

DAILY CATECHISM FOR THE HOME*

Bringing out the truths of the catechism through everyday conversations among fathers, mothers, and their children. The Small Catechism comes from (1986 Concordia Publishing House, cph.org).

PART I: The 10 Commandments (11 Weeks)

PART II: The Creed (11 Weeks)

PART III: The Lord's Prayer (9 Weeks)

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PREFACE

Martin Luther, to all faithful and godly pastors and preachers: grace, mercy, and peace be yours in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The deplorable, miserable conditions which I recently observed when visiting the parishes have constrained and pressed me to put this catechism of Christian doctrine into this brief, plain, and simple form. How pitiable, so help me God, were the things I saw: the common man, especially in the villages, knows practically nothing of Christian doctrine, and many of the pastors are almost entirely incompetent and unable to teach. Yet all the people are supposed to be Christians, have been baptized, and receive the Holy Sacrament even though they do not know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments and live like poor animals of the barnyard and pigpen. What these people have mastered, however, is the fine art of tearing all Christian liberty to shreds.

Oh, you bishops! How will you ever answer to Christ for letting the people carry on so disgracefully and not attending to the duties of your office even for a moment? One can only hope judgment does not strike you! You command the Sacrament in one kind only, insist on the observance of your human ways, and yet are unconcerned whether the people know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, or indeed any of God's Word. Woe, woe to you forever!

Therefore dear brothers, for God's sake I beg all of you who are pastors and preachers to devote yourselves sincerely to the duties of your office, that you feel compassion for the people entrusted to your care, and that you help us accordingly to inculcate this catechism in the people, especially the young. If you cannot do more, at least take the tables and charts for catechism instruction and drill the people in them word for word, in the following way:

First, the pastor should most carefully avoid teaching the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the sacraments, etc., according to various texts and differing forms. Let him adopt one version, stay with it, and from one year to the next keep using it unchanged. Young and inexperienced persons must be taught a single fixed form or they will easily become confused, and the result will be that all previous effort and labor will be lost. There should be no change, even though one may wish to improve the text.

The honored fathers understood this well, and therefore they all consistently used one form of the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. We should do as they did by teaching these materials to the young and the common man without altering a single syllable and by never varying their wording when presenting or quoting them year after year.

So adopt whatever form you wish, and then stick with it at all times. If, however, you happen to be preaching to some sophisticated, learned audience, then you certainly may demonstrate your skill with words by turning phrases as colorfully and masterfully as you can. But with young persons keep to a single, fixed, and permanent form and wording, and teach them first of all the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, etc., according to the text, word for word, so that they can repeat it after you and commit it to memory.

But those who refuse to learn are to be told that they are denying Christ and do not belong to Him. They are not to be admitted to the Sacrament, accepted as sponsors at Baptism, or allowed to exercise Christian liberty in any way. They should instead be simply directed back to the pope and his functionaries, yes, even to Satan himself. Moreover, their parents and superiors should refuse them food and drink, telling them that the prince is of a mind to expel such rude persons from his realm, and so on.

Of course we cannot, and we should not try to, force the Christian faith on anyone. Yet we should steadily keep on urging people toward it and help them know what is considered right and wrong in the society in which they want to live and earn their living. A person who wants to live in a certain city and enjoy its privileges should know and observe its laws, no matter whether he believes in them or is at heart a rogue or scoundrel.

Second, after they have well memorized the text (of the catechism), then explain the meaning so that they understand what they are saying. Do so again with the help of these charts or some other brief uniform method of your choosing; adhere to it and do not change a single syllable, as said above concerning the text, taking your time with it. For it is not necessary to teach everything at once, but one thing after the other. After they understand well the meaning of the First Commandment, proceed to the Second, and so on, otherwise they will be too overwhelmed to the point of remembering nothing.

Third, after you have so taught them this short catechism, take up the Large Catechism and use it to give them a broader and richer understanding. Here enlarge on every individual commandment, petition, segment, explaining in each case the various words, uses, benefits, dangers, and hurts involved, as you will find them amply described in many a book dealing with these topics. Stress especially that commandment or any other specific part of the catechism doctrine which your people neglect most. For example, among craftsmen and merchants, farmers and employees, you must powerfully stress the Seventh Commandment, which forbids stealing, because among such people many kinds of dishonesty and thievery occur. Also, for young persons and the common man you must stress the Fourth Commandment, urging them to be orderly, faithful, obedient, and peaceable, always bringing in many Bible examples of how God punished or blessed such people.

You should particularly urge those in authority and parents to govern the young well and to send them to school. Show them why it is their duty to do this and explain what a damnable sin it is if they fail to do so. For by such neglect they ruin and destroy both the kingdom of God and that of this world and prove themselves to be the worst enemies of both God and man. Thoroughly underscore what terrible harm they do by not helping train children to become pastors, preachers, writers, and the like, and how God will punish them for it. There is a great need to preach about these things. For parents and those in authority are guilty beyond words in this regard, and the devil has horrible things in mind.

Finally, now that the pope's tyranny is over, people no longer want to go to the Sacrament but despise it. Here again urging is necessary, however, with the understanding that we are not to force anyone into the faith or to the Sacrament, nor set any law, time, or place for it. Our preaching should instead be such that of their own accord and without our command, people feel constrained themselves and press us pastors to serve the Sacrament. The way to go about this is to tell them that if anyone does not seek or desire the Lord's Supper at the very least four times a year, it is to be feared that he despises the Sacrament and is not Christian, just as no one is a Christian who does not believe or hear the Gospel. For Christ did not say, "Omit this" or "despise this," but "This do, as often as you drink it," etc. He most certainly wants it done and does not want it left undone and despised. "This do," He says.

For a person not to prize highly the Sacrament is tantamount to saying that he has no sin, no flesh, no devil, no world, no death, no danger, no hell. That is to say, he believes in none of these although he is overwhelmed by them and is the devil's possession twice over. On the other hand, he needs no grace, life, paradise, kingdom of heaven, Christ, God, or any good thing. Surely, if he recognized how much evil is in him and how much he needs all the good things he lacks, he would not neglect the Sacrament, which gives help against such evil and bestows so much goodness. He will not need to be forced by law to the Sacrament but will himself come running in a hurry to the Lord's Table, constrained within himself and pressing you to give him the Sacrament.

Therefore do not set up any law concerning it, as the pope does. Only emphasize clearly the benefit, need, usefulness, and blessing connected with the Sacrament, and also the harm and danger of neglecting it. The people will then come of themselves without your using compulsion. But if they still do not come, then let them go their way and tell them that all who are insensitive or unaware of their great need and God's gracious help belong to the devil. But if you fail to urge these things or if you make it into law and bitterness, then the fault will be yours if they despise the Sacrament. Why should they not be lazy if you are asleep and silent?

So look to it, you pastors and preachers. Our ministry today is something else than it was under the pope. It has become a serious and saving responsibility. Consequently it now involves much more trouble and labor, danger and trial, and in addition it brings you little of the world's gratitude and rewards. But Christ Himself will be our reward if we labor faithfully. The Father of all grace help us to do just that. To Him be praise and thanks forever through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

WEEK ONE

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MEMORIZE: The First Commandment

You shall have no other gods.

***What does this mean?* We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.**

Day 1: What thoughts come to mind when you think about God? Any idea why God commands us, as first things, to have no other gods before Him?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Psalm 139 (Selected Verses) on God's Characteristics/Attributes
You have searched me, Lord, and you know me ... 4Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely... 7Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ... 13 You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well ... All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. 17How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! 18Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand... (For More Discussion: Talk about God's attributes/characteristics described in Psalm 139 = All Knowing / Omniscient; Everywhere Present / Omnipresent; All Powerful / Omnipotent; Eternal or other attributes in other parts of the Scripture Holy; Just; Merciful; Love...)

Day 2: Bring me one thing (or symbol) you greatly fear. Explain why. Why should we fear God? Yet, why do we not need to be afraid of Him?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28).

Day 3: Bring me one thing (or symbol) you dearly love. Explain why. Why should we love God?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him (John 3:16-17).

Day 4: Bring me one thing (or symbol) you highly trust. Explain why. Why should we trust in God?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (Romans 8:34-35a)

Day 5: Write a list of all the idols (false gods) you can think of. (To help you: Think about all the things people fear the most, love the most, trust in the most.)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. (Philippians 3:18-19).

Day 6: What idols threaten to lead you away from God - what tempts you to fear these idols more than God, to love these idols more than God, to trust in these idols more than God? (Help if Needed: What are you afraid of losing in this life? What are things you love most? What do you trust in to

make you really happy and feel secure? What do you take pride in which helps form your identity? Explain how these could be idols.)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. (Colossians 3:2)

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

TERMS FROM THE WEEK: Idolatry - Worshipping anything but God as god; Open Idolatry - Worshipping publicly anyone or anything that is not the true God. Secret Idolatry - Worshipping in a subtle way anything as god which is not the true God - not overtly noticeable to others or even one's own self. Attributes of God: Omnipotent - All Powerful; Omniscient - All Knowing; Omnipresent - Everywhere Present.

