also our God, our High Priest and King, the One Who died that His own might have life eternal.

Speak of His life, but speak also of His death. Page 46 may be of some benefit here as you make relevant section 4. Meditate yourself on the words of Spurgeon on pages -47 and 48—examine your own heart as you read the concluding paragraph on page 48. This can be a glorious study for you and your women.

#### Chapter IX - OF FREE WILL

The doctrine of Free Will sometimes spoken of as free moral agency can be a real source of strength and blessing. The will, an attribute of man, in its unfallen state was not neutral. It was good Adam was holy, but he was not perfect. He and Eve had the power of contrary choice and they chose evil. Before the fall they could choose good or evil (section 2), while after the fall they could only choose that which was spiritually evil because their natures had become tainted with sin (this is a review of the doctrine of sin).

Probably" the question concerning the will most frequently asked the Calvinist is "how, if God has chosen you before the foundation of the world, is your will free to choose God?"

Rather than answer that here, work through the study guide reading the notes, and consult your resource books. Berkhof is especially helpful in this chapter. You need to deal with questions you think would arise in this area.

The one who follows the teaching of Arminius believes that man's will is free in his unregenerate state to choose good or evil. The Calvinist (or reformed theology) teaches from Scripture (Ephesians 2:1) that unregenerate man is dead in trespasses and sins and obviously in that state cannot choose good. It takes an act of God through the work of the Holy Spirit because of the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ to bring forth spiritual life in one spiritually dead, before his will is choose the good (section 4).

Be sure to deal with man's responsibility, however, for he is not a robot, and this is not fatalism, for man is a free moral agent.

Section 5 could be further explained as an encouragement to your women. God does command through Peter (I Peter 1:16), "Be ye holy; for I am holy," while at the same time He knows that also involved in our "willing" is knowledge. The more perfect our knowledge of God, the more holy we should be. Paul writes, "Now we know in part" (I Corinthians 13:9), but that there will be a day in glory where the Christian will be perfect in Christ and his knowledge and will be confirmed in goodness, never again to choose evil. Our desire, however, should be a continual striving after holiness as Paul, in Corinthians, admonishes the Christian that whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does, he should do all to God's glory — which simply means choosing the good.



## Chapter X - OF EFFECTUAL CALLING

One of the most precious and joyful doctrines in Scripture and included in the Confession is this one before you now. Plainly stated it is those whom God has elected to eternal life before the foundation of the world He will bring (effectually\_ call) to Himself .

There are many parents who are burdened over children, children concerned about parents and friends. Nothing we can do of ourselves can ever bring any one to Christ. It is all of God. But, He has said to the Father, "All that you gave to me have come to me" No one God selects to be His will ever be lost. Scripture and chapter 1 are emphatic here. Each one effectually called will come at God's "appointed and accepted time." Our duty as Christians is to be faithful witnesses of His grace—to those about whom we have concern, and let the Holy Spirit work in His time and way. Never say, "If He has elected them, He'll effect the call" and neglect any responsibility you might have in the means.

An interesting comparison is in section one — the heart of stone in the unregenerate person and the new heart of flesh and all it involves in the one who is effectually called. Follow this through if you are interested.

Surely stressed in this chapter should be the insufficiency of man to promote effectual calling. Once again we revert to the Covenant of Grace. Only the sovereign grace of a holy God is able to effectually call the sinner.

Questions 8 and 9, page 53, may stimulate thoughts, questions or some answers as you examine section 3.

There are two calls issued. Your women may need this explained by you — the general call and the effectual, specific call. Section 4 leaves no doubt in this regard, Matthew 22: 14 reads "For many are called, but few are chosen." G. I, Williamson on page 55 presents a very intelligible approach to effectual calling.

The hymn at the top of page 57 sums it up quite well.

## Chapter XI - OF JUSTIFICATION

Each time I have stood in St. Peter's in Rome, I have envisioned the trees that were growing up, and out of the space now covered by the beautiful dome spoken of on page 57a To secure the finances to rid the church of such growth and erect and paint the massive covering." the Pope issued his indulgences. The promise by Tetzel of the forgiveness of sins through the purchase of these indulgences infuriated the young priest, Martin Luther, who later discovered the truth of Justification by faith. With the nailing of his Ninety Five theses on his church door in Wittenburg, the Reformation began in earnest and reverberations were felt all over Europe.

As you explain "justification" there are certain facts you should not neglect: Perhaps your women can help you with these.

It is free (a gift) to the sinner, it cannot be earned.

It cost the Saviour His life.

It is an ACT, once and for all, performed by God.

It is personal and individual.

It is only for the elect and was planned in eternity past.

Faith is the instrument of justification.

When the Holy Spirit applies Christ to the sinner she is justified.

Justification is a permanent transaction.

This is a longer chapter in the study guide, but if you will bear with it and study it in its entirety along with the

references given I believe you will be the richer. Each section of the chapter is filled with the truth of Scripture and should serve to fill the child of God with renewed joy and produce within her a deeper sense of her own unworthiness and the abundant grace of the Almighty God.

Jeanne T. Patterson