



Life and immortality

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Objective The confirmands respect all life. They know the significance of their life on earth for their eternal life.

Contents All life comes from God; great respect for life.
Body, soul, and spirit.
Earthly and eternal life.
The Fifth Commandment.

1 Lead-in

Ask

When does a person's life start?

2 Human life

Listen to answers
and summarise

There are various views as to when a person's life begins. Our life began when our parents conceived us. Although we still were so tiny that our parents could not even be aware of us, we were alive. In this new creature all personal features (the colour of the hair and eyes, height, characteristics, mental faculties, etc.) were already established. This is to be made clear to the confirmands. They must be aware that **human life begins at conception!**

3 Great respect for life

A student tells
(homework)

The confirmands tell the story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4: 3–15).

Explain

Why Cain killed Abel

*The severity of
Cain's sin*

God accepted Abel and his offering, but not Cain and his offering. Cain therefore developed hatred for his brother Abel. God saw his thoughts and pointed out to Cain that he was in danger of sinning. He strongly admonished Cain to rule over sin. Nevertheless Cain gave in to the sinful thought and killed his brother. God pointed out to Cain the sin he had committed and punished him: "When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth" (Genesis 4: 12). Only then did Cain become aware of the severity and consequences of what he had done. He said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me" (Genesis 4: 13–14). God however, put a mark on Cain and promised to protect him.





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- Explain** Even at Noah's time God explicitly emphasised respect for the life of other human beings (cf. Genesis 9: 5–6). Later God gave Moses the Fifth Commandment.
- A student reads aloud** You shall not murder.
- Ask** **What must I do for life to be preserved?**
- Listen to answers and summarise** I want to greatly respect every form of life because all life originates in God's creation. To have great respect for life is an opportunity to praise God.
- A student tells (homework)** The confirmands relate that God made a covenant with Noah after the great flood and explain what God commanded Noah to do (cf. Genesis 8: 18 to 9: 13).

- Explain** We are permitted to make use of animals and plants because God provided them as food for us (cf. Genesis 9: 3). To respect all life however, implies that nothing is to be senselessly killed or destroyed.

- Hint** If questions concerning military service, war, self-defence, the death penalty, etc. should arise it is to be pointed out to the confirmands that these will be dealt with in detail at youth discussions. The confirmation teacher will find some comments concerning such matters in appendix 1 at the end of this lesson.

4 Spirit and soul

- Explain** Human beings not only consist of a body, but also of a spirit and a soul.
- Ask** **What do you know about soul, spirit, and body?**
- Workbook exercise** The confirmands are to consider this question by doing the exercise in their workbook. The confirmation teacher first listens to the answers. Many words of course cannot be clearly classified. Rather they will be cause for questions. Feelings and emotions, for example, could be matched to the soul as well as the spirit. There also are interactions with the body. Our feelings are also created by our various senses. Answers are not always clear, because human beings were created as an entity consisting of spirit, soul, and body. The body is subject to mortality. This conclusion is to crystalise clearly from the discussion (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5: 23).





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Hint

In appendix 2 additional information concerning this issue can be found.

Explain

Soul

First of all, the term 'soul' refers to the immortal life that has been granted by God. We endeavour to care for our soul and to keep it healthy. For this it must live in close fellowship with God. The soul is also considered the habitation of our feelings and emotions. In this sense the word 'soul' has the same meaning as 'heart' or 'disposition'.

Spirit

The Bible does not always distinguish between the soul and spirit of human beings. Both of these concepts originally meant 'breath' or 'spirit'. Spirit however, also denotes human beings' ability to think as well as to examine and understand the various things which they see and hear. It likewise enables human beings to inquire into and act in accordance with God's will. Both soul and spirit are immortal and inseparably connected with one another.

Body

The body is subject to mortality.

5 Immortality of the soul

Ask

What happens to soul and spirit when a person dies?

Listen to answers and summarise

Spirit and soul comprise a single entity. They are immortal. The immortality of the soul cannot be equated with the biblical term 'eternal life' (or 'everlasting life'), which refers to unceasing fellowship with God.

Ask

How do you imagine immortality?

Listen to answers and summarise

Eternal fellowship with God

The soul has the opportunity to live on in eternal fellowship with God and His Son. God offers human beings the means to achieve this, and seeks to prepare them for this fellowship with Him. Through God's word, those baptised with the Spirit who are already in the beyond are prepared for this life with the triune God in the same manner as we are prepared.

Eternally separated from God

However, the soul can also be separated from God forever. This condition is also described as the second death: "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power..." (Revelation 20: 6). Let us accept Christ's advice: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10: 28).



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The main points

I also want to have great respect for life!

Homework

The confirmands consider what attributes they expect to find in a friend. Notes can be made at the end of the workbook.





Appendix 1

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Issues concerning the Fifth Commandment (“You shall not murder”)

Hint

The following comments should only be discussed if the confirmands ask corresponding questions. Furthermore it should be pointed out to them that such issues will be dealt with in detail during youth meetings.

Much already becomes a good deal clearer when we consult the Hebrew text of this commandment, which literally translates as: “You shall not murder!”

In principle, the commandment dictates that we are not to destroy human life.

When a human life is killed, a distinction is made as to whether this occurred on purpose or by accident, or whether external circumstances were a factor. The guilt incurred when such a sin is committed is assessed accordingly.

For example, external circumstances might include **self-defence, military service, termination of pregnancy when the mother's life is in jeopardy, etc.**

Like assisted suicide, active euthanasia is a violation of the Fifth Commandment.





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Appendix 2

Soul, spirit, and body

Hint

This appendix is to provide an overview of how these concepts are used in the Bible. For the class the confirmation teacher should limit himself to what is contained in the lesson.

Soul

In the Holy Scriptures the word 'soul' has various meanings.

- The 'soul' represents life itself and incorporates the body. In this sense the 'soul' refers to human beings themselves.
- The soul is the life granted by God, both the earthly and transitory life as well as the spiritual and eternal life. The soul is therefore a human being's most precious possession. To remain healthy and not come to harm the soul must live in close fellowship with God. God wants to rescue the soul. That is why He admonishes human beings to care for their soul.

In addition the Holy Scriptures consider the soul as the habitation of our feelings and emotions. In this sense the word 'soul' has the same meaning as 'heart' or 'disposition'. The soul can be distressed and afraid; it is able to love, yearn, be joyful, etc.

Spirit

In the first instance there is no difference between human beings' spirit and soul. Both concepts originally meant 'breath' or 'spirit'. The spirit also resides in the body. It says: "God ... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Genesis 2: 7; cf. also 1 Corinthians 15: 45–46).

A distinction is made between the soul and the spirit when 'spirit' is used to describe the capability of human beings to think, to understand, and to make decisions. In this sense the spirit is a gift of God. The human spirit can therefore not only deal with earthly matters, but also godly matters.

Through His Spirit God would like to sanctify human beings' souls as well as their spirit so that our entire being will turn to God (cf. 1 Corinthians 6: 19). The human spirit can also be influenced by spirits that oppose God, however (see Lesson 6).

The body and the immortal soul belong together. At the first resurrection, the living and the dead who have allowed themselves to be prepared for the coming of Jesus will receive a body similar to the glorified body of Christ.

Body

The mortal body houses the soul and the spirit. Death is the consequence of sin (cf. Romans 6: 23).