WEEK TWO

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MEMORIZE: The Second Commandment

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

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

Day 1: In the Bible, names mean something. (That's a little different from names today in our culture where babies are often named something because parents like the sound of it.) In this command God is concerned that his people do not ruin his reputation (name) by what they say or do. The essence of the Second Commandment is this: You shall not give God a bad reputation (name) which makes people think poorly of him upon hearing his name. Why is God so intent on protecting his reputation?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy (Micah 7:18: Micah means "Who is like the LORD?")

Day 2: There are many ways that people can tarnish God's reputation. The first example Martin Luther picks up on in his explanation is "cursing." To curse is to call on God to damn something to hell forever or something similar. Sadly, people do this a lot. People often say, "God damn it!" after hurting themselves or getting angry. What impression will people get of God if they hear Christians like yourself cursing, saying things like "Damn it!" or "Go to hell!" or "Jesus Christ!" when something bad happens?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" (Romans 2:24).

Day 3: Another way people can tarnish God's reputation is by swearing. Swearing is calling on God to back up something you say. Sadly, many times people "swear" when they are lying or over a matter that is insignificant: "I swear I did my homework," when you didn't or "I swear Dad said we're going to the movies tonight." Only in the most important of matters, like for a trial in a courtroom, does God want us to call on him as a witness to the truth. How does God's reputation get tarnished when Christians swear about a lie or over small matters?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: "All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one" (Matthew 5:7).

Day 4: Another way people can tarnish God's reputation is by searching for special knowledge or power by another name, not God's. Examples of this (satanic arts): Ouija (wee-gee) Boards, Tarot Cards, Horoscopes, Seances (say-ahnce), Psychics, Voodoo, Dark Arts... When Christians look beyond God and His Word for answers or powers which God alone knows and has, this also tarnishes God's reputation/name. Why?

Discuss: The Harry Potter series is a classic work of literature in recent times, a fictional series of books with wizardry and magic throughout. Halloween is a holiday that some people use to glorify the occult (satanic arts). What are ways Christians can enjoy literature like Harry Potter or a holiday like Halloween? What are things Christians should be cautious about with things like this? (Each family needs to be convinced about how to approach these things without judging other Christians who enjoy them in Christian freedom as explained in 1 Corinthinans 8.)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. (Isaiah 8:19-20)

Day 5: Lying and deceiving is yet another way we can tarnish God's reputation/name because as Christians we bear God's name. (Christian means a little Christ or one who identifies with Christ as a follower. God, therefore, calls us his children because we are like his Son by grace through faith.) When others catch us in a lie or deceiving and know we are Christian, how does that reflect poorly on Jesus? Explain how lying about Jesus - false teaching in church and all false religions - is the worst way to break this commandment.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy. (Proverbs 12:22)

Day 6: Luther does an excellent job explaining how in every commandment there is a way to break God's command and there are ways to keep it. To rightly use God's name and support his good reputation, we should call on God's name when in trouble, to pray, to praise him for his goodness, and to live grateful lives. Give examples of troubles we can face where we should call on God's name. Give examples of other times we should pray, praise, and give God thanks.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me. (Psalm 50:15)

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

WEEK THREE

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MEMORIZE: The Third Commandment

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

Day 1: In the Old Testament times (1500-33AD) God required a day of rest for his people, a day for them to take time and rest in knowing that God alone does all the work needed for us to be saved and for us to truly live and be blessed. That day was called the Sabbath day. It's from the Hebrew language. Sabbath means rest. Why do you think God would command his people to take time off to think about his amazing works of creation, paying for our sins, and giving us faith, not to mention all we need for daily life?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: There remains, then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For whoever enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall. (Hebrews 4:9-11)

Day 2: Luther rightly connects God's command to keep the Sabbath day as special (holy means set apart for a special purpose) to studying the Bible. Luther urges people not to despise God's Word or those preaching it, but gladly hear it and learn it. Why? What is so important about resting in the Word of God that if we do nothing else, we should at least read and study the Bible?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Few things are needed—or indeed only one [resting in the Word]. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her. (Luke 10:42)

Day 3: Why do you think we often want to skip reading God's Word, talking about God's Word, or go to church and Bible hour?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: The time will come when men will not tolerate sound doctrine, but with itching ears they will gather around themselves teachers to suit their own desires. So they will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

Day 4: When Jesus came, he fulfilled God's plan to give us true rest. It's because of Jesus that we are no longer commanded to keep a certain day set apart to rest in God as Old Testament believers did. We rest everyday all the time in God because of Jesus' work, especially whenever we study, pray, and talk about the Bible which is all about Jesus. (By the way, did you know that Saturday, not Sunday, was the Sabbath Day for Old Testament believers? The reason why the day of worship was switched to Sunday was because Jesus rose on Sunday morning and brought us eternal rest on that day.) As a family, let's come up with a way we can rest in Jesus every day together. Let's talk about how we can get better spiritual rest weekly at church too, like committing to going weekly, actively listening, talking about the message, and committing to changing.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

Day 5: Yesterday, we talked about how we can rest more in Jesus as a family. Today, come up with three ways we each as individuals can rest more in Jesus on our own. This could be setting a time aside to read a Bible on your own for 3-5 minutes. This could be setting a time aside to pray for a few moments. This could be setting a time aside to find cool Bible resources - videos, music... and enjoy the messages shared through such resources. (Be sure to check with your pastor for good resources. He'd love to help you find some!) Whatever you plan to do, be sure to share your plan with your family and talk about the exciting things you learn and experience in your faith.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

Day 6: Remembering the Sabbath doesn't just happen when you sit down to read the Bible or intentionally pray as a family or personally. Rest in Jesus happens whenever you think about the amazing things God has done, is doing, and will do. And the cool thing is that God's work and reminders of his work is all around us all the time. As a family, point out all the good things you have. These are gifts from God. And whenever you are in trouble or whenever someone has hurt someone else by being sinful, specifically share with each other how Jesus rescues and forgives us. Or, if you are struggling to do something or wonder about who you are or what talents you might have, be quick to talk about how the Holy Spirit has gifted you and will guide you to glorify God who will direct your paths. Resting in Jesus is doing this kind of stuff!

REFERENCE PASSAGES: These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day. MORE DISCUSSION: In what ways do you find people trying to get rest apart from God?

WORTHY OF NOTE: TABLE OF DUTIES

Certain passages of Scripture for various callings and positions, admonishing them about their duties and responsibilities

To Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers: The overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, 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. 1 Tim. 3:2-4

He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 1 Tim. 3:6

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. Titus 1:9

What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors: The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. 1 Cor. 9:14

Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Gal. 6:6-7

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, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." 1 Tim. 5:17-18

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. 1 Thess. 5:12-13

To Youth: Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, 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. 1 Peter 5:5-6

WEEK FOUR

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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.

Day 1: In the New Testament from the Bible - 2nd half of the Bible which “testifies” that Jesus is the Savior God planned to send – one of the writers, the Apostle Paul, says that this commandment is the first commandment with a promise. If you do this commandment, “you may enjoy long life on the earth.” Why is it generally true that if you honor your father and mother you will live a long life?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Ephesians 6:1-3 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” (Ephesians 6:1-3)

Day 2: Since it is true that we may live longer if we obey our fathers and mothers who command us to do things to keep us healthy, safe, and capable, then, explain why children choose to disobey at times.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Proverbs 22:15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him. (Proverbs 22:15)

Day 3: When children disobey, loving parents will forgive them for Jesus’ sake and discipline them – punish them for their good to teach them. If parents never discipline their children then what things will inevitably happen to those children?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Proverbs 29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. Proverbs 19:18 Discipline your children, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to their death. Proverbs 13:24 Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

Day 4: Parents aren’t the only authorities in our lives. (An authority is someone who has been given command over you by God.) God also gave those in the government and the church authority. (We especially think of policemen, judges, pastors, and elders.) Why is it also true that if we obey policemen and pastors that we also will have a long life?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

Day 5: Sometimes those in authority ask us to do something we shouldn’t or they treat us too harshly or they don’t treat us with love and respect. What should we do in response when those in authority don’t treat us as they ought or ask us to do something evil? In a perfect world, what should those in authority – parents, government officials, church leaders - do in such a situation?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: We should obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:29)

Day 6: The Fourth Commandment reminds us that we will always be under some kind of authority in our lives. We are always answerable to someone, even if you become the president of the United States. That someone is God. Why is it good to always obey God? How has he proven that he commands us not to harm or burden us but to be a blessing to us?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, people of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live! (Ezekiel 18:31-32)

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day. MORE

DISCUSSION: In what ways do you find people trying to be their own authority?

