

Unit 2: Our History and Heritage

In order to truly understand our lives and beliefs, we must understand the lives and beliefs of the people who came before us. Our identity and faith is rooted in, and shaped by, the experiences of our spiritual ancestors traced back over the centuries.

These six lessons are designed to help you consider where your faith comes from in the hope that it will give you a better understanding of where it may be going. You'll be introduced to a long and diverse tradition that you're already a part of, and encouraged to imagine how you might carry that tradition into the future.

Welcome to Confirmation Class

Confirm Series: Lessons 5-7

As we wait to begin, take a moment to review our goals and expectations for class:

Lesson Goals

As a result of this lesson, I will be able to...



- Explain the significance of Jesus's Jewish faith and how it relates to early Christianity
- Discuss how the beliefs and practices of early Christians influence my faith today
- Identify key figures and events of the Reformation that shaped modern Christianity

Class Expectations



- WORK HARD
- BE KIND
- No phones should be out (*unless instructed to use them for class*)

For Fun!



Be ready to share the answer to ONE of these prompts before we begin:

- What is one place you've always wanted to visit? Why?
- Do you prefer the beach or mountains? Why?
- What is one comfort food for you?


“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the
children of God.”

Romans 8:14

Tentative Agenda

Welcome/Opening Prayer

Lesson 5: The Faith of Jesus

Break/Snack

Lessons 6-7: The Early Church & Reformation

Wrap Up/Closing

Opening Prayer

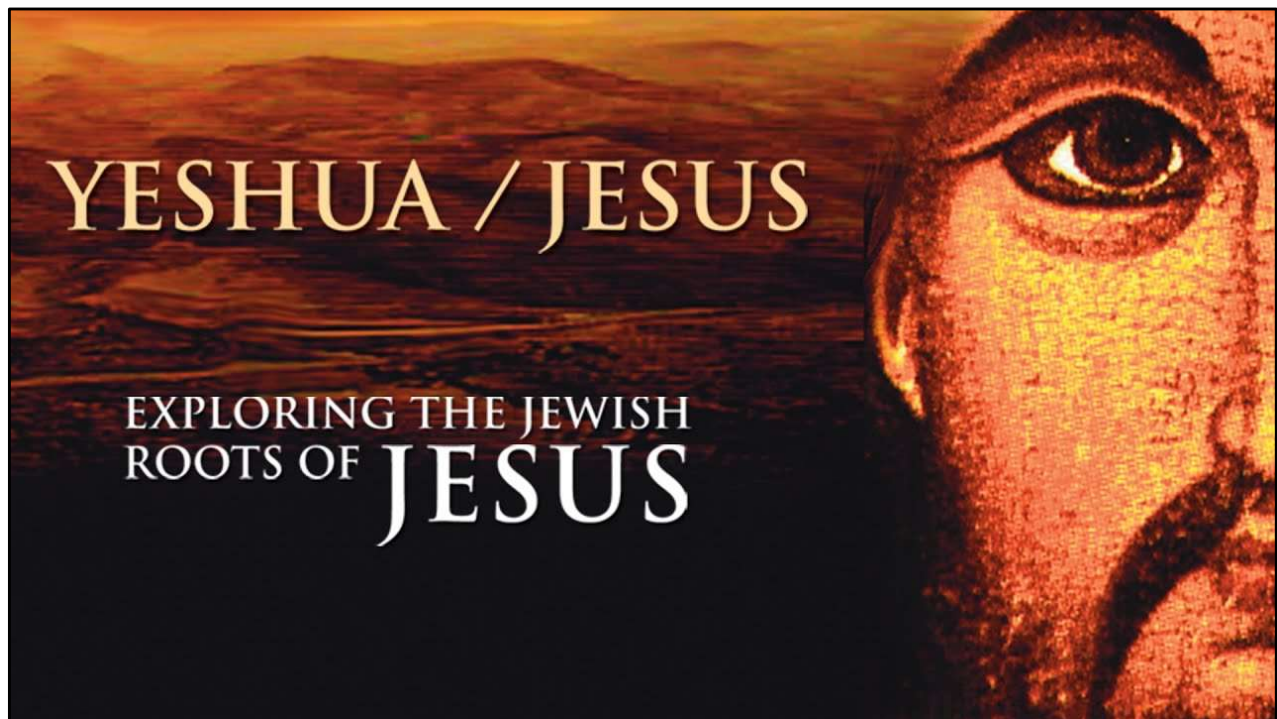
Dear God, thank you for guiding us as we explore the faith of Jesus as a Jewish person, the early Christians who helped shape our church, and the Reformation that transformed our understanding of faith. Help us to appreciate the deep history of Your people and the courage of those who followed Your teachings, inspiring us to grow and seek truth. May we honor both the past and our call to follow You with faith and courage. Amen.

