

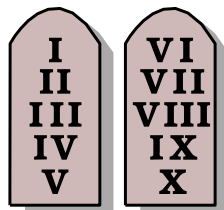
Devotional Modeling
for
Lutheran Families

CATECHISM HOME DEVOTIONS

by
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THE TEN COMMANDMENTS



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The head of the family should teach them in the simplest way to those in the household.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not use his name to curse, swear, lie or deceive, or use witchcraft, but call upon God's name in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his Word, but regard it as holy, and gladly hear and learn it.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Honor your father and mother, that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not dishonor or anger our parents and others in authority, but honor, serve and obey them, and give them love and respect.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not murder.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not commit adultery.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we lead a pure and decent life in words and actions, and that husband and wife love and honor each other.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not steal.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not take our neighbor's money or property or get it by dishonest dealing, but help him to improve and protect his property and means of income.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, or give him a bad name, but defend him, speak well of him and take his words and actions in the kindest possible way.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house or obtain it by a show of right, but do all we can to help him keep it.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, workers, animals, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not force or entice away our neighbor's spouse, workers, or animals, but urge them to stay and do their duty.

THE CONCLUSION

What does God say about all these commandments?

He says, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."

What does this mean?

God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. Therefore we should fear his anger and not disobey what he commands. But he promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore we should love and trust in him and gladly obey what he commands.

Sunday, Week 1
Introduction to the Ten Commandments

References: Luther's Catechism questions 1-33, Luther's Large Catechism p. 5-13.

Hymn (*Christian Worship* 203 v. 1,2,3):

Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word;
Curb those who by deceit or sword
Would seek to overthrow your Son
And to destroy what he has done.

Lord Jesus Christ, your pow'r make known,
For you are Lord of lords alone;
Defend your Christendom that we
May sing your praise eternally.

O Comforter of priceless worth,
Send peace and unity on earth.
Support us in our final strife,
And lead us out of death to life.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Discussion:

How many of the Ten Commandments can you name without help?

Commandments 1-3 speak about our relationship with whom?

What do Commandments 4-10 deal with?

What, then, is one word that sums up what the Ten Commandments are all about?

In what sermon did Jesus show the true meaning of the Law?

Advanced Discussion:

If Christ came in fulfillment of the law why do we still keep the Ten Commandments?

Prayer: Ex Corde Prayer, Lord's Prayer or Luther's Morning Prayer

Luther's Morning Prayer:

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen. My heavenly Father, I thank you through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, for keeping me through the night from all harm and danger. Keep me through this day also from sin and every evil that all my doings and life may please you. I commend my body and soul and all things into your hands. Let your holy angel be with me, so that the devil may have no power over me. Amen.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Monday, Week 1

Commandments One and Two

References: Luther's Catechism questions 34-52, Luther's Large Catechism p. 13-25.

Hymn (CW 285 V. 1-3):

The Ten Commandments are the law,
Which Israel heard in holy awe.
In smoke and fire from Sinai
The voice of God shook the sky.
Have mercy, Lord!

"I am your Lord and God alone!
No other god but me enthroned!
Put your whole confidence in me;
Give me your heart totally."
Have mercy, Lord!

"In what you speak bring me no shame;
Do not misuse my holy name,
But call on me in troubled days;
Give me your thanks, prayers, and praise."
Have mercy, Lord!

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.

Discussion:

What sin does God forbid in this Commandment?

In his explanation to this commandment in the Large Catechism Luther states, "To whatever we look for any good thing and for refuge in every need, that is what is meant by "god." . . . To whatever you give your heart and entrust your being, that, I say, is really your God." With this thought in mind, what are some examples of false gods or idolatry?

Why is God so opposed to idolatry?

Advanced Discussion:

How can we “fear” other people, “love” other people, and “trust” other people without sinning against the First Commandment?

How do people stereotype God today?

Is this true to God’s image?

What about images in a church like a cross or crucifix?

How is God different from an idol? (See Psalm 115:4-7)

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not use his name to curse, swear, lie or deceive, or use witchcraft, but call upon God’s name in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks.

Discussion:

What is the name of God?

What should we not do with the name of God?

When we use God’s name in vain, whom are we trying to impress?

What are we living for? Luther mentions four ways that God’s name can be properly used. Name them and give examples of each.

What does our language indicate about our Christianity?

Advanced Discussion:

An earlier translation in the explanation states we should not use God’s name “superstitiously.” That translation did not grasp the full meaning of the original *zaubern*. That word clearly states that witchcraft is a violation of this Commandment. Why do you think that witchcraft in so many forms (palm reading, fortune telling, horoscopes, etc.) continues to grow in popularity?

Does breaking this Commandment really matter to God?
(See Leviticus 24:10-16 and Deuteronomy 18:9-13.)

What is the difference between the uninformed, the uncontrolled, or the unsaved's misuse of God's name?

Prayer: Ex Corde Prayer, Lord's Prayer, Luther's Morning Prayer or Luther's Evening Prayer

Luther's Evening Prayer:

In the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen. My heavenly Father, I thank you through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, for graciously keeping me through this day. Forgive me all the sins that I have done against you, and graciously keep me through this night. I commend my body and soul and all things into your hands. Let your holy angel be with me, so that the devil may have no power over me. Amen.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Tuesday, Week 1

Commandments Three and Four

References: Luther's Catechism questions 53-78, Luther's Large Catechism p. 25-40.

Hymn (CW 285 v. 1, 4,5):

The Ten commandments are the law,
Which Israel heard in holy awe.
In smoke and fire from Sinai
The voice of God shook the sky.
Have mercy, Lord!

"Respect the Sabbath of the Lord!
Do not despise my holy word,
But hold it sacred, precious, true,
And hear that truth preached to you."
Have mercy, Lord!

"Give to your parents honor due,
Be dutiful and loving, too,
And help them when their pow'rs are few;
So shall it go well with you."
Have mercy, Lord!

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his Word, but regard it as holy, and gladly hear and learn it.

Discussion:

One day Jesus came to visit his friends, Mary and Martha. They were happy to see him. Martha wanted everything to be just right for Jesus. She hurried about getting things ready.

Mary sat down next to Jesus to listen to him talk to her. Martha didn't think that was fair. She came over to Jesus and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister Mary lets me do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

Jesus said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried about many things, but only one thing is the best thing to do. Mary picked the best thing and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42)

How does Mary serve as an example for us?

What are some ways that the Third Commandment is broken?

Advanced Discussion:

Do you think Mary was always like this? Had she perhaps been like Martha and then come to the realization worked by the Holy Spirit of what was more important?

Today it is common to hear about “burnout” and “workaholics.” Many people say that they don’t have time for God. How do you evaluate this type of thinking?

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Honor your father and mother, that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not dishonor or anger our parents and others in authority, but honor, serve and obey them, and give them love and respect.

Note: The Fourth Commandment begins the second table of the Law. No person can relate correctly to his fellowman unless he first relates correctly with God. If we do not have a proper relationship with God we will not have a proper relationship with anyone else. God’s love for us determines how we act toward our fellowman.

Discussion:

Whom, in addition to “your father and mother,” have been placed in authority over you in this life?

What are we forbidden to do with regard to our parents and all in authority over us?

What are we commanded to do?

If we obey this Commandment how will our life be different from others who don’t believe in Jesus?

Advanced Discussion:

This Commandment begins with the parents because they are the starting point for our relationships with other people. Why do so many people who have problems in their family life also have problems dealing with fellow workers and others in society?

Are we always to obey the unchristian government?

Prayer Points:

1. Worship and Sunday School attendance.
2. Pray for parents, pastors, teachers, government leaders and all in authority.
3. Thankfulness for blessings of home, church, school, and government.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Wednesday, Week 1
Commandments Five and Six

References: Luther's Catechism questions 79-98, Luther's Large Catechism p. 40-47.

Hymn (CW 285 v. 1, 6, 7):

The Ten Commandments are the law,
Which Israel heard in holy awe.
In smoke and fire from Sinai
The voice of God shook the sky.
Have mercy, Lord!

"You shall not murder, hurt, nor hate;
Your anger dare not dominate.
Be kind and patient; help, defend,
And treat your foe as your friend."
Have mercy, Lord!

"Be faithful to your marriage vow;
No lust or impure thoughts allow,
But keep your body free from sin
With self-control, discipline."
Have mercy, Lord!

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not murder.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need.

Discussion:

What sins are we forbidden to commit by this Commandment?

What are some examples of these sins that we have recently seen on the TV news or read about in the newspaper? (See Matthew 5:21-22; Matthew 25:42-43.)

What are we encouraged to do in place of such things?

Advanced Discussion:

Why does God so strongly protect life?

What about the life of the unborn?

What about abusing alcohol or tobacco or over-eating?

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not commit adultery.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we lead a pure and decent life in words and actions, and that husband and wife love and honor each other.

Discussion:

What is God protecting?

What is marriage?

What sins does the Sixth Commandment forbid?

What kind of life does God want us to lead?

How should we fight against evil desires?

What especially should be involved in the relationship between man and wife?

Advanced Discussion:

God created sex and said it was good. He created us as sexual beings and established marriage where sexual fulfillment is found. Our sinfulness undermines and limits God's purpose. Sexual sins attack us at our essence but they are forgivable. If you had a friend who was having an affair or living in sin, how would you try to apply law and gospel?

Should we listen to non-Christian music that openly flaunts immoral sex as something good? Explain your answer.

What about the use of contraceptives?

Prayer Points:

1. Repentance for hatred and prejudice.
2. Thankfulness for health.
3. Fulfillment in life and home.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Thursday, Week 1
Commandments Seven and Eight

References: Luther's Catechism questions 99-116, Luther's Large Catechism p. 47-59.

Hymn (CW 285 v. 1, 8, 9):

The Ten Commandments are the law,
Which Israel heard in holy awe.
In smoke and fire from Sinai
The voice of God shook the sky.
Have mercy, Lord!

"You shall not steal or take away
What others worked for night and day,
But open wide a gen'rous hand
And help the poor in the land."
Have mercy, Lord!

"Bear no false witness nor defame
Your neighbor and destroy his name
But view him in the kindest way;
Speak truth in all that you say."
Have mercy, Lord!

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not steal.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not take our neighbor's money or property or get it by dishonest dealing, but help him to improve and protect his property and means of income.

Discussion:

What are some examples of sins that are forbidden in this Commandment?

What are ways that God wants us to use our possessions?

Advanced Discussion:

This Commandment also deals with Christian stewardship (Management of the resources that God has entrusted to you). How can or do we steal from God?

What is the value of earthly possessions?

Is the Lord pleased with my attitude toward material possessions?

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, or give him a bad name, but defend him, speak well of him and take his words and actions in the kindest possible way.

Discussion:

What is God saying with this Commandment?

Why is this important?

Can we ever sin by telling the truth?

What positive actions does God expect of us?

Explain the statement: "Our tongue can either do a lot of good or a lot of harm."

Advanced Discussion:

See Acts 5:1-11. This is an example of people creating a false impression to others of their godliness. They are lying to God and to others. Today many people are chronic liars. Some do so boldly while many others use exaggeration, half-truths, false quoting and over use of the superlative. What does God think of this lying? What, if anything, does this have to do with the American political process?

Prayer Points:

1. My use of time for Christian service, worship and study.
2. My tongue as an instrument of praise.
3. My defense for those whose name is being slandered.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Friday, Week 1

Commandments Nine and Ten

References: Luther's Catechism questions 117-132, Luther's Large Catechism p. 59-62.

Hymn (CW 285 v. 1, 10):

The Ten Commandments are the law,
Which Israel heard in holy awe.
In smoke and fire from Sinai
The voice of God shook the sky.
Have mercy, Lord!

"You shall not crave your neighbor's house
Nor covet money, goods, or spouse.
Pray God he would your neighbor bless
As you yourself wish success."
Have mercy, Lord!

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or obtain it by a show of right, but to all we can to help him keep it.

Discussion:

What is God saying with this Commandment?

What does the word "covet" mean?

Give some examples from everyday life that show how the Old Adam (our sinful nature) and the New Man (our believing faith) are at war with each other in us over this Commandment.

Advanced Discussion:

Both the Ninth and the Tenth Commandments deal with an internal lack of contentment. The child of God is to be content with what God has given him and not to seek what God has not given. See Philippians 4:11-12; Job 1:21. Our culture's marketing system is based on peoples' coveting desire to possess more and more. The result is that many people purchase far more than they have money for or can

afford. Lack of contentment finally enslaves them to debt. How am I different from the world in this area? Am I different from the world?

Are the over-spending practices of our national government a reflection of the coveting sins of our nation?
If so, how?

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, workers, animals, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not force or entice away our neighbor's spouse, workers or animals, but urge them to stay and do their duty.

Discussion:

What are we not to entice or force away from our neighbor?

Can we name anything else or mention specific examples of how this Commandment is broken today?

Why do you think God gave us two Commandments that deal with coveting?

Advanced Discussion:

We should note that the Commandments progress from God to neighbors and finally to self. Coveting deals, as mentioned earlier, with our thoughts. Where am I in this area? Am I content with who I am and with what the Lord has given me?

Prayer:

Lord, you know what I am. Give me the courage to face the truth about myself, to know my inadequacies, to recognize my failures, to better understand my weaknesses. Keep me from pride, conceit and unloving attitudes. Don't permit me to live as a counterfeit or to hide behind some cheap pretense. As I look to Christ crucified, let me see the depth of my sin, the baseness of my selfishness and the judgment of death I deserve. In the risen and living Christ let me see the new life you have given me by your grace, deliverance from my sin and the freedom to serve you. With Christ ruling my heart, let me be honest with you, myself and all people. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Saturday, Week 1

The Conclusion

References: Luther's Catechism questions 133-144, Luther's Large Catechism p. 62-67.

Hymn (CW 285 v. 1, 11, 12):

The Ten Commandments are the law,
Which Israel heard in holy awe.
In smoke and fire from Sinai
The voice of God shook the sky.
Have mercy, Lord!

God gave these laws to show therein,
O child of man, your life of sin,
And help you rightly to perceive
How unto God you should live.
Have mercy, Lord!

Our works cannot salvation gain;
They merit only endless pain.
Forgive us, Lord! To Christ we fly,
Our mediator on high.
Have mercy, Lord!

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE CONCLUSION

What does God say about all these commandments?

He says, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."

What does this mean?

God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. Therefore we should fear his anger and not disobey what he commands. But he promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore we should love and trust in him and gladly obey what he commands.

Discussion:

What does God threaten to all who transgress His Commandments?

Why?

What does the Bible say about the soul who sins?

What does God promise to all who keep his Commandments?

Who can keep all the Commandments of God perfectly?

Is there any hope, then, of being saved by the Law?

How are we, then, made free from sin?

Advanced Discussion:

From what part of Christian doctrine do we learn this?

What is good about placing the Ten Commandments before the Creed in the order of the six chief parts of the Catechism?

What is not so good about placing the 10 Commandments before the Creed?