WORTHY OF NOTE: TABLE OF DUTIES

Certain passages of Scripture for various callings and positions, admonishing them about their duties and responsibilities

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. Heb. 13:17

To Parents: Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Eph. 6:4

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

Of Civil 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 rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 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 wrong-doer. Rom. 13:1–4

Of Citizens: Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's. Matt. 22:21

It is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Rom. 13:5–7

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior. 1 Tim. 2:1–3

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good. Titus 3:1

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 1 Peter 2:13–14

WEEK FIVE

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THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not commit murder.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in their body but help and be a friend to him in every bodily need.

Day 1: One of the interesting things about God's law is that he not only wrote them down at Mt. Sinai and gave them to his servant Moses for all the world to know, but he gave everyone an intuitive sense of his law in their hearts. (People are born with a general sense of right and wrong, what they should and shouldn't do.) The commandment not to murder is a perfect example of a general command all people know no matter how different their culture is. Name some things that people generally know are right and wrong.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: When Gentiles, who do not have the Law, do by nature what the Law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the Law, since they show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. (Romans 2:14)

Day 2: Even though everyone is born with a general sense that murder is wrong, the sinful nature inside each of us strives to erase God's law from the heart. For example, how many of us think we have ever murdered another person? (What do you think? Are you a murderer?) Most people would say they've never broken this commandment. But, Jesus defines the 5th Commandment in a very interesting way in the passage below. After reading the passage, think over the last week and think of examples of when you broke the 5th commandment. Share those moments with one another and forgive each other in Jesus' name.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. (Matthew 5:21-22)

Day 3: Another way that people try to erase the 5th Commandment from their hearts is found in our society concerning the practice of abortion. (Abortion is the murder of unborn children.) We have laws in our land that allow for such a thing if a mother, often pressured by others, feels like she will not be able to take care of a child or that a child would be devastating to living the life she wants. How can we be certain that abortion is not just a political issue but that it is murder, even in tragic cases such as rape?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Surely I was born sinful from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. (Psalm 51:5).

Day 4: Another example of people in our culture seeking to legalize murder is what we call euthanasia (youth-an-asia). This is the idea that when people are terribly sick and dying that it would be a compassionate thing to end their life before they suffer anymore. Why is it wrong to take someone's life, even if they are sick and dying and in excruciating pain? What should we do for such people?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me. (Psalm 31:15)

Day 5: In our country, the government allows for the death penalty for criminals who commit very serious crimes like murder. Is the government allowed to take the life of human beings who are guilty of serious crimes? Explain how it's not murder if the government puts someone to death in order to serve justice.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: The one in authority [government] is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. (Romans 13:4)

Day 6: The Fifth Commandment is not just about condemning the taking of human life in thought, word, or action (sin of commission). Luther also points out that God would have us keep this commandment by "helping and being a friend" to others in every bodily need. What are ways that we are to keep the Fifth Commandment in this world and do the good we ought (keep from sins of omission)?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. (Matthew 25:35-36).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day. MORE

DISCUSSION: On a scale of 1-10 (one being poor, 10 being great), how well do you think people respect human life in our culture from what you see online or in the news to how people treat each other in public or private?

WEEK SIX

The Sixth Commandment

You shall not commit adultery. (*Adultery is having sexual relations with another person who is not your spouse. This can be premarital or extramarital.*)

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do, and husband and wife love and honor each other.

Day 1: The Sixth Commandment may be the most assaulted commandment in our culture today regarding the love God wants us to show to others. The Sixth Commandment is God's protection of the gift of sex and human sexuality which belongs and alone is to be fully expressed within marriage. Sometime this week, it is encouraged for fathers and mothers or guardians to discuss with their children the traditional "birds and the bees" conversation. Be sure to have this conversation, not just once, but regularly as youth mature. As added encouragement, please realize that if this conversation is not had within the family, it will be had among their peers and by the world which is often tragic.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Day 2: Our culture is overly sexualized and this is highly disconcerting for godly families because families are being torn apart by the breaking of the Sixth Commandment. Take some time and discuss how our culture breaks the Sixth Commandment from what's available online, to tv, to music, and with how people view relationships between those of the opposite gender or even the same.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:27-28).

Day 3: Did you know that 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 5 boys will be sexually abused before the age of 18, and often it is from within one's own immediate or extended family? Did you also know that children are often exposed to internet pornography at age 9 if not before? Did you know that human sex trafficking is a major issue in our country happening in almost every town, and one of the ways children and teens become victims is through internet gaming? What are ways that a family can protect itself from sexual abuse online and off? (Do you have accountability online for you and your children? Do you have rules established for the home such as no sleepovers, no closed/locked doors when people are over, no screens in bedrooms...? Are your family members protected when they venture out into the world?)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. (1 Corinthians 6:18)

Day 4: In our culture today, same sex attraction (homosexuality) is a major issue which is largely politicized and promoted as a civil rights issue. (Civil rights are rights that inherently belong to people and people groups to live and behave as other people and yet, their rights are being assaulted.) What do you think about people (LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning...) who proclaim they are gay or that they were born that way? (What does the following passage say about God's view? For more information, check out the book *Rainbow Savior* by Pastor William Monday.)

REFERENCE PASSAGES: Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men a nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:9-10);

Day 5: Homosexuality is just one of many sins which breaks the Sixth Commandment. But there are many other sins and they all are equally sinful, none worse or better than the other. Divorce, the breaking of a marriage for ungodly reasons, is always a sin where one or both spouses are guilty. When couples live together before marriage and are sexually active, they also commit sin. When couples become sexually active even when they don't live together, this too is sin. Even telling dirty jokes, looking at porn online, or thinking lustful thoughts is a sin against the Sixth Commandment. Like all other sins, what are we to do when we sin against the Sixth Commandment?

REFERENCE PASSAGES: I am writing these things to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate before the Father— Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He Himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2)

Day 6: As with all the commandments, there's always two parts to it. There are ways in which we are not to live and there are ways in which we are. The way we are to live is the way of true love. This is especially how husbands and wives honor each other in marriage and how single people respect marriage and the marriage bed. True love is not romantic love or even friendship love. True love is committing to doing what is right even when our feelings tempt us to sin. Talk about why sin of any kind can be so tempting but also talk about why doing what is right is far better. Talk about how Jesus Christ is the perfect picture of true sacrificial love too.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it. (Genesis 4:7)

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

DISCUSSION: Why is it so tough to talk openly about Sixth Commandment issues in the home. What can your family do to make conversations on the Sixth Commandment easier and happen more?

WORTHY OF NOTE: TABLE OF DUTIES

Certain passages of Scripture for various callings and positions, admonishing them about their duties and responsibilities

To Husbands

Husbands, in the same way 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. 1 Peter 3:7

Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Col. 3:19

To Wives

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. Eph. 5:22

They were submissive to their own husbands, 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. 1 Peter 3:5–6

WEEK SEVEN

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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.

Day 1: Stealing is another one of the commandments God gave that is universally understood. People in every culture know that taking what doesn't belong to them is evil. That said, stealing happens quite a bit in obvious and not so obvious ways. How many ways can you think of where people steal from others whether blatantly or subtly?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of your crops... (Proverbs 3:9)

Day 2: Why do you think God is concerned about people treating other people's stuff in a respectful way? What happens to people when others unlawfully take their money, property, or all that they own?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the truth faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows (1 Timothy 6:10)

Day 3: As with all the commandments, this commandment has ways we are to keep it – helping “to improve and protect his property and means of income.” For example, if you are at a restaurant and there's \$5 on the floor, what should you do with that? (Or what if the cashier gives you \$10 in change instead of \$5, what should you do? Or what if your sibling loses their phone/tablet, what should you do?)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Truly, I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you did for me (Matthew 25:40).

Day 4: It's interesting to think of Jesus and how the plan of salvation involved his keeping the 7th Commandment. How so? (Does the following passage help?)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Day 5: Jesus says something interesting to his disciples regarding possessions. It's in our passage for today. Read that passage and discuss what makes this command so difficult. Discuss why we should abide by Jesus' words anyway? Discuss how we should be wise and protect ourselves from people who will try to take advantage of us too.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: I tell you, do not resist an evil person... If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well... Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. (Matthew 5:39-42)

Day 6: Explain how it is possible to steal from God. (Hint: Since God owns everything and everything we have is really on loan to us from God for which we must give an account, think about the ways in which God would have us use our possessions.)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows (James 1:17).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day. MORE DISCUSSION: As a family, discuss ways to plan giving to the Lord and using finances wisely. How blessed young people are when they learn responsibility over finances!

WORTHY OF NOTE: TABLE OF DUTIES

Certain passages of Scripture for various callings and positions, admonishing them about their duties and responsibilities

To Workers of All Kinds

Slaves, 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, whether he is slave or free. Eph. 6:5–8

To Employers and Supervisors

Masters, treat your slaves 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. Eph. 6:9

To 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. 1 Tim. 5:5–6

WEEK EIGHT

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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.