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Lesson 5: The Faith of Jesus



- How many of you have stared a clock waiting for a class to end? (Never Confirmation class, right?)
 - Did it feel like time had slowed to a crawl? Maybe even stopped and gone in reverse?
 - That is one of the problems with time; it never speeds up when you need it to. In fact, it never speeds up at all.
 - There is no fast-forward button on life; and that tricks us into thinking that every moment is the most important, every crisis is the worst, and every event is the biggest ever.
- Because time can feel relative to the situation you are in, it's hard to have perspective, to look at the long, slow march of time and see how each moment, each crisis, and each event builds on top of the last one to bring us here. That's what the next section of lessons is all about—we're going to talk about the history of the church, the history of faith, and how we're part of the history of those who are yet to be born. To get us started, let's watch a quick video introducing the next few lessons.
- Watch the video: Our History and Heritage (2 min)
 - <https://my.amplifymedia.com/amplify/video/unitedmethodistpublishinghouse/23051-confirm/23054-confirm/61036-unit-2-introduction-our-history-and-heritage>
 - Log in: cedwards@kingswoodumc.com
 - Password: Youthminmvnu!1



- We're going to start our look at the history of faith by talking about the faith of Jesus. Jesus was born into the Jewish faith, which you may already know. This is the faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and most of the other people you've heard about in Sunday School or sermons. Let's look at what you know about the Jewish faith at the time of Jesus.
- **Do you know where Jewish people during Jesus's time worshipped?**
 - Most communities would meet in synagogues, which were local buildings set aside for religious ceremonies and instruction. Synagogues would often serve as schools, as well.
 - However, on special feast days, especially Passover and the Day of Atonement, many Jewish people would travel to the Temple in Jerusalem to participate in the religious festivals and ceremonies.
- **What important holidays or celebrations does the Jewish community have?**
 - The Jewish people had several holy days set aside to remember God's acts throughout their history. There were seven festivals including Passover, the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of the First Fruits, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Festival of Booths. The most important of these was Passover, when the people would remember God leading them out of Egypt. Leviticus 23 has more information about these festivals.
- **What did the Jewish study to learn about God?**
 - They would have studied the books that make up what we call the Old Testament. It was typically divided into three parts: The Law (Torah), the Prophets (Nevi'im), and

the Writings (Kethuvium). They learned mostly through stories passed down from family and rabbis teaching in synagogue.

- We should remember that Jesus was born more than 2,000 years ago. While we have the Bible to tell us a lot about that time, as well as history books and archeologists, there is still a lot that has not been documented.
- **What do you think the people from Jesus's time would think about how we worship (the place and the way) today?**



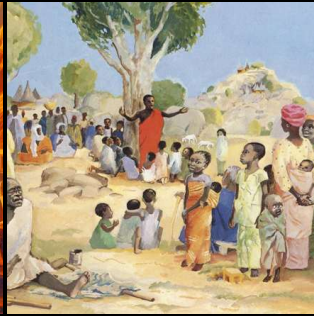
- You might find confirmation strange. Maybe you're the only one of your friends at school who is going through it. But there is a legacy of people who, at your age, are committed to a special group to learn more about their faith, ask questions, and look for answers.
 - Even Jesus went through something similar in the book of Luke.
- To get a sense of what Jesus would have been learning the temple, we will be reading aloud from several important passages in the Old Testament, which help to tell the story of God's people.
- Before reading the passages, it helps to know a little about the world where Jesus grew up.
 - Centuries before Jesus was born, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquered Israel, exiled the people, and destroyed the temple.
 - After 150 years, a man named Nehemiah was allowed to bring some of the people back to repair the walls of Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.
 - However, the people of Israel were never truly free of their captors.
- The rule of Babylon gave way to the rule of the Persians and then the Greeks, and eventually, decades before Jesus's birth, the Romans came to power.
 - By the time Jesus heard these were his people, the Israelites, had been dispersed all over the empire, and the nation of Israel had been under the thumb of a ruling nation for 600 years.
- When Nehemiah and his small group of Israelites returned to Jerusalem, they rededicated themselves to their faith and their tradition.
 - Our first two readings are from the Book of Nehemiah, where the people

collectively remember their history and repent of their sins.

- As you listen to these Scriptures, imagine you are in the Temple with Jesus, possibly hearing these words for the first time.



Nehemiah 9:1-15
Page 593



Micah 6:1-8
Page 1117



Nehemiah 9:26-38
Page 594



Isaiah 9:1-7
Page 824

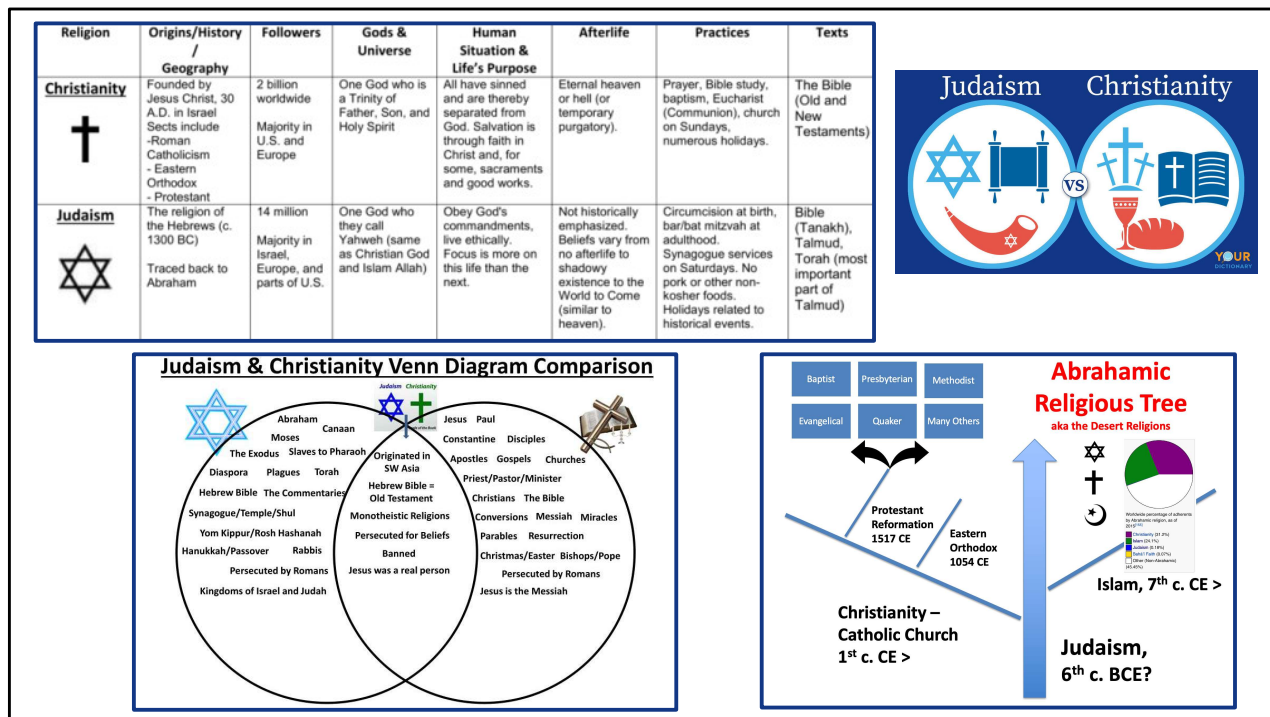
- Jesus is sitting in the same temple that Nehemiah had built after returning from exile more than 400 years previously and learning the same story of faith that his people had passed down for generations. Think about what these words must have meant for someone in his situation.
 - Read: **Nehemiah 9:1-15 (page 593)**
- Despite God's goodness, the Israelites still wanted things their own way; and so God sent prophets to bring them back to God. This next reading is from one of those prophets, a man named Micah.
 - Read: **Micah 6:1-8 (page 1117)**
- But the people didn't listen to Micah's words; they did not do justice, embrace faithful love, or walk humbly with their God. Let's pick up the story again in Nehemiah.
 - Read: **Nehemiah 9:26-38 (page 594)**
- This was still the situation in the time of Jesus. The Babylonians no longer ruled Israel, but the Romans had taken over and Israel remained an occupied nation. Yet there was still a promise for the future and a hope.
 - Read: **Isaiah 9:1-7 (page 824)**



- Now we're going to try something that you may never have done before. It's called *lectio divina*, which is Latin for divine reading. It's a way to meditate on a particular passage of Scripture.
- The passage we're going to focus on was a very important part of Jesus's Jewish faith. It's a prayer called the Shema that is found in the book of Deuteronomy.
 - The Shema, or Shema Yisrael, is a central Jewish prayer that expresses belief in one God and is a core part of Jewish prayer services:
 - What it is: A Jewish prayer that affirms monotheism and is a central part of Jewish prayer services
 - When it's recited: Traditionally recited twice a day, in the morning and evening
- I'm going to read through this prayer three times and you'll focus on something different each time.
 1. For the first time, just listen to the Scripture. **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**
 2. Take a deep breath and relax. This time I want you to pick out a word or phrase that jumps out to you. **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**. Share the word/phrase.
 3. This time think about how this prayer connects to the history of Israel that we've been talking about. **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**. Share your thoughts.

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Lesson 6: The Early Church



Difference between Jewish and Christian faiths...

- **Judaism** and **Christianity** are two different religions that share some common history but have different beliefs about who God is and how people should follow Him.
 - **Shared Origins**
 - Both Judaism and Christianity believe in one God and both look to the Old Testament (or Hebrew Bible) as sacred scripture.
 - They share stories of early figures like Abraham, Moses, and the prophets.
 - **Key Difference – Jesus**
 - The biggest difference is what each religion believes about Jesus.
 - Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah (Savior) who came to Earth to save humanity from sin.
 - They believe that through Jesus' death and resurrection, people can have a relationship with God and eternal life.
 - Judaism, on the other hand, does not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. Jewish people are still waiting for the Messiah to come and do things like bring peace to the world and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.
 - **Scripture**
 - Christians have both the Old Testament and the New Testament.
 - The New Testament includes the life and teachings of Jesus and the early church.
 - Jews follow the Hebrew Bible (what Christians call the Old Testament), but

they don't recognize the New Testament as scripture.

- **Practices**
 - There are also differences in religious practices.
 - Jewish people follow the laws and commandments of the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible) very closely, including things like observing the Sabbath, eating kosher, and celebrating holidays like Passover and Yom Kippur.
 - Christians, while they respect the Old Testament, believe that Jesus' life fulfilled those laws, so their focus is more on faith in Jesus and following his teachings, celebrating holidays like Christmas and Easter.
- In short, **Judaism focuses on living by the laws of the Torah and waiting for the Messiah to come**, while **Christianity centers on Jesus as the Messiah and his message of salvation**.
 - Both religions, though, are about following God and living good, moral lives.

NAME THAT CHRISTIAN

WRITE DOWN AS MANY FACTS AS YOU CAN ABOUT YOUR IMPORTANT PERSON IN THE NEXT 3 MINUTES!

- The story of the church is long and filled with many twists and turns. There are countless teachers and preachers, writers and monks, kings and queens who play a role in the history of the church. It's filled with tales of war and political intrigue, but also boundless love and beauty. People spend years and years trying to understand it and piece it together.
- Group the class into four groups or each independently if you have less than 4 students
 - Name that Christian: Learning more about some of the people who have been part of the story of the church, and as a result, part of the story of our faith.
 - They may use their phones or the iPads if they don't have a phone
 - Slide 18 has iPad support information on it, if you use them
 - Write down some important facts you learn about your person (at least 3)
 - Augustine
 - Gregory the Great
 - Julian of Norwich
 - Francis of Assisi
- Ask the following questions to see if the groups can recognize their important figure by raising their hand or shouting out the answer...
 - Which person was a bishop of the church of Africa? (Augustine)
 - Who is the patron saint of Italy? (Francis of Assisi)
 - Who nearly died and had a mystical encounter with God? (Julian of Norwich)
 - Who is known as the father of Christian worship? (Gregory the Great)

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Lesson 7: The Reformation



- The Protestant Reformation was a major movement in the 1500s when people began to challenge the way the Catholic Church was operating.
 - A German monk named Martin Luther was one of the main people who started it by writing down 95 complaints (called the "95 Theses") about things he believed the Church was doing wrong, like selling forgiveness (indulgences) for money.
 - Martin Luther and Dr. Martin Luther King are two different people with similar names!
 - **Martin Luther** (1483–1546) was a German monk and a key figure in the **Protestant Reformation** in the 1500s. He challenged the Catholic Church's practices, especially with his 95 Theses, and his actions led to the formation of Protestant denominations like Lutheranism.
 - **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.** (1929–1968) was an **American civil rights leader** in the 1950s and 1960s, best known for his work to end racial segregation and discrimination in the United States. He gave the famous "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963 during the March on Washington.
 - Dr. King was named after Martin Luther, but they lived in very different times and had different roles in history. One was a religious reformer, and the other was a civil rights activist.
 - Luther and others felt that people should be able to read the Bible in their own language and have a direct relationship with God, without needing the Church to control everything.

- This led to the formation of new branches of Christianity, like Lutheranism and Calvinism, which became known as Protestant churches because they "protested" against the Catholic Church.
- Over time, the Reformation changed the way people practiced Christianity and led to many new denominations that still exist today.
 - It also influenced the Catholic Church to make some reforms of its own, leading to what we now know as both Protestant and Catholic forms of Christianity.
- The **Diet of Worms** sounds strange because of the English words, but it actually has nothing to do with food or worms!
 - "**Diet**" in this case refers to a formal assembly or meeting, usually of political or religious leaders.
 - "**Worms**" (pronounced "Verm") is the name of a city in Germany where this important meeting took place.
 - So, the **Diet of Worms** was simply a meeting held in the city of Worms in 1521. At this meeting, Martin Luther was put on trial for his writings, which challenged the authority of the Catholic Church. It was a big moment in the Protestant Reformation, as Luther refused to take back his ideas, famously saying, "Here I stand, I can do no other."
 - In short, the name just comes from the location and the type of meeting—it has nothing to do with actual worms!

Wrap-Up

Confirm Series: Lessons 5-7

As we wrap up class, lets go over a few things together:

Objective Review

The objective of class today was...

- Explain the significance of Jesus's Jewish faith and how it relates to early Christianity
- Discuss how the beliefs and practices of early Christians influence my faith today
- Identify key figures and events of the Reformation that shaped modern Christianity

Application

Every person must answer!

Today's lesson is important to me because...

Upcoming Dates

- October 4
 - Sunday Night Live (5-7p)
- October 11
 - Confirmation Class
- October 17
 - HarvestFest volunteer opportunity (10-2p)
- October 18
 - Sunday Night Live (5-7p)
- October 24-25
 - Youth Fall Retreat
 - SIGN UP TODAY!!!!!!!!!!!!
- October 25
 - Mentor Meet Up
 - Confirmation Class

Closing Prayer

One confirmand will lead us in a closing prayer. *(different person from whoever did the opening prayer)*