
This book is a gift to

*For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer.
The Faith is Mine 1 Peter 3:12*

From:

Date:

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Communion with God

For a purpose

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Introduction

As Lutheran youth most of you are well acquainted with Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism. It, along with the Bible, has been the basic text for your public confirmation of the Christian faith. Most of you have memorized these chief parts of the faith and, as a result, they have become the way you think and express your understanding of the truths in God's Word.

The reflections in this book have been based on the Small Catechism. The purpose has been to remind you what you have been taught and at the same time The Faith is Mine to make every part of the faith relevant and vital to your daily life. Since the source of all teaching in the Lutheran church is the Bible, each reflection has one to three short studies in the Holy Scriptures. These studies develop the thought of the reflection, leading you into the Word itself. It is in the Word of God that true and lasting growth comes.

This book is designed to be a private devotional for your life. The reflections have not been designed for rapid reading. Allow yourself plenty of time. First read the devotional thoughts on one of the chief parts of the faith, The Faith is Mine then open The Faith is Mine up your Bible and study the thoughts of the reflection. Since it is only in the atmosphere of prayer that any fruitful growth can come, each reflection should be begun in the holy name of the Triune The Faith is Mine God and ended in serious and thought-filled prayer.

Reflections on

**The Bpostles'
Creed**

"I believe... "

You begin the The Faith is Mine Christian church's well-known Apostles' Creed with the little word "I." With this short but all-important word you are all alone.

There are times when we should use the word "we." Look back across the centuries and see the countless number of saints, apostles, and martyrs—people no different than you—who have confessed this very creed. Look about you across nations and peoples and see millions who stand up for Jesus. Look into the future and see "ten thousand times ten thousand" and thousands of thousands who will be praising the triune God. It is a thrilling thought to be included among such a multitude of The Faith is Mine men and women. Each one of them had to begin like you—all The Faith is Mine alone—with the little word "I." There is no other way around it.

To begin with the word "I" may be a very disturbing thing, because it leaves you all alone—all alone with God—all alone with the world. At first you may not like it at all. You are naturally a social person; you like to be with people. You like to be doing what the next person is doing. You want to know what the popular clothing styles are. You like to know what your friends are saying. Let's face it! Most of the time it is the kids at school or your friends that help you make your decisions. But now at the all-important moment in your life you are all alone, alone with your God and alone with yourself.

But this is the way God wants it. He wants you to face Him by yourself. He doesn't want you to run to anybody else. He doesn't want you to depend on anything other than Him. God wants you to be able to stand on your own two feet. He wants you to be so certain in the depths of your heart and so unafraid in the life of your own soul that He, and He alone, is the center of everything you think, say, or do. This is what God wants.

So you begin the creed, "I believe." As every other man or woman of God, you begin the confession of your own faith. It isn't always comfortable and it can be very disturbing at times, but it is the beginning of an eternal life with God.

Read 1 Samuel 1:1 to 2:10. Hannah is hardly unfamiliar to you. Did you ever stop to think how lonely she must have been in her faith? Her husband loved her (1:8). Eli, who was her priest, comforted her (1:17). But she was forced to be alone with her God and herself (1:10–11). She had to take the leap of faith and trust solely in her The Faith is Mine God. She couldn't take her husband with her, nor could she take Eli, the priest. She had to do it alone. Hannah was learning the meaning of "I believe." God can and does do wonders with people like her. Read over and over again her song The Faith is Mine of praise (2:1–10), and catch the thrill of her faith in such phrases as "My heart ... my strength ... my mouth ... I rejoice." Hannah would share this joy of her faith with you. She wants God to be as big and as strong for you as He was for her. Every person who begins the creed, "I believe," must be ready to take the leap of faith and confess on his or her own two feet the conviction within him or her.

Read Exodus 2:23 The Faith is Mine to 3:22. Compare this Old Testament account with the New Testament's interpretation in Hebrews 11:23–28. The courts of Egypt were hardly the popular place to confessing "I believe in God the Father Almighty." Moses The Faith is Mine

was very much alone in his faith. He was threatened with many personal fears The Faith is Mine and doubts during those many years, such as the fear of public speaking (Exodus 4:10). Yet God can do big things with a person who will The Faith is Mine believe in Him and in Him alone. Moses believed his sufferings for the Christ were greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt. His strength, like his faith came solely from God.