Day 1: Just as we Christian people do not want to give God a bad reputation/name by what we say think or do in the Second Commandment, we don't want to give our neighbor a bad reputation either. Why do you think God wants us to protect the reputation/name of our neighbors?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: A good reputation and respect are worth much more than silver and gold. (Proverbs 22:1)

Day 2: Why would it be harder to keep our neighbor's name / reputation intact versus God's name/reputation as in the Second Commandment?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (Matthew 5:44)

Day 3: Is it okay to speak poorly about someone when they did something wrong and are guilty? Explain how you should talk to a friend who asks you about a classmate or relative who got in trouble for something they did?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. (Matthew 18:15-16)

Day 4: If people are talking poorly about someone you know, what would God have us do according to Luther's explanation of the Eighth Commandment? (How often does this happen?)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. (Proverbs 31:8-9)

Day 5: If you have friends who talk poorly about other people, do you think they won't talk poorly about you when you aren't around? How might we help people who are in a habit of talking bad about others or gossiping?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. (Matthew 12:36)

Day 6: By our sinful nature, we are quick to criticize and exalt ourselves over others by tearing people down with our words. Take the rest of the day and be intentional about complimenting others for who they are and what they do in Christ. For evening prayers, take a moment and discuss how the day went.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. (Ephesians 4:29)

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day. MORE

DISCUSSION: Reflect upon the week before and consider how critical you and your family members are of others. Is there a tendency toward gossip or are you gracious? Commit to being gracious and rest secure in knowing that all gossip is forgiven in Jesus.

WEEK NINE

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THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or get it in a way which only appears right, but help and be of service to him in keeping it.

Day 1: In the last two commandments which are about coveting, we find that God is concerned about the evil thoughts of the heart which lead to evil words and actions. He therefore commands us not to covet. (To covet is to desire something you should not want, something that is forbidden.) Since this commandment is about the heart, ask yourselves how bad you think the human heart is on a scale of 1-10 where 1 is absolutely evil and 10 is absolutely good. Explain your answer.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

Day 2: Is it okay to want what someone else has? Explain how it might be okay to want something someone else has. Now how might it not be okay? (Hint: Does your desire lead to decent actions or sinful ones?)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. (James 4:2).

Day 3: A couple days ago we talked about how sinful the heart is. What alone can change a heart so that we don't cheat others out of what they have but so that we are of "service to them" and help them keep it?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone (Ezekiel 36:26)

Day 4: In the Old Testament, a promise of a Savior to come was bound up in the land in which God's people lived. It was to be in the Promised Land that the promised savior would be born. That made houses, homes, property, land especially important then. How would the coveting of someone's property by a fellow Israelite in that day potentially harm a person's faith? How does being dishonest or scheming to get someone's property hurt a person's faith in our day if the coveting is done by a Christian?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. (1 Peter 2:12)

Day 5: Truly it is only God who can give us a new heart and God does this in a miraculous way. What great act did Jesus perform which melts our hearts of stone and inspires us to truly desire what is good and right?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Day 6: One way to keep from coveting the possessions of someone else is to be content with God alone. Why can we be content - happy - with just having God and nothing more or less?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:12-13)

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day. MORE

DISCUSSION: What are things you could give up for a day or week in order to learn better contentment in the Lord? Discuss possibilities with family.

WEEK TEN

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THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not entice or force away our neighbor's wife, workers, or animals, or turn them against him, but urge them to stay and do their duty.

Day 1: When you think about all the commandments, aren't they all about coveting in the end? (Again, remember that to covet is to want something you shouldn't have.) Explain how coveting is behind the desire to have other gods, to misuse God's name, to skip church, to dishonor those in authority, murder, commit adultery, steal, and gossip.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. (James 2:10)

Day 2: When you think about all the commandments, you can see how the order makes sense. The first three commandments involve our relationship with God. Commandments 4-10 pertain to commandments dealing with our neighbor. And the last two commandments address the heart which is always the cause for our words and actions. Explain how this order to the commandments and its conclusion makes perfect sense.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. (Mark 7:21, 22).

Day 3: If we kept the commandments about coveting perfectly, explain how we would keep all the commandments perfectly. Explain how people would be truly impressed with Christians and want to follow Jesus too.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: I would not have known sin if it were not for the law. For example, I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, Do not covet. And sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind... The commandment that was meant for life resulted in death for me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me. So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good. (Romans 7:7-12)

Day 4: We've had a couple opportunities to talk about how our sinful hearts are the problem for why we do not keep the law of God as we should. Discuss examples of when people were led astray by their own hearts. What lesson should we learn from this?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Many ways seem right to a man, but in the end they lead to death. (Proverbs 16:25)

Day 5: Only one person who has ever walked this earth had a perfect heart for an entire lifetime and was able to keep God's commandments. Who was this person and why did he keep the commandments perfectly?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: God made Him [Jesus] who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Day 6: What kind of world do you think we would live in if everyone freely coveted whatever they wanted?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. (Matthew 24:12)

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day. MORE

DISCUSSION: Why is the saying, "Follow your heart" such terrible advice?

WEEK ELEVEN

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The Close of the Commandments

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." (Ex. 20: 5–6)

What does this mean? God threatens to punish all who break these commandments.

Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should also love and trust in Him and gladly do what He commands.

Day 1: Many people believe God gave us the law so we could be good in order to go to heaven. That is not true at all. In fact, that lie will ensure you never put your faith in Jesus and never live with God. Such an idea will either give you false security about yourself (self-righteous) or drive you to despair over life itself knowing you deserve hell and could never be saved. So, why did God give us the law? (HINT: We call this the use of the law as a MIRROR because it shows us something about ourselves).

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. (Romans 3:20)

Day 2: If we're not saved through the law, how alone are we saved and able to live with God in heaven? (HINT: We call this good news which is what GOSPEL means.)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in[a] Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:21-24)

Day 3: Once we understand that we cannot save ourselves by being good - keeping the law - and once we understand that we are saved by grace alone through Jesus' perfect life, death, and resurrection, then, we can return to the law and find a very helpful purpose in it. What is that purpose do you think? (Hint: See passage for help. This usage of the law is called GUIDE.)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws. (Psalm 119:105-6)

Day 4: There is yet another use for the law which is helpful to this world. It is what we call the law's usage as a curb or club. Explain what a curb on a street is used for or a club that police officers in London, England use regarding criminals. Now, can you guess why we would say God's law has a similar use?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers--and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine (1 Timothy 1:9-10).

Day 5: Talk about all that we deserve / have earned because we have broken God's law. When you have shared all that you truly deserve, talk about what God has given you instead, in spite of your sins. What does it say about God who forgives us through Jesus and blesses us in spite of all our rebellion?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: If You, O LORD, kept track of iniquities, then who, O Lord, could stand? But with You there is forgiveness, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD; my soul does wait, and in His word I put my hope. (Psalm 130:4-5)

Day 6: When you regularly stop and think about how gracious God is in Jesus Christ, we can't help but think about how we can live lives of thanks to God for his goodness, not because we have to but because we want to. And when we don't feel like loving God or others because it's too hard or too much of an inconvenience, we should recognize that our sinful nature is taking control over us. Think about a typical day and talk about how you can show love to God. Talk about temptations that you can anticipate which will look to get in the way and cause us to sin.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: I run in the path of your commands, for you have broadened my understanding. (Psalm 119:32)

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day. MORE

DISCUSSION: How many times did you hear about the Law in church and its three uses and the Gospel? Be ready to share with family.

WORTHY OF NOTE: TABLE OF DUTIES

Certain passages of Scripture for various callings and positions, admonishing them about their duties and responsibilities

To Everyone: The commandments ... are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Rom. 13:9; I urge ... that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone. 1 Tim. 2:1; Let each his lesson learn with care, and all the household well shall fare.

THE CREED, ARTICLE ONE: WEEK ONE

THE CREED

The First Article: Creation

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

What does this mean? I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them.

