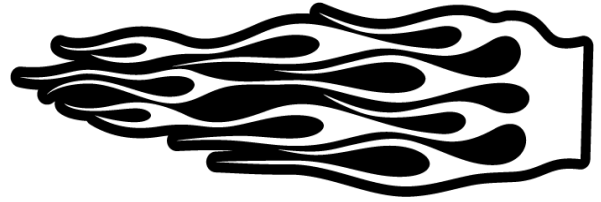


# FLAME TEEN HANDOUT

Week 7 – 11/14/2021

Topic: Christian Initiation



Each of us are on a unique life journey



It is my road to walk and mine alone.  
Others may walk it with me, but no one  
can walk it for me.

God's will?

The Good Life  
for all

Want the 'good life'?



## How did I get here?

Take a few moments and think about where you are in your life right now?

Who were/are the people who have shaped/influenced you?

What were/are the experiences and events that have shaped you?

Key People	
1	_____
2	_____
3	_____
4	_____
5	_____
6	_____
7	_____
8	_____

Significant Experiences	
1	_____
2	_____
3	_____
4	_____
5	_____
6	_____
7	_____
8	_____

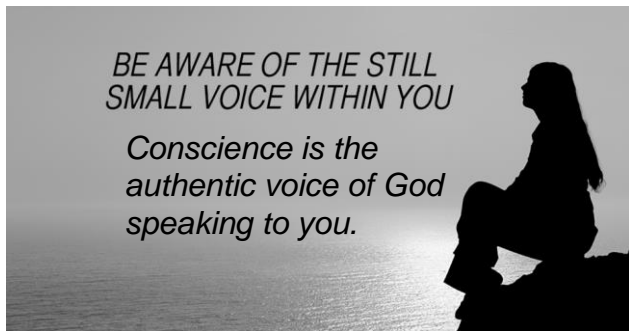
Key Events	
1	_____
2	_____
3	_____
4	_____
5	_____
6	_____
7	_____
8	_____





### SHARE SOME OF THE POINTS ON YOUR MAP

- Who were some of the influential people in your life other than parents?
- Who would say has been the biggest influence in your life so far? Why?
- What were some of the most impactful experiences in your life so far?
  - What have you learned as a result of these experiences?
  - What surprised you about what others wrote?
  - What has surprised you the most about your own journey?
- ✓ Can you point to a person, experience or event that has shaped what you believe? Value?
- ✓ What has been the biggest influence on your faith so far in your life? Was it a person, an experience, or an event?
- ✓ How is/has your FLAME group helped you on your life's journey?



### Key Ideas for this week



1. **All of us are on a unique life journey.**
2. **God's will for every being** is that they become what God created them to be.
3. **The purpose of religious faith** (all faiths) is to help people live well and love deeply.
4. **Christian faith is continuously being formed by the work of the Holy Spirit** through multiple Means.
5. **Christian Initiation** is "... a developmental journey by which a person, no matter their age, comes to a new understanding of him/herself as a disciple of Christ and member of His Church."
6. **The Sacraments of Initiation** are Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. They lay the foundation for the Christian life

### Primacy of Conscience

- We are responsible for forming our own conscience and following it.
- We have serious obligation to develop a mature conscience, to find the right answer to concrete situation.
- An informed conscience is what we need to know in order to make right choices our life.

## Here's Why You Believe What You Do

by Aaron Ross

"He just doesn't get that aspect of theology because of the kind of church he grew up in," my friend commented after a lively theology debate with a mutual friend.

I nodded. He was probably right, but I couldn't help thinking that perhaps he also only felt so strongly about the issue because of the kind of church *he* grew up in.

None of us understand God in a vacuum. We all come at God with different perspectives and backgrounds. It can be hard for us to understand how someone can think about God so differently than someone else: "How

can a Christian believe in speaking in tongues? Why don't all Christian believe in creation just like the Bible says in Genesis?"

The problem, however, is not with others, but with us. We cannot grasp or understand how others believe until we can be honest and reflective on how we believe what we believe.