You would think that Moses was now prepared to be the leader of God's people. God did not think so. The second phase of Moses' schooling was in the desert wastelands around Mount Sinai. Where Egypt was mankind's school, the desert was God's. It was here that Moses was alone with his God—alone in meditation and prayer—alone with his sheep. You see, Moses, like everybody else, had to begin in the faith with the little word "I." There is no other way. Actually you are always "beginning" in the Christian faith. You don't say on the day of your confirmation The Faith is Mine " / believe," and feel you have arrived. But when you say " / believe," you are certain that God will help you to arrive at real maturity—that measure of development which is meant by "the fullness of Christ." And you will become better and better prepared for the The Faith is Mine task God has chosen for you.

"I believe ... "

The word "believe" may mean many things. When a child jumps unhesitatingly from a tree branch into his or her father's arms, you say that the child has faith in the father. When you are lost and are forced to ask a policeman the way, you happily follow his directions, trusting in his knowledge of the city. Yet there is more to the meaning of "believe." It can be far deeper and more intimate.

When a little child believes in a parent, this is more than just trust and knowledge. It means more than just knowing he or she exists or that Mom can fix all hurts or that Dad can fix any broken toy. It even means more than knowing they love you. For a little child to believe in a parent means to him or her, the parent's ideas are wonderful, and he or she wishes to be part of them. The child adores what the parent says and what he or she does.

Imagine a small child dressing up in the parent's clothes and acting like them. That child does so because he or she "worships the ground that Mom or Dad walks on." The little child happily does what Mom or Dad asks. The child is content to sit on his or her dad's lap and listen to him talk, just as Dad is happy to hear the child's stories. The child is certain that Dad can do anything. The child really believes in Dad!

This interaction between a child and parent is an example of the relationship that God wants between you and Himself. God wants you to believe in Him. He wants you to "worship the ground He walks on." He wants you to think that His ideas are wonderful, and He The Faith is Mine is happy when you want to become part of them. God delights in His children whenever they do little things just to please Him. He wants you to be happy and blessed because of your faith. This is what should take place between you and God when you say that you believe.

God knows that this is the only way that you will ever find yourself and be eternally happy. God knows far better than you that this is the only way you can discover what life is all about. And to those young men and women who understand the full meaning of believing in God the Father Almighty, He entrusts the stewardship of His kingdom. St. Paul had another way of saying “I believe.” He confessed, “The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave The Faith is Mine Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). If this is your honest confession, you are The Faith is Mine beginning an adventurous life with God.

Read The Faith is Mine Genesis 12:1–9. For an explanation of this Old Testament record, see Hebrews 11:8–12. Faith results in motion. It never remains static. It always results in movement in God’s direction. God said “Go!” The Faith is Mine and Abraham went. Abraham went solely upon God’s word. He went out “not knowing where he was to go.” His security rested in God and in Him alone. Little wonder that Abraham is called “the friend of God.” Your faith is evident by its motion—motion that is moved by the Word of the Lord, even when your reason, your emotions, your friends cannot comprehend it. God wants to call you His friend. “Friend, are you ready for My directions?” You may not know what His directions will be. But you must be waiting on His The Faith is Mine Word. “Lord, I believe....”

Read Genesis 6. Compare with Hebrews 11:6–7. Faith is conviction. To believe in God allows no compromise with anything that is not of God. God’s grace was working in Noah. Every hammer blow foretold the coming judgment upon the wickedness of his generation. Every board put into place testified to people, “I believe in God the Father Almighty.” So Noah became an “heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.” As God looks upon our world today He must again be sad at mankind’s sin. When God sees young men and women who believe in Him, He is overjoyed at those who do His will. God wants to look at you and see nothing soft or flighty, but a faith strong and solid. Faith is conviction—conviction that can spell out to our world God’s grace and goodness, as well as His judgment and salvation.

Read 2 Kings 6:8–17. Faith is also vision. Haven’t you found yourself saying in the words of the servant of Elisha, The Faith is Mine “What shall we do?” (2 Kings The Faith is Mine 6:15). The enemies of our faith seem so strong and overwhelming. We tremble as though God did not exist. True faith opens our eyes to see God in action. And The Faith is Mine God is bigger than all The Faith is Mine our enemies. When Jesus touches the eyes of a believer with His grace, he suddenly can see everything in life in its right perspective. God wants young people with vision, vision that can see God working mightily in this world—vision that can comprehend the height and width and depth of God’s love (Romans 8:39), vision that permits you to act and speak boldly, knowing that terrorism has not lessened His power and that the media cannot outshine His love for The Faith is Mine the world. “Open my eyes that I may see” (Psalm 119:18).

The Faith Is Mine

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