Day 1: What proof do you see all around that there is a God who made everything? Give three big examples.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. (Psalm 19:1)

Day 2: What does the world try to get us to believe which contradicts this truth that God made all creatures, us, and our bodies?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt; their acts are vile. There is no one who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if any understand, if any seek God. All have turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. (Psalm 14:1-3)

Day 3: The Theory of Evolution, taught in public schools and accepted by most scientists today, states that everything came into being through a process of evolving from nonlife to life, from one cell organisms to multiple, from fish to monkeys to man. Creationism is the account that says God made all things mature in 6 24 hour days and rested on the 7th. Can either idea be absolutely proven by people? (Why do Christians believe in Creationism and not the Theory of Evolution?)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Now faith is the assurance of what we hope for and the certainty of what we do not see. This is why the ancients were commended. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. (Hebrews 11:1-3)

Resource: www.answersingenesis.org

Day 4: The Theory of Evolution falls into a category called Historical Science (unproven) not Observational Science (proven). That means that scientists make educated guesses about the past upon what we know about laws in the present, the past where there were no eyewitnesses. The problem with that approach is that it rules out the possibility that God made everything mature in a super natural way. In fact, science rules out all supernatural possibilities because it binds itself only to the natural world which can be seen and experienced. Why do you think humans reject the clear evidence for God?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: "Men... suppress the truth by their wickedness. For what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from His workmanship, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and darkened in their foolish hearts. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools." (Romans 1:18-23)

Day 5: From the Genesis account in the Bible, we see God create everything mature. How would that explain that the earth, moon, sun, stars, and all creation would seem older than they actually are as measured by radiometric dating and such?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to distinguish between the day and the night, and let them be signs to mark the seasons and days and years. And let them serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth.” And it was so. God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night. And He made the stars as well. God set these lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth, to preside over the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1:14-18)

ILLUSTRATION: If you went into the garden of Eden on day 8 and saw Adam & Eve, how old would you guess they were by their looks? Would you say they were only 2 days old? No. How about the fully grown trees? Only 5 days? No. How about the mountains and stars?

Day 6: Some wonder about the dinosaurs and fossils and are tempted to believe that dinosaurs existed prior to humankind. But the Bible suggests that dinosaurs and all land animals lived alongside humans and were made on the sixth day. What then would explain all the fossils we see and the extinction of many animals over time?

Resource: www.answersingenesis.org

REFERENCE PASSAGE: For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and the waters rose and lifted the ark high above the earth. So the waters continued to surge and rise greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the waters. Finally, the waters completely inundated the earth, so that all the high mountains under all the heavens were covered. (Genesis 7:17-19)

LORD’S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

ARTICLE ONE: WEEK TWO

THE CREED

The First Article: Preservation

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

What does this mean? He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.

Day 1: Think about your most favorite things, things that are truly good - blessings. Ever wonder where they come from? Let's take a moment after you name some and explain how they all trace back to God.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. (James 1:17)

Day 2: Today, let's think about your human body. What are some of the things that you are able to do that we might take for granted? List some skills that you have too, anything you feel you are good at. Let's talk about how we can trace these gifts back to God too.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: [God] himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else... For in him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:25b,28a)

Day 3: We continue on with thoughts about our bodies. Ever wonder how our bodies know what to do with food when it enters our digestive tract? Ever wonder how our bodies know what to do when they're injured? Or how our heartbeats continue to beat or lungs breathe without conscious thought? How does all this point us back to God?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. (Psalm 139:14)

Day 4: What has God created so our bodies just don't fall apart immediately and this world crumble or become a place where we are unable to live? (Spell out all these things and how God is always at work preserving his world even in spite of our ruining his creation by our sin.)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: For in Him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:16-17)

Day 5: Why do you think people fail to praise God for his preservation of us and providing for us? Why do we so often forget?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: This people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. (Matthew 13:15)

Day 6: What can we do as a family and what can you do personally to remember that God preserves us in our bodies and lives and provides for us daily?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. (Colossians 3:2).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

THE CREED, ARTICLE ONE: WEEK THREE

The First Article: Protection

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

What does this mean? He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil.

Day 1: Ever think about all the things that protect you from harm? Today, let's list as many as we can think about. After exhausting our list, let's talk about how well we remember - or don't - that God is the giver of such things.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10).

Day 2: In our list of protectors, we may have thought about policemen and firefighters or those in the military. Perhaps mom and dad. But how about white blood cells? Ever think about how much goes into healing yourself? Did you teach your body how to do that? Think about the last time you were sick or were injured. What was all involved, even things you can't explain, which restored your health?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life (Psalm 138:7)

Day 3: God also protects us from doing foolish things or putting ourselves into a vulnerable position through our mind and reason. What are instances where someone suffered serious harm because of their own foolishness?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you (Proverbs 4:6)

Day 4: There are also spiritual forces that seek to harm us such as temptation, our sinful nature, and the devil. What does God do to protect us from these things?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions (Ephesians 6:10-18).

Day 5: One of the ways God promises to protect us is to send us angels. Did you know that angels aren't sent to protect everyone, only believers in Jesus? How powerful do you think angels are? How many do you think are around you right now? What do you think they think about us as they watch, serve, and defend us?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:14).

Day 6: Does God protect us in all circumstances? Name some times in your life or in the life of someone else where it looks like God didn't protect. How might we explain God's seeming "absence?" (Ultimately, how has he shown us that he will truly protect us forever, even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death?)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (Romans 5:3-5).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

THE CREED, ARTICLE ONE: WEEK FOUR

The First Article: Grace

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

What does this mean? All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.

This is most certainly true.

Day 1: On a scale of 1-10, (1 not at all and 10 very worthy), how deserving are you and I to receive such blessings from God as his provisions and protection, not to mention that we are works of his creation? Explain your answer. Then see the Scripture here.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ ... there is no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless" (Romans 3:10-12a).

Day 2: Ever wonder how God can be so merciful and compassionate that he does not turn his back on us and cast us away forever? Why would God be so loving? No human being, besides Jesus, loves so absolutely, and it's not at all because we are good because we are not by nature. Not even a little bit. Yet, God loves. What do you think is the reason? And where is the proof?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. ⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Day 3: As Luther finishes summarizing the meaning of the First Article, he mentions that because of God's creating us, protecting us, and providing for us, we should thank and praise, serve and obey him. Why is it good for us to thank God and how do we do this in our thoughts, words, and actions?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: "I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship" (Romans 12:1).

Day 4: What's the difference between thanking and praising God for creating us, preserving us, and protecting us? What do you think it means to praise God especially. Where, when, and how are we to do this?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. ² Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever. ³ Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. ⁴ One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts. ⁵ They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty — and I will meditate on your wonderful works. ⁶ They tell of the power of your awesome works — and I will proclaim your great deeds. ⁷ They celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness. ⁸ The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. (Psalm 145:1-8)

Day 5: What are ways we serve the Lord? (Again, this is the appropriate response we offer when we recognize that God created us, provides for us, and protects us, correct?)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Sacrifice and offering you did not desire — but my ears you have opened — burnt offerings and sin offerings[b] you did not require... I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:6,8).

Day 6: On a scale of 1-10 - 1 being “not well at all” and 10 being “Perfectly” - how well do you feel like you obey the Lord? (Obedience to God is important, isn't it? This is what we want to give God, our Father, who created us, protects, and preserves us.)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: O LORD, hear my voice; let Your ears be attentive to my plea for mercy. If You, O LORD, kept track of iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with You there is forgiveness, so that You may be feared (Psalm 130:2-4).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

THE CREED, ARTICLE TWO: WEEK FIVE

The Second Article: Redemption

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

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.

Day 1: Jesus is no ordinary man. He's 100% God and 100% man. Where do you find that truth in Luther's explanation of the creed? When you think of Jesus as God, how does that make you feel about him? When you think of Jesus as man - a person just like you in every way but without sin - how does that make you feel?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)

Day 2: Ever think about Jesus being human like us? He was. He was born of a woman, just like you and I. (Jesus had no earthly father, and so he was not infected with sin. Still, he is 100% human.) Think about Jesus as a baby, a boy, a teenager. What problems do you think he faced? What did he look like? How tall was he? Do you think he can understand anything you have to deal with?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Day 3: How difficult do you think it was for Jesus who is "in very nature God" not to use his powers but to suffer as we do without any divine powers? Think about how he had to stand trial before Pontius Pilate, though he is God. Did you know he God hungry and tired and thirsty? How hard was it for him to stay on the cross when people were killing him, spitting on him, and insulting him? How hard is it for you to love your classmates, friends, siblings, and enemies when they hurt you? What do you feel like doing to them? What did Jesus do when we hated him - and we all did by nature?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Day 4: The Son of God went through a stage of humiliation when he was born into this world. He was born into poverty, not into a palace. He lived his earthly life without a place to call home. He was experienced pain, sadness, and extreme suffering. He suffered hell for our sin as our substitute. He was buried. But, after all that, Jesus went through a stage of exaltation. When we say Jesus

descended into hell, what do you think that refers to? What did he do in hell? Was this part of his humiliation or exaltation? What does this truth cause you to feel? (Be sure to check out the references for a much needed hint/help.)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits... When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (1 Peter 3:18-19 & Colossians 2:13-15).

Day 5: As we keep thinking about Jesus, God's only Son yet one of us born of the virgin Mary, we have to acknowledge that no one has loved us like He has. No one has dedicated their whole life to bring us to God like he has. No one is able nor has lived perfectly earning the perfection God demanded of us. No one is able nor has died making complete payment for our sins which was hell itself. No one is able nor has risen conquering death for us. Only Jesus. What do you think was the most difficult part of his job to earn our salvation?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all... After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:1-11, written 700 years before Jesus was born. Amazing!)