Prayer:

O God, release me from the emptiness of a life of sin. In the midst of my oppressive weakness, restore to me the joy of your salvation. Remind me of the cross on which your Son bore the guilt of my sin. Remind me of the empty tomb by which he gained for me the freedom to live. Thank you, God my Father, for the joy and peace that revive me and restore me to live in and for you. Amen.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

THE CREED

THE CREED

The head of the family should teach it in the simplest way to those in the household.

THE FIRST ARTICLE

(Creation)

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

What does this mean?

I believe that God made me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my mind and all my abilities.

And I believe that God still preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, property and home, spouse and children, land, cattle and all I own, and all I need to keep my body and life. God also preserves me by defending me against all danger, guarding and protecting me from all evil. All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because I have earned or deserved it. For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him.

This is most certainly true.

THE SECOND ARTICLE

(Redemption)

I believe 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 is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

What does this mean?

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.

All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally.

This is most certainly true.

THE THIRD ARTICLE

(Sanctification)

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.

What does this mean?

I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.

But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers.

On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead, and will give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

Sunday, Week 2
Introduction To The Creed and The First Article

References: Luther's Catechism questions 145-157, Luther's Large Catechism p. 67-68.

Hymn (CW 271 v. 1-3):

We all believe in one true God,
Who created earth and heaven,
The Father, who to us in love
Has the right of children given.
He in soul and body feeds us;
All we need his hand provides us.
He through snares and perils leads us,
Watching that no harm betides us.
He cares for us by day and night;
All things are governed by his might.

We all believe in Jesus Christ,
His own Son, our Lord, possessing
An equal godhead, throne and might,
Source of ev'ry grace and blessing,
Born of Mary, virgin mother,
By the power of the spirit,
Made true man, our elder brother,
That the lost might life inherit,
Was crucified by sinful men
And raised by God to life again.

We all confess the Holy Ghost,
Who, sweet hope and comfort giving,
Now with the Father and the Son
In eternal light is living,
Who the Church, his own creation,
Keeps in unity of spirit;
Here forgiveness and salvation
Daily come through Jesus' merit.
All flesh shall rise, and we shall be
In bliss with God eternally.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE FIRST ARTICLE
(Creation)

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

Discussion:

What is a creed?

Why is the Apostle's Creed divided into three parts?

What are some differences between Christians who say, "I believe in God," and people who make a general statement such as "I believe there is a God"?

Why do we call the first person of the Triune God "The Father"?

Why do we confess that God the Father is "the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth"?

Advanced Discussion:

Agree or Disagree: God's beautiful world is evidence of his love for us.

Prayer Points:

1. Thankfulness for God's plan of salvation.
2. Renewed awareness of God's blessings in nature.
3. Repentance for abuse of the environment.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Monday, Week 2

The First Article

References: Luther's Catechism questions 158-171, Luther's Large Catechism p. 69-70.

Hymn (CW 234 v. 4, 5):

Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work and defend you;
Surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend you.

Ponder anew

What the Almighty can do,
As with his love he befriends you.

Praise to the Lord! Oh, let all that is in me adore him!
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before him!
Let the Amen
Sound from his people again;
Gladly forever adore him.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE FIRST ARTICLE

(Creation)

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

What does this mean?

I believe that God made me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my mind and all my abilities. And I believe that God still preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, property and home, spouse and children, land, cattle and all I own, and all I need to keep my body and life. God also preserves me by defending me against all danger, guarding and protecting me from all evil. All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because I have earned or deserved it. For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.

Discussion:

Name specific ways that God continues to preserve me.

Why does a Christian normally say prayers before eating?

How does my heavenly Father protect me?

Who are special creatures my heavenly Father sends to protect me?

How does my heavenly Father want me to show that I appreciate his goodness and mercy?

How is this done?

What happened to God's perfect world?

Advanced Discussion:

Why must the teaching of the origin of the universe (both creation and evolution) be a matter of faith?

Should both creation and evolution be taught in the public schools? Why or why not?

Prayer Points:

1. Repentance for failing to praise, serve and obey the Lord.
2. Thankfulness for God's protecting angels.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Tuesday, Week 2 The Second Article

References: Luther's Catechism questions 172-193, Luther's Large Catechism p. 70-72.

Hymn (CW 377 v. 3,4,5):

My own good works availed me naught,
No merit they attaining;
My will against God's judgment fought,
No hope for me remaining.
My fears increased till sheer despair
Left naught but death to be my share
And hell to be my sentence.

But God beheld my wretched state
Before the world's foundation,
And, mindful of his mercies great,
He planned my soul's salvation.
A Father's heart he turned to me,
Sought my redemption fervently;
He gave his dearest treasure.

He spoke to his beloved Son:
"Tis time to have compassion.
Then go, bright Jewel of my crown,
And bring mankind salvation.
From sin and sorrow set them free;
Slay bitter death for them that they
May live with you forever."

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE SECOND ARTICLE (Redemption)

I believe 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 is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

What does this mean?

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from

death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.

All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally.

This is most certainly true.

Discussion:

Why do we confess that Jesus Christ is true God?

How did God's Son become true man?

What, then, do I believe about Jesus' person?

What do we call the work of Christ by which he ransomed us from the slavery of sin, death and the devil?

Why do we call Christ's suffering and death innocent?

Advanced Discussion:

Why is it so important to our salvation that Jesus be both God and man?

Prayer:

Lord, you know what I am. Give me the courage to face the truth about myself, to know my inadequacies, to recognize my failures, to better understand my weaknesses. Keep me from pride, conceit and unloving attitudes. Don't permit me to live as a counterfeit or to hide behind some cheap pretense. As I look to Christ crucified, let me see the depth of my sin, the baseness of my selfishness and the judgment of death I deserve. In the risen and living Christ let me see the new life you have given me by your grace, deliverance from my sin and the freedom to serve you. With Christ ruling my heart, let me be honest with you, myself and all people. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Wednesday, Week 2

The Second Article

References: Luther's Catechism questions 194-208, Luther's Large Catechism p. 70-72.

Hymn (CW 377 v. 6,7):

The Son obeyed his Father's will,
Was born of virgin mother,
And, God's good pleasure to fulfill,
He came to be my brother.
No garb of pomp or pow'r he wore;
A servant's form like mine he bore
To lead the devil captive.

To me he spoke, "Hold fast to me—
I am your rock and castle.
Your ransom I myself will be;
For you I strive and wrestle.
For I am yours, your friend divine,
And evermore you shall be mine;
The foe shall not divide us."

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE SECOND ARTICLE

(Redemption)

I believe 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 is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

Discussion:

What do we mean when we speak about Christ's "humiliation"?

With what words does the Creed confess Christ's humiliation?
According to the Creed how was Christ exalted?

Of what does Christ's resurrection assure us?

Advanced Discussion:

In John 5:24 Jesus says Christians have "crossed over from death to life." What did he mean by this?

Prayer Points:

1. Pray for strengthening of faith based on the resurrection.
2. A greater appreciation for Christ's life and work.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Thursday, Week 2 The Second Article

References: Luther's Catechism questions 209-217, Luther's Large Catechism p. 70-72.

Hymn (CW 377 v. 8,9,10):

"The foe shall shed my precious blood,
Me of my life bereaving.
All this I suffer for your good;
Be steadfast and believing.
Life shall from death the vict'ry win;
My innocence shall bear your sin,
And you are blest forever.

"Now to my Father I depart,
The Holy Spirit sending
And, heav'nly wisdom to impart,
My help to you extending.
He will a source of comfort be,
Teach you to know and follow me,
And in all truth will guide you.

"What I on earth have lived and taught
Be all your life and teaching;
So shall my kingdom's work be wrought
And honored in your preaching.
Take care that no one's man-made laws
Should e'er destroy the gospel's cause.
This final word I leave you."

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

What does this mean?

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.

All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally.

This is most certainly true.

Discussion:

Why did Christ redeem me?

How does the redemption, which Christ won for me, become my own?

How only can I come to believe in Jesus?

Advanced Discussion:

How would you respond to a suffering Christian who tells you: "Now God is punishing me for my sins."

Prayer:

Almighty God, who has given your one and only Son to take our nature upon him, grant that we, being born from above and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Friday, Week 2 The Third Article

References: Luther's Catechism questions 218-234, Luther's Large Catechism p. 72-78.

Hymn (CW 176 v. 1, 2):

Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord!
May all your graces be outpoured
On each believer's mind and heart;
Your fervent love to them impart.
Lord, by the brightness of your light
In holy faith your church unite
From ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue;
This to your praise, O Lord our God, be sung:
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Come holy Light, Guide divine,
And cause the Word of life to shine!
Teach us to know our God aright
And call him Father with delight.
From ev'ry error keep us free;
Let none but Christ our Master be
That we in living faith abide,
In him, our Lord, with all our might confide.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE THIRD ARTICLE (Sanctification)

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.

What does this mean?

I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.

But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers.

On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead, and will give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

Discussion:

What is the work of the Holy Spirit called?

By what means does the Holy Spirit call me to faith in Christ?

The Bible pictures the miracle that the Holy Spirit works in me when he calls me to faith by the gospel with three words - conversion, regeneration or rebirth, and quickening. What do these words mean?

What kind of life does the Holy Spirit lead me to live?

Where is my guideline for good works to be found?

Advanced Discussion:

We often meet or hear about people who say they have “made a personal decision for Christ” or have “accepted Christ” as their personal Savior. Comment on these expressions.

(Note that in Luther’s explanation we read. “I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.”)

Prayer Points:

1. Repentance for working against the Holy Spirit by neglect of the Word of God.
2. Renewed zeal to live for the Lord daily.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Saturday, Week 2

The Third Article

References: Luther's Catechism questions 235-264, Luther's Large Catechism p. 72-78.

Hymn (CW 176 v. 1, 3)

Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord!
May all your graces be outpoured
On each believer's mind and heart;
Your fervent love to them impart.
Lord, by the brightness of your light
In holy faith your church unite
From ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue;
This to your praise, O Lord our God, be sung:
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Come holy Fire, Comfort true;
Grant us the will your work to do
And in your service to abide;
Let trials turn us not aside.
Lord, by your pow'r prepare each heart,
And to our weakness strength impart
That bravely here we may contend,
Through life and death to you, our Lord, ascend.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE THIRD ARTICLE

(Sanctification)

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.

Discussion:

What is the holy Christian church?

How is a child of God essentially different from an unbeliever?

What is a saint?

Where is the holy Christian church to be found?

What does God want us to do if people who are not members of our church ask us about our faith?

Advanced Discussion:

Many feel that they can be Christians without actually going to church. Futurists predict that many others in the coming years will go from church to church and never join. Comment.

Prayer Points:

1. Pray that the gospel might be proclaimed throughout the world.
2. For a spiritual awakening in our nation.
3. For effective and faithful Christian service in our congregation.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER



THE LORD'S PRAYER

The head of the family should teach it in the simplest way to those in the household.

THE ADDRESS

Our Father who is in heaven.

What does this mean?

With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that he is our true Father and that we are his true children, so that we may pray to him as boldly and confidently as dear children ask their dear father.

THE FIRST PETITION

Hallowed be your name.

What does this mean?

God's name is certainly holy by itself, but we pray in this petition that we too may keep it holy.

How is God's name kept holy?

God's name is kept holy when his Word is taught in its truth and purity and we as children of God lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But whoever teaches and lives contrary to God's Word dishonors God's name among us. Keep us from doing this, dear Father in heaven!

THE SECOND PETITION

Your kingdom come.

What does this mean?

God's kingdom certainly comes by itself even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may also come to us.

How does God's kingdom come?

God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and lead a godly life now on earth and forever in heaven.

THE THIRD PETITION

Your will be done on earth as in heaven.

What does this mean?

God's good and gracious will certainly is done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

How is God's will done?

God's will is done when he breaks and defeats every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world and our sinful flesh, which try to prevent us from keeping God's name holy and letting his kingdom come. And God's will is done when he strengthens and keeps us firm in his Word and in the faith as long as we live. This is his good and gracious will.

THE FOURTH PETITION

Give us today our daily bread.

What does this mean?

God surely gives daily bread without our asking, even to all the wicked, but we pray in this petition that he would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What, then, is meant by daily bread?

Daily bread includes everything that we need for our bodily welfare, such as food and drink, clothing and shoes, house and home, land and cattle, money and goods, a godly spouse, godly children, godly workers, godly and faithful leaders, good government, good weather, peace and order, health, a good name, faithful neighbors, and the like.

THE FIFTH PETITION

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

What does this mean?

We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins or because of them deny our prayers; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we ask, neither have we deserved them, but we ask that he would give them all to us by grace; for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment.

So we too will forgive from the heart and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

THE SIXTH PETITION

Lead us not into temptation.

What does this mean?

God surely tempts no one to sin, but we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or lead us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins; and though we are tempted by them, we pray that we may overcome and win the victory.

THE SEVENTH PETITION

But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean?

In conclusion, we pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil that threatens body and soul, property and reputation, and finally when our last hour comes, grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to himself in heaven.

THE DOXOLOGY

What does this mean?

We can be sure that these petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven and are heard by him, for he himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us. Therefore we say, "Amen. Yes, it shall be so."

Sunday, Week 3

The Address and First Petition

References: Luther's Catechism questions 329-341, Luther's Large Catechism p. 78-85.

Hymn (CW 410 v. 1, 2):

Our Father, who from heav'n above
Bids all of us to live in love
As members of one family
And pray to you in unity,
Teach us no thoughtless words to say,
But from our inmost hearts to pray.

Your name be hallowed. Help us, Lord,
In purity to keep your Word,
That to the glory of your name
We walk before you free from blame.
Let no false doctrine us pervert;
All poor, deluded souls convert.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE ADDRESS

Our Father who is in heaven.

What does this mean?

With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that he is our true Father and that we are his true children, so that we may pray to him as boldly and confidently as dear children ask their dear father.

Discussion:

What is prayer?

What does Jesus want us to remember when he tells us to address God as "our Father in heaven"?

Why does Jesus want us to remember the relationship we have with God by faith?

Advanced Discussion:

If God already knows everything going on in our lives and will work his will anyway, why bother praying?

THE FIRST PETITION

Hallowed be your name.

What does this mean?

God's name is certainly holy by itself, but we pray in this petition that we too may keep it holy.

How is God's name kept holy?

God's name is kept holy when his Word is taught in its truth and purity and we as children of God lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But whoever teaches and lives contrary to God's Word dishonors God's name among us. Keep us from doing this, dear Father in heaven!

Discussion:

What is God's name?

How do we keep God's name holy?

Advanced Discussion:

Some who pray the Lord's Prayer also confess "all steeples point to heaven" and "it doesn't really make any difference what you believe as long as you are sincere." Comment on these statements. What are they doing with the name of God?

Prayer:

I invoke you, God, and you answer me;
 turn your ear to me, hear what I say.
Display your marvelous kindness,
 Savior of fugitives!
From those who revolt against you
 guard me like the pupil of your eye;
Hide me in the shadow of your wings
 from the onslaughts of the wicked. Amen. (Psalm 17:6-9)

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Monday, Week 3

The Second Petition

References: Luther's Catechism questions 342-346, Luther's Large Catechism p. 85-87.

