

# LUTHER'S LARGE CATECHISM

## BIBLE TRUTH FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

A BIBLE STUDY BY PASTOR TIMOTHY WAGNER  
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### LESSON ONE: Introduction

#### Why Confessions?

1. Explain from the following passages why creeds and confessions of faith are natural for Christians:
  - Luke 6:45
  - Romans 10:8-10
  - 2 Corinthians 4:13
2. Explain from the following passages why creeds and confessions of faith are necessary for Christians:
  - Jeremiah 23:31
  - 1 John 4:1

3. Evaluate the following quotation:

We Have "No Creed, But Christ." 1. Whatever may be said in favor of expedients (written materials) to teach God's word, let it be clear that the NT, and the NT alone, is our standard of authority. 2. All denominational creeds are wrong!  
("No Creed, But Christ," Chris Reeves, <http://truthmagazine.com/content/webpdf/nocreeds.PDF>)

4. Read the following quotation from the Formula of Concord, and explain the distinction between the Scriptures and the Confessions:

<sup>7</sup> In this way the distinction between the Holy Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament and all other writings is preserved. The Holy Scriptures alone remain the judge, rule, and norm. According to them—as the only touchstone—all teachings shall and must be discerned and judged to see whether they are good or evil [1 Thessalonians 5:21–22], right or wrong.

<sup>8</sup> The other symbols and writings mentioned above are not judges like the Holy Scriptures. They are only a testimony and declaration of the faith. They show how the Holy Scriptures have been understood and explained in regard to controversial articles in God's Church by those living at that time. Also, they show how the opposite teaching was rejected and condemned (by what arguments the dogmas conflicting with the Holy Scriptures were rejected and condemned). (Formula of Concord, Epitome, Introduction, Par. 7-8)

5. Read the following quotation from the constitution of our congregation, and explain why it is wise (even necessary) for us to regularly study the Lutheran Confessions:

This congregation accepts and confesses all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580 as true statements of Scriptural doctrine...without reservation because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith held by the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Hence, no doctrine shall be taught or tolerated in this congregation which is in any way at variance with these symbolical books and the Holy Scriptures.

### **Background of the Large Catechism**

Luther explains what was a driving force behind his writing the Large Catechism in 1529 (See also "The Origin of the Catechisms" on the last page of this lesson):

...to all Christians, but especially to all pastors and preachers...We have no small reasons for constantly preaching the catechism and for both desiring and begging others to teach it. For sadly we see that many pastors and preachers are very negligent in this matter and slight both their office and this teaching. Some neglect the catechism because of great and high art (giving their mind, as they imagine, to much "higher" matters). But others neglect it from sheer laziness and care for their bellies. (Long Preface, Par. 1)

### **Prefaces of the Large Catechism**

<sup>7</sup> But for myself I say this: I am also a doctor and preacher; yes, as learned and experienced as all the people who have such assumptions and contentment. Yet I act as a child who is being taught the catechism. Every morning—and whenever I have time—I read and say, word for word, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Psalms, and such. I must still read and study them daily. Yet I cannot master the catechism as I wish. <sup>8</sup> But I must remain a child and pupil of the catechism, and am glad to remain so. (Long Preface, Par. 7-8)

6. What can we learn from Luther's attitude toward the "simple" teachings of the catechism?

<sup>9</sup> For even if they know and understand the catechism perfectly (which, however, is impossible in this life), there are still many benefits and fruits to be gained, if it is daily read and practiced in thought and speech. For example, the Holy Spirit is present in such reading, repetition, and meditation. He bestows ever new and more light and devoutness. In this way the catechism is daily loved and appreciated better...

<sup>10</sup> Besides, catechism study is a most effective help against the devil, the world, the flesh, and all evil thoughts. It helps to be occupied with God's Word, to speak it, and meditate on it, just as the first Psalm declares people blessed who meditate on God's Law day and night (Psalm 1:2). Certainly you will not release a stronger incense or other repellent against the devil than to be engaged by God's commandments and words, and speak, sing, or think them [Colossians 3:16]. For this is indeed the true "holy water" and "holy sign" from which the devil runs and by which he may be driven away [James 4:7]. (Long Preface, Par. 9-10)

7. Describe how God blesses Christians in their daily lives through their regular study of God's Word and the truths of the catechism.

If I were to list all the profit and fruit God's Word produces, where would I get enough paper and time? The devil is called the master of a thousand arts. <sup>13</sup> But what shall we call God's Word, which drives away and brings to nothing this master of a thousand arts with all his arts and power? The Word must indeed be the master of more than a hundred thousand arts. And shall we easily despise such power, profit, strength, and fruit—we, especially, who claim to be pastors and preachers? If so, not only should we have nothing given us to eat, but we should also be driven out, baited with dogs, and pelted with dung. We not only need all this every day just as we need our daily bread, but we must also daily use it against the daily and unending attacks and lurking of the devil [1 Peter 5:8], the master of a thousand arts. (Long Preface, Par. 12-13)

8. Luther not only speaks highly of the power of the Word in the life of a Christian. He also speaks strongly against pastors and preachers who “despise such power, profit, strength, and fruit.” Read 1 Timothy 4:11-16. Why is Luther so passionate about such pastors' neglect of the Word?

<sup>16</sup> What else are such proud, arrogant saints doing who are unwilling to read and study the catechism daily? They think they are much more learned than God Himself with all His saints, angels, prophets, apostles, and all Christians. God Himself is not ashamed to teach these things daily. He knows nothing better to teach. He always keeps teaching the same thing and does not take up anything new or different. All the saints know nothing better or different to learn and cannot finish learning this. Are we not the finest of all fellows to imagine that if we have once read or heard the catechism, we know it all and have no further need to read and learn? Can we finish learning in one hour what God Himself cannot finish teaching? He is engaged in teaching this from the beginning to the end of the world. All prophets, together with all saints, have been busy learning it, have ever remained students, and must continue to be students. (Long Preface, Par. 16)

<sup>19</sup> Therefore, I again beg all Christians—especially pastors and preachers—not to think of themselves as doctors too soon and imagine that they know everything. (For imagination, like unshrunk cloth, will fall far short of the measure.) Instead, they should daily exercise themselves well in these studies and constantly use them. Furthermore, they should guard with all care and diligence against the poisonous infection of contentment and vain imagination, but steadily keep on reading, teaching, learning, pondering, and meditating on the catechism. And they should not stop until they have tested and are sure that they have taught the devil to death, and have become more learned than God Himself and all His saints. (Long Preface, Par. 19)

9. Luther calls those “who are unwilling to read and study the catechism daily” “proud, arrogant saints.” And he said that we should not stop until we “have become more learned than God himself and all His saints.” How can you make better use of the catechism in your daily life? How can we help Christians see that youth or adult confirmation classes are not the end of learning the Scriptures but the beginning of a lifetime of learning?

<sup>20</sup> If they show such diligence, then I will promise them—and they shall also see—what fruit they will receive, and what excellent people God will make of them. So in due time they themselves will admit that the longer and the more they study the catechism, the less they know of it and the more they will find to learn. Only then, as hungry and thirsty men, will they truly relish what now they cannot stand because of great abundance and contentment. To this end may God grant His grace! Amen. (Long Preface, Par. 20)

10. If you find yourself losing interest in studying God's Word, what advice would Luther offer?

<sup>3</sup> Therefore, we must have the young learn well and fluently the parts of the catechism or instruction for children, diligently exercise themselves in them, and keep them busy with these parts.

<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is the duty of every father of a family to question and examine his children and servants at least once a week and see what they know or are learning from the catechism. And if they do not know the catechism, he should keep them learning it faithfully. (Short Preface, Par. 3-4)

11. To whom does Luther assign the responsibility of making sure that children learn the basic truths of God's Word (See also Deuteronomy 6:6-9 and Ephesians 6:4)? What, then, is the church's role?

## You make the call

*"It's good for my son to go to confirmation class. I'll send him," says a rather irregular church member.*

*The pastor replied, "Don't bother if you're not going to bring him to church on Sunday."*

*Was the pastor's reply a good one? What should the pastor do if the child attends catechism class but does not attend church on Sunday? What about Sunday School?*

## During the Week

1. Review this lesson by reread Luther's Prefaces to the Large Catechism.
2. Read Luther's Large Catechism, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandments.
3. Think about Luther's words regarding personal use of the catechism. Can you think of a way your family could use the catechism at home?

## Where to Find Luther's Large Catechism

- *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (Paul T. McCain, ed. Concordia Publishing House, 2005), **available for Kindle, iBooks**
- Other editions of the Book of Concord
- *Luther's Large Catechism: A Contemporary Translation with Study Questions* (F. Samuel Janzow, ed. Concordia Publishing House, 1978)
- *Luther's Large Catechism with Study Questions* (Paul T. McCain, ed. Concordia Publishing House, 2010) – same text as *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, **available for Kindle, iBooks**
- [www.LambofGodColumbus.org/LC](http://www.LambofGodColumbus.org/LC) (PDF of 1917 translation)
- [www.BookofConcord.org](http://www.BookofConcord.org)

## The Origin of the Catechisms

From *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, pp. 309-311

Martin Luther was first and foremost a Bible professor at the University of Wittenberg, but he was also a parish preacher who served at both the city and castle churches in Wittenberg. In 1516 Luther preached a thorough sermon series on the Ten Commandments. In 1517 he preached a sermon series on the Lord's Prayer and wrote a short explanation of the Ten Commandments to help the members of the parish confess their sins. In 1518 Luther published his exposition of the Ten Commandments. In the next two years he published other short tracts based on his catechetical sermons. In 1520 he gathered these resources together and had them published under the title *A Short Form of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer*.

Luther wanted this book to serve the laypeople. While Luther built on catechetical customs, his work stood out as a clear departure from much of medieval catechesis. There were three key reasons for this: First, Luther removed a lot of the additional materials that had accumulated throughout the Middle Ages and focused primarily on the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, urging that if these three things were learned well, the most important truths of Christianity would be known. Second, Luther very intentionally arranged the catechism so that the Commandments would be first, then the Creed, then the Lord's Prayer. Third, Luther divided the Apostles' Creed into only three parts, not the traditional twelve parts. Luther wanted to focus clearly on the three persons of the Holy Trinity and their respective saving work. Luther's little 1520 book was the foundation for his later catechetical work.

In 1525 Luther formally commissioned what he called the "children's catechism" (*catechismus puerorum*), using the term *catechism* for the first time. He directed his colleagues Justus Jonas and John Agricola to do this work. Luther felt he was too busy to do it himself, but as it turned out, Jonas and Agricola also did not do the job to Luther's satisfaction.

Luther continued preaching each year on the basic parts of the catechism and added sermons equally clear and simple on the Sacraments: Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord's Supper. In 1528 he again took over catechism instruction in the parish church in Wittenberg and preached three series of sermons that year—in May, September, and December—each containing about ten sermons. These thirty sermons would serve Luther well a year later, in 1529, when he finally wrote the catechisms.

What ignited Luther's passion to put the catechisms in writing was a visit he had made to Saxony at the urging of its Elector. Luther was horrified to see how bad things were in the Saxon churches. He realized how essential it was for him to get to work on his catechisms. Here is what he said:

The deplorable, miserable condition which I discovered lately when I, too, was a visitor, has forced and urged me to prepare this Catechism, or Christian doctrine, in this small, plain, simple form. Mercy! Good God! what manifold misery I beheld! The common people ... have no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine, and, alas! many pastors are altogether incapable, and incompetent to teach. Nevertheless, all maintain that they are Christians.... Yet they cannot recite either the Lord's Prayer, or the Creed, or the Ten Commandments, they live like dumb brutes and irrational swine. (Bente, 156)

Luther finished the Large Catechism in March 1529, and in mid-April the first copies were in print. The title was simply *German Catechism, Martin Luther*. He finished the Small Catechism in May 1529. Its title was *The Small Catechism for Ordinary Pastors and Preachers, Martin Luther, Wittenberg*. It was an instant best-seller, printed and reprinted many times in Wittenberg and other cities throughout Germany. In early 1529 Luther also had large posters printed containing the chief parts of the catechism. These posters were hung up on walls in churches, schools, and homes for the people to recite together.

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### LESSON TWO: 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandments

#### First Commandment *You shall have no other gods.*

<sup>4</sup> The purpose of this commandment is to require true faith and trust of the heart, which settles upon the only true God and clings to Him alone. It is like saying, "See to it that you let Me alone be your God, and never seek another." In other words, "Whatever you lack of good things, expect it from Me. Look to Me for it. And whenever you suffer misfortune and distress, crawl and cling to Me. I, yes, I, will give you enough and help you out of every need. Only do not let your heart cleave to or rest on any other." (Ten Commandments, Par. 4)

1. Luther explains the purpose of the first commandment. Read Psalm 115:1-13. Explain how the first commandment is evidence of God's love.

A god means that from which we are to expect all good and in which we are to take refuge in all distress. So, to have a God is nothing other than trusting and believing Him with the heart...Now, I say that whatever you set your heart on and put your trust in is truly your god...Therefore, I repeat that the chief explanation of this point is that to "have a god" is to have something in which the heart entirely trusts. (Ten Commandments, Par. 2-3,10)

2. Everyone has a "god." How might you explain this to someone who doesn't claim to follow a religion?

Many a person thinks that he has God and everything in abundance when he has money and possessions. He trusts in them and boasts about them with such firmness and assurance as to care for no one. <sup>6</sup> Such a person has a god by the name of "Mammon" (i.e., money and possessions; [Matthew 6:24]), on which he sets all his heart. <sup>7</sup> This is the most common idol on earth. He who has money and possessions feels secure [Luke 12:16-21] and is joyful and undismayed as though he were sitting in the midst of Paradise. <sup>8</sup> On the other hand, he who has no money doubts and is despondent, as though he knew of no God. <sup>9</sup> For very few people can be found who are of good cheer and who neither mourn nor complain if they lack Mammon. This care and desire for money sticks and clings to our nature, right up to the grave. (Ten Commandments, Par. 5-9)

3. How does idolatry to "Mammon" threaten the church's ministry? How can we help one another recognize this idolatry in our lives and resist its temptations?

<sup>22</sup> Beside this, there is also a false worship and extreme idolatry, which we have practiced up to now. This is also still common in the world. All churchly orders are founded on it. It concerns the conscience alone, which seeks help, consolation, and salvation in its own works. This conscience imagines it can wrestle heaven away from God and thinks about how many requests it has made, how often it has fasted, celebrated Mass, and so on. Upon such things it depends and boasts, as though unwilling to receive anything from God as a gift. For it wants to earn or merit heaven with abundant works. The conscience acts as though God must serve us and is our debtor, and we are His liege lords. <sup>23</sup> What is this but reducing God to an idol—indeed, an apple-god—and elevating and regarding ourselves as God? (Ten Commandments, Par. 22-23)

4. Read Romans 11:33-36. Explain how works-righteousness is “false worship and extreme idolatry” that elevates oneself as God.

<sup>26</sup> Even though we experience much good from other people, whatever we receive by God's command or arrangement is all received from God. For our parents and all rulers and everyone else, with respect to his neighbor, have received from God the command that they should do us all kinds of good. So we receive these blessings not from them, but through them, from God. For creatures are only the hands, channels, and means by which God gives all things. So He gives to the mother breasts and milk to offer to her child, and He gives corn and all kinds of produce from the earth for nourishment [Psalm 104:27–28; 147:8–9]. None of these blessings could be produced by any creature of itself.

5. How does the doctrine of vocation (that God calls people to represent him in serving others) guard against thankless idolatry?

### Appendix to the First Commandment

***I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments.  
[Exodus 20:5–6]***

<sup>42</sup> But unfortunately, here is the failure: the world believes none of this, nor regards it as God's Word. For the world sees that those who trust in God and not in Mammon suffer care and want, and that the devil opposes and resists them. They don't have money or favor or honor, and besides, can scarcely support life. On the other hand, those who serve Mammon have power, favor, honor, possessions, and every comfort in the eyes of the world. For this reason, these words must be understood to speak against the appearance of such things. And we must consider that they do not lie or deceive, but must come true. (Ten Commandments, Par. 42)

6. The Lord promises blessings to those who keep his commands and threatens punishments to those who disobey him. Sometimes what we observe seems to contradict this. How do we explain the seeming contradiction between what God has said and what we observe?

This is enough about the First Commandment, which we have had to explain at length, since it is of chief importance. For, as said earlier, where the heart is rightly set toward God [Deuteronomy 32:46] and this commandment is observed, all the other commandments follow. (Ten Commandments, Par. 48)

7. Explain how all of the other commandments flow from the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment.

## Second Commandment

### ***You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.***

<sup>50</sup> The First Commandment has instructed the heart and taught the faith. This commandment now leads us forward and directs the mouth and tongue to God. For the first things that spring from the heart and show themselves are words [Matthew 12:34].

8. How is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment closely connected to the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment?

<sup>54</sup> But the greatest abuse occurs in spiritual matters. These have to do with the conscience, when false preachers rise up and offer their lying vanities as God's Word [Jonah 2:8]. (Ten Commandments, Par. 54)

9. Read Matthew 7:15. Why are the lies of false teachers especially dangerous and detestable to God?

<sup>62</sup> Now you understand what it means to take God's name in vain. In sum it means (a) to use His name simply for purposes of falsehood, (b) to assert in God's name something that is not true, or (c) to curse, swear, use spells, and, in short, to practice whatever wickedness one may. (Ten Commandments, Par. 62)

10. Of the three ways of misusing God's name, which do you think poses the greatest threat to Christians?

<sup>73</sup> It is also useful that we form the habit of daily commending ourselves to God [Psalm 31:5], with soul and body, wife, children, servants, and all that we have, against every need that may arise. So also the blessing and thanksgiving at meals [Mark 8:6] and other prayers, morning and evening, have begun and remained in use [Exodus 29:38–43]. <sup>74</sup> Likewise, children should continue to cross themselves when anything monstrous or terrible is seen or heard. They can shout, "Lord God, protect us!" "Help, dear Lord Jesus!" and such. Also, if anyone meets with unexpected good fortune, however trivial, he says, "God be praised and thanked!" or "God has bestowed this on me!" and so on. (Ten Commandments, Par. 73-74)

11. We may sometimes think of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment only in terms of the misuses of God's name. How does God want us to use his name? How can parents teach their children such proper use?



12. Some Christians are uncomfortable around people who blurt out "Praise the Lord!" whenever something good happens or whenever God's blessings come up in conversation. Is it right or wrong to feel this way? What is Luther saying here?

### **You make the call**

*A person knows he should not curse or swear. But he is called to testify on behalf of a friend. The friend is charged with theft (and is later found guilty), and this man has been asked to give a good character reference for his friend, which he, in all honesty, has never seen stealing. Also, he has never been in a courtroom, and now suddenly he is told to "swear to tell the truth, so help you God." He does, but his conscience troubles him. What is more, he later discovers the truth that his friend is a thief. He comes to you with his troubled conscience. What should you say?*

### **During the Week**

1. Review this lesson by rereading Luther's Large Catechism, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandments.
2. Read Luther's Large Catechism, 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> Commandments.
3. Think about Luther's words regarding trust in anything other than God for good. In what areas of your life do you most struggle to trust God? In what other things do you put your trust?

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### LESSON THREE: 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Commandments

#### Third Commandment *You shall sanctify the holy day.*

We keep them first of all for bodily causes and necessities, which nature teaches and requires. We keep them for the common people, manservants and maidservants, who have been attending to their work and trade the whole week. In this way they may withdraw in order to rest for a day and be refreshed.<sup>84</sup> Second, and most especially, on this day of rest (since we can get no other chance), we have the freedom and time to attend divine service. We come together to hear and use God's Word, and then to praise God, to sing and to pray [Colossians 3:16]. (Ten Commandments, Par. 83-84)

1. Read Exodus 23:12 and Leviticus 23:3. For what two main purposes does the Lord command a day of rest?
2. The Sabbath was to be a day of remembrance and anticipation. According to the following passages, what did God intend for the day of rest to call to mind?
  - a. Exodus 20:11
  - b. Deuteronomy 5:15
  - c. Hebrews 4:9-11

<sup>85</sup> However, this keeping of the Sabbath, I point out, is not restricted to a certain time, as with the Jewish people. It does not have to be just on this or that day. For in itself no one day is better than another [Romans 14:5-6]. Instead, this should be done daily. However, since the masses of people cannot attend every day, there must be at least one day in the week set apart. (Ten Commandments, Par. 85)

3. Luther points out that "this keeping of the Sabbath" (for the sake of hearing and using God's Word) is not restricted to a certain time. How often does he say it should be done?
4. Read Colossians 2:16-17. Explain why the requirement of complete rest on the 7<sup>th</sup> day (Saturday) no longer applies to New Testament Christians.

<sup>96</sup> It is not only the people who greatly misuse and desecrate the holy day who sin against this commandment (those who neglect to hear God's Word because of their greed or frivolity or lie in taverns and are dead drunk like swine). But even that other crowd sins. They listen to God's Word like it was any other trifle and only come to preaching because of custom. They go away again, and at the end of the year they know as little of God's Word as at the beginning. (Ten Commandments, Par. 96)

5. Read Mark 7:6-7 and James 1:22-26. How do Luther's words and these passages guard regular church attenders (and even regular Bible readers) from pride?
6. Share tips, tricks, and/or tools you use to try to avoid merely going through the motions in worship or personal or group Bible study. How do you try to go away knowing more of God's Word than when you came?

### **Fourth Commandment**

***You shall honor your father and your mother that it may be well with you and you may live long upon the earth.***

<sup>105</sup> To the position of fatherhood and motherhood God has given special distinction above all positions that are beneath it: He does not simply command us to love our parents, but to honor them... <sup>106</sup> For it is a far higher thing to honor someone than to love someone, because honor includes not only love, but also modesty, humility, and submission to a majesty hidden in them. <sup>107</sup> Honor requires not only that parents be addressed kindly and with reverence, but also that, both in the heart and with the body, we demonstrate that we value them very highly, and that, next to God, we regard them as the very highest. For someone we honor from the heart we must also truly regard as high and great...The young...should think of their parents as standing in God's place. They should remember that however lowly, poor, frail, and strange their parents may be, nevertheless, they are the father and the mother given to them by God. Parents are not to be deprived of their honor because of their conduct or their failings. (Ten Commandments, Par. 105-108)

7. What do you think are the most significant factors that have contributed to the decline in respect for parents in our culture? What do you see as the most significant consequences?

So also men are all called fathers in the Scriptures, who in their government perform the functions of a father, and have a paternal heart toward their subordinates. From antiquity the Romans and other nations called the masters and mistresses of the household" and "housemothers." They called their national rulers and overlords "fathers of the entire country." This is a great shame to us who would be Christians because we do not give them the same title or, at least, do not value and honor them as fathers. (Ten Commandments, Par. 141)

8. Read Romans 13:1-2. Like God's command to honor parents, his command to submit to the government as his authorities has only one exception (see Acts 4:29). Why is this especially important to remember in our ever-changing political climate?

<sup>158</sup> So we have two kinds of fathers presented in this commandment: fathers in blood and fathers in office. Or, those who have the care of the family and those who have the care of the country. Besides these there are still spiritual fathers...For the only ones called spiritual fathers are those who govern and guide us by God's Word. <sup>159</sup> In this sense, St. Paul boasts his fatherhood in 1 Corinthians 4:15, where he says, "I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel." <sup>160</sup> Now, since they are fathers, they are entitled to their honor, even above all others. But to spiritual fathers the least amount of honor is bestowed. The way the world knows for honoring them is to drive them out of the country and to begrudge them a piece of bread. In short, spiritual fathers must be (as says St. Paul [1 Corinthians 4:13]) like the filth of the world and everybody's refuse and footrag. (Ten Commandments, Par. 158-160)

9. Read 1 Timothy 5:17 and Hebrews 13:7,17. List ways of showing honor for spiritual fathers.

10. Why do you think that, often, "to spiritual fathers the least amount of honor is bestowed"?

God wants to have this included in this commandment when He speaks of father and mother. <sup>168</sup> ...they should consider that they are obligated to obey God. First of all, they should seriously and faithfully fulfill their office, not only to support and provide for the bodily necessities of their children, servants, subjects, and so on, but, most of all, they should train them to honor and praise God [Proverbs 22:6]. <sup>169</sup> Therefore, do not think that this matter is left to your pleasure and arbitrary will. This is God's strict command and order, to whom also you must give account for it [1 Peter 4:5]. (Ten Commandments, Par. 167-169)

<sup>172</sup> For if we wish to have excellent and able persons both for civil and Church leadership, we must spare no diligence, time, or cost in teaching and educating our children, so that they may serve God and the world. <sup>173</sup> We must not think only about how we may amass money and possessions for them. God can indeed support and make them rich without us, as He daily does. But for this purpose He has given us children and issued this command: we should train and govern them according to His will. Otherwise, He would have no purpose for a father and a mother. <sup>174</sup> Therefore, let everyone know that it is his duty, on peril of losing the divine favor, to bring up his children in the fear and knowledge of God above all things [Proverbs 1:7]. (Ten Commandments, Par. 172-174)

11. Read Ephesians 6:4. What does God say is the most important role that parents have in the lives of their children?

12. Discuss how the church and fellow Christians can support parents in this important role.

## You make the call

How would you respond to the following reasons for not attending worship on Sundays?

*"Pastor, I'd like to come to church, but I just can't. I just started a new job, and I've got to work Sundays. When I work my way up the seniority list, I'll be able to come to church on Sundays."*

*"Pastor, it has just been really busy lately. Sundays are the only day we have to get some rest and enjoy time with our kids."*

## You make the call

*The pastor is calling on a woman who has visited church. She has children who are not baptized. She tells the pastor that she liked his church but probably won't be coming back anytime soon. "I don't want to shove religion down my kids' throats," she confides. "When they are older, I'll let them make their own choice."*

*Using the Third and Fourth Commandments as your starting point, what would you say to her?*

### During the Week

1. Review this lesson by rereading Luther's Large Catechism, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Commandments.
2. Read Luther's Large Catechism, 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Commandments.
3. Luther made a comment to the effect of "while we still have the Word." Think about how our generation's attitude towards God's Word can impact our children and grandchildren.

# LUTHER'S LARGE CATECHISM

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### LESSON FOUR: 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> Commandments

#### **Fifth Commandment** ***You shall not murder.***

Where murder is forbidden, all cause from which murder may spring is also forbidden. For many people, although they do not kill, curse and utter a wish that would stop a person from running far if it were to strike him on the neck...The heart must not be ill disposed toward anyone or wish another person ill in anger and hatred...A person who does evil to his neighbor is not the only one guilty under this commandment. It also applies to anyone who can do his neighbor good, prevent or resist evil, defend, and save his neighbor so that no bodily harm or hurt happen to him—yet does not do this [James 2:15–16]. (Ten Commandments, Par. 186, 188–189)

1. The most obvious sins against the fifth commandment are those in which a person causes physical harm to someone else. According to the following passages, in what other ways is the fifth commandment broken in what we do (or don't do)?
  - a. Matthew 5:21-22
  - b. 1 John 3:15
  - c. James 2:15-16
2. Which of these do you think is most often overlooked as sinful by the world? in your own heart?

**187** Now, this urge dwells in everyone by nature. It is common practice that no one is willing to suffer at the hands of another person. Therefore, God wants to remove the root and source by which the heart is embittered against our neighbor. He wants to make us used to keeping this commandment ever in view, always to contemplate ourselves in it as in a mirror [James 1:23–25], to regard the will of God, and to turn over to Him the wrong that we suffer with hearty confidence and by calling on His name. In this way we shall let our enemies rage and be angry, doing what they can. We learn to calm our wrath and to have a patient, gentle heart, especially toward those who give us cause to be angry (i.e., our enemies). (Ten Commandments, Par. 186–187)

3. Read Romans 12:17-21. When is it especially difficult to keep the fifth commandment? What does God want us to do in these situations?

4. Read Romans 5:10 and 1 Peter 2:19-25. How do these passages both comfort us and encourage us with regard to the fifth commandment?

### **Sixth Commandment** ***You shall not commit adultery.***

This commandment is directed against all kinds of unchastity, whatever it may be called. <sup>203</sup> Not only is the outward act of adultery forbidden, but also every kind of cause, motive, and means of adultery. Then the heart, the lips, and the whole body may be chaste and offer no opportunity, help, or persuasion toward in chastity. (Ten Commandments, Par. 202-203)

5. Read Matthew 5:27-28. God makes it clear that impure thoughts and words are just as sinful as the act of adultery. How do lust, pornography, and other such sins damage God's gift of marriage?

<sup>204</sup> Not only this, but we must also resist temptation, offer protection, and rescue honor wherever there is danger and need. We must give help and counsel, so as to maintain our neighbor's honor. (Ten Commandments, Par. 204)

6. In a world in which marriage is increasingly dishonored, how can we help *others* to honor God's gift of marriage?

<sup>207</sup> Therefore, He also wishes us to honor [marriage] [Hebrews 13:4] and to maintain and govern it as a divine and blessed estate because, in the first place, He has instituted it before all others. He created man and woman separately, as is clear [Genesis 1:27]. This was not for lewdness, but so that they might live together in marriage, be fruitful, bear children, and nourish and train them to honor God [Genesis 1:28; Psalm 128; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4]. <sup>208</sup> Therefore, God has also most richly blessed this estate above all others. In addition, He has bestowed on it and wrapped up in it everything in the world, so that this estate might be well and richly provided for. Married life is, therefore, no joke or presumption. It is an excellent thing and a matter of divine seriousness. For marriage has the highest importance to God so that people are raised up who may serve the world and promote the knowledge of God, godly living, and all virtues, to fight against wickedness and the devil. (Ten Commandments, Par. 207-208)

7. For what purposes(s) did God institute the "divine and blessed estate" of marriage?
8. How does an individual's or a culture's understanding (or misunderstanding) of the purpose(s) for marriage affect how they treat this institution?

<sup>219</sup> Let me now say in conclusion what this commandment demands: Everyone should live chaste in thought, word, and deed in his condition—that is, especially in the estate of marriage. But also everyone should love and value the spouse God gave to him [Ephesians 5:33]. For where marital chastity is to be maintained, man and wife must by all means live together in love and harmony. Then one may cherish the other from the heart and with complete faithfulness. For harmony is one of the principal points that enkindles love and desire for chastity, so that, where this is found, chastity will follow without any command. <sup>220</sup> Therefore, St. Paul diligently encourages husband and wife to love and honor one another. (Ten Commandments, Par. 219-220)

9. What tips would you give your child or another young Christian for a God-pleasing Christian marriage?

### **Seventh Commandment** ***You shall not steal.***

Consider a manservant or maidservant who does not serve faithfully in the house, does damage, or allows damage to be done when it could be prevented. He ruins and neglects the goods entrusted to him, by laziness, idleness, or hate, to the spite and sorrow of master and mistress. ... If another servant had taken that much money secretly or carried it away, he would be hanged with the rope. But...no one dare call you a thief. <sup>226</sup> I say the same also about mechanics, workmen, and day laborers. They all follow their evil thoughts and never know enough ways to overcharge people, while they are lazy and unfaithful in their work. All these are far worse than burglars, whom we can guard against with locks and bolts and, if caught, can be treated in such a way that they will not commit the crime again. But against unfaithful workers no one can guard. No one even dares to give them an angry look or accuse them of theft. (Ten Commandments, Par. 225-226)

10. What common sin against the seventh commandment does Luther identify here? Why do you think that, often, no one dares to call it theft?

<sup>227</sup> Furthermore, in the market and in common trade also, this practice is in full swing and force to the greatest extent. There one openly cheats another with bad merchandise; false measures, weights, and coins; and by nimbleness and strange finances [Proverbs 20:10]. Or he takes advantage of him with clever tricks. Likewise, one overcharges another in a trade and greedily drives a hard bargain, skins and distresses him. Who can repeat or think of all these acts?...<sup>231</sup> This is, in short, the way of the world: whoever can steal and rob openly goes free and secure, unmolested by anyone, and even demands that he be honored. Meanwhile, the little burglars, who have once trespassed, must bear the shame and punishment to make the former thieves appear godly and honorable. But let such open thieves know that in God's sight they are the greatest thieves. (Ten Commandments, Par. 231)

11. Read Ezekiel 22:12. Agree or disagree: Free-market capitalism is against the seventh commandment.



<sup>253</sup> Here, then, you have a rich Lord. He is certainly enough for you. He will not allow you to come up short in anything or to lack [Psalm 37:25]. So you can with a joyful conscience enjoy a hundred times more than you could scrape together with unfaithfulness and wrong. (Ten Commandments, Par. 253)

12. Read Psalm 37:25 and Philippians 4:19. How do these verses provide us with comfort and motivation to obey the seventh commandment?

### You make the call

*You are driving home from vacation. Taking a detour to a Nevada ghost town, you come upon a college student whose Volkswagen Bug (vintage 1966) has broken down. It is really hot, about 113 degrees. You stop, give him a gallon of cold water and promise to call the police.*

*Upon getting in the car, you are chastised by your spouse for not doing enough to help the man. Are they right? Why or why not?*

### During the Week

1. Review this lesson by rereading Luther's Large Catechism, 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Commandments.
2. Read Luther's Large Catechism, 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Commandments.
3. List why it is important to you have a good name. Think about a time when your good name was damaged (by your fault or not).
4. List times or areas of your life in which you have found it most difficult to be content.

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### LESSON FIVE: 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> Commandments

#### Eighth Commandment

***You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.***

<sup>264</sup> Here belongs particularly the detestable, shameful vice of speaking behind a person's back and slandering, to which the devil spurs us on, and of which much could be said. For it is a common evil plague that everyone prefers hearing evil more than hearing good about his neighbor. We ourselves are so bad that we cannot allow anyone to say anything bad about us. Everyone would much prefer that all the world should speak of him in glowing terms. Yet we cannot bear that the best is spoken about others. (Ten Commandments, Par. 264)

1. Read Ephesians 4:29. Luther says, "Everyone would much prefer that all the world should speak of him in glowing terms. Yet we cannot bear that the best is spoken about others." Why is this true?

Here it is a common occurrence that everyone bears false witness against his neighbor. For wherever there are godly preachers and Christians, they must bear the sentence before the world that calls them heretics, apostates, and indeed, instigators and desperately wicked unbelievers. Besides, God's Word must suffer in the most shameful and hateful manner, being persecuted, blasphemed, contradicted, perverted, and falsely quoted and interpreted. (Ten Commandments, Par. 262)

2. Read John 15:18-25. In what way should Christians expect others to bear false witness against them?

<sup>276</sup> The true way in this matter would be to keep the order in the Gospel. In Matthew 18:15, Christ says, "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone." Here you have a precious and excellent teaching for governing well the tongue, which is to be carefully kept against this detestable misuse. Let this, then, be your rule, that you do not too quickly spread evil about your neighbor and slander him to others. Instead, admonish him privately that he may amend his life. Likewise, if someone reports to you what this or that person has done, teach him, too, to go and admonish that person personally, if he has seen the deed himself. But if he has not seen it, then let him hold his tongue. (Ten Commandments, Par. 276)

3. Read Matthew 18:15. Luther asks, "do you think it is a small matter to gain a brother?" (Par. 278). How does that important goal affect how we deal with the sins of fellow Christians?

<sup>284</sup> All this has been said about secret sins. But where the sin is quite public, so that the judge and everybody know about it, you can without any sin shun the offender and let him go his own way, because he has brought himself into disgrace. You may also publicly testify about him. For when a matter is public in the daylight, there can be no slandering or false judging or testifying. It is like when we now rebuke the pope with his doctrine, which is publicly set forth in books and proclaimed in all the world. Where the sin is public, the rebuke also must be public, that everyone may learn to guard against it. (Ten Commandments, Par. 284)

4. Read 1 Timothy 5:19-20. Why must our response to public sin be different than our response to "secret" private sin?

<sup>289</sup> It is especially an excellent and noble virtue for someone always to explain things for his neighbor's advantage and to put the best construction on all he may hear about his neighbor (if it is not notoriously evil). Or, at any rate, forgive the matter over and against the poisonous tongues that are busy wherever they can to pry out and discover something to blame in a neighbor [Psalm 140:3]. They explain and pervert the matter in the worst way, as is done now especially with God's precious Word and its preachers. (Ten Commandments, Par. 289)

5. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. What makes the "excellent and noble virtue" that Luther describes here so difficult to do? Why is it essential for the unity of a Christian congregation?

**Ninth and Tenth Commandments**  
***You shall not covet your neighbor's house.***  
***You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant,***  
***or his maidservant, or his cattle, or anything that is his.***

For above, in the Seventh Commandment, the vice is forbidden where one takes for himself the possessions of others or withholds them from his neighbor. A person cannot rightly do these things. But here it is also forbidden for you to alienate anything from your neighbor, even though you could do so with honor in the eyes of the world, so that no one could accuse or blame you as though you had gotten it wrongfully. (Ten Commandments, Par. 296)

6. Explain the distinction that Luther makes between the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment ("You shall not steal.") and the commandments against coveting.

<sup>307</sup> In whatever way such things happen, we must know that God does not want you to deprive your neighbor of anything that belongs to him, so that he suffer the loss and you gratify your greed with it. This is true even if you could keep it honorably before the world. For it is a secret and sly trick done "under the hat," as we say, so it may not be noticed. Although you go your way as if you had done no one any wrong, you have still injured your neighbor. If it is not called stealing and cheating, it is still called coveting your neighbor's property, that is, aiming at possession of it, luring it away from him without his consent, and being unwilling to see him enjoy what God has granted him. (Ten Commandments, Par. 308)

7. Read Exodus 23:4-5. List some specific practices approved by the world that the ninth and tenth commandments might identify as sin.

<sup>310</sup> So these commandments are especially directed against envy and miserable greed. God wants to remove all causes and sources from which arises everything by which we harm our neighbor. Therefore, He expresses it in plain words, "You shall not covet," and so on. For He especially wants us to have a pure heart [Matthew 5:8], although we will never attain to that as long as we live here. So this commandment will remain, like all the rest, one that will constantly accuse us and show how godly we are in God's sight! (Ten Commandments, Par. 310)

8. Read Romans 3:20. How are the ninth and tenth commandments especially effective at achieving this purpose for the law?

### Luther's Conclusion to the Ten Commandments

<sup>313</sup> I am of the opinion, indeed, that here one will find his hands full (and will have enough) to do to keep these commandments: meekness, patience, love towards enemies, chastity, kindness, and other such virtues and their implications [Galatians 5:22–23]. But such works are not of value and make no display in the world's eyes. For these are not peculiar and proud works. They are not restricted to particular times, places, rites, and customs. They are common, everyday, household works that one neighbor can do for another. Therefore, they are not highly regarded. <sup>314</sup> But the other works cause people to open their eyes and ears wide. Men aid this effect by the great display, expense, and magnificent buildings with which they adorn such works, so that everything shines and glitters. There they waft incense, they sing and ring bells, they light tapers and candles, so that nothing else can be seen or heard. For when a priest stands there in a surplice garment embroidered with gold thread, or a layman continues all day upon his knees in Church, that is regarded as a most precious work, which no one can praise enough. But when a poor girl tends a little child and faithfully does what she is told, that is considered nothing. For what else should monks and nuns seek in their cloisters? (Ten Commandments, Par. 313-314)

9. What comfort do we find in these words of Luther?

10. What warning do we find in his words, especially for the way we portray "church work"?

### You make the call

*A person is asking you what your church has to offer. There's Sunday worship, Bible classes, Sunday school, and occasional kids and fellowship events. Your church also encourages people to spend time at home with spouse and children. He is not interested. He wants to join a group that raises money or participates in hunger walks and conducts focus groups on reducing intolerance in the world.*

*What do you tell him?*

### During the Week

1. Review this lesson by rereading Luther's Large Catechism, 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Commandments.
2. Read Luther's Large Catechism, the Apostles' Creed.
3. We live in a country that guarantees freedom of speech. Does that entitle everyone to express his or her own opinion? Why or why not?
4. If someone asks you to describe God, how would you begin?

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### LESSON SIX: The Apostles' Creed

#### The First Article

***I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.***

<sup>13</sup> But what is the force of this, or what do you mean by these words, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?" Answer: "This is what I mean and believe, that I am God's creature [2 Corinthians 5:17]. I mean that He has given and constantly preserves [Psalm 36:6] for me my body, soul, and life, my members great and small, all my senses, reason, and understanding, and so on. He gives me food and drink, clothing and support, wife and children, domestic servants, house and home, and more. <sup>14</sup> Besides, He causes all created things to serve for the uses and necessities of life. These include the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens, day and night, air, fire, water, earth, and whatever it bears and produces. They include birds and fish, beasts, grain, and all kinds of produce [Psalm 104]. (The Apostles' Creed, Par. 13-14)

1. While confessing that God created the entire universe in six days several thousand years ago is important, how does Luther help us to focus more on present reality than past history?

<sup>20</sup> We could say much here, if we were to wander, about how few people believe this article. For we all pass over it, hear it, and say it. Yet we do not see or consider what the words teach us. <sup>21</sup> For if we believed this teaching with the heart, we would also act according to it [James 2:14]. We would not strut about proudly, act defiantly, and boast as though we had life, riches, power, honor, and such, of ourselves [James 4:13-16]. We would not act as though others must fear and serve us, as is the practice of the wretched, perverse world. The world is drowned in blindness and abuses all the good things and God's gifts only for its own pride, greed, lust, and luxury. It never once thinks about God, so as to thank Him or acknowledge Him as Lord and Creator. (The Apostles' Creed, Par. 20-21)

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (p. 1171). How would keeping the First Article in mind every moment of every day affect how we live our lives?

## The Second Article

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

<sup>30</sup> So those tyrants and jailers are all expelled now. In their place has come Jesus Christ, Lord of life, righteousness, every blessing, and salvation. He has delivered us poor, lost people from hell's jaws, has won us, has made us free [Romans 8:1–2], and has brought us again into the Father's favor and grace. He has taken us as His own property under His shelter and protection [Psalm 61:3–4] so that He may govern us by His righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and blessedness. (The Apostles' Creed, Par. 30)

3. After seeing the risen Jesus, Thomas confesses him to be “my Lord and my God” (John 20:28) “Lord” is a term of authority expressed by those who are subject to him. What “tyrants and jailers” were our “lords”? How did Jesus strip them of their power to become our “Lord”?

<sup>31</sup> Let this, then, be the sum of this article: the little word *Lord* means simply the same as *redeemer*. It means the One who has brought us from Satan to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness, and who preserves us in the same. But all the points that follow in this article serve no other purpose than to explain and express this redemption. (The Apostles' Creed, Par. 31)

4. Read Leviticus 25:29 (p. 123) and Galatians 3:13 (p. 1153). What does the word “redeem” mean?
5. Luther claims that “all the points” after “our Lord” in the Second Article serve to “explain and express this redemption.” With this statement, Luther again takes the historical reality of the events of Jesus' life and makes them absolutely timely and relevant. How?

<sup>33</sup> Yes, the entire Gospel that we preach is based on this point, that we properly understand this article as that upon which our salvation and all our happiness rests. It is so rich and complete that we can never learn it fully.

6. Read 1 Corinthians 2:2 (p. 1129) and 1 Corinthians 1:22-24 (p. 1128). What must be at the heart and core of all Christian teaching and preaching? Why?
7. The Gospel is so simple that a child can confess it, but “so rich and complete that we can never learn it fully.” Explain.

### The Third Article

***I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.***

The work of redemption is done and accomplished [John 19:30]. Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us by His suffering, death, resurrection, and so on [Colossians 2:3]. But if the work remained concealed so that no one knew about it, then it would be useless and lost. So that this treasure might not stay buried, but be received and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed. In the Word He has the Holy Spirit bring this treasure home and make it our own. <sup>39</sup> Therefore, sanctifying is just bringing us to Christ so we receive this good, which we could not get ourselves [1 Peter 3:18]. (The Apostles' Creed, Par. 38-39)

8. Read Romans 10:12-17 (p. 1121). Explain the connection between the Second and Third Articles.

<sup>57</sup> However, while sanctification has begun and is growing daily [2 Thessalonians 1:3], we expect that our flesh will be destroyed and buried with all its uncleanness [Romans 6:4-11]. Then we will come forth gloriously and arise in a new, eternal life of entire and perfect holiness. <sup>58</sup> For now we are only half pure and holy. So the Holy Spirit always has some reason to continue His work in us through the Word. He must daily administer forgiveness until we reach the life to come. At that time there will be no more forgiveness, but only perfectly pure and holy people [1 Corinthians 13:10]. We will be full of godliness and righteousness, removed and free from sin, death, and all evil, in a new, immortal, and glorified body [1 Corinthians 15:43, 53]. (The Apostles' Creed, Par. 57-58)

9. Read Philippians 3:12-14 (p. 1163). For how long does the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification continue? What is its goal?

<sup>56</sup> But outside of this Christian Church, where the Gospel is not found, there is no forgiveness, as also there can be no holiness. Therefore, all who seek and wish to earn holiness not through the Gospel and forgiveness of sin, but by their works, have expelled and severed themselves (from this Church) [Galatians 5:4]. (The Apostles' Creed, Par. 56)

10. Read Proverbs 16:25 (p. 641) and Acts 4:12 (p. 1080). To what false hope do many outside of the Christian Church cling? How does it threaten even those within the Church?

For here in all three articles God has revealed Himself and opened the deepest abyss of His fatherly heart and His pure, inexpressible love [Ephesians 3:18-19]. He has created us for this very reason, that He might redeem and sanctify us. In addition to giving and imparting to us everything in heaven and upon earth, He has even given to us His Son and the Holy Spirit, who brings us to Himself [Romans 8:14, 32]. <sup>65</sup> For (as explained above) we could never grasp the knowledge of the Father's grace and favor except through the Lord Christ. Jesus is a mirror of the fatherly heart [John 14:9; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3], outside of whom we see nothing but an angry and terrible Judge. But we couldn't know anything about Christ either, unless it had been revealed by the Holy Spirit [1 Corinthians 2:12]. (The Apostles' Creed, Par. 64-65)

11. How do all three articles of the Apostles' Creed "open the deepest abyss of God's fatherly heart and His pure, inexpressible love"?



<sup>67</sup> From this you see that the Creed is a doctrine quite different from the Ten Commandments. For the Commandments teach what we ought to do. But the Creed tells what God does for us and gives to us. Furthermore, apart from this, the Ten Commandments are written in all people's hearts [Romans 2:15]. However, no human wisdom can understand the Creed. It must be taught by the Holy Spirit alone [1 Corinthians 2:12]. <sup>68</sup> The teaching (of the Commandments), therefore, makes no Christian. For God's wrath and displeasure abide upon us still, because we cannot keep what God demands of us. But the Creed brings pure grace and makes us godly and acceptable to God. (The Apostles' Creed, Par. 67-68)

12. List the differences Luther describes between the Creed and the Commandments. Why are these differences significant?

### You make the call

*A friend who goes to another church accepts your invitation to join you for worship one Sunday. On your way home, your friend says, "What your pastor said about Jesus dying on the cross was nice, but that's not really what I go to church for. What I like about my church is that they give me good advice on how to be the kind of person that God wants me to be."*

*What do you tell him?*

### During the Week

1. Review this lesson by rereading Luther's Large Catechism, The Apostles' Creed.
2. Read Luther's Large Catechism, the Lord's Prayer (Introduction, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Petitions).
3. How can studying a creed like the Apostles' Creed equip a Christian to be a witness?
4. What are the greatest obstacles to consistent prayer in your life?

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### LESSON SEVEN: Lord's Prayer – Introduction, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Petitions

#### Introduction

1. List reasons you have given or heard other Christians give for not praying.

2. Identify Luther's response to reasons not to pray in each of the following quotes:

<sup>8</sup> But praying, as the Second Commandment teaches, is to call upon God in every need. He requires this of us and has not left it to our choice. But it is our duty and obligation to pray, if we would be Christians, just as it is our duty and obligation to obey our parents and the government. For by calling upon God's name and praying, His name is honored and used well. This you must note above all things, so that you may silence and reject thoughts that would keep and deter us from prayer. (The Lord's Prayer, Par. 8)

Indeed, the human heart is by nature so hopeless that it always flees from God and imagines that He does not wish or desire our prayer, because we are sinners and have earned nothing but wrath [Romans 4:15]. <sup>11</sup> Against such thoughts (I say),...God lets us plainly understand that He will not cast us away from Him or chase us away [Romans 11:1]. This is true even though we are sinners. But instead He draws us to Himself [John 6:44], so that we might humble ourselves before Him [1 Peter 5:6], bewail this misery and plight of ours, and pray for grace and help [Psalm 69:13]. (The Lord's Prayer, Par. 10-11)

<sup>16</sup> You should say, "My prayer is as precious, holy, and pleasing to God as that of St. Paul or of the most holy saints. This is the reason: I will gladly grant that Paul is personally more holy, but that's not because of the commandment. God does not consider prayer because of the person, but because of His Word and obedience to it. For I rest my prayer on the same commandment on which all the saints rest their prayer. Furthermore, I pray for the same thing that they all pray for and always have prayed. Besides, I have just as great a need of what I pray for as those great saints; no, even a greater one than they." (The Lord's Prayer, Par. 16)

<sup>19</sup> In the second place, we should be more encouraged and moved to pray because God has also added a promise and declared that it shall surely be done for us as we pray. He says in Psalm 50:15, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you." And Christ says in the Gospel of St. Matthew, "Ask, and it will be given to you; ... for everyone who asks receives" (7:7-8). <sup>20</sup> Such promises certainly ought to encourage and kindle our hearts to pray with pleasure and delight. For He testifies with His own Word that our prayer is heartily pleasing to Him. Furthermore, it shall certainly be heard and granted, in order that we may not despise it or think lightly of it and pray based on chance. (The Lord's Prayer, Par. 19-20)

3. Which of the reasons for praying that Luther identifies is most powerful for you? Why?

### **The First Petition** ***Hallowed be Your name.***

God's name (his reputation) is holy, unpolluted by sin. He risks his name when he puts his name on us in Holy Baptism, just as he did when he called Old Testament Israel his chosen people. In this petition, we pray that, by our doctrine and life, we would not profane that holy name:

As godly children we should pray that God's name, which is already holy in heaven, may also be and remain holy with us upon earth and in all the world. <sup>39</sup> "But how does it become holy among us?"... "When both our doctrine and life are godly and Christian." Since we call God our Father in this prayer, it is our duty always to act and behave ourselves as godly children, that He may not receive shame, but honor and praise from us. (The Lord's Prayer, Par. 38-39)

<sup>41</sup> In the first place, then, God's name is profaned when people preach, teach, and say in God's name what is false and misleading. They use His name like an ornament and attract a market for falsehood. That is, indeed, the greatest way to profane and dishonor the divine name. (The Lord's Prayer, Par. 41)

4. Read Jeremiah 23:13-32 (p. 774). How do we see God's name profaned today in the same way it was by the prophets in Jeremiah's day?
5. Read Genesis 3:1-5 (p. 3). The devil hasn't changed his approach. Why is his approach so effective?
6. Read Ezekiel 33:13 (p. 854) and Isaiah 43:11 (p. 719). How does teaching falsely about God's law take honor and glory away from God?

<sup>43</sup> In the second place, God's name is profaned by an openly wicked life and works, when those who are called Christians and God's people are adulterers, drunkards, misers, enviers, and slanderers [1 Corinthians 5:11]. Here again God's name must come to shame and be profaned because of us. <sup>44</sup> It is a shame and disgrace for a flesh-and-blood father to have a bad, perverse child that opposes him in words and deeds. Because of that child the father suffers contempt and reproach. In the same way also, it brings dishonor upon God if we are called by His name and have all kinds of goods from Him, yet we teach, speak, and live in any other way than as godly and heavenly children. People would say about us that we must not be God's children, but the devil's children [1 John 2:29]. (The Lord's Prayer, Par. 43-44)

7. Read Ezekiel 36:23 (p. 857). Explain how the lives of Christians affect God's name. (Give specific examples, if possible.)

<sup>47</sup> Here, now, learn what great need there is for such prayer. Because we see how full the world is of sects and false teachers, who all wear the holy name as a cover and sham for their doctrines of devils [1 Timothy 4:1], we should by all means pray without ceasing [1 Thessalonians 5:17] and cry out and call upon God against all people who preach and believe falsely. We should pray against whatever opposes and persecutes our Gospel and pure doctrine and would suppress it, as do the bishops, tyrants, enthusiasts, and such [2 Thessalonians 2:3-4]. Likewise, we should pray for ourselves who have God's Word but are not thankful for it, nor live like we ought according to the Word. (The Lord's Prayer, Par. 47)

8. Read Galatians 1:6-9 (p. 1151). Should we pray for Christian teachers and churches that hold to false teachings? Why or why not?

### **The Second Petition Your kingdom come.**

<sup>54</sup> All this is nothing other than saying, "Dear Father, we pray, give us first Your Word, so that the Gospel may be preached properly throughout the world. Second, may the Gospel be received in faith and work and live in us, so that through the Word and the Holy Spirit's power [Romans 15:18-19], Your kingdom may triumph among us. And we pray that the devil's kingdom be put down [Luke 11:17-20], so that he may have no right or power over us [Luke 10:17-19; Colossians 1], until at last his power may be utterly destroyed. So sin, death, and hell shall be exterminated [Revelation 20:13-14]. Then we may live forever in perfect righteousness and blessedness" [Ephesians 4:12-13]. (The Lord's Prayer, Par. 54)

9. Jesus can be described as ruling in three kingdoms: (a) his kingdom of power, in which he rules and directs all things by his might; (b) his kingdom of grace, in which he lives and rules in the hearts of Christians by his Word and Sacraments; and (c) his kingdom of glory, in which he returns as judge and rules the saints and angels in heaven. For which are we *primarily* praying, when we say, "Your kingdom come"?

10. Read Romans 1:16. Many in the world (even Christians) expect God to change the world through his laws or through direct communication or intervention. How does this perhaps show a misunderstanding of the kingdom with which God is primarily concerned (and on which he wants his Church to focus)?

<sup>57</sup> It's like a time when the richest and most mighty emperor would tell a poor beggar to ask whatever he might desire. The emperor was ready to give great royal presents. But the fool would only beg for a dish of gruel. That man would rightly be considered a rogue and a scoundrel, who treated the command of his Imperial Majesty like a joke and a game and was not worthy of coming into his presence. In the same way, it is a great shame and dishonor to God if we—to whom He offers and pledges so many inexpressible treasures—despise the treasures or do not have the confidence to receive them, but hardly dare to pray for a piece of bread. <sup>58</sup> All this is the fault of shameful unbelief that does not even look to God for enough decent food to satisfy the stomach. How much less does such unbelief expect to receive eternal treasures from God without doubt? Therefore, we must strengthen ourselves against such doubt and let this be our first prayer. Then, indeed, we shall have everything else in abundance, as Christ teaches, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" [Matthew 6:33]. For how could He allow us to suffer lack and to be desperate for temporal things when He promises to give us what is eternal and never perishes [1 Peter 1:4]? (The Lord's Prayer, Par. 57-58)

11. Explain Luther's point.

### You make the call

*One of your friends says that the best way to pray the Lord's Prayer is with the traditional wording, because people won't be distracted or confused by words that they aren't used to saying (since they've memorized it that way). Another friend says that the more modern version (without "art," "thy," and "trespasses") is better because people won't be distracted or confused by words that they aren't used to saying (since people don't talk that way anymore).*

*What do you say?*

### During the Week

1. Review this lesson by rereading Luther's Large Catechism, The Lord's Prayer (Introduction, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Petitions).
2. Read Luther's Large Catechism, the Lord's Prayer (3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Petitions).
3. Read each set of passages below. How do the first two parts of the Catechism (the Ten Commandments and the Creed) reveal the need for the third part (Prayer)?
  - Mark 14:38; Romans 7:18-19
  - Psalm 32:5; Daniel 9:4-6,19
  - 1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Peter 3:15-18; Mark 9:24
4. Do your prayers focus more on spiritual blessings or physical blessings? If one or the other is regularly absent from your prayers, what might it reveal about your understanding of God's gift of prayer?

# LUTHER'S LARGE CATECHISM

## BIBLE TRUTH FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

A BIBLE STUDY BY PASTOR TIMOTHY WAGNER  
LAMB OF GOD LUTHERAN CHURCH, COLUMBUS, OHIO



### LESSON EIGHT: Lord's Prayer – 3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> Petitions

#### The Third Petition *Your will be done.*

<sup>65</sup> If we would be Christians, therefore, we must surely expect and count on having the devil with all his angels and the world as our enemies [Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:9]. They will bring every possible misfortune and grief upon us. For where God's Word is preached, accepted, or believed and produces fruit, there the holy cross cannot be missing [Acts 14:22]. And let no one think that he shall have peace [Matthew 10:34]. He must risk whatever he has upon earth—possessions, honor, house and estate, wife and children, body and life. (The Lord's Prayer, Par. 65)

1. Read John 16:33 (p. 1070). Discuss why this is such a hard truth for Christians to believe and accept.

<sup>67</sup> So there is just as great a need, as in all the other petitions, that we pray without ceasing, "Dear Father, Your will be done, not the devil's will or our enemies' or anything that would persecute and suppress Your holy Word or hinder Your kingdom. Grant that we may bear with patience and overcome whatever is to be endured because of Your Word and kingdom, so that our poor flesh may not yield or fall away because of weakness or sluggishness." (The Lord's Prayer, Par. 67)

2. Why is the third petition often so difficult to pray, when we are suffering?
3. Read 1 Timothy 2:3-4 (p. 1174) and Psalm 37:5-6 (p. 552). Why is the third petition so important to pray, when we are suffering?

**The Fourth Petition**  
***Give us today our daily bread.***

<sup>80</sup> But this petition is especially directed also against our chief enemy, the devil. For all his thought and desire is to deprive us of all that we have from God or to hinder it. He is not satisfied to obstruct and destroy spiritual government by leading souls astray with his lies and bringing them under his power. He also prevents and hinders the stability of all government and honorable, peaceable relations on earth. There he causes so much contention, murder, treason, and war. He also causes lightning and hail to destroy grain and cattle, to poison the air, and so on. <sup>81</sup> In short, he is sorry if anyone has a morsel of bread from God and eats it in peace. If it were in his power and our prayer (next to God) did not prevent him, we would not keep a straw in the field, a farthing in the house, yes, not even our life for an hour. This is especially true of those who have God's Word and would like to be Christians. (The Lord's Prayer, Par. 80-81)

4. Read 1 Peter 5:8 (p. 1203). Do you often think of the devil as one who wants to deprive you of your "daily bread"? Why or why not?
  
5. Read Job 1:9-11 (p. 496). We perhaps are more likely to see the devil as a spiritual enemy. How do his attempts to rob us of our "daily bread" serve spiritual and eternal purposes?

**The Fifth Petition**  
***Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.***

<sup>88</sup> There is here again great need for us to call upon God and to pray, "Dear Father, forgive us our trespasses." It is not as though He did not forgive sin without and even before our prayer. (He has given us the Gospel, in which is pure forgiveness before we prayed or ever thought about it [Romans 5:8].) But the purpose of this prayer is that we may recognize and receive such forgiveness. <sup>89</sup> The flesh in which we daily live is of such a nature that it neither trusts nor believes God [Romans 7:14-18]. It is ever active in evil lusts and devices, so that we sin daily in word and deed [Genesis 6:5], by what we do and fail to do [James 2:15-16]. By this the conscience is thrown into unrest, so that it is afraid of God's wrath and displeasure. So it loses the comfort and confidence derived from the Gospel. Therefore, it is always necessary that we run here and receive consolation to comfort the conscience again.

<sup>90</sup> But this should serve God's purpose of breaking our pride and keeping us humble. God has reserved this right for Himself: if anyone wants to boast of his godliness and despise others, that person is to think about himself and place this prayer before his eyes. He will find that he is no better than others [Romans 12:3] and that in God's presence all must tuck their tails and be glad that they can gain forgiveness. <sup>91</sup> Let no one think that as long as he lives here he can reach such a position that he will not need such forgiveness [1 John 1:8]. In short, if God does not forgive without stopping, we are lost. (Lord's Prayer, Par. 88-91)

6. Read 1 John 1:7-10 (p. 1207). Explain how Jesus' teaching us to pray the fifth petition guards us from both pride and despair?

**The Sixth Petition**  
***Lead us not into temptation.***

<sup>107</sup> To feel temptation is, therefore, a far different thing from consenting or yielding to it. We must all feel it, although not all in the same way. Some feel it in a greater degree and more severely than others. For example, the young suffer especially from the flesh. Afterward, when they reach middle life and old age, they feel it from the world. But others who are occupied with spiritual matters, that is, strong Christians, feel it from the devil. <sup>108</sup> Such feeling, as long as it is against our will and we would rather be rid of it, can harm no one. For if we did not feel it, it could not be called a temptation. But we consent to it when we give it the reins and do not resist or pray against it. (Lord's Prayer, Par. 107-108)

7. Read Galatians 5:16-17 (p. 1155). How does Luther distinguish between temptations and sinful thoughts or desires? While we can make this distinction on a theoretical level, what makes it hard to make on a practical level?

<sup>109</sup> Therefore, we Christians must be armed [Ephesians 6:10–18] and daily expect to be constantly attacked. No one may go on in security and carelessly, as though the devil were far from us. At all times we must expect and block his blows. Though I am now chaste, patient, kind, and in firm faith, the devil will this very hour send such an arrow into my heart that I can scarcely stand. For he is an enemy that never stops or becomes tired. So when one temptation stops, there always arise others and fresh ones.

8. Read James 4:7 (p. 1198). Agree or disagree: If you are a Christian and resist the devil again and again, he will eventually leave you alone.

**The Seventh Petition**  
***But deliver us from evil.***

<sup>117</sup> You see again how God wishes for us to pray to Him also for all the things that affect our bodily interests, so that we seek and expect help nowhere else except in Him. (Lord's Prayer, Par. 117)

9. Read Psalm 50:15 (p. 561). Why does the Lord want us to turn to him and to “expect help nowhere else except in Him”?
10. Read Matthew 6:33 (p. 961). Review the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. How many primarily focus on physical needs/blessings? How many primarily focus on spiritual needs/blessings? What might we learn from this?



## You make the call

*One of your friends says that, because Jesus said, "This is how you should pray," and then taught the Lord's Prayer, we should just pray the Lord's Prayer (and it covers everything in our lives indirectly anyway). Another friend says that, since God wants us to pray from the heart, we should rarely, if ever use the Lord's Prayer or other written prayers.*

*What do you say?*

### During the Week

1. Review this lesson by rereading Luther's Large Catechism, The Lord's Prayer (3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Petitions).
2. Read Luther's Large Catechism, Holy Baptism.
3. Read and meditate on Psalm 37. List phrases in the psalm that help to encourage Christians to pray the third petition.
4. Find out the date on which you were baptized. How might you celebrate the anniversary of that date every year? (Parents, how might you help your children celebrate their "baptism birthday"?) How can you remember your baptism every day?

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### LESSON NINE: Baptism

<sup>7</sup> For it is of the greatest importance that we value Baptism as excellent, glorious, and exalted. We contend and fight for Baptism chiefly because the world is now so full of sects arguing that Baptism is an outward thing and that outward things are of no benefit. <sup>8</sup> But let Baptism be a thoroughly outward thing. Here stand God's Word and command, which institute, establish, and confirm Baptism. What God institutes and commands cannot be an empty thing. It must be a most precious thing, even though it looked like it had less value than a straw. <sup>9</sup> Up to now people could consider something great when the pope with his letters and bulls gave away indulgences and confirmed altars and churches, solely because of the letters and seals. So we ought to value Baptism much more highly and more precious, because God has commanded it. Besides, it is done in His name. For these are the words, "Go, baptize." However, do not baptize in your name, but in God's name. (Baptism, Par. 7-9)

1. Read Acts 2:38-39 (p. 1079). Outwardly, Baptism looks no different than any other rituals in the church or in society. What makes Baptism different and leads us to "value Baptism as excellent, glorious, and exalted"?

<sup>39</sup> Now there is not only God's commandment and injunction here, but also the promise. Because of this, Baptism is still far more glorious than whatever else God has commanded and ordained. It is, in short, so full of consolation and grace that heaven and earth cannot understand it. <sup>40</sup> But it requires skill to believe this, for the treasure is not lacking, but this is lacking: people who grasp it and hold it firmly. (Baptism, Par. 39-40)

2. Baptism is commanded by God. Some Christians see it as just another command to obey. What makes it "far more glorious than whatever else God has commanded and ordained"?

<sup>43</sup> Think about it. Imagine there was a doctor somewhere who understood the art of saving people from death or, even though they died, could restore them quickly to life so that they would afterward live forever. Oh, how the world would pour in money like snow and rain. No one could find access to him because of the throng of the rich! But here in Baptism there is freely brought to everyone's door such a treasure and medicine that it utterly destroys death and preserves all people alive. (Baptism, Par. 43)

3. Read Titus 3:4-7 (p. 1182). Agree or disagree: Baptism does not get the attention it deserves in the lives of most Christians and congregations. (If you agree, why do you think that is?)

4. Discuss ways that we can show how much we value this gift of God...

- in our congregation
- in our personal lives
- in our families

<sup>77</sup> Our Baptism abides forever. Even though someone should fall from Baptism and sin, still we always have access to it. So we may subdue the old man again. <sup>78</sup> But we do not need to be sprinkled with water again [Ezekiel 36:25–26; Hebrews 10:22]. Even if we were put under the water a hundred times, it would still be only one Baptism, even though the work and sign continue and remain. <sup>79</sup> Repentance, therefore, is nothing other than a return and approach to Baptism. We repeat and do what we began before, but abandoned. (Baptism, Par. 77-79)

5. Read Numbers 23:19-20 (p. 155). Why don't we have to be baptized again, if we fall into unbelief or other gross sin?

<sup>44</sup> We must think this way about Baptism and make it profitable for ourselves. So when our sins and conscience oppress us, we strengthen ourselves and take comfort and say, "Nevertheless, I am baptized. And if I am baptized, it is promised to me that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body." (Baptism, Par. 44)

6. Read 1 Peter 3:21-22 (p. 1202) and Galatians 3:26-27 (p. 1153). Describe, in terms that a young child can understand, the comfort you derive from remembering your Baptism every day.

<sup>57</sup> So we do likewise in infant Baptism. We bring the child in the conviction and hope that it believes, and we pray that God may grant it faith [Luke 17:2; Ephesians 2:8]. But we do not baptize it for that reason, but solely because of God's command. Why? Because we know that God does not lie [Titus 1:2]. I and my neighbor and, in short, all people, may err and deceive. But God's Word cannot err. (Baptism, Par. 57)

7. Read Matthew 19:13-15 (p. 976). Why do we not hesitate to baptize infants?

<sup>84</sup> For this reason let everyone value his Baptism as a daily dress [Galatians 3:27] in which he is to walk constantly. Then he may ever be found in the faith and its fruit, so that he may suppress the old man and grow up in the new. <sup>85</sup> For if we would be Christians, we must do the work by which we are Christians. <sup>86</sup> But if anyone falls away from the Christian life, let him again come into it. For just as Christ, the Mercy Seat [Romans 3:25], does not draw back from us or forbid us to come to Him again, even though we sin, so all His treasure and gifts also remain. Therefore, if we have received forgiveness of sin once in Baptism, it will remain every day, as long as we live. Baptism will remain as long as we carry the old man about our neck. (Baptism, Par. 84-86)

8. Read Romans 6:3-4 (p. 1116). When we are buried and raised with Christ in Baptism, it changes the way we live our lives. How?

<sup>65</sup> The act or ceremony is this: we are sunk under the water, which passes over us, and afterward are drawn out again. These two parts, (a) to be sunk under the water and (b) drawn out again, signify Baptism's power and work. It is nothing other than putting to death the old Adam and affecting the new man's resurrection after that [Romans 6:4–6]. Both of these things must take place in us all our lives. So a truly Christian life is nothing other than a daily Baptism, once begun and ever to be continued. For this must be done without ceasing, that we always keep purging away whatever belongs to the old Adam. Then what belongs to the new man may come forth. (Baptism, Par. 65)

9. Read Romans 6:5-14 (p. 1116-1117). How does my baptism comfort me, when I face temptation?

### You make the call

*You hear a Christian friend say, "I'm going to let my children decide whether to be baptized when they are older. I don't want to force religion on them."*

*What do you say?*

### During the Week

1. Review this lesson by rereading Luther's Large Catechism, Holy Baptism
2. Read Luther's Large Catechism, The Sacrament of the Altar.
3. Consider how the following quotes of Luther are connected, and apply what you learn to your daily life:

Then [the baptizer] shall make the sign of the cross on both the forehead and the breast and say: "Receive the sign of the holy cross upon the forehead and the breast." (from Luther's Baptismal Booklet)

In the morning, as soon as you get out of bed, you are to make the sign of the holy cross and say: "God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit watch over me. Amen." (The Morning Blessing, from Luther's Small Catechism)

In the evening, when you go to bed, you are to make the sign of the holy cross and say: "God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit watch over me. Amen." (The Evening Blessing, from Luther's Small Catechism)

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### LESSON TEN: The Sacrament of the Altar

<sup>12</sup> With this Word you can strengthen your conscience and say, "If a hundred thousand devils, together with all fanatics, should rush forward, crying, 'How can bread and wine be Christ's body and blood?' and such, I know that all spirits and scholars together are not as wise as is the Divine Majesty in His little finger" [see 1 Corinthians 1:25]. <sup>13</sup> Now here stands Christ's Word, "Take, eat; this is My body.... Drink of it, all of you; this is My blood of the new testament," and so on.... What Christ's lips say and speak, so it is. He can never lie or deceive [Titus 1:2]. (The Sacrament of the Altar, Par. 12-14)

1. Read Matthew 26:26-28 (p. 985). When human reason insists that Christ's body and blood are not present in the Sacrament, what "proof" do we have that they are indeed present?

<sup>16</sup> For here we conclude and say, "Even though an imposter takes or distributes the Sacrament, a person still receives the true Sacrament, that is, Christ's true body and blood, just as truly as a person who receives or administers it in the most worthy way." For the Sacrament is not founded upon people's holiness, but upon God's Word. Just as no saint on earth, indeed, no angel in heaven, can make bread and wine be Christ's body and blood, so also no one can change or alter it, even though it is misused. <sup>17</sup> The Word by which it became a Sacrament and was instituted does not become false because of the person or his unbelief. (The Sacrament of the Altar, Par. 16-17)

2. If an unbeliever distributes the Lord's Supper, is it a valid sacrament in which Christ's body and blood are present? Why is this significant?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 (p. 1136). If an unbeliever receives the Lord's Supper, does he receive the body and blood of Christ?

<sup>35</sup> Whoever now accepts these words and believes that what they declare is true has forgiveness. But whoever does not believe it has nothing, since he allows it to be offered to him in vain and refuses to enjoy such a saving good. The treasure, indeed, is opened and placed at everyone's door, yes, upon his table. But it is necessary that you also claim it and confidently view it as the words tell you.... Since this treasure is entirely presented in the words, it cannot be received and made ours in any other way than with the heart.... The body cannot seize and make its own what is given in and with the Sacrament. This is done by the faith in the heart, which discerns this treasure and desires it. (The Sacrament of the Altar, Par. 35-37)

4. If an unbeliever receives the Lord's Supper, does he receive the forgiveness of his sins? (Cf. 1 Corinthians 11:27)

<sup>2</sup> Everyone who desires to be a Christian and go to this Sacrament should know [the words by which Christ has instituted this Sacrament]. For it is not our intention to let people come to the Sacrament and administer it to them if they do not know what they seek or why they come. (The Sacrament of the Altar, Par. 2)

<sup>58</sup> Therefore, we must make a distinction here between people. Those who are lewd and morally loose must be told to stay away [1 Corinthians 5:9–13]. They are not prepared to receive forgiveness of sin, since they do not desire it and do not wish to be godly. (The Sacrament of the Altar, Par. 58)

5. What makes the practice of close communion so important? (Cf. 1 Corinthians 11:27)

<sup>42</sup> Now, it is true, as we have said, that no one should by any means be forced or compelled to go to the Sacrament, lest we institute a new murdering of souls. Nevertheless, it must be known that people who deprive themselves of and withdraw from the Sacrament for such a long time are not to be considered Christians. For Christ has not instituted it to be treated as a show. Instead, He has commanded His Christians to eat it, drink it, and remember Him by it. <sup>43</sup> Indeed, those who are true Christians and value the Sacrament precious and holy will drive and move themselves to go to it. (The Sacrament of the Altar, Par. 42-43)

<sup>46</sup> However, you may say, "But the words are added, 'As often as you drink it'; there He compels no one, but leaves it to our free choice." <sup>47</sup> I answer, "That is true, yet it is not written so that we should never do so. Yes, since He speaks the words 'As often as you drink it,' it is still implied that we should do it often. This is added because He wants to have the Sacrament free. He does not limit it to special times, like the Jewish Passover, which they were obliged to eat only once a year. (The Sacrament of the Altar, Par. 46-47)

<sup>67</sup> It is surely a sin and a shame that He so cordially and faithfully summons and encourages us to receive our highest and greatest good, yet we act so distantly toward it. We permit so long a time to pass (without partaking of the Sacrament) that we grow quite cold and hardened, so that we have no longing or love for it. (The Sacrament of the Altar, Par. 67)

6. Read Isaiah 55:1-3 (p. 733). How does a proper understanding of the Lord's Supper keep us from both forcing anyone to receive the Sacrament and treating the Sacrament as something optional?
7. Agree or disagree: A Christian who does not receive the Sacrament often is not a Christian.
8. Some have argued that the Lord's Supper should be offered every Sunday. What do you think? How do Luther's balanced comments apply? Should we offer the Sacrament more often at Lamb of God (There are times when even those who attend worship every Sunday must go three weeks between times when the Sacrament is publicly offered to them)?

<sup>59</sup> But the others, who are not such callous and wicked people, and who desire to be godly, must not absent themselves. This is true even though otherwise they are feeble and full of infirmities. (The Sacrament of the Altar, Par. 58-59)

<sup>61</sup> Such people must learn that it is the highest art to know that our Sacrament does not depend upon our worthiness. We are not baptized because we are worthy and holy. Nor do we go to Confession because we are pure and without sin. On the contrary, we go because we are poor, miserable people. We go exactly because we are unworthy. This is true unless we are talking about someone who desires no grace and Absolution nor intends to change. (The Sacrament of the Altar, Par. 61)

<sup>72</sup> If, therefore, you are heavy laden and feel your weakness, then go joyfully to this Sacrament and receive refreshment, comfort, and strength [Matthew 11:28]. <sup>73</sup> If you wait until you are rid of such burdens, so that you might come to the Sacrament pure and worthy, you must stay away forever. <sup>74</sup> In that case Christ pronounces sentence and says, "If you are pure and godly, you have no need of Me, and I, in turn, no need of you." Therefore, the only people who are called unworthy are those who neither feel their weaknesses nor wish to be considered sinners. (The Sacrament of the Altar, Par. 72-74)

9. Read Matthew 9:10-13 (p. 963) and Matthew 11:28 (p. 966). Are we ever "too sinful" to receive the Lord's Supper? Why or why not?
  
10. Read Matthew 5:23-24 (p. 959). Agree or disagree: If you have unresolved sins that you have committed, you should not receive the Lord's Supper.

<sup>75</sup> But if you say, "What, then, shall I do if I cannot feel such distress or experience hunger and thirst for the Sacrament?" Answer, "For those who are of such a mind that they do not realize their condition I know no better counsel than that they put their hand into their shirt to check whether they have flesh and blood. And if you find that you do, then go, for your good, to St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. Hear what sort of a fruit your flesh is:

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like these. [Galatians 5:19-21]

<sup>76</sup> Therefore, if you cannot discern this, at least believe the Scriptures. They will not lie to you, and they know your flesh better than you yourself. Yes, St. Paul further concludes in Romans 7:18, "I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh." If St. Paul may speak this way about his flesh, we cannot assume to be better or more holy than him. <sup>77</sup> But the fact that we do not feel our weakness just makes things worse. It is a sign that there is a leprous flesh in us that can't feel anything. And yet, the leprosy rages and keeps spreading. <sup>78</sup> As we have said, if you are quite dead to all sensibility, still believe the Scriptures, which pronounce sentence upon you. In short, the less you feel your sins and infirmities, the more reason you have to go to the Sacrament to seek help and a remedy.

<sup>79</sup> In the second place, look around you. See whether you are also in the world, or if you do not know it, ask your neighbors about it. If you are in the world, do not think that there will be lack of sins and misery. (The Sacrament of the Altar, Par. 71-79)

11. Explain Luther's advice to any who "don't experience hunger and thirst for the Sacrament."

## You make the call

*One Christian says that we should bring back the practice of "announcing" for communion, including the opportunity to confess your sins privately to the pastor, so that we are properly prepared.*

*Another Christian says that he doesn't put much thought into communion until he is standing in the aisle on his way up to receive it, since its blessings depend on Christ's words, not his preparations.*

*What do you say?*

### During the Week

1. Review this lesson by rereading Luther's Large Catechism, The Sacrament of the Altar.
2. Read Luther's "A Brief Exhortation to Confession."
3. Imagine that you were expected to confess your sins to another Christian, knowing that you would be assured that your sins were forgiven every single time. Do you think it would feel like a burden, a blessing, or both?



# LUTHER'S LARGE CATECHISM

## BIBLE TRUTH FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

A BIBLE STUDY BY PASTOR TIMOTHY WAGNER  
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### LESSON ELEVEN: A Brief Exhortation to Confession<sup>1</sup>

<sup>15</sup> So notice then, that Confession, as I have often said, consists of two parts. The first is my own work and action, when I lament my sins and desire comfort and refreshment for my soul. The other part is a work that God does when He declares me free of my sin through His Word placed in the mouth of a man. It is this splendid, noble, thing that makes Confession so lovely, so comforting.... <sup>18</sup> In our view of Confession, therefore, we should sharply separate its two parts far from each other. We should place slight value on our part in it. But we should hold in high and great esteem God's Word in the Absolution part of Confession. We should not proceed as if we intended to perform and offer Him a splendid work, but simply to accept and receive something from Him. (Confession, Par. 15,18)

1. Read 1 John 1:8-9 (p. 1207). What is the most important part of Confession? How would you explain that to someone new to the church who thinks that Confession is "too negative" to be a regular part of Christian worship?

<sup>16</sup> It used to be that we emphasized it only as our work; all that we were then concerned about was whether our act of confession was pure and perfect in every detail. We paid no attention to the second and most necessary part of Confession, nor did we proclaim it. We acted just as if Confession were nothing but a good work by which payment was to be made to God, so that if the confession was inadequate and not exactly correct in every detail, then the Absolution would not be valid and the sin unforgiven. <sup>17</sup> By this the people were driven to the point where everyone had to despair of making so pure a Confession (an obvious impossibility) and where no one could feel at ease in his conscience or have confidence in his Absolution. So they not only rendered the precious Confession useless to us but also made it a bitter burden [Matthew 23:4] causing noticeable spiritual harm and ruin. (Confession, Par. 16-17)

2. Read Galatians 5:1-4 (p. 1154) and Matthew 11:28 (p. 966). The Roman Catholic Church requires Confession of sins before a priest. Christians must enumerate all "mortal" sins and complete the "satisfaction" (works) prescribed by the priest in order to be assured of their forgiveness. Explain how this turns the confession of sins into the opposite of what God intends it to be.

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<sup>1</sup> The "Brief Exhortation to Confession" was not included in the Large Catechism that Luther published early in 1529, but it was added by Luther later that year. For this reason, some editions of the Large Catechism and the Book of Concord either do not include it or include it in a different place than at the end of the Large Catechism.

<sup>8</sup> In the first place, I have said that besides the Confession here being considered there are two other kinds, which may even more properly be called the Christians' common confession. They are (a) the confession and plea for forgiveness made to God alone and (b) the confession that is made to the neighbor alone. These two kinds of confession are included in the Lord's Prayer, in which we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" [Matthew 6:12], and so on. <sup>9</sup> In fact, the entire Lord's Prayer is nothing else than such a confession. For what are our petitions other than a confession that we neither have nor do what we ought, as well as a plea for grace and a cheerful conscience? Confession of this sort should and must continue without letup as long as we live. For the Christian way essentially consists in acknowledging ourselves to be sinners and in praying for grace... <sup>12</sup> So we have in the Lord's Prayer a double absolution: there we are forgiven both our offenses against God and those against our neighbor, and there we forgive our neighbor and become reconciled to him. (Confession, Par. 8-9,12)

3. Read Psalm 32:5 (p. 549) and James 5:16 (p. 1199). What two "kinds" of confession does Luther say "may even more properly be called the Christians' common confession" than required confession to a priest?
4. Explain what Luther means when he writes, "In fact, the entire Lord's Prayer is nothing else than such a confession." (How does the Lord's Prayer reflect both "kinds" of confession and a "double absolution"?)

<sup>13</sup> Besides this public, daily, and necessary confession, there is also the confidential confession that is only made before a single brother. If something particular weighs upon us or troubles us, something with which we keep torturing ourselves and can find no rest, and we do not find our faith to be strong enough to cope with it, then this private form of confession gives us the opportunity of laying the matter before some brother. We may receive counsel, comfort, and strength when and however often we wish.... So any heart that feels its sinfulness and desires consolation has here a sure refuge when he hears God's Word and makes the discovery that God through a human being looses and absolves him from his sins. (Confession, Par. 13-14)

5. Read Psalm 38:4 (p. 554). Luther advocates strongly for private confession and absolution in the Large Catechism and in his other writings. In what situation(s) is it especially appropriate for Christians to privately confess their sins to a pastor or another Christian?
6. Private confession is relatively rare in our Lutheran churches today. Why do you think that is?

<sup>23</sup> If this were explained in detail and if the need that ought to move and lead us to make confession were pointed out, then one would need little urging or coercion. For everyone's own conscience would so drive and disturb him that he would be glad to do what a poor and miserable beggar does when he hears that a rich gift of money or clothing is being handed out at a certain place. So as not to miss it, he would run there as fast as he can and would need no bailiff to beat and drive him on. (Confession, Par. 23)

7. Read Luke 7:40-48 (p. 1023). Explain how a proper understanding of what confession is, as well as an honest assessment of who we are, leave no need for urging or coercion to confess our sins.

<sup>30</sup> To sum it up, we want to have nothing to do with coercion. However, if someone does not listen to or follow our preaching and its warning, we will have nothing to do with him [1 Corinthians 5:11], nor may he have any share in the Gospel. If you were a Christian, then you ought to be happy to run more than a hundred miles to Confession and not let yourself be urged to come. You should rather come and compel us to give you the opportunity. <sup>31</sup> For in this matter the compulsion must be the other way around: we must act under orders, you must come into freedom. We pressure no one, but we let ourselves be pressured, just as we let people compel us to preach and to administer the Sacrament. (Confession, Par. 30-31)

8. Read Psalm 143:7-8 (p. 620). Luther speaks strongly against the Church requiring and coercing Christians to practice private confession. Rather, from where should the compulsion come?

### You make the call

*"It's okay" (or something similar) is often the response of one Christian to another, when someone apologizes for sinning against them. Why is this not the best way to respond?*

### During the Week

1. Review this lesson by rereading Luther's "A Brief Exhortation to Confession."
2. Find a trusted Christian friend (or your pastor) to whom you might confess your sin and receive absolution, especially when guilt weighs you down. Talk with them about any unresolved guilt.