Day 6: What blessings do you now receive through Jesus who, by his work, has become and earned the right to be our Lord? List as many as you can? What's the most important? (Is there any gift/blessing you have received that was given from God for the sake of Christ?)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: "To each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: 'When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people'" (Ephesians 4:7-8).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

THE CREED, ARTICLE TWO: WEEK SIX

The Second Article: Redemption

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

What does this mean? [He] has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil;

Day 1: Redeem. We hardly use that word anymore. You may hear it used regarding coupons. "Redeem this coupon for 50 cents off the listed price!" Redeem means to buy back. When you give a grocer a coupon, you are buying back money you would have had to spend otherwise. A synonym for "redeem" is "ransom." Why would we say that Jesus redeemed you and me? How so?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life you inherited from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish." (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Day 2: Redeem means to buy something back. To pay a ransom means to buy something back too. Who or what was holding us captive, a captivity from which Jesus had to buy us with nothing less than his own blood?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin" (John 8:34)... "Escape from the snare of the devil, [you who have] been held captive by him to do his will" (1 Timothy 2:26).

Day 3: In order to buy us back, Jesus' life had to be perfect and his death had to have enough value for all people. This is why Jesus had to be God, perfect, worth more than all creation, able to conquer death. But, the price Jesus had to pay was a perfect life for humans and the death every human deserved, and God wasn't human nor could he die. This is why Jesus also had to be man. What amazes you the most about Jesus' two natures - divine and human? (For example, God is everywhere yet is entirely Jesus. Or, Jesus had to learn things just like we do, but he also already knew it all. God is all powerful which is why Jesus could do miracles and rise from the dead, but he grew tired, hungry, and needed sleep. Crazy, huh? Again, what aspect of Jesus baffles you the most?)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9). NOTE: Jesus is like a cup fitting the entire ocean inside.

Day 4: Not only did Jesus have to be the perfect Godman, but he had some important roles/jobs to fulfill. He needed to be God's revelation to all people, a prophet who only spoke God's Word and revealed God. He needed to be a priest, one who intercedes for others and sacrifices for sin on their behalf. He also needed to be the King of kings and conquer everything even death. Jesus had to be prophet, priest, and king. Which of the three jobs do you think is the toughest and why?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son (Hebrews

1:1-2)... Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet was without sin (Hebrews 4:14-15)... Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.” “You are a king, then!” said Pilate (John 18:36-37).

Day 5: To truly appreciate that Jesus paid our ransom price, we need to see how much we truly need a Savior. This is why we confess that we are “lost and condemned creatures.” We had no hope because of our sins and faced an eternity of hell. We were absolutely condemned. It was so bad that we didn’t even know by nature how lost we were. What things in your life do you see which makes it clear that, by nature, you are lost and deserving of condemnation? What proof of this do you see in the world?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:24-25a).

Day 6: We are saved by grace. Grace is God’s sufficient saving love which is given freely at Christ’s expense. Why is it awesome to know that we are saved by grace and not by anything we have to do?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

LORD’S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

THE CREED, ARTICLE TWO: WEEK SEVEN

The Second Article: Redemption

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

What does this mean? [He] has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, 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,

Day 1: Jesus truly is everything, our priceless treasure. He is worth far more than all the gold and silver in this world - than in a million worlds. How so? He isn't just a part of creation. He is beyond creation, the very power God used to bring everything into being. Since he gave himself as the price of our ransom, what does that say about your worth now and when will it be really important for you to remember that you are of infinite worth?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: The ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough (Psalm 49:8).

Day 2: Holy is a church term which gets thrown around a lot. But what does it mean? Well, holy means something has been set apart by God for a unique and important purpose. Jesus' blood is holy not only because he is sinless but because God set his blood apart as our ransom, and no other blood could pay such a price. Jesus, of course, poured out his blood on the cross to make us holy. How are we now set apart by God as unique and with a special purpose unlike the rest of the world?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy (Hebrews 10:14).

Day 3: When Jesus suffered, it was for us and it was entirely innocent. In other words, Jesus did not deserve to suffer because he was guiltless, innocent - not responsible for any sin. Jesus deserved no punishment. In fact, only those who sin should suffer because suffering came because of sin. Just as the wages of sin are death, so too suffering is payment or consequence of living in a sin-broken world. Take some time and list all the things you can think of which we suffer from. Explain how it comforts us to know that Jesus suffered all that we suffer too and he did this willingly.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief... Surely He took on our infirmities and carried our sorrows; (Isaiah 53:3-4).

Day 4: The Christian life is referred to as following after Jesus and picking up our crosses. In other words, it is a path filled with pain and suffering just as Jesus suffered when he picked up his cross. Why must we suffer and share in the "sufferings of Christ" just because we follow Jesus? (Think about times when Christians express their faith in public. What kind of response is that often met with?)

REFERENCE PASSAGE: Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12)

Day 5: Think about how Jesus “turns everything upside down.” That is to say, what might be thought of as difficult or unpleasant, even scary, is now, in Christ, reason for and a pathway to joy. Suffering for Christ means we are partners with Christ, his friends. Dying means we go to see Jesus. Pain causes us to turn to God and grow closer to him all the more. The worst things in life are now met with gospel hope. How does suffering become easier in knowing this?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: “You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.” Then Jesus told His disciples, “If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it (Matthew 16:23-25).

Day 6: The next time you suffer for doing good or for speaking up about Jesus, what thoughts will run through your mind as you consider that you are suffering just like Jesus did? In fact, how could you shape your life in such a way that you can be sure to see more suffering in your life for Christ’s sake - as crazy as that sounds?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: So that those who slander you may be put to shame by your good behavior in Christ. For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God (1 Peter 3:16-18).

LORD’S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

THE CREED, ARTICLE TWO: WEEK EIGHT

The Second Article: Redemption

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

What does this mean? That I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

Day 1: Jesus is called so many wonderful things in the Scripture. Just in John's Gospel he is called things like: The Word, Son of God, Son of Man, Living Water, Bread of Life, Light of the World, I Am, The Good Shepherd, Resurrection, The Way, Truth, Life, and King... Go through each name of Jesus here and share why you would willingly want to serve Jesus as Luther reminds us in the catechism.

REFERENCE PASSAGE: "I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love" (Luke 7:47).

Day 2: Jesus is everything we need and has done everything for us so we could, again, serve him in his kingdom. Why is this service good for us?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: "Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked" (Psalm 84:10).

Day 3: Our service involves freely living out God's will for us in blessedness. (Blessedness is a holy kind of happiness - true lasting satisfaction though even painful at times, different from the world's form of happiness which is temporary and often sinful.) Why will we be happier serving God than serving our own sinful desires?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: "By faith Moses, when he was grown, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25He chose to suffer oppression with God's people rather than to experience the fleeting enjoyment of sin. 26He valued disgrace for Christ above the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his reward" (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Day 4: Serving God also means doing so in innocence. (Innocence is refraining from evil as if it's the last thought on our mind, as if we don't know what evil is in the first place and are horrified at the thought of it.) How would you define evil? How does God define evil?

REFERENCE PASSAGE: "How could I do such a great evil and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9b, Joseph's words to Potiphar's wife who was trying to tempt him.)

Day 5: We also serve God in righteousness. (Righteousness are the acts of good we do through faith in Christ. In fact, only faith in Christ allows us to do anything good.) Define what is right. How do we know what is good and pleasing to God?

REFERENCE PASSAGES: Everything that is not from faith is sin (Romans 14:23b). For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age (Titus 2:11-12).

Day 6: Jesus lives forever and not only has risen but has ascended to the most powerful place of all - God's "right hand" position. (Jesus is God's "right hand man," to put it in a modern way. The right hand man is one you turn to in order to get done whatever you need to get done.) This means Jesus rules over all things and the Scripture says he does so for all who trust in him - for you and me. Why does this thought give you joy? And why does this thought also make you feel good about Jesus' return to judge the living and the dead?

REFERENCE PASSAGES: “God put everything under (Jesus’) feet and made Him head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all” (Ephesians 1:22-23)... “Lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:28).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

THE CREED, ARTICLE THREE: WEEK NINE

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 reason or strength 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.

Day 1: As we come to the last of the three articles of the Apostles' Creed, we confess trust in the Holy Spirit. (Faith is a word full of meaning. Faith stands for knowledge about something, belief about that something being true, and trusting that something for you personally.) With the introduction to the 3rd person of the Godhead, we need to cover the concept of the Trinity. (Trinity comes from two words which mean 3 (tri, like tricycle which has 3 wheels) and 1 (one, like in unicycle which has 1 wheel). God is triune - 3 persons yet 1 being/essence. (We can't understand this but simply trust it because the Bible says so.) What do you believe the Spirit's work is, if the Son's work is redeeming us, and the Father's work is creating us? (Hint: Reread the third article and Luther's meaning for thoughts about an answer.)

REFERENCE PASSAGES: The Spirit is the Lord, and where the Spirit is, there is freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17)... As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:16-17)... "When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13).