Hymn (*CW* 410 v. 1, 3):

Our Father, who from heav'n above
Bids all of us to live in love
As members of one family
And pray to you in unity,
Teach us no thoughtless words to say,
But from our inmost hearts to pray.

Your kingdom come, we humbly pray,
That Christ may rule in us today
And that your Holy Spirit bring
Still more to worship Christ as King
Break Satan's pow'r, defeat his rage;
Preserve your Church from age to age.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE SECOND PETITION

Your kingdom come.

What does this mean?

God's kingdom certainly comes by itself even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may also come to us.

How does God's kingdom come?

God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and lead a godly life now on earth and forever in heaven.

Discussion:

What is the kingdom of God about which we are praying in this petition?

How does this kingdom come to us?

Why do we pray for Christ to rule in our hearts?

What, then, are we praying in the Second Petition?

Advanced Discussion:

Give examples of things for which we pray unconditionally and those where we let God's will be done.

Prayer Points:

1. That Christ would be the Lord of my life.
2. Pray for a specific friend who does not know Christ.
3. Pray for all believers in our hometown to be salt and light to a dying world.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Tuesday, Week 3

The Third Petition

References: Luther's Catechism questions 347-352, Luther's Large Catechism p. 87-89.

Hymn (CW 410 v. 1, 4):

Our Father, who from heav'n above
Bids all of us to live in love
As members of one family
And pray to you in unity,
Teach us no thoughtless words to say,
But from our inmost hearts to pray.

Your gracious will on earth be done
Just as in heav'n around your throne,
That patiently we may obey
Throughout our lives all that you say.
Curb sinful flesh and ev'ry ill
That sets itself against your will.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE THIRD PETITION

Your will be done on earth as in heaven.

What does this mean?

God's good and gracious will certainly is done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

How is God's will done?

God's will is done when he breaks and defeats every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world and our sinful flesh, which try to prevent us from keeping God's name holy and letting his kingdom come. And God's will is done when he strengthens and keeps us firm in his Word and in the faith as long as we live. This is his good and gracious will.

Discussion:

What is God's good and gracious will?

What tries to prevent us from keeping God's name holy and letting his kingdom come?

How do the devil, the world and our sinful nature constantly try to prevent God's will from being done on earth?

What, then, are we praying for in the Third Petition?

Advanced Discussion:

How do people picture the devil?

How does Scripture portray him?

Prayer Points:

1. For God's good and gracious will to be done.
2. Pray that a specific person who hates God's Word would have his or her heart softened.
3. That believers everywhere might fight the forces of darkness in their many forms wielding the Word of God.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Wednesday, Week 3

The Fourth Petition

References: Luther's Catechism questions 353-357, Luther's Large Catechism p. 89-92.

Hymn (CW 410 v. 1, 5):

Our Father, who from heav'n above
Bids all of us to live in love
As members of one family
And pray to you in unity,
Teach us no thoughtless words to say,
But from our inmost hearts to pray.

Give us today our daily bread
And let us all be clothed and fed.
From hardship, war, and earthly strife,
From sickness, famine, spare our life.
Let selfishness and worry cease
That we may live in godly peace.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE FOURTH PETITION

Give us today our daily bread.

What does this mean?

God surely gives daily bread without our asking, even to all the wicked, but we pray in this petition that he would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What, then, is meant by daily bread?

Daily bread includes everything that we need for our bodily welfare, such as food and drink, clothing and shoes, house and home, land and cattle, money and goods, a godly spouse, godly children, godly workers, godly and faithful leaders, good government, good weather, peace and order, health, a good name, faithful neighbors, and the like.

Discussion:

What is meant by daily bread?

To whom does God give daily bread?

What does Jesus teach us Christians by this petition?

Why does Jesus teach us to ask for bread for only “this day”?

What, then, are we praying in the Fourth Petition?

Advanced Discussion:

Is it a sin to worry?

Prayer Points:

1. Better recognition that God must supply all earthly blessings.
2. Daily bread—thank you for the simple necessities of life.
3. This day—not in abundance, but enough for today’s needs.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Thursday, Week 3

The Fifth Petition

References: Luther's Catechism questions 358-362, Luther's Large Catechism p. 92-94.

Hymn (CW 410 v. 1, 6):

Our Father, who from heav'n above
Bids all of us to live in love
As members of one family
And pray to you in unity,
Teach us no thoughtless words to say,
But from our inmost hearts to pray.

Forgive our sins, Lord, we implore,
That they may trouble us no more;
We, too, will gladly those forgive
Who hurt us by the way they live.
Help us in our community
To serve each other willingly.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE FIFTH PETITION

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

What does this mean?

We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins or because of them deny our prayers; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we ask, neither have we deserved them, but we ask that he would give them all to us by grace; for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment.

So we too will forgive from the heart and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

Discussion:

What do we mean by trespasses?

What are we asking when we pray for forgiveness?

How do we show our thanks for God's forgiveness?

What, then, are we praying in the Fifth Petition?

Advanced Discussion:

What about the warning that our forgiveness is based on our forgiving others?

Prayer Points:

1. Our trespasses—we confess our sins, including those we have forgotten or never even noticed.
2. Forgive us for the sake of Jesus and his merits.
3. As we forgive—not making a “deal” with God. Rather, make our forgiveness of others as willing and complete as God’s forgiveness of us.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Friday, Week 3

The Sixth Petition

References: Luther's Catechism questions 363-367, Luther's Large Catechism p. 94-96.

Hymn (CW 410 v. 1, 7):

Our Father, who from heav'n above
Bids all of us to live in love
As members of one family
And pray to you in unity,
Teach us no thoughtless words to say,
But from our inmost hearts to pray.

Into temptation lead us not.
When evil foes against us plot
And vex our souls on every hand,
Oh, give us strength that we may stand
Firm in the faith, a mighty host,
Through comfort of the Holy Ghost.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE SIXTH PETITION

Lead us not into temptation.

What does this mean?

God surely tempts no one to sin, but we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or lead us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins; and though we are tempted by them, we pray that we may overcome and win the victory.

Discussion:

What is meant by "temptation"?

Who deceives us or leads us astray by temptation?

Will our Father in heaven ever lead us into temptation?

Why, then, do we ask our Father in heaven not to lead us into temptation?

What, then, are we praying in the Sixth Petition?

Advanced Discussion:

God tests us, as he tested Abraham (Genesis 22:1), in order to strengthen our faith. But God never leads us into sin. "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed." James 1:13,14. Why do so many people blame God for the evil and sin or hurt and pain in their lives?

(It is often very hard to deal with our own sinfulness and to recognize God's promise of good for our lives. Romans 8:28.)

Prayer Points:

1. Ask that God would help us avoid and overcome temptation.
2. That God would steer us away from anything that leads us away from him.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Saturday, Week 3

The Seventh Petition and The Doxology

References: Luther's Catechism questions 368-376, Luther's Large Catechism p. 96-97.

Hymn (CW 410 v. 1, 8, 9):

Our Father, who from heav'n above
Bids all of us to live in love
As members of one family
And pray to you in unity,
Teach us no thoughtless words to say,
But from our inmost hearts to pray.

From evil, Lord, deliver us;
The times and days are perilous.
Redeem us from eternal death,
And when we yield our dying breath,
Console us, grant us calm release,
And take our souls to you in peace.

Amen, that is, it shall be so.
Make strong our faith that we may know
That we may doubt not but believe
What here we ask we shall receive.
Thus in your name and at your word
We say, "Amen. Oh, hear us, Lord!"

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE SEVENTH PETITION

But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean?

In conclusion, we pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil that threatens body and soul, property and reputation, and finally when our last hour comes, grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to himself in heaven.

Discussion:

What is meant by "evil"?

How does the evil in the world affect our lives?

What does God do about the evil in the world?

What, then, are we praying in the Seventh Petition?

Advanced Discussion:

Since ancient times there has been controversy over the exact meaning of the phrase “from evil.” The question is whether the Greek word employed is to be taken as abstract or personal, neuter or masculine, whether that from which we are to be delivered is “the evil” or the “evil one.” In the Small Catechism Luther translates “evil.” However, in the Large Catechism he speaks of “the evil one.” Will this knowledge affect our understanding of this petition? If so, how?

THE DOXOLOGY

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.
Amen.**

What does this mean?

We can be sure that these petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven and are heard by him, for he himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us. Therefore we say, “Amen. Yes, it shall be so.”

Discussion:

Why can we be sure that these petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven?

Why do we close our prayers with the word “Amen”?

What, then, are we saying in the Doxology?

Advanced Discussion:

Luther once called the Lord’s Prayer “the greatest martyr in the world.” What did he mean? How might we avoid this danger when we pray the Lord’s Prayer.

Prayer Points:

1. Help us avoid any evil of body and soul and overcome it.
2. Comfort us that the perfect answer to this petition is that you will take us to heaven where there is no evil.
3. God is able to answer every prayer.
4. Praise him for he has heard us and will help us.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM



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The head of the family should teach it in the simplest way to those in the household.

THE INSTITUTION OF BAPTISM

First: What is Baptism?

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water used by God's command and connected with God's Word.

Which is that word of God?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!"

THE BLESSINGS OF BAPTISM

Second: What does Baptism do for us?

Baptism works forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

What is God's promise?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

THE POWER OF BAPTISM

Third: How can water do such great things?

It is certainly not the water that does such things, but God's Word, which is in and with the water and faith which trusts this Word used with the water. For without God's Word the water is just plain water and not Baptism. But with this Word it is Baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of rebirth through the Holy Spirit.

Where is this written?

Saint Paul says in Titus, chapter 3, "[God] saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying."

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM FOR OUR DAILY LIFE

Fourth: What does baptizing with water mean?

Baptism means that the Old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and die, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written?

Saint Paul says in Romans, chapter 6, "We were . . . buried with [Christ] through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Sunday, Week 4

The Means of Grace: The Gospel in Word and Sacrament

References: Luther's Catechism p. 229-230.

Hymn (CW 88 v. 1, 2):

To Jordan came the Christ, our Lord,
To do his Father's pleasure;
Baptized by John, the Father's Word
Was given us to treasure.
This heav'nly washing now shall be
A cleansing from transgression
And by his blood and agony
Release from death's oppression.
A new life now awaits us.

These truths on Jordan's banks were shown
By mighty word and wonder.
The Father's voice from heav'n came down
Which we do well to ponder:
"This man is my beloved son,
In whom my heart has pleasure.
Him you must hear, and him alone,
And trust in fullest measure
The word that he has spoken."

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE MEANS OF GRACE: THE GOSPEL IN WORD AND SACRAMENTS

In the Bible, the expression "grace of God" usually means "God's undeserved love which provides free forgiveness of sins, life and salvation for all people." In the study of the three articles we learned that it is only through Christ that God in his grace forgives all sins and thus also gives life and salvation. Now we want to ask, "By what means do we learn to know the grace of God?" It is by the study of God's Word. So we say that the *means* by which God makes known and gives his *grace* to us is the gospel in his Word.

God's Word is made up of two basic teachings or doctrines, the law and the gospel. Of these two doctrines it is the gospel or "good news" that tells us about God's grace. So to be more exact we say that the means by which God offers and gives his grace to us is the gospel in his Word.

We might use a water pipe as an illustration of the means of grace. The water pipe is the means by which the water from a water tower or well is brought to the faucet in our sinks. In a similar way the gospel in God's Word is the means by

which God's grace (forgiveness of sins and eternal life) is offered and given to us.

In the Third Article we learned how the gospel in God's Word serves as a means of grace. There are also two sacred acts in which the gospel is also used as a means of grace. They are called the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

When Lutherans use the term "sacrament," we mean a sacred act that has three basic characteristics:

1. A sacrament is a sacred act that Christ established or instituted for Christians to do.
2. A sacrament is a sacred act in which Christ tells us to use earthly elements (water, bread, and wine) together with God's Word.
3. A sacrament is a sacred act in which Christ offers, gives, and seals to us the forgiveness of sins and thus also life and salvation.

In summary, then, if we ask "What do we mean by the means of grace?", the answer is the means of grace is that means by which God offers and gives us the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. And if we ask, "What is that means of grace?", the answer is this: the means of grace is the gospel in Word and sacraments.

Discussion:

What is a sacrament?

What kinds of earthly elements are used in a sacrament?

It has been said that the sacraments are visible pictures of the Word of God. What is taking place behind the scenes spiritually in Baptism and the Lord's Supper?

What does Christ offer, give and seal to us in a sacrament?

What do we mean by the means of grace?

Advanced Discussion:

A magazine article about contemporary spirituality related the story of a woman who meditated in her garden with the earth, plants, and air. She felt she did not need anything else for her spiritual journey in life. What God was she communing with?

Prayer Points:

1. Repentance for my neglect of the Means of Grace.
2. Better appreciation for Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Monday, Week 4

The Institution of Baptism

References: Luther's Catechism questions 265-270, Luther's Large Catechism p. 97-104.

Hymn (CW 88 v. 3,4):

Oh, hear and mark the message well,
For God himself has spoken.
Let faith, not doubt, among us dwell,
And so receive this token.
Our Lord here with his Word endows
Pure water freely flowing.
God's Holy Spirit here avows
Our kinship while bestowing
The baptism of his blessing.

All that the mortal eye beholds
Is water as we pour it.
Before the eye of faith unfolds
The pow'r of Jesus' merit.
For here it sees his precious blood
To all our ills bring healing,
The wonders of that crimson flood
The love of God revealing,
Assuring his own pardon.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE INSTITUTION OF BAPTISM

First: What is Baptism?

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water used by God's command and connected with God's Word.

Which is that word of God?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!"

Discussion:

What does the word "baptize" mean?

For whom is baptism intended?

Give several reasons why Christ instituted baptism for us.

Advanced Discussion:

Luther posed the question: "What is baptism?" How does baptism relate to the explanation of the Second Article?

Prayer

Dear Lord, I am your child. You named me with your holy name at my baptism. You made me your own. You insisted on having me even though you knew the end of my life as well as its beginning, its shame as well as its glory, its failures as well as its achievements, its bad as well as its good. Forgive me for so often wandering into a far country away from you, from your forgiveness and from joy and love in Christ Jesus. Help me to live in the freedom of my baptism, by faith, in the life that you daily renew by your gracious forgiveness. I am baptized. I belong to you, dear Father! Amen.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Tuesday, Week 4 The Blessings of Baptism

References: Luther's Catechism questions 272-274, Luther's Large Catechism p. 97-104.

Hymn (CW 88 v. 1, 5):

To Jordan came the Christ, our Lord,
To do his Father's pleasure;
Baptized by John, the Father's Word
Was given us to treasure.
This heav'nly washing now shall be
A cleansing from transgression
And by his blood and agony
Release from death's oppression.
A new life now awaits us.

To his disciples spoke the Lord,
"Go out to ev'ry nation
And bring to them the living Word
And this my invitation:
Let ev'ryone abandon sin
And come in true contrition
To be baptized and thereby win
Full pardon and remission
And heav'nly bliss inherit."

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE BLESSINGS OF BAPTISM

Second: What does Baptism do for us?

Baptism works forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

What is God's promise?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

Discussion:

Why is it a great comfort for each of us to say everyday, "I am baptized"?

Does everyone who is baptized receive this blessing?

Advanced Discussion:

Agree or Disagree: We lose the blessings of baptism when we do not act like Christians.

Prayer Points:

1. Pray for certainty of faith and hope of heaven.
2. Greater understanding and realization of my own baptism.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Wednesday, Week 4

The Power of Baptism

References: Luther's Catechism questions 275-278, Luther's Large Catechism p. 97-104.

Hymn (CW 294 v. 1, 4):

Baptized into your name most holy,
O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
I claim a place, though weak and lowly,
Among your saints, your chosen host.
Buried with Christ and dead to sin.
Your Spirit now shall live within.

All that I am and love most dearly –
Receive it all, O Lord, from me.
Let me confess my faith sincerely
And help me your own child to be!
Let nothing that I am or own
Serve any will but yours alone.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE POWER OF BAPTISM

Third: How can water do such great things?

It is certainly not the water that does such things, but God's Word, which is in and with the water and faith which trusts this Word used with the water. For without God's Word the water is just plain water and not Baptism. But with this Word it is Baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of rebirth through the Holy Spirit.

Where is this written?

Saint Paul says in Titus, chapter 3, "[God] saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying."

Discussion:

Why is baptism able to offer and give such great blessings?

How does the Word of God make baptism a “washing”?

Advanced Discussion:

In Romans 6:13 God urges Christians to “offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.” How can a Christian’s mouth become an instrument of righteousness? His hands?

Prayer:

God loved the world so that he gave
His only Son the lost to save
That all who would in him believe
Should everlasting life receive.

Be of good cheer, for God’s own Son
Forgives the sins that you have done.
You’re justified by Jesus’ blood;
Baptized, you are a child of God. (CW 391 v. 1, 4)

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Thursday, Week 4

The Meaning of Baptism for our Daily Life

References: Luther's Catechism questions 279-284, Luther's Large Catechism p. 97-104.

Hymn (CW 295 v. 2, 4):

Lord, your Word is clear and plain,
And we will obey it duly:
"He who is not born again,
Heart and life renewing truly,
Born of water and the Spirit,
Can my kingdom not inherit."

Gracious Head, your member own;
Shepherd, take your lamb and feed it;
Prince of Peace, make here your throne;
Way of Life, to heaven lead it.
Precious Vine, let nothing sever
From your side this branch forever.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM FOR OUR DAILY LIFE

Fourth: What does baptizing with water mean?

Baptism means that the Old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and die, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written?

Saint Paul says in Romans, chapter 6, "We were . . . buried with [Christ] through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Discussion:

What new desire does the Holy Spirit work in me by baptism?

How does the Old Adam (sinful nature) oppose this new life in me? Give some examples.

How do we drown our old Adam?

What difference will it make in the way we live our daily life if we remind ourselves each day that we are baptized children of God?

Advanced Discussion:

When many Christians are asked what Christ has done for them they respond, "he has forgiven my sins." Is this answer sufficient?

Prayer:

Dear Lord, this world is often strange, challenging and confusing. Temptations and trials come to us in many forms and ways. Especially at such times lead us back to the strength and comfort of our baptismal grace. Remind us that we begin, live out, and conclude each day of our life as members of your heavenly household. Help us to live in this world as your redeemed children, serving you and others in love and devotion. In doing so we praise your holy name, O blessed Trinity. Amen.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Friday, Week 4 Infant Baptism

References: Luther's Catechism question 271, Luther's Large Catechism p. 104-109.

Hymn (CW 296):

Our children Jesus calls
To his most dear embrace.
He holds them in his mighty arms
Through their baptismal grace.

"Let them approach," he cries,
"Nor scorn their humble claim.
The heirs of heav'n are such as these;
For such as these I came."

With joy we bring them, Lord,
Devoting them to you,
And pray, "As you show love to us,
So love our children, too."

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them," Jesus said in Matthew 28:19. He thus commanded the baptism of all people. He made no exceptions. Infants, since they are sinful by birth, also need to be reborn to become children of God. "Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5). The Savior especially invited children to come to him: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Mark 10:14). Jesus also spoke of "these little ones who believe in me." (Matthew 18:6). Faith is a gift of God and the Spirit can certainly work the miracle of faith in the hearts of infants as well as in adults.

Christian parents will want to bring their children to the Lord in baptism and to keep them with the Lord by training and instructing them in the ways of the Lord. "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4).

In the case of adults, instruction in the Christian faith precedes baptism. On the Day of Pentecost after Peter had preached the crucified and risen Christ, those who accepted his message were baptized (Acts 2:41). Adults make confession of their Christian faith when they are baptized (Acts 8:26-39).

Discussion:

Why do we baptize infants as well as adults?

Give another reason for baptizing infants.

How is the benefit to be received?

Can the Lord work faith in the hearts of infants?

Advanced Discussion:

How many times is a person to be baptized? How does this illustrate the power of God?

Prayer:

You have made us for yourself
And our hearts are restless
until they rest in You. Amen. (St. Augustine)

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Saturday, Week 4

The Pastor Baptizes, Emergency Baptism and Sponsors and Witnesses

References: Luther's Catechism p. 236-237.

Hymn (CW 299):

All who believe and are baptized
Shall see the Lord's salvation;
Baptized into the death of Christ,
They are a new creation.
Through Christ's redemption they shall stand
Among the glorious, heav'nly band
Of ev'ry tribe and nation.

With one accord, O God, we pray:
Grant us your Holy Spirit;
Help us in our infirmity
Through Jesus' blood and merit.
Grant us to grow in grace each day
That by this sacrament we may
Eternal life inherit.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE PASTOR BAPTIZES

Jesus commanded his disciples to baptize. This means that all believers have the right from Jesus to baptize. Why, then, does our pastor normally do the baptizing in our congregation? God urges us to do everything "in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Corinthians 14:40). Therefore, to avoid disorder in our congregation, when we call a person to serve as our pastor, we also ask that person to do the baptizing.

Discussion:

All believers have the right from Jesus to baptize. Why, then, does our pastor normally do the baptizing in our congregation?

EMERGENCY BAPTISM

If a child is in danger of dying, and our pastor is not present, any Christian may and should administer Baptism. If the child lives, it is not necessary later to have the pastor baptize the child also. The important thing in Baptism is not who does it, but rather that it is done in the way Jesus commanded us, namely, by using water connected with God's Word. In any emergency, then, we should simply take water and pour or sprinkle or wash the water on the head of the child while we say, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." If there is time, the Baptism may also be preceded or followed by a Scripture reading such as Luke 18:15-17, a prayer and the Lord's Prayer (see page 14 of *Christian Worship* for a form for emergency Baptism.)

Discussion:

How should we perform an emergency baptism?

SPONSORS AND WITNESSES

Having sponsors for a baby is not commanded by God, so it is not a necessary part of Baptism. It is a custom that our church uses because of the special things a sponsor can do for a child.

The sponsor does not believe for the child, but the parents ask the sponsor to be concerned about the spiritual welfare of the child in various ways. The sponsor can remind the child of his or her Baptism and the meaning of Baptism. The sponsor can assure the child that he or she was baptized if this is ever in doubt. The sponsor can pray for the godchild and encourage the godchild to study God's Word faithfully.

Thus the sponsor also assures the parents that if they should die, there would be someone to look after the spiritual needs of the child and bring the child up in the true faith.

The responsibility of a witness is different from that of a sponsor. If we ask someone to serve as a witness to a child's Baptism, we are asking that person only to be a witness to the fact that the child was baptized. If a person is of another faith, we ask him to serve as a witness rather than a sponsor. We do this because we want to uphold the confession that God tells us to make to all with whom we are not in fellowship, and also because we do not want a person to make a promise that he or she will not or cannot keep.

Discussion:

What kind of sponsors ought we to choose for our children?

Why?

Advanced Discussion:

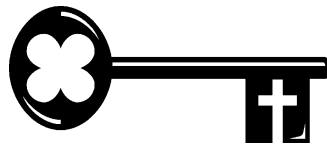
It is said that Luther had a “baptism theology,” that is, he greatly stressed the importance and power of baptism for the daily life of the Christian. Why might you believe this emphasis has been lost to many Christians, even Lutherans?

Prayer Points:

1. For faithful sponsors.
2. For parents to instruct their children in the Word.
3. For the personal comfort and assurance that I am a forgiven child of God.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

THE USE OF THE KEYS AND CONFESSION



THE USE OF THE KEYS AND CONFESSION

The head of the family should teach them in the simplest way to those in the household.

THE KEYS

First: What is the use of the keys?

The use of the keys is that special power and right which Christ gave to his church on earth: to forgive the sins of penitent sinners, but refuse forgiveness to the impenitent as long as they do not repent.

Where is this written?

The holy Evangelist John writes in chapter 20, “[Jesus] breathed on [his disciples] and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’”

THE PUBLIC USE OF THE KEYS

Second: How does a Christian congregation use the keys?

A Christian congregation with its called pastor uses the keys in accordance with Christ’s command by forgiving those who repent of their sin and are willing to amend, and by excluding from the congregation those who are plainly impenitent that they may repent. I believe that when this is done, it is as valid and certain in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us himself.

Where is this written?

Jesus says in Matthew, chapter 18, “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

CONFESSION

First: What is confession?

Confession has two parts. The one is that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution or forgiveness from the pastor as from God himself, not doubting but firmly believing that our sins are thus forgiven before God in

heaven.

Second: What sins should we confess?

Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's Prayer.

But before the pastor we should confess only those sins that we know and feel in our hearts.

Third: How can we recognize these sins?

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments. Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, employer, or employee? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you hurt anyone by word or deed? Have you been dishonest, careless, wasteful, or done other wrong?

Fourth: How will the pastor assure a penitent sinner of his forgiveness?

He will say, "According to the authority of Christ, I forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Sunday, Week 5

The Ministry of the Keys and Confession

References: Luther's Catechism questions 304-310.

Hymn (*CW* 305 v. 1, 2):

From depths of woe I cry to you;
Lord, hear me, I implore you.
Bend down your gracious ear to me;
My prayer let come before you.
If you kept record of my sin
And held against me what I've been,
How could I stand before you?

Your love and grace alone avail
To blot out my transgression.
The best and holiest deeds must fail
To break sin's dread oppression.
Before you none can boasting stand,
But all must fear your strict demand
And live alone by mercy.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE KEYS

First: What is the use of the keys?

The use of the keys is that special power and right which Christ gave to his church on earth: to forgive the sins of penitent sinners, but refuse forgiveness to the impenitent as long as they do not repent.

Where is this written?

The holy Evangelist John writes in chapter 20, "[Jesus] breathed on [his disciples] and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'"

Discussion:

What does Christ mean when he speaks about "the keys"?

Why is the proper use of the keys either a powerful warning or a great comfort for us?

"Only Christ can forgive sins." Agree or Disagree.

Church members sometimes excuse themselves from confessing their faith to others

by saying, "That's the minister's business." Comment.

Advanced Discussion:

What is the meaning of Christ's words in Luke 18:14: "He who humbles himself will be exalted"?

Prayer Points:

1. Pray for backsliding Christians.
2. That hearts filled with hatred would be softened with Christ's forgiveness.
3. For proper application of law and gospel by our pastor.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Monday, Week 5

The Public Use of the Keys

References: Luther's Catechism questions 311-318.

Hymn (*CW* 305 v. 3,4)

Therefore my hope is in the Lord
And not in my own merit;
It rests upon his faithful Word
To them of contrite spirit.
That he is merciful and just—
This is my comfort and my trust.
His help I wait with patience.

My soul is waiting for the Lord
As one who longs for morning;
No watcher waits with greater hope
Than I for his returning.
I hope as Israel in the Lord;
He sends redemption through his Word.
We praise him for his mercy.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE PUBLIC USE OF THE KEYS

Second: How does a Christian congregation use the keys?

A Christian congregation with its called pastor uses the keys in accordance with Christ's command by forgiving those who repent of their sin and are willing to amend, and by excluding from the congregation those who are plainly impenitent that they may repent. I believe that when this is done, it is as valid and certain in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us himself.

Where is this written?

Jesus says in Matthew, chapter 18, "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Discussion:

Through whom are the keys administered publicly in a congregation?

Why do our congregations have pastors?

The sins of penitent sinners are to be forgiven. Who is such a penitent sinner?

Mention some penitent sinners from Bible History.

What should we do if we have wronged another person?

Advanced Discussion:

How can you tell if a person is repentant? What attitude will he or she have?

What finally leads to a person's excommunication (expulsion from a Christian congregation)?

Prayer:

O Lord, grant me your forgiveness, your grace, your peace, your strength, your comfort, your hope, your life, your presence, your joy, your promise of success for all my tasks this day. Amen.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Tuesday, Week 5

Other Forms of the Holy Ministry

Reference: Luther's Catechism p. 280-281.

Hymn (CW 486 v. 1,2):

Lord of glory, you have bought us
With your lifeblood as the price,
Never grudging for the lost ones
That tremendous sacrifice,
And with that have freely given
Blessings countless as the sand
To the unthankful and the evil
With your own unsparing hand.

Grant us heart, dear Lord, to give you
Gladly, freely, of your own.
With the sunshine of your goodness
Melt your thankless hearts of stone
Till our cold and selfish natures,
Warmed by you, at length believe
That more happy and more blessed
'Tis to give than to receive.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

OTHER FORMS OF THE HOLY MINISTRY

God has ordained the public ministry in the church. Often, however, we limit ourselves to a discussion of the pastor in this ministry because the catechism says, "A congregation with its called pastor uses the keys ... by forgiving ... and by excluding from the congregation, etc." Many scripture passages mention other offices such as evangelists, teachers, elders, and overseers (bishops), in addition to pastors. Another office mentioned in the New Testament is that of deacon (1 Timothy 3:8).

From this we can see that God did not establish only one office of the public ministry, but he gave believers the liberty to set up various forms of that office to meet whatever needs they may have. A congregation may have only one person serving in the public ministry, a pastor. Or a congregation may have many serving them: one or more pastors, teachers, elders, evangelists, vicars, and the like.

What God says about those who are pastors is true of all others who serve in the public ministry: 1) They must have the qualifications that God has established for those who serve in the church, and 2) no one may serve in the public ministry without a call by the Holy Spirit through the congregation. Each will serve according

to what the congregation calls him to do.

When congregations join in an association or a synod to do such work as Christian education or mission work, they will call people to serve as professors, chaplains, missionaries, administrators, or other specialized ministries. Each will be serving in his call to meet the special needs of the association of congregations or the synod.

Whatever the form of the ministry, all who serve are called by the Holy Spirit through a group of believers to do the Lord's work.

Discussion:

Read Acts 6:1-7. What problem had developed in the church?

What solution was decided upon?

What are some other forms of the ministry beside the office of a pastor that you can name?

How are you using your gifts and talents to the glory of God and the strengthening of Christ's church?

Advanced Discussion:

Two Christians cannot agree. One says: "The pastor is the servant of the congregation." The other says: "The pastor is the servant of Christ." Can you help them understand each other?

Prayer:

Loving Father, make me ready and willing to serve in your kingdom this day. I place myself in your care and power to become an instrument of your will. Despite my weaknesses and failings, use me effectively in the tasks to which you have appointed me. Hear my prayer, through Jesus Christ, your Son, my Lord. Amen.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Wednesday, Week 5

CONFESSION First: What is confession?

Reference: Luther's Catechism questions 319-320, Luther's Large Catechism p. 122-127.

Hymn (CW 308 v. 1, 5):

"As surely as I live," God said,
I would not have the sinner dead,
But that he turn from error's ways,
Repent, and live through endless days."

The words which absolution give
Are his who died that we might live;
The minister whom Christ has sent
Is but his humble instrument.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

CONFESSION

First: What is Confession?

Confession has two parts. The one is that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution or forgiveness from the pastor as from God himself, not doubting but firmly believing that our sins are thus forgiven before God in heaven.

Discussion:

In *Webster's Dictionary* the word "confession" has three meanings listed. Each meaning has but one part, nevertheless Christian confession has two parts. Which is the first part?

Which is the second part?

Why do we confess our sins?

Why should we not doubt the message of absolution from the pastor?

Advanced Discussion:

A man, who calls himself a Christian, seeks to divorce his wife and marry another woman even though he has no Scriptural grounds. To "solve" his problem, he reasons as follows. "I'll divorce my wife, even though I know it's wrong and marry

the other woman. Later, we'll repent of our sin and be forgiven by God and the church. They will then bless my new marriage and take me back. Or if they don't we'll join another church where they will." Is this true confession?

Prayer Points:

1. Repentance for all sin.
2. Desire and strength to put away all sin of thought, word and action.
3. Strength and desire to make confession to those I have wronged.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Thursday, Week 5

CONFESSION Second: What sins should we confess?

References: Luther's Catechism question 321, Luther's Large Catechism p. 122-127.

Hymn (CW 308 v. 1, 6):

"As surely as I live," God said,
"I would not have the sinner dead,
But that he turn from error's ways,
Repent, and live through endless days."

When ministers lay on their hands,
Absolved by Christ the sinner stands;
He who by grace the Word believes
Forgiveness, sure and sweet, receives.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Second: What sins should we confess?

Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's Prayer.
But before the pastor we should confess only those sins that we know and feel in our hearts.

Discussion:

Of how many sins should we plead guilty before God?

Does that include even those sins we do not know or come to mind?

What does our church teach concerning private confession to the pastor?

What does the Bible say about confessing our faults to the neighbor whom we have offended and grieved?

Advanced Discussion:

How can we confess unknown sins?

Luther for a time was uncertain as to whether confession should be regarded as a third sacrament, but dropped this idea because confession does not possess a divinely ordained earthly element or sign. Nevertheless he continued to value it highly. This is not the case in our day. Confession is often neglected and in some

catechetical instruction is even omitted. Some Christians confess particular sins privately to their pastor. Although this is not a requirement for forgiveness, can you think of a good reason for using such private confession?

Prayer:

O God, it is hard for me to confess my sins and not merely to repeat worn-out phrases with which I try to cover my real and haunting guilt. I am a sinner. Why, Lord, do I so often run from that realization? Why am I so bothered about a few things that go wrong while I think nothing of my lack of faith in you? Why do I feel guilty when I fail to live up to my own standards but hardly blush when I fail you? Why do I imitate unholy people instead of following Jesus? I confess that I often trust myself more than you, that I am weak in the face of temptations, and without you I am nothing. All I can do is plead mercy, O God. I cannot even hold up the honesty and fullness of my confession. All I can do is trust your love in Jesus Christ. Forgive me Father! Forgive me for even this, my poor confession. I need your forgiveness for Christ's sake. Amen.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Friday, Week 5

CONFESSION Third: How can we recognize these sins?

References: Luther's Catechism question 322, Luther's Large Catechism p. 122-127.

Hymn (CW 313 v. 4, 5):

Useless would be Jesus' passion
If salvation you could fashion.
Do not come if you suppose
You need not him who died and rose.

Christ says, "Come, all you that labor,
And receive my grace and favor;
Those who feel no pain or ill
Need no physician's help or skill."

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Third: How can we recognize these sins?

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments. Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, employer, or employee? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you hurt anyone by word or deed? Have you been dishonest, careless, wasteful, or done other wrong?

Discussion:

What rule should we use to examine our lives before confession?

Pick a few Commandments. Consider the good you have neglected to do and the sins against that Commandment that you have committed in thought, word, and deed.

Advanced Discussion:

The study of ethics appears to be on the rise. Normally this study is based on "situation ethics" and not the Ten Commandments. What is the difference?

Prayer:

O Father in heaven, help me to search my heart that I may see my sins clearly: the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do. Grant me true repentance and the firm resolve to do better through Jesus Christ, your Son and my Lord. Amen.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Saturday, Week 5

CONFESSION Fourth: How will a pastor assure a penitent sinner of his forgiveness?

References: Luther's Catechism questions 323-328, Luther's Large Catechism p. 122-127.

Hymn (CW 317 v. 1):

"As surely as I live," God said,
"I would not have the sinner dead,
But that he turn from error's ways,
Repent, and live through endless days."

Praise God the Father and the Son
And Holy Spirit, Three in One,
As was, is now, and so shall be
Forever and eternally!

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Fourth: How will the pastor assure a penitent sinner of his forgiveness?

He will say, "According to the authority of Christ, I forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Discussion:

When does our pastor regularly make the comforting announcement of absolution?

What does this confession mean to you in your daily living?

As Christians we are accountable to one another. What does this have to do with the area of confession?

How should we receive the absolution spoken by a fellow Christian?

Advanced Discussion:

Confession consists in acknowledgment of sin and the assurance of God's grace, but the chief emphasis must be on absolution. Confession exists for the sake of absolution. What happens if confession is not understood from the view of absolution?

Sometimes in public testimonials on TV or on the radio, Christians confess their former gross sins such as prostitution, drug dealing, gambling, drunkenness and adultery. Is this a good thing to do?

Prayer Points:

1. Repentance for a sin that has troubled you recently.
2. Thankfulness for the forgiveness of Christ.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION



THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

The head of the family should teach it in the simplest way to those in the household

THE INSTITUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

First: What is the sacrament of Holy Communion?

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ for us Christians to eat and to drink.

Where is this written?

The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and the apostle Paul tell us: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat. This is my body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me." Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

THE BLESSINGS OF HOLY COMMUNION

Second: What blessing do we receive through this eating and drinking?

That is shown us by these words, "Given" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins."

Through these words we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in this sacrament.

For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

THE POWER OF HOLY COMMUNION

Third: How can eating and drinking do such great things?

It is certainly not the eating and drinking that does such things, but the words, "Given" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins."

These words are the main thing in this sacrament, along with the eating and drinking.

And whoever believes these words has what they plainly say, the forgiveness of sins.

THE RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Fourth: Who, then, is properly prepared to receive this sacrament?

Fasting and other outward preparations may serve a good purpose, but he is properly prepared who believes these words: "Given" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." But whoever does not believe these words or doubts them is not prepared, because the words "for you" require nothing but hearts that believe.

Sunday, Week 6

The Institution of Holy Communion

References: Luther's Catechism questions 285-289, Luther's Large Catechism p. 110-121.

Hymn (CW 317 v. 1):

O Lord, we praise you, bless you, and adore you,
In thanksgiving bow before you.
Here with your body and your blood you nourish
Our weak souls that they may flourish.
O Lord, have mercy!
May your body, Lord, born of Mary,
That our sins and sorrows did carry,
And your blood for us plead
In all trial, fear, and need: O Lord, have mercy!

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE INSTITUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

First: What is the sacrament of Holy Communion?

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Discussion:

By what other names is the sacrament of Holy Communion known?

Jesus ordained and instituted Holy Communion on the last evening of his life. Here he displayed the ultimate act of giving. What feast had he celebrated on that evening with his disciples?

As part of the Passover celebration a perfect lamb was to be killed and eaten. To whom did this lamb point?

What sacrament, then, was to take the place of the Passover?

To whom did Jesus give the bread and the wine?

What does that mean for us, his disciples in this generation?

Advanced Discussion:

Someone once asked, "If all my sins have already been forgiven through Christ's death and resurrection, then why do I need to go to the Lord's Supper?" How would you answer?

Prayer Points:

1. Forgive my unworthiness.
2. Strengthen my faith in your love.
3. Restore to me the joy of my salvation.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Monday, Week 6

The Blessings of Holy Communion

References: Luther's Catechism questions 290-292, Luther's Large Catechism p. 110-121.

Hymn (CW 317 v. 2, 3):

Your holy body into death was given,
Life to win for us in heaven.
No greater love than this to you could bind us;
May this feast of that remind us!
O Lord, have mercy!
Lord, your love and kindness did move you;
Let your supper move us to love you.
All our debt you have paid;
Peace with God once more is made.
O Lord, have mercy!

May God bestow on us his grace and favor
To please him with our behavior
And live together here in love and union,
Cherishing our blest communion.
O Lord, have mercy!
Let not your good Spirit forsake us;
Grant that heav'nly minded he make us.
Give your Church, Lord, to see
Days of peace and unity.
O Lord, have mercy!

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE BLESSINGS OF HOLY COMMUNION

Second: What blessing do we receive through this eating and drinking?

That is shown us by these words, "Given" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins."

Through these words we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in this sacrament.

For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

Discussion:

Why did Jesus give his body into death and pour out his blood for us?

Why is it such a great comfort and strengthening for our faith each time we receive the Lord's Supper?

How often should you go to Holy Communion?

Advanced Discussion:

Agree or Disagree: "We should not go to Communion if we don't feel the need for it."

Prayer:

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress;
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly—
Wash me, Savior, or I die. Amen.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Tuesday, Week 6

The Power of Holy Communion

References: Luther's Catechism questions 293-295, Luther's Large Catechism p. 110-121.

Hymn (*CW* 135 v. 1, 4):

The death of Jesus Christ, our Lord,
We celebrate with one accord;
It is our comfort in distress,
Our heart's sweet joy and happiness.

His Word proclaims, and we believe
That in this supper we receive
His very body, as he said,
His very blood for sinners shed.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE POWER OF HOLY COMMUNION

Third: How can eating and drinking do such great things?

It is certainly not the eating and drinking that does such things, but the words, "Given" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins."

These words are the main thing in this sacrament, along with the eating and drinking.

And whoever believes these words has what they plainly say, the forgiveness of sins.

Discussion:

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?

What does Jesus do through his Word in Holy Communion?

Do all receive the forgiveness of Christ in the sacrament?

Advanced Discussion:

How would you react to the following statement: "I don't feel any different after I've taken the Lord's Supper. Can I be sure that I am forgiven if I don't feel forgiven?"

Prayer Points:

1. Stronger trust in the promises of God.
2. Thankfulness and praise for Christ's love for us.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Wednesday, Week 6

The Reception of Holy Communion

References: Luther's Catechism questions 296-303, Luther's Large Catechism p. 110-121.

Hymn (*CW* 135 v. 1, 9):

The death of Jesus Christ, our Lord,
We celebrate with one accord;
It is our comfort in distress,
Our heart's sweet joy and happiness.

Help us sincerely to believe
That we may worthily receive
Your supper and in you find rest.
Amen! They who believe are blest.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Fourth: Who, then, is properly prepared to receive this sacrament?

Fasting and other outward preparations may serve a good purpose, but he is properly prepared who believes these words: "Given" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." But whoever does not believe these words or doubts them is not prepared, because the words "for you" require nothing but hearts that believe.

Discussion:

Mention what we want to remember about the Lord's Supper that prepares us to receive it in a worthy manner and also makes us eager to receive it often.

In I Corinthians 11:28 those who commune in the sacrament are told to examine themselves. What questions should we ask to help us accomplish that end?

To whom should the Lord's Supper be denied?

Why is it denied?

Advanced Discussion:

True or False: "Everyone who goes to Communion receives Jesus' body and blood."

True or False: "Everyone who goes to Communion receives the forgiveness of sins."

Prayer:

My faith looks up to thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine.
Now hear me while I pray;
Take all my guilt away;
Oh, let me from this day
Be wholly thine! Amen.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Thursday, Week 6

Daily Prayers

Reference: Luther's Catechism page 16.

Hymn (CW 411):

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Ev'rything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Ev'rything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged—
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness—
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge—
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
In his arms he'll take and shield you;
You will find a solace there.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DAILY PRAYERS

How the head of the family should teach those in his household to pray morning and evening, to ask a blessing and to say grace at meals.

MORNING PRAYER

In the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.
I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger. Keep me through this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

EVENING PRAYER

In the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have graciously kept me this day. Forgive me all my sins, and graciously keep me this night. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

TO ASK A BLESSING

The eyes of all look to you, O Lord, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. Amen.

Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us through these gifts that we receive from your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

TO SAY GRACE

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Amen.

Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank you for all your gifts, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Discussion:

Prayer is a part of a healthy relationship with God. We communicate with him. It is essential. What would our family life be like if father did not speak with mother, parents with children, or brother with sister?

Why is it important for parents to pray with their children?

What kind of witness is given to others when we pray before meals with guests in our homes or at a public eating establishment?

How might we change our prayer habits? Are we praying, for example, in the morning and evening, before stressful work or important events?

Advanced Discussion:

Jesus says, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Matthew 5:44). What or how should we pray for our enemies?

Explain this statement: If God hated us, He would give us everything we ask for.

Prayer: Luther's Morning or Evening Prayer

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Friday, Week 6

Table of Duties: Pastors . . . Wives

Reference: Luther's Catechism p. 17-18.

Hymn (CW 284 v. 1, 2):

How precious is the Book divine,
By inspiration giv'n!
Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine
To guide our souls to heav'n.

Its light, descending from above
Our gloomy world to cheer,
Displays a Savior's boundless love
And brings his glories near.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

TABLE OF DUTIES

PASTORS

A pastor must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to much wine, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. He must not be a recent convert. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (See 1 Timothy 3:2,3,4,6; Titus 1 :9.)

Discussion:

Why is it important that our pastor not be a recent convert?

Are pastors to be essentially different from any other Christians?

WHAT WE OWE TO OUR PASTORS AND TEACHERS

Anyone who receives instruction in the Word must share all good things with his instructor (Galatians 6:6.).

In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. (See 1 Corinthians 9:14.) The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "The worker deserves his wages." (See 1 Timothy 5:17,18.)

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. (See Hebrews 13:17.)

Discussion:

How might we or others be hurt if we disobey or rebel against the leaders in our church?

GOVERNMENT

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. (See Romans 13:1,2,4.)

Discussion:

Where does all authority to govern come?

Advanced Discussion:

Should a Christian run for a political office? Should a minister run for a political office?

HUSBANDS

Husbands, be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. (See 1 Peter 3:7; Colossians 3:19.)

Discussion:

If a husband is harsh or unloving to his wife why will his prayers be hindered?

WIVES

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. (See Ephesians 5:22; 1 Peter 3:6.)

Discussion:

In Ephesians 5 we are told that a husband is to love his wife to the point that he would die for her just as Christ died for us. If the husband so loves his wife how will this affect her attitude of submission?

Advanced Discussion:

Can there ever be abuse in a Christian home?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, give me the wisdom to know what is right and to live what is true. Prevent my life from saying one thing and my words another. Remind me that I should do what I say and be what I claim. Hear me for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Saturday, Week 6
Table of Duties: Parents . . . A Word For All

Reference: Luther's Catechism p. 18-19.

Hymn (CW 514 v. 3, 4):

Hear us, dear Father, when we pray
For needed help from day to day
That as your children we may live,
Whom you in baptism did receive.

Lord, when we fall or go astray,
Absolve and lift us up, we pray;
And through the sacrament increase
Our faith till we depart in peace.

Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PARENTS

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. (See Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21.)

Discussion:

Mention examples of parents embittering their children.

CHILDREN

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—"that it may go well with you and you may enjoy long life on the earth." (See Ephesians 6:1-3.)

Discussion:

What simple command is given to children when it comes to their relationship with their parents?

Advanced Discussion:

Is there a time when disobeying a parent might actually be honoring him or her?

EMPLOYEES

Obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does. (See Ephesians 6:5-8.)

Discussion:

Why do many people seek to hire Christians for their business?

EMPLOYERS

Treat your employees in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. (See Ephesians 6:9.)

Discussion:

What will people think about a professing Christian who treats his employees unfairly?

YOUNG PEOPLE

Young men, be submissive to those who are older. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. (See 1 Peter 5:5,6.)

Discussion:

Why does the Lord want young people to respect and listen to those who are older?

WIDOWS

The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. (See 1 Timothy 5:5,6.)

Discussion:

How might a widow devote her life to the Lord?

A WORD FOR ALL

Love your neighbor as yourself. This is the sum of all the commandments.
(See Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14.) And continue praying for everyone.
(See 1 Timothy 2:1.)

Let each his lesson learn with care
And all the household well shall fare.

Prayer:

Most glorious Trinity, in your mercy I commit to you this day my soul, my body, all my ways and efforts, all my actions and purposes. Open my heart and mouth, that I may praise your name, which above all names is holy; and since you have created me to praise your holy name, grant that my life may be for your honor and that I may serve you in love and fear. Amen.

Benediction: May the almighty and most merciful God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us. Amen.

Sunday, Week 7 Christian Questions

In preparation "for those preparing to receive the Lord's Supper," review the Christian Questions on p. 331-334 of Luther's Catechism.

Answer Key
for
Catechism Home Devotions

Sunday, Week 1

Introduction to the Ten Commandments

How many of the Ten Commandments can you name without help?

The Ten Commandments are divided into two tables of Law. Normally this division is made between Commandments 1-3 and 4-10. Commandments 1-3 speak about our relationship with whom? (God. "You should love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.")

What do Commandments 4-10 deal with? (Our relationship to our neighbor. "You should love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:37-39.)

What, then, is one word that sums up what the Ten Commandments are all about? (Love)

In what sermon did Jesus show the true meaning of the Law?
(The Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5-7)

Advanced Discussion:

If Christ came in fulfillment of the law why do we still keep the Ten Commandments?
(Christ has commanded us to obey them in the New Testament.)

Monday, Week 1

Commandments One and Two

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

What sin does God forbid in this Commandment?
(Idolatry, that is, the worship of idols, or false gods.)

In his explanation to this commandment in the Large Catechism Luther states, "To whatever we look for any good thing and for refuge in every need, that is what is meant by "god." . . . To whatever you give your heart and entrust your being, that, I say, is really your God." With this thought in mind, what are some examples of false gods or idolatry? (Money, job, yourself, family, sleep, recreation, entertainment, etc.)

Why is God so opposed to idolatry? (If we do not know and worship the true God everything else in our life will be adversely affected.)

Advanced Discussion:

How can we "fear" other people, "love" other people, and "trust" other people without sinning against the First Commandment? (It is a matter of priorities.)

How do people stereotype God today?
(They see him as Santa Claus or as a "George Burns" grandfather type.)

Is this true to God's image? (God detests this as much as the "golden calf.")

What about images in a church like a cross or crucifix? (They are there to picture and bring to mind the real thing.)

How is God different from an idol? (See Psalm 115:4-7. He is living, powerful and worthy of

praise.)

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

What is the name of God? (Everything that God has revealed about himself.)

What should we not do with the name of God?
(Use it to curse, swear, lie, deceive or employ it superstitiously.)

When we use God's name in vain, whom are we trying to impress? (It is being shown that God is certainly not the object of our affection.)

What are we living for? Luther mentions four ways that God's name can be properly used. Name them and give examples of each.

What does our language indicate about our Christianity?

Advanced Discussion:

An earlier translation in the explanation states we should not use God's name "superstitiously". This translation does not grasp the full meaning of the original *zaubern*. This word clearly states that witchcraft is a violation of this Commandment. Why do you think that witchcraft in so many forms (palm reading, fortune telling, horoscopes, etc.) continues to grow in popularity? (Our society appears to be moving further and further away from the one true God in belief and lifestyle.)

Does breaking this Commandment really matter to God? (See Leviticus 24:10-16 and Deuteronomy 18:9-13.)

What is the difference between the uninformed, the uncontrolled, or the unsaved's misuse of God's name?

Tuesday, Week 1 Commandment Three

How does Mary serve as an example for us?

What are some ways that the Third Commandment is broken?
(Not attending church or Bible study whenever possible, not reading the Bible at home, not teaching Bible stories to our children, etc.)

Advanced Discussion:

Do you think Mary was always like this? Had she perhaps been like Martha and then come to the realization worked by the Holy Spirit of what was more important?

Today it is common to hear about "burnout" and "workaholics." Many people say that they don't have time for God. How do you evaluate this type of thinking?
(God made us and he knows what we need.)

Commandment Four

Who, in addition, to "your father and mother" have been placed in authority over you in this life? (All who are placed over us in home, school, state, and church.)

What are we forbidden to do with regard to our parents and all in authority over us? (We should not dishonor or anger them.)

What are we commanded to do?

(Honor, serve and obey them, and give them love and respect.)

If we obey this Commandment how will our life be different from others who don't believe in Jesus?

Advanced Discussion:

This Commandment begins with the parents, because they are the starting point for our relationships with other people. Why do so many people who have problems in their family life also have problems dealing with fellow workers and others in society?

(They do not have a right relationship with the Lord and thus also with their parents and others.)

Are we always to obey the unchristian government?

(Not when we are forced to disobey God and His will. "We must obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29.)

Wednesday, Week 1

Commandment Five

What sins are we forbidden to commit by this Commandment? (Murder, hatred, bitter words, anger, suicide, abortion, etc.)

What are some examples of these sins that we have recently seen on the TV news or read about in the newspaper? (See Matthew 5:21,22; Matthew 25:42,43.)

What are we encouraged to do in place of such things?

(Help and be a friend to our neighbor in his need.)

Advanced Discussion:

Why does God so strongly protect life? (He created it and it is sacred to him. He alone can end it. See Cain and Abel story in Genesis 4.)

What about the life of the unborn?

What about abusing alcohol or tobacco or over eating? (Evidence of a lack of self-control.)

Commandment Six

What is God protecting? (Marriage. The basic building block of human relationships.)

What is marriage? (The lifelong union of man and wife. This most intimate of relationships also mirrors our relationship with God and Christ with us. See Ephesians 5:21-33.)

What sins does the Sixth Commandment forbid? (Divorce; unfaithfulness; impure works,

words, looks, thoughts and desires; sinful amusements; pornography; dirty jokes; etc.)

What kind of life does God want us to lead? (A pure and decent life in word and action.)

How should we fight against evil desires? (With the Word of God and prayer and by fleeing situations of temptation. Matthew 5:27,28.)

What especially should be involved in the relationship between man and wife?
(They should love and honor each other.)

Advanced Discussion:

God created sex and said it was good. He created us as sexual beings and established marriage where sexual fulfillment is found. Our sinfulness undermines and limits God's purpose. Sexual sins attack us at our essence but they are forgivable. If you had a friend who was having an affair or living in sin how would you try to apply law and gospel? (Lead them to acknowledge and repent and only then speak words of forgiveness in Christ. If they fail to repent they must be left with the law and the consequences of the law, namely, death.)

Should we listen to non-Christian music that openly flaunts immoral sex as something good?
Explain your answer.

What about the use of contraceptives?

Thursday, Week 1 Commandment Seven

What are some examples of sins that are forbidden in this Commandment?
(Theft, fraud, robbery, taking too much interest on a loan, taking advantage of people, stealing things from the workplace, not working when we should be, etc.)

What are ways that God wants us to use our possessions?
(To help our neighbor improve and protect his property and business.)

Advanced Discussion:

This Commandment also deals with Christian stewardship (Management of the resources that God has entrusted to you). How can or do we steal from God?
(By withholding offerings of time, talents or money from the Lord.)

What is the value of earthly possessions?
(See Matthew 16:26; Luke 12:15-21. They certainly cannot buy salvation or even true happiness but they can be used to show Christ's love for us to others, to support our families and the work of the church and those in need.)

Is the Lord pleased with my attitude toward material possessions?

Commandment Eight

What is God saying with this Commandment?
(Telling lies, betraying or giving someone a bad name is a sin.)

Why is this important?
(Our name and reputation and that of others can easily be destroyed.)

Can we ever sin by telling the truth?
(Yes, when we pass on a story that hurts someone's reputation.)

What positive actions does God expect of us? (Defend our neighbors, speak well of them, and take their words and actions in the kindest possible way.)

Explain the statement: "Our tongue can either do a lot of good or a lot of harm."

Advanced Discussion:

See Acts 5:1-11. This is an example of people creating a false impression to others of their godliness. They are lying to God and to others. Today many people are chronic liars. Some do so boldly while many others use exaggeration, half-truths, false quoting and over use of the superlative. What does God think of this lying? What, if anything, does this have to do with the American political process?
(God hates lies. God is truth. Lies attack his essence. Jesus speaks about Satan as the "Father of lies." John 8:44.)

Friday, Week 1 Commandment Nine

What is God saying with this Commandment?

What does the word "covet" mean? (To wrongfully want something that is not ours.)

Give some examples from everyday life that show how the Old Adam (our sinful nature) and the New Man (our believing faith) are at war with each another in us over this Commandment.

Advanced Discussion:

Both the Ninth and the Tenth Commandments deal with an internal lack of contentment. The child of God is to be content with what God has given him and not to seek what God has not given. See Philippians 4:11-12; Job 1:21. Our culture's whole marketing system is based on peoples' coveting desire to possess more and more. The result is that many people purchase far more than they have money for or can afford. Lack of contentment finally enslaves them to debt. How am I different from the world in this area? Am I different from the world?
(The coveting person dreams of taking. The contented person dreams of sharing. The coveting person clutches with a tight fist and fears others. The contented person holds what he has with open hands and reaches out to embrace others.)

Are the over-spending practices of our national government a reflection of the coveting sins of our nation? If so, how?

Commandment Ten

What are we not to entice or force away from our neighbor? (Spouse, workers or animals.)
Can we name anything else or mention specific examples of how this Commandment is broken

today? (Companies stealing from competitors by attracting away their workers who come along with the competitors' secrets for success or customer accounts.)

Why do you think God gave us two Commandments that deal with coveting?
(Maybe because coveting leads to many other sins. Also these Commandments deal with controlling our thoughts. An emphasis of the Apostle Paul was Christian self-discipline.)

Advanced Discussion:

We should note that the Commandments progress from God to neighbors and finally to self. Coveting deals, as mentioned earlier, with our thoughts. Where am I in this area? Am I content with who I am and with what the Lord has given me?

Saturday, Week 1

The Conclusion

What does God threaten to all who transgress His Commandments?
(He threatens to punish them.)

Why? (God is holy and perfect and demands the same for all people. See Matthew 5:48.)

What does the Bible say about the soul who sins?
("The soul that sins, it will die." Ezekiel 18:20. "The wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23.)

What does God promise to all who keep his Commandments?
(Grace and every blessing. Exodus 15:22-26.)

Who can keep all the Commandments of God perfectly? (No one.)

Is there any hope, then, of being saved by the Law? (No.)

How are we, then, made free from sin?
(By faith in Christ Jesus. John 8:31-36; Romans 10:4; Luke 17:11-19. The gospel is the "good news" that Jesus Christ has paid for our sins by his sinless life and perfect death. See John 3:16. Christ is alive and well and has promised eternal life to all who trust in him.)

Advanced Discussion:

From what part of Christian doctrine do we learn this? (The Creed.)

What is good about placing the Ten Commandments before the Creed in the order of the six chief parts of the Catechism?
(The law shows us our sin and God's wrath. We cannot save ourselves. See Galatians 3:24. The law is our tutor. In the original Greek this tutor was a slave who saw to it that a child under his care was raised properly. He escorted the child to school and reminded the child of who he was and why he was to conduct himself properly.)

What is not so good to place the 10 Commandments before the Creed?
(Many poor souls never get to the "good news" of Christ. They do not know the function of the law. They think they are saved by their life when God emphatically declares just the opposite. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23.)

Sunday, Week 2
Introduction To The Creed and The First Article
THE FIRST ARTICLE

What is a creed? (A statement of belief.)

Why is the Apostle's Creed divided into three parts? (They correspond to the three persons of the Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.)

What are some differences between Christians who say, "I believe in God," and people who make a general statement such as "I believe there is a God"?

Why do we call the first person of the Triune God "The Father"? (Because he is our creator, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our father through faith in Jesus.)

Why do we confess that God the Father is "the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth"? (Because he is the creator of everything - the world and all it contains and even myself.)

Advanced Discussion:

Agree or Disagree: God's beautiful world is evidence of his love for us.
(This world does show us God's power, wisdom, and goodness, but it does not show us the way to heaven.)

Monday, Week 2
The First Article

Name specific ways that God continues to preserve me.

Why does a Christian normally say prayers before eating?
(It is said that pigs are highly intelligent animals, however if we have ever experienced pigs running to the feeding trough we may have questioned that assertion. They fight, shove and bite in all directions in order to stuff as much as possible in their mouths before any of the other pigs can get their fill. The little piglets especially must scramble for any scraps that remain. Such behavior is behind the common, "Stop eating like a pig." It has also been said that people who do not pray before a meal are no better than pigs.)

How does my heavenly Father protect me?

Who are special creatures my heavenly Father sends to protect me? (Angels.)

How does my heavenly Father want me to show that I appreciate his goodness and mercy?
(By thanking and praising, serving and obeying him.)

How is this done? (Not just on Sunday morning but throughout the week with our thoughts, words and actions.)

What happened to God's perfect world? (It fell into sin but the heavenly Father in his goodness and mercy sent his one and only Son to save me.)

Advanced Discussion:

Why must the teaching of the origin of the universe (both creation and evolution) be a matter of faith? (Only God was there. He tells us about it in Genesis 1. See Hebrews 11:3.)

Should both creation and evolution be taught in the public schools? Why or why not?

Tuesday, Week 2

The Second Article

Why do we confess that Jesus Christ is true God?
(Because the Bible calls him God and he has characteristics that only God has.)

How did God's Son become true man?
(When he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.)

What, then, do I believe about Jesus' person? (He is true man and true God in one person.)

What do we call the work of Christ by which he ransomed us from the slavery of sin, death and the devil? (Redemption. The ransom price was paid to God and not to Satan.)

Why do we call Christ's suffering and death innocent? (Because Jesus was paying the price for all people's sins, not his own, since he had no sin.)

Advanced Discussion:

Why is it so important to our salvation that Jesus be both God and man?
(Man to live under the law and God to keep the law perfectly.)

Wednesday, Week 2

The Second Article

What do we mean when we speak about Christ's "humiliation"? (Christ's humiliation means that Christ chose not to make full use of his heavenly power and glory so that he might live and die in a lowly way. He did this in obedience to the Father's plan for our salvation.)

With what words does the Creed confess Christ's humiliation? ("Conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.")

According to the Creed how was Christ exalted?
(By descending into hell, rising from the dead, ascending into heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, and becoming the judge of the living and the dead.)

Of what does Christ's resurrection assure us?
(That Christ is God's Son, He is our Redeemer, and he will raise us from the dead.)

Advanced Discussion:

In John 5:24 Jesus says Christians have "crossed over from death to life." What did he mean by this? (See I Corinthians 15. Our faith is based on Christ's resurrection. It has been said that death for the believer is already something that is in the past.)

Thursday, Week 2
The Second Article

Why did Christ redeem me?
(He loves me and wants me to be his own and use my whole life to serve him.)

How does the redemption, which Christ won for me, become my own?
(By faith in Jesus Christ.)

How only can I come to believe in Jesus? (Only by the work of the Holy Spirit.)

Advanced Discussion:

How would you respond to a suffering Christian who tells you: "Now God is punishing me for my sins." (Jesus was punished for our sins on the cross. If the Lord chooses to discipline us it is always for our good. See Romans 8:28.)

Friday, Week 2
The Third Article

What is the work of the Holy Spirit called? (Sanctification, that is, he calls people out of the unbelieving world to be holy.)

By what means does the Holy Spirit call me to faith in Christ?
(By the gospel in Word and sacrament.)

The Bible pictures the miracle that the Holy Spirit works in me when he calls me to faith by the gospel with three words - conversion, regeneration or rebirth, and quickening. What do these words mean? (Turning, a second birth, making alive.)

What kind of life does the Holy Spirit lead me to live?
(A life of good works in gratitude for the gift of Christ to me.)

Where is my guideline for good works to be found?
(In the Word of God. See Psalm 119:9, 105; 2 Corinthians 5:15; Romans 12:1,2.)

Advanced Discussion:

We often meet or hear about people who say they have "made a personal decision for Christ" or have "accepted Christ" as their personal Savior. Comment on these expressions. (Note that in Luther's explanation we read, "I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.")

Saturday, Week 2
The Third Article

What is the holy Christian church?
(All those everywhere who believe in Jesus as the Savior.)

How is a child of God essentially different from an unbeliever?
(The essential difference is the faith, which then is evidenced in the fruits. See Galatians

5:22-25.)

What is a saint?

(A person who is holy. One who has been washed clean with the blood of Christ.)

Where is the holy Christian church to be found?

(Where the gospel is preached and the sacraments are used.)

What does God want us to do if people who are not members of our church ask us about our faith?

(God wants us to be ready to share our faith with everyone who asks us about it.)

Advanced Discussion:

Many feel that they can be Christians without actually going to church. Futurists predict that many others in the coming years will go from church to church and never join. Comment.

Sunday, Week 3

The Address

What is prayer? (An act of worship in which we speak to God from our hearts. St. Paul admonished Christians to "pray without ceasing.")

What does Jesus want us to remember when he tells us to address God as "Our Father in heaven"? (That he has created us and by faith God is our true Father and that we are his true children.)

Why does Jesus want us to remember the relationship we have with God by faith? (So that we feel free to pray to our heavenly Father as boldly and confidently as dear children ask their dear father.)

Advanced Discussion:

If God already knows everything going on in our lives and will work his will anyway, why bother praying?

The First Petition

What is God's name? (God's name is his titles and everything else he has revealed to us about himself in his Word.)

How do we keep God's name holy? (By teaching his Word in its truth and purity and by leading holy lives according to his Word.)

Advanced Discussion:

Some who pray the Lord's Prayer also confess "all steeples point to heaven" and "it doesn't really make any difference what you believe as long as you are sincere." Comment on these statements. What are they doing with the name of God?

Monday, Week 3
The Second Petition

What is the kingdom of God about which we are praying in this petition?
(Christ's rule in our hearts by his Word.)

How does this kingdom come to us? (The kingdom of God does not come by what we do, but it comes by itself when our heavenly Father in his grace gives us his Holy Spirit.)

Why do we pray for Christ to rule in our hearts?
(Because by his Word we learn to know and believe the truth of our salvation and because he enables us to lead a godly life now on earth and forever in heaven.)

What, then, are we praying in the Second Petition? (That our heavenly Father would send his Holy Spirit, so that Christ may rule in our hearts and in the hearts of many others.)

Advanced Discussion:

Give examples of things for which we pray unconditionally and those where we let God's will be done.

Tuesday, Week 3
The Third Petition

What is God's good and gracious will?
(That his Word be taught in its truth and purity to all people, that all people believe in Jesus and be saved, that we should live a holy life.)

What tries to prevent us from keeping God's name holy and letting his kingdom come?
(The devil, the world and our sinful nature or flesh.)

How do the devil, the world and our sinful nature constantly try to prevent God's will from being done on earth? (By leading people astray from God's Word, so that they live in unbelief and sin; by leading people to ignore, forget or deny Jesus; by promoting a hatred of God's Word and an enjoyment of sin.)

What, then, are we praying for in the Third Petition?
(That God's good and gracious will be done on earth rather than the will of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature.)

Advanced Discussion:

How do people picture the devil? (Often as a cute little fellow with red clothes and a pitchfork.)

How does Scripture portray him? ("Father of lies," John 8:44; He has a kingdom of darkness, Matthew 12:26; Satan means "accuser"; Beelzebub means "lord of the flies," Matthew 12:24; Belial means "worthlessness," I Samuel 1:16; He is confirmed in sin, Ephesians 6:16, I Peter 5:8; He delights to torment and destroy, Job 1:13-19; and he chiefly attacks the church and its members, I Peter 5:8,9.)

Wednesday, Week 3
The Fourth Petition

What is meant by daily bread? (Food and all other things that God promises to give us for our bodily, material and social needs. These are necessities, not luxuries.)

To whom does God give daily bread? (To all without their asking, even to all the wicked.)

What does Jesus teach us Christians by this petition?
(To realize that everything we receive for our bodily needs is a gracious gift of our heavenly Father and to receive all our bodily needs with thanksgiving.)

Why does Jesus teach us to ask for bread for only "this day"?
(By the words "this day" Jesus teaches us to trust God to supply what we need each day and not to worry about the future.)

What, then, are we praying in the Fourth Petition?
(We are asking our heavenly Father to provide our bodily needs day by day.)

Advanced Discussion:

Is it a sin to worry?
(See Matthew 6:25-34. We are to trust in God and his will. Worry is a sin.)

Thursday, Week 3
The Fifth Petition

What do we mean by trespasses? (We simply mean all our sins.)

What are we asking when we pray for forgiveness? (We are asking God for Jesus' sake not to look upon our sins and we are also asking God not to deny our prayers because of our sin but in his grace to give us all the things we ask for.)

How do we show our thanks for God's forgiveness? (We show our thanks as we forgive from the heart and gladly do good to those who sin against us.)

What, then, are we praying in the Fifth Petition? (We are praying that God in his grace would forgive all our sins and also lead us to forgive anyone who sins against us.)

Advanced Discussion:

What about the warning that our forgiveness is based on our forgiving others?
(See the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant in Matthew 18:21-35.)

Friday, Week 3

The Sixth Petition

What is meant by "temptation"? (Any situation in which a person may be deceived or led astray into false belief, despair, or into great and shameful sins. It is the struggle between the Christian's godly life and his sinful human nature. See Romans 7.)

Who deceives us or leads us astray by temptation?
(The devil, the world and our sinful nature.)

Will our Father in heaven ever lead us into temptation? (No.)

Why, then, do we ask our Father in heaven not to lead us into temptation?
(Because he alone has the power to guard and keep us from temptation or to help us overcome and win the victory over our temptations.)

What, then, are we praying in the Sixth Petition?
(That our heavenly Father lead us, so that we are not overcome by any temptation.)

Advanced Discussion:

God tests us, as he tested Abraham (Genesis 22:1), in order to strengthen our faith. But God never leads us into sin. "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed." James 1:13,14. Why do so many people blame God for the evil and sin or hurt and pain in their lives? (It is often very hard to deal with our own sinfulness and to recognize God's promise of good for our lives. Romans 8:28.)

Saturday, Week 3

The Seventh Petition

What is meant by "evil"? (All the bad things that are a part of our life on earth as a result of Adam's fall into sin.)

How does the evil in the world affect our lives?
(The evil in the world brings many hardships into our lives because evil threatens our bodies and souls, property and reputation.)

What does God do about the evil in the world? (God keeps evil away from us. When God permits evil to come into our lives he makes it work for our good or he strengthens and supports us so that we are able to bear it.)

What, then, are we praying in the Seventh Petition? (For our heavenly Father to bring us safely through all the evil of this world to our heavenly home.)

Advanced Discussion:

Since ancient times there has been controversy over the exact meaning of the phrase "from evil." The question is whether the Greek word employed is to be taken as abstract or personal, neuter or masculine, whether that from which we are to be delivered is "the evil" or the "evil one." In the Small Catechism Luther translates "evil." However, in the Large Catechism he speaks of "the evil one." Will this knowledge affect our understanding of this petition? If so, how?

The Doxology

Why can we be sure that these petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven?
(Because Jesus commanded us to pray this way, he teaches us to seek God's kingdom first as God wants us to, and when we ask anything from him we are giving all glory to God.)

Why do we close our prayers with the word "Amen"?
(Because we do not doubt but firmly believe that our Father in heaven will hear and answer our prayer. "Amen" means "Yes, it shall be so.")

What, then, are we saying in the Doxology?
(That we are sure our Father in heaven will hear and answer these petitions.)

Advanced Discussion:

Luther once called the Lord's Prayer "the greatest martyr in the world." What did he mean?
How might we avoid this danger when we pray the Lord's Prayer?

Sunday, Week 4

The Means of Grace: The Gospel in Word and Sacrament

What is a sacrament?
(A sacred act that Christ established or instituted for Christians to do.)

What kinds of earthly elements are used in a sacrament? (Water, bread and wine.)

It has been said that the sacraments are visible pictures of the Word of God. What is taking place behind the scenes spiritually in Baptism and the Lord's Supper?
(Spiritual washing and spiritual eating.)

What does Christ offer, give and seal to us in a sacrament? (The forgiveness of sins and thus also life and salvation.)

What do we mean by the means of grace?
(We mean that means by which God offers and gives us the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation, namely, the gospel in Word and sacraments.)

Advanced Discussion:

A magazine article about contemporary spirituality related the story of a woman who meditated in her garden with the earth, plants, and air. She felt she did not need anything else for her spiritual journey in life. With what God was she communing? (Certainly not the one true God who has revealed himself in Christ through the medium of the Word.)

Monday, Week 4

The Institution of Baptism

What does the word "baptize" mean? (The Greek word "baptize" means to apply water in various ways: immerse, wash, pour or sprinkle.)

For whom is baptism intended? (Jesus' command to baptize "all nations" means we are to baptize all who request baptism for themselves or for their children.)

Give several reasons why Christ instituted baptism for us.

Advanced Discussion:

Luther posed the question: "What is baptism?" How does baptism relate to the explanation of the Second Article?

(It is the present realization of what Luther described in the explanation of the Second Article as the goal and purpose of the saving work of Jesus: "that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom . . ." We are admitted into the work Jesus accomplished on the cross in which he "redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil." The Word connected with the water in baptism is the whole gospel, which testifies to this saving work of Jesus Christ and bestows it upon us.)

Tuesday, Week 4

The Blessings of Baptism

Why is it a great comfort for each of us to say everyday, "I am baptized"?(In baptism God offers and gives us forgiveness of sins, deliverance from the power of death and the devil and eternal salvation.)

Does everyone who is baptized receive this blessing?(No, only the person that believes. Baptism is not a magical incantation.)

Advanced Discussion:

Agree or Disagree: We lose the blessings of baptism when we do not act like Christians. (We lose them when we do not believe like Christians. Could be a true statement if the absence of Christian works results from an absence of Christian faith.)

Wednesday, Week 4

The Power of Baptism

Why is baptism able to offer and give such great blessings? (Because the Holy Spirit is working through the Word of God in baptism.)

How does the Word of God make baptism a "washing"?(The Word of God makes baptism a spiritual washing through which God graciously forgives our sin and grants us rebirth and a new life through the Holy Spirit.

Advanced Discussion:

In Romans 6:13 God urges Christians to "offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of

righteousness." How can a Christian's mouth become an instrument of righteousness? His hands?

Thursday, Week 4

The Meaning of Baptism for our Daily Life

What new desire does the Holy Ghost work in me by baptism? (The desire to throw off the slavery of sin and live a new life.)

How does the Old Adam (sinful nature) oppose this new life in me? Give some examples. (The Old Adam tries to lead me into many kinds of evil deeds and desires.)

How do we drown our old Adam?

(By being sorry for our sins and by believing that God forgives our sins for Jesus' sake.)

What difference will it make in the way we live our daily life if we remind ourselves each day that we are baptized children of God? (We will be led to thank God with our whole life for the blessings that Christ has given to us in baptism.)

Advanced Discussion:

When many Christians are asked what Christ has done for them they respond, "he has forgiven my sins." Is this answer sufficient? (It stresses the negative aspect that Christ has taken away my sins; the positive aspect that Christ has empowered me to a new life of service to him may not be fully understood or appreciated.)

Friday, Week 4

Infant Baptism

Why do we baptize infants as well as adults?

(Because they are included in "all nations." Matthew 28:19.)

Give another reason for baptizing infants.

(They need the benefit of baptism because they are born and conceived in sin. Psalm 51:5; John 3:5,6.)

How is the benefit to be received? (By faith in Christ.)

Can the Lord work faith in the hearts of infants?

(He can. Christ himself says that these little ones believe in him. Matthew 18:1-6.)

Advanced Discussion:

How many times is a person to be baptized? How does this illustrate the power of God?

(Once. Some people have been baptized many times. This puts the emphasis on the individual and his works. To believe and practice that there is "one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5) puts the emphasis on God and faith as the work of the Holy Spirit.)

Saturday, Week 4

The Pastor Baptizes

All believers have the right from Jesus to baptize. Why, then, does our pastor normally do the baptizing in our congregation?

(God urges us to do everything "in a fitting and orderly way" (I Corinthians 14:40).

Therefore, to avoid disorder in our congregation, when we call a man to serve as our pastor, we also ask him to do the baptizing.)

Emergency Baptism

How should we perform an emergency baptism? (Take water and pour or sprinkle or wash the water on the head of the child while we say, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Sponsors and Witnesses

What kind of sponsors ought we to choose for our children?

(Such as are of our own faith.)

Why? (Because they are to assist in caring for the Christian education of the children.)

Advanced Discussion:

It is said that Luther had a "baptism theology," that is, he greatly stressed the importance and power of baptism for the daily life of the Christian. Why might you believe this emphasis has been lost to many Christians, even Lutherans? (One reason is the contemporary emphasis on experience and personal emotion. This leads people to look for salvation within when God says that salvation comes from outside of us.)

Sunday, Week 5

The Ministry of the Keys and Confession

What does Christ mean when he speaks about "the Keys"? (The special power and right he gives all believers or the church either to forgive sins or to refuse to forgive sins.)

Why is the proper use of the Keys either a powerful warning or a great comfort for us?

"Only Christ can forgive sins." Agree or Disagree. (Only God can forgive sins yet he has chosen to declare that forgiveness through clay vessels.)

Church members sometimes excuse themselves from confessing their faith to others by saying, "That's the minister's business." Comment.

(See I Peter 2:9 and Acts 1:8. A pastor is not called to be the token Christian for the church. All Christians have responsibility to witness and give answer for their faith.)

Advanced Discussion:

What is the meaning of Christ's words in Luke 18:14: "He who humbles himself will be exalted."

Monday, Week 5
The Public Use of the Keys

Through whom are the Keys administered publicly in a congregation?
(Through its pastor.)

Why do our congregations have pastors? (Because God ordained that there should be leaders in the church. Pastors are called to preach and teach the Word of God publicly, for the sake of good order to baptize and distribute Holy Communion, and to use the binding and loosing Keys publicly.)

The sins of penitent sinners are to be forgiven. Who is such a penitent sinner?
(Such as are sorry for their sins and believe in Jesus Christ.)

Mention some penitent sinners from Bible History.
(The tax collector, Luke 18:13; the prodigal son, Luke 15:11-24; Peter, Matthew 26:75.)

What should we do if we have wronged another person?
(Confess our sin to him immediately.)

Advanced Discussion:

How can you tell if a person is repentant? What attitude will he or she have?
(A. He will be sad for having sinned. Psalm 31:9-10. B. He will trust in Christ for forgiveness. Psalm 130. C. He will have the desire not to sin again. Psalm 51:10-14.)

What finally leads to a person's excommunication (expulsion from a Christian congregation)? (Not the greatness of the sin nor the offense caused by the person's actions but rather his refusal to repent of his sin.)

Tuesday, Week 5
Other Forms of the Holy Ministry

Read Acts 6:1-7. What problem had developed in the church?
(The church leaders had become bogged down in helping the needy in the church and thus could not fully devote themselves to the Word and prayer.)

What solution was decided upon?
(To delegate the helping of the needy to other leaders.)

What are some other forms of the ministry beside the office of a pastor that you can name?
(Luther emphasized the universal priesthood, which God gives to all New Testament believers (I Peter 2:4-10). He helped to tear down the wall of privileges and power that divided the church into two classes of people, priests and laity. There are pastor ministers, greeter ministers, secretary ministers, usher ministers, janitor ministers, Sunday School ministers, choir ministers, kitchen ministers, elder ministers, treasurer ministers, altar guild ministers, and many other kinds of ministers.)

How are you using your gifts and talents to the glory of God and the strengthening of Christ's church?

Advanced Discussion:

Two Christians cannot agree. One says: "The pastor is the servant of the congregation." The other says: "The pastor is the servant of Christ." Can you help them understand each other? (The pastor is always to be subservient to Christ and his teachings in Holy Scripture, however in matters not strictly commanded or forbidden in God's Word (like what color to paint the church kitchen) he is to carry out the wish of the congregation even though he may be in personal disagreement.)

Wednesday, Week 5

CONFESSION First: What is confession?

In *Webster's Dictionary* the word "confession" has three meanings listed. Each meaning has but one part, nevertheless Christian confession has two parts. Which is the first part? (We confess our sins.)

Which is the second part?
(We receive absolution, or forgiveness.)

Why do we confess our sins? (Because God in his Word urges us to do this and we know and believe there is forgiveness for our sins.)

Why should we not doubt the message of absolution from the pastor?
(He is speaking God's message of forgiveness.)

Advanced Discussion:

A man, who calls himself a Christian, seeks to divorce his wife and marry another woman even though he has no Scriptural grounds. To "solve" his problem, he reasons as follows. "I'll divorce my wife, even though I know it's wrong and marry the other woman. Later, we'll repent of our sin and be forgiven by God and the church. They will then bless my new marriage and take me back. Or if they don't we'll join another church where they will." Is this true confession?

(No. It is an abuse of the kindness and forgiveness that God has offered. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." Galatians 6:7.)

Thursday, Week 5

CONFESSION Second: What sins should we confess?

Of how many sins should we plead guilty before God?

(Of all sins. 1 John 1:8-9; Proverbs 28:13.)

Does that include even those sins we do not know or come to mind?

(It does. Psalm 19:12.)

What does our church teach concerning private confession to the pastor?

(No one should be forced to private confession, but it is of great benefit to a burdened conscience. Matthew 9:2; 2 Samuel 12.)

What does the Bible say about confessing our faults to the neighbor whom we have offended and grieved? ("Confess your faults one to another." James 5:16. "Be reconciled to your brother." Matthew 5:23-24).

Advanced Discussion:

How can we confess unknown sins? (By confessing that we are sinful by nature.)

Luther for a time was uncertain as to whether confession should not be regarded as a third sacrament, but dropped this idea because confession does not possess a divinely ordained earthly element or sign. Nevertheless he continued to value it highly. This is not the case in our day. Confession is often neglected and in some catechetical instruction is even omitted. Some Christians confess particular sins privately to their pastor. Although this is not a requirement for forgiveness, can you think of a good reason for using such private confession?

(Release from clinging guilt through personal absolution and reception of impartial Christian counsel.)

Friday, Week 5

CONFESSION Third: How can we recognize these sins?

What rule should we use to examine our lives before confession?

(According to the divine Law, or the Ten Commandments.)

Pick a few Commandments. Consider the good you have neglected to do and the sins against that Commandment that you have committed in thought, word, and deed.

(When appropriate, a word of absolution—forgiveness—should be spoken.)

Advanced Discussion:

The study of ethics appears to be on the rise. Normally this study is based on "situation ethics" and not the Ten Commandments. What is the difference?

(The Ten Commandments are absolute truth. Situation ethics has no firm basis and differs from person to person and moment to moment.)

Saturday, Week 5

CONFESSION Fourth: How will a pastor assure a penitent sinner of his forgiveness?

When does our pastor regularly make the comforting announcement of absolution?

(At the beginning of our worship service when he says in the general confession: "Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.")

What does this confession mean to you in your daily living?

As Christians we are accountable to one another. What does this have to do with the area of confession?

(Sin thrives in solitude and concealment. It fears exposure. Confession is the venture that dares to break through this ultimate solitude and reveal sin to another person.)

How should we receive the absolution spoken by a fellow Christian?

(We should receive it as from God himself, believing that our sins are thus forgiven before God in heaven.)

Advanced Discussion:

Confession consists in acknowledgment of sin and the assurance of God's grace, but the chief emphasis must be on absolution. Confession exists for the sake of absolution. What happens if confession is not understood from the view of absolution?

(People will be left wallowing in guilt and self-pity. Without the comfort of forgiveness in Christ there is only doubt and despair.)

Sometimes in public testimonials on TV or on the radio, Christians confess their former gross sins such as prostitution, drug dealing, gambling, drunkenness and adultery. Is this a good thing to do?

(Not necessarily. Sometimes it appears that people glory in their shame. Such public confession of specific acts might even prove to be a stimulus to bring about the opposite of what was intended by the speaker. When the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross is held before us along with the positive will of God, sin is exposed in all its infamy, wrongness and deceptiveness. Or we could put it another way: You don't have to crawl in the mud with the pigs to know that they are dirty.)

Sunday, Week 6
The Institution of Holy Communion

By what other names is the sacrament of Holy Communion known?
("The Lord's Supper," I Corinthians 11:20; "the Lord's Table," I Corinthians 10:21; "the Sacrament of the Altar," and "the Eucharist" (the word means "thanksgiving" in the Greek), I Corinthians 11:24.)

Jesus ordained and instituted Holy Communion on the last evening of his life. Here he displayed the ultimate act of giving. What feast had he celebrated on that evening with his disciples? (The Passover. See Exodus 12 and Matthew 26.)
As part of the Passover celebration a perfect lamb was to be killed and eaten. To whom did this lamb point? (To Christ, the Lamb of God.)

What sacrament, then, was to take the place of the Passover? (Holy Communion.)

To whom did Jesus give the bread and the wine? (His disciples.)

What does that mean for us, his disciples in this generation?
("Do this in remembrance of me.")

Advanced Discussion:

Someone once asked, "If all my sins have already been forgiven through Christ's death and resurrection, then why do I need to go to the Lord's Supper?" How would you answer?
(Christ instituted the Lord's Supper for our comfort. He wants us never to doubt that our sins are forgiven. To make that comfort real to us he offers the very thing with which our forgiveness was won in the first place - his body and blood. It is as though we were at the foot of the cross and the crucified Christ would look down on us, call out our names and say, "I am dying to take away your sins.")

Monday, Week 6
The Blessings of Holy Communion

Why did Jesus give his body into death and pour out his blood for us?
(Because God's plan required it.)

Why is it such a great comfort and strengthening for our faith each time we receive the Lord's Supper? (Holy Communion is so comforting to me because in it Jesus again and again assures me personally of forgiveness, life, and salvation.)

How often should you go to Holy Communion? (As often as it is celebrated.)

Advanced Discussion:

Agree or disagree: "We should not go to Communion if we don't feel the need for it."
(Mechanical participation is worse than no participation. If we don't feel the need then we should refresh our understanding so that we do feel the need.)

Tuesday, Week 6
The Power of Holy Communion

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things? (It is not the eating and drinking that does such things, but the words, "Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.")

What does Jesus do through his Word in Holy Communion? (Jesus promises to give us his body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. He strengthens our faith so that we trust his promise and make the blessings of this sacrament our own.)

Do all receive the forgiveness of Christ in the sacrament? (No, only the person who believes.)

Advanced Discussion:

How would you react to the following statement. "I don't feel any different after I've taken the Lord's Supper. Can I be sure that I am forgiven if I don't feel forgiven?" (All people have emotions and to some extent we live by them but Christ's salvation is a gift to us from God. It is an objective truth grasped through faith. God is greater than our hearts and feelings. Of course this person may not feel forgiven because he or she has not properly prepared for reception of the sacrament.)

Wednesday, Week 6
The Reception of Holy Communion

Mention what we want to remember about the Lord's Supper that prepares us to receive it in a worthy manner and also makes us eager to receive it often.

(The one who receives the sacrament properly has faith in the words of Christ, "Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.")

In I Corinthians 11:28 those who commune in the sacrament are told to examine themselves. What questions should we ask to help us accomplish that end? (Do I repent of all my sins? Do I believe in Jesus Christ? Do I intend to amend my sinful life?)

To whom should the Lord's Supper be denied?
(To those who cannot or will not examine themselves. I Corinthians 11:28; Matthew 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 2:19; Matthew 7:6; Acts 2:42.)

Why is it denied? (Out of love for the individual.)

Advanced Discussion:

True or false: "Everyone who goes to Communion receives Jesus' body and blood."
(True. The Real Presence does not depend upon the faith of the recipient or the faith of the celebrant.)

True or false: "Everyone who goes to Communion receives the forgiveness of sins."
(False. The words "for you" require nothing but hearts that believe.)

Thursday, Week 6

Daily Prayers

Prayer is a part of a healthy relationship with God. We communicate with him. It is essential. What would our family life be like if father did not speak with mother, parents with children, or brother with sister?

Why is it important for parents to pray with their children?
(Prayer is something that must be learned, like good manners.)

What kind of witness is given to others when we pray before meals with guests in our homes or at a public eating establishment?

How might we change our prayer habits? Are we praying, for example, in the morning and evening, before stressful work or important events?

Advanced Discussion:

Jesus says, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Matthew 5:44). What or how should we pray for our enemies?
(We should pray that they stop persecuting us, and that they trust in Christ as their Savior. Jesus prayed for his enemies many times. For example, when he was on the cross he prayed for those who were crucifying him, asking God to forgive them. See Luke 6:27-28; Matthew 5:44.)

Explain this statement: If God hated us, He would give us everything we ask for.
(Many things we ask for would damage our faith. God loves us so much that God gives us only the things that God knows we can manage. We sometimes think that God does not equally divide blessings and gifts among us, but God knows what is best for his children. See Matthew 6:31-33; Luke 12:15; I Timothy 6:8.)

Friday, Week 6

Table of Duties: Pastors . . . Wives

Pastors

Why is it important that our pastor not be a recent convert?

Are pastors to be essentially different from any other Christians? (No. One thing that may distinguish them is that they must be able to understand and apply sound biblical teaching.)

What We Owe to our Pastors and Teachers

How might we or others be hurt if we disobey or rebel against the leaders in our church?

Government

Where does all authority to govern come?

Advanced Discussion:

Should a Christian run for a political office? Should a minister run for a political office?

Husbands

If a husband is harsh or unloving to his wife why will his prayers be hindered?

Wives

In Ephesians 5 we are told that a husband is to love his wife to the point that he would die for her just as Christ died for us. If the husband so loves his wife how will this affect her attitude of submission? (Love and submission cover the same ground here. Love is nothing less than the ultimate act of submission illustrated in Ephesians 5 by Christ actually giving his life for the bride.)

Advanced Discussion:

Can there ever be abuse in a Christian home?

Saturday, Week 6

Table of Duties: Parents . . . A Word For All

Parents

Mention examples of parents embittering their children.

Children

What simple command is given to children when it comes to their relationship with their parents?

Advanced Discussion:

Is there a time when disobeying a parent might actually be honoring him or her?

Employees

Why do many people seek to hire Christians for their business?

Employers

What will people think about a professing Christian who treats his employees unfairly?

Young People

Why does the Lord want young people to respect and listen to those who are older?

Widows

How might a widow devote her life to the Lord?