Before we can talk to others about God, before we can even begin to grasp the complexities about what we believe, we need to understand how we believe. John Wesley, one of the deepest Christian thinkers of the last 300 years, taught us what influences how we believe and what that means. All of us, regardless of whether we grew up Christian, atheist, another religion, or anything else, process how we understand God through four areas:

## **Experience**

No matter how similar an experience you had growing up compared to a friend, the experience will never be the same. Even identical twins can often explain their very similar experiences in very different ways. When we come to know God, our before Christ and after Christ experiences influence how we think about God.

For example, pastors and the Bible often use the metaphor of a father in relation to God. Since God is seen as a "father," our perception of our own human fathers can dictate our view of God. Those who have grown up with an abusive father or without a father at all have a much different view of God as father than someone who grew up in a household with "good" father.

God uses our experiences to teach us about who He is (or isn't) and about the world He has created. This then can inform or even change how we believe about God.

## **Tradition**

Tradition is important as it helps us understand who God is in light of those who have come before us. For some, that tradition comes from their family, for others, it is based on their pastor or denomination from which they grew up in, others may not have a tradition to draw on altogether.

It is unfortunate, but most Christians tend to let their tradition too heavily influence their reading of Scripture instead of the other way around. Whether you are Catholic, Evangelical, Baptist, Pentecostal, or so on, our Scripture often does not inform our understanding of our tradition, but our tradition tells us how to understand Scripture.

As I teach at a Christian university, I see this problem very often. Students will come to a theology or biblical studies class knowing more of what their tradition says about the Bible than they do about what the Bible says itself.

## **Reason**

We have all done it (or at least I hope so). We have all asked questions like, "Does this Christianity thing really make sense?," "Did Christ really die for my sins?"

This one is tough, as faith and reason exist in a rather tricky balance. According to John Wesley, however, our faith is one that, though it lives outside of reason, still is a reasonable faith.

Reason outside of faith has produced a lot of interesting (and often considered heretical) ideas about Christianity. Ideas like "Jesus couldn't really be God, Jesus couldn't have risen from the dead."

Faith alone is not above its own problems. There are those who would rather just "accept it in faith" and not actually think through the complexities of the work and Scripture God gave us to explore. There will always be

ideas that are unreasonable and must be accepted on Faith (think Jesus being born of a virgin), but our faith is largely a reasonable faith. Balance is key.

## Scripture

The most important way in which we understand God is through our reading of Scripture. It is the filter that all of these other areas should flow through. It should be the highest priority that our main understanding of God comes to us through His Word.

How we read the Scripture will greatly influence how we think about God. Whether we read a passage as a metaphor or literal can greatly change the meaning of passage. Taking Jesus death and resurrection as figurative as opposed to literal can have dire consequences on how we understand what God did for us as humanity. This reading can have drastic changes on how we view God.

Before we can talk to others about our faith, before we can dialogue about what is theologically “right or wrong” with someone else, we must first understand how our beliefs about God have been informed by these four areas.

To borrow from Socrates’ saying, “the unexamined life is not worth living,” I would challenge Christians that “the unexamined belief is not worth believing.” Knowing how we believe helps us understand how someone can believe differently than us and not just condemn them. It is only when we can come understand our own beliefs can we really talk to others about Christ.



### Words to Live By...

“Every man gives his life for what he believes. Every woman gives her life for what she believes. Sometimes people believe in little or nothing, and so they give their lives to little or nothing. One life is all we have, and we live it as we believe in living it...and then it’s gone.

But to surrender who you are and to live without belief is more terrible than dying – even more terrible than dying young.”

*St. Joan of Arc*

### Prayer of Unknowing by Thomas Merton

I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following Your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that, if I do this, You will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore I will trust You always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for You are ever with me, and You will never leave me to face my perils alone.



**I Learned Statements** – complete at least two of the sentences below

The form consists of six white notepad-style boxes with a grey background and a red border. Each box has a dotted line on its left side, suggesting a spiral binding. The boxes are arranged as follows:

- Top left: A large box with the text "I learned..." at the top.
- Top middle: A large box with the text "I discovered. . ." at the top.
- Top right: A large box with the text "I was surprised by..." at the top.
- Bottom left: A large box with the text "I was reminded that. . ." at the top.
- Bottom middle: A small vertical box with a dotted line on its top edge.
- Bottom right: A large box with the text "The question I have is. ." at the top.