Day 2: The work of the Holy Spirit is known as "sanctification." (Sanctus comes from the Latin language and it means holy, or more so, set apart for special use. Our English word sanctuary - worship space - comes from the same word.) The Holy Spirit sanctifies, sets apart, a people for God through Jesus' redeeming work. God's people are holy in two special ways then: 1) The Spirit makes people perfect and not guilty of any sin by gifting Jesus' perfection, forgiveness, and resurrection power to them through faith. 2) As holy children of God, the Holy Spirit now calls us to live special lives which nonbelievers can't live - lives full of goodness starting with love from God and for God. (The world doesn't know God's love and can't love him. Therefore, everything nonbelievers do - even if it looks good to us - is still sinful to God because it's done apart from faith in Jesus. It's done out of pride and not to glorify - bring praise - to God.) Explain how God would see you, what you could only do, and where we would all be if the Spirit hadn't sanctified us in Christ.

REFERENCE PASSAGES: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-25).

Day 3: Without the Holy Spirit, we could not know about Jesus' work for us, we would not have the Bible, and we could not even believe in the Bible and Jesus, if we had it. So, the Holy Spirit authored the Bible through people, makes sure that the Bible stays perfect and preserved for all ages that we might know Jesus, and even works faith in our hearts to believe in Jesus. He also continues to work through the message of the Bible and the good news of Jesus so that our faith/trust increases and doesn't die. Any guesses how the Spirit first communicates to people who God is? (Hint: It is through this tool (means) that the Spirit often puts God's name on us, especially infants.)

REFERENCE PASSAGES: Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of

God unless they are born again.” “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit...” (John 3:3-5). ... “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). ... He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

Day 4: The idea that one can only be holy in God’s sight by the work of the Holy Spirit applying Jesus’ saving work to us makes sense. At the same time, it is humbling to think that without the Spirit’s sanctifying work, people are simply absolutely evil and cannot do one good thing. (For example, it might be hard to understand that when a believer helps an old lady across the street, God is pleased. But when a nonbeliever helps an old lady across the street, though God blessed the old lady through a nonbeliever, God still sees the nonbeliever’s act as sinful.) Explain how a work from a nonbeliever which looks good is still tainted with sin at its core. (Answer found for tomorrow’s focus.)

REFERENCE PASSAGES: For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them (Ephesians 2:10)... By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous when God gave approval to his gifts (Hebrews 11:4)... All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away (Isaiah 64:6).

Day 5: By our instinct - our natural way of thinking which is corrupted by sin - we all like to think God judges us based on the works we do. Many believe God is pleased because they’ve done more good works than bad, or because they are better than others, or because in our minds we’ve made up for our sins. They end up suggesting they don’t need Jesus. (In fact, all nonbelievers think this way and, sadly, even believers sometimes believe this. But think about this for a moment: If a person believes that he can earn God’s favor by doing good works, then, what good is Jesus’ death? If we can earn God’s favor in any way, then Jesus’ sacrifice is unnecessary. Of course, if Jesus’ cross were unnecessary, then, why would God have put Jesus on the cross to begin with? But Jesus had to die for us. This is the only way we can have God’s favor and go to heaven. Only the Spirit could reveal this to us which is contrary to our thinking.)

When someone does good, then, but doesn’t trust in Jesus, they are actually telling God that they don’t need Jesus. Do you understand why works which may seem good to us can actually be sinful to God? Consider the motive of your heart whenever you do something good. Ask why you are doing it. (Pause.) Your sole motivation should always be because Jesus died for you. We may do good things because it’s the right thing to do, it helps others, makes us feel good, or whatever. But the most important reason - our sole motivation - should be out of faith in and love for Jesus. Only the Spirit could teach us this.

REFERENCE PASSAGES: If anyone turns a deaf ear to my instruction, even their prayers are detestable (Proverbs 28:9)... “If righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!” (Galatians 2:21).

Day 6: Over the last couple days, we touched on a point of doctrine that is often tough to grasp - faith in Jesus alone makes a person good before God and able to do good. Apart from Jesus, you can’t do one good thing. Only the Spirit can convince us of this and he does so through the gospel message which is found in the Bible and offered in baptism and the Lord’s Supper. (We will talk

about these two sacraments later.) But for today, we consider how important the Bible is. Only by the Bible can we know Jesus and have a good relationship with God through faith. Why is it that getting into the Bible or studying a summary of it (Luther's Small Catechism) is one of the last things we feel like doing in a day?

REFERENCE PASSAGES: I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe (Romans 1:16) ... Faith comes by hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17) ... Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers but his delight is in the word of the Lord and on it he meditates day and night (Psalm 1:1-3). All Scripture is Godbreathed and is useful for teaching, correcting, training, and rebuking so that the man of God is equipped for every good work (1 Timothy 3:15-16) ... The time will come when men will not tolerate sound doctrine, but with itching ears they will gather around themselves teachers to suit their own desires. So they will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

THE CREED, ARTICLE THREE: WEEK TEN

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? 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 richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.

Day 1: Some believe that their faith in God is a personal matter and no one else's business. Some believe that they can commune with God in nature apart from others or catch a sermon online and they're good to go. But those who know the Scriptures know that God saves us personally and in community with others. He does not want us to be alone and isolated from other Christians. This is why we confess that the Spirit created "the holy Christian church, the communion of saints" and why Luther explains that the Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens, and sets apart the whole Christian church on earth..." This is all the Spirit's doing. It is not something a person or group of people just decided to create. Why is it important that we join regularly with fellow believers whom the Spirit joined together?

REFERENCE PASSAGES: Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:24-25) ... Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken (Ecclesiastes 4:12) ...

Day 2: People may argue that there are hypocrites in the church - people who act like they love Jesus but after church they are mean and cruel to others. Because of this, they say they don't want to be part of the church. Did you know that Jesus taught that the devil would try to sabotage the church by making sure there'd be hypocrites in the church? Why do you think there will be those in the church who don't really believe in Jesus but act like they do? After discussing why you think people claim to follow Jesus but don't, think about how Jesus still treated the church. Did he give up on the church even though there would be those from within the church who would crucify him? Explain how the Holy Spirit can still be at work within the church though it will contain hypocrites.

REFERENCE PASSAGES: Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' " "An enemy did this," he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' " "No," he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn'" (Matthew 13:24-30).

Day 3: Another reason why the Holy Spirit created the Church is over the fact that we can do more together than we can apart. Explain how we can do more for this world as a church together than you could do as simply an individual by yourself.

REFERENCE PASSAGES: Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good... The body is a unit, though it is comprised of many parts. And although its parts are many, they all form one body. So it is with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7,12)... “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).

Day 4: One of the greatest blessings we enjoy together as a church family is when we gather to confess our sins and hear words of forgiveness (absolution) from the pastor. Why is this, in one respect, difficult? Why is this, at the same time, amazing and one of the greatest gifts from God which we could receive?

REFERENCE PASSAGES: Jesus breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld” (John 20:22-23).

Day 5: When we confess that we are a part of the “communion of saints” we are expressing a unity with all who are made perfect through faith in Jesus, the only perfect people there are. That said, this one group of saints can be divided into two parts. Those who are on earth and those in heaven. What differences do you think there are between saints on earth - they’ve been called saints “militant” - and saints in heaven - also known as saints “triumphant.” Yet, how do you think they are similar?

REFERENCE PASSAGES: After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

... Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?” I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:9-10, 13-14).

Day 6: What are the greatest ways that Christians can encourage each other in the Lord? Share at least three ways the Spirit leads us to encourage one another.

REFERENCE PASSAGES: Be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:18b-20)... Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world (James 1:27)... But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

LORD’S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

EXTRA DISCUSSION: God gifts us with special abilities to bring glory to him, we who are in Christ. Some have leadership skills, some administrative, some speaking/preaching, others teaching... (Romans 12;6-8). What gifts do you think God has given you? If you are unsure, ask your family and friends in Christ. Another gift from God is the fruit of the Spirit which all Christians have but may not have to full maturity. That fruit is "love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22). Where do you see these on display because of Christ? Where do you see more maturing needed? Pray for more evidence of these gifts and fruit in your life. Lastly, did you know that many who struggle with knowing who they are, what their purpose is, or finding meaning in life are those who are unfamiliar with the work of the Holy Spirit? This all comes from the Holy Spirit.

THE CREED, ARTICLE THREE: WEEK ELEVEN

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

This is most certainly true.

Day 1: The Bible is very clear that the end of the world is coming. God has set a day aside when he will judge all people. We confess this truth every time we recite the third article with these words that we believe in “the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.” Luther reminds us that this means we believe that “on the Last Day, God will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.” What do you think that day will be like? Should we be nervous about this day?

PASSAGE REFERENCES: We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17).

Day 2: Consider the following passage below about the days leading up to the end of the world. What is so shocking and sad about this?

PASSAGE REFERENCES: About that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:36-39).

Day 3: How do you think the universe will be destroyed on the last day? How should we live knowing this day is coming?

PASSAGE REFERENCES: “The present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men... the Day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and its works will be laid bare. Since everything will be dissolved in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to conduct yourselves in holiness and godliness as you anticipate and hasten the coming of the day of God, when the heavens will be destroyed by fire and the elements will melt in the heat” (2 Peter 3:7, 10-12).

Day 4: Do you think the Lord will give us any signs on earth to indicate that we can't last like this indefinitely, but that there is an end that's coming? Consider the passage below and note any particular signs.

PASSAGE REFERENCES: At that time many will fall away and will betray and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and mislead many. Because of the multiplication of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold. But the one who perseveres to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:10-14).

Day 5: Some have mocked God suggesting that there is no end of the world because it's been 2,000 years since Jesus was visibly among us. Why do you think God is still waiting to return?

PASSAGE REFERENCES: The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Day 6: Knowing that Jesus could come anytime, how should you live your day today? What will you want to avoid? What will you want to be more into? How will you look to treat other people?

PASSAGE REFERENCES: "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour" (Matthew 25:13)

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: WEEK ONE

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Introduction

Our Father who art 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 with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.

Day One: When we call God, Father, do you recognize how radical that is? It was in Jesus' day. People revered God as the ALmighty, and rightly so. God is all-powerful, holy, and absolutely beyond us which should cause us to tremble at the thought of ever standing before Him. But Jesus calls us to see Him as our Father. What thoughts come to mind when you think of God as a loving Father? (By the way, how did God become our Father, especially since we orphaned ourselves by our sin?)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist (1 Corinthians 8:6).

Day Two: Before we even begin to pray to God we are invited to call Him Father all for the sake of Jesus, God's only Son, by whose work we have become children of God. Since God is our Father, we can make requests to Him (pray) like children ask of their loving parents. But even better, something about the fact that our Father is in heaven, says something about what he can do for us as we ask Him in prayer. What does the place where the Father is have to do with what he can do for us? Any ideas? (Hint: Heaven is the place where God dwells in all his power and glory.)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us (Ephesians 3:20).

Day Three: As any loving parent responds to a child's request, our Father in Heaven doesn't give everything his children they ask for because not everything is good for them. Can you give examples of things we might pray for which may not be for our good? When we pray, what things in this life keep us from knowing what is best for us?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! (Matthew 7:11).

Day Four: How often do you pray? If we are honest with ourselves we all could learn to pray far more than we do. What are some reasons why we fail to pray as we ought? Come up with three reasons?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures (James 4:2-3).

Day Five: Martin Luther called the Lord's Prayer the greatest martyr of all time. (A martyr is slaughtered instead of valued as being from God.) Why do you think Martin Luther would say this of the Lord's Prayer? (Hint: Think about how often it is said but how often it is offered without much thought, but simply because of routine and tradition.) What can you do to prevent the Lord's Prayer from being abused when you say it?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me" (Matthew 15:8).

Day Six: We are about to review the seven petitions (requests) Jesus taught us through the Lord's Prayer. If you were to write a perfect prayer, what would you write? (Keep it to 7 petitions/requests.) Before we review those petitions, can you recite the seven requests we make already? Any guesses about what you are truly asking for with each petition?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective (James 5:16b).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

DAILY PRAYERS

Asking a Blessing

How the head of the family should teach his household to ask a blessing and return thanks

The children and members of the household shall go to the table reverently, fold their hands, and say:

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. (Ps. 145: 15–16)

Then shall be said the Lord's Prayer and the following:

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

Returning Thanks

Also, after eating, they shall, in like manner, reverently and with folded hands say:

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good. His love endures forever. [He] gives food to every creature. He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call. His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor His delight in the legs of a man; the LORD delights in those who fear Him, who put their hope in His unfailing love. (Ps. 136:1, 25; 147:9–11)

Then shall be said the Lord's Prayer and the following:

We thank You, Lord God, heavenly Father, for all Your benefits, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: WEEK TWO

The First Petition: Hallowed be Thy name.

What does this mean? God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also.

How is God's name kept holy? God's name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God's Word profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father!

Day One: Did you know that "Hallowed be thy name" or "Hallowed be your name" is actually something we ask for from God? It's a request, a petition. It's not just a word of praise. So today, we want to think about the word "Hallowed." Any clue as to what that word means? (Try thinking of any English words we use that sound close to it. Hint: Luther's explanation should give you some help.)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God (Isaiah 52:10).

Illustration: We really don't use "Hallowed" anywhere else but in the Lord's Prayer. However, there is a holiday that uses a variation of the word "hallowed." It's Halloween. Ever wonder why it's called Halloween? Hallowed is an old english word which means "Holy." The last part of the word "een" is a variation of the word "eve." Hallow's Eve put together became Halloween. (Think of the night before Christmas Day. That's Christmas Eve, right?) Hallow's Eve is the night before the church holiday "All Holy One's Day" or "All Saints Day." (A saint is a holy/hallowed person - made holy through faith in Jesus.) So, why do we have all these festivities for Halloween like trick-or-treating, wearing costumes, having a bonfire, and jack-o-lanterns and such? A lot of those traditions have roots in practices people would observe because they had a misunderstanding about what would happen to people when they died. Treats were left for them. Costumes were worn, lanterns and bone fires (bonfires) were lit to scare off evil spirits. So the church took hold of October 31 when these happened and pointed people to the following day to discuss what truly happens to people when they die, especially believers. In fact, Martin Luther, who wrote the catechism, he posted 95 statements about the dead on October 31, 1517 for this very reason. Pretty cool, huh?

Day Two: Okay, so if "Hallowed" means "holy" then why would we ask that God would help us keep his name holy in the first petition of the Lord's Prayer? Isn't it already holy? (Check out the passage references and see if you can come up with an answer.)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16)... You dishonor God by breaking the law... It is written: "God's name is blasphemed (hated/defamed) among the Gentiles because of you" (Romans 2:23-24).

Day Three: In the first request of the prayer Jesus taught us - It's called the Lord's Prayer because it comes from Jesus - we ask God to help us live such lives that others can see we must follow a holy saving God. As we live such good lives, people will seek God out and, God-willing, become believers and be saved too. Is there anything that could help us live good and upright lives so people know God is holy to save them?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: I gain understanding from Your precepts; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Psalm 119:104-5).

Day Four: Living according to God's Ten Commandments out of love for Jesus' who so loved and saved us is how we keep God's name holy before others. We need help to do this better and are thankful that wherever we fail, God forgives us. What are the Ten Commandments? How many can you remember? Can you name them all?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out ... of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me... You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave anyone unpunished who takes His name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy... Honor your father and mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (9th-10th): You shall not covet... (Exodus 20:2-17

Day Five: This first request of the Lord's Prayer reminds us that as Christians we bear the name of Christ, God's family name. It's like how you have a last name to let others know which family you come from. What would happen to your family name if, at school or work, you were a mean disrespectful person? What would people think of your family, if you were a nice, helpful, and respectful loving person? How is this a good way to think about the first thing we ask in the Lord's Prayer?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us (1 Peter 2:12).

Day Six: What's the biggest area in your life where you feel you could do better in showing that God is an amazing saving holy God who wants all people to be saved?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your loving devotion; according to Your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash me clean of my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin (Psalm 51:1-2).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: WEEK THREE
The Second Petition: Thy kingdom come.

What does this mean? The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

How does God's kingdom come? God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.

Day One: In our second request from the Lord's Prayer, we ask that God would bring his kingdom. Won't he do this anyway? Why does he tell us to ask for this?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "We are punished justly, for we are receiving what our actions deserve..." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!" And Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:42-43).

Day Two: As Luther teaches correctly, we ask God for his kingdom to come to us especially because it is true that God will bring forth his kingdom with or without us. Thankfully, he desires us to be a part of his kingdom which is why he tells us to ask for this daily. What does his kingdom refer to though? Is he telling us to ask to go to heaven? Is that his kingdom? Or are we asking for something different. What do you think? (Hint: We are not asking first and foremost to go to Jesus' heavenly kingdom. His kingdom extends further than just heaven.)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). "The kingdom of God will not come with observable signs. Nor will people say, 'Look, here it is,' or 'There it is.' For you see, the kingdom of God is in your midst" (Luke 17:21). Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, for to this you were called as members of one body. And be thankful (Colossians 3:14).

Day Three: The kingdom of God is actually with us as God rules in the hearts of believers. When we pray that God's kingdom come, we are asking that he would rule all the more in our hearts. Since we are asking for him to rule more in our hearts, who or what was ruling in our hearts before?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name." So He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:17-19).

Day Four: Since God's kingdom is in us and we have weapons to fight against the enemies of God's kingdom - the sinful nature, the sinful world, and the devil - what weapon has God given us? Should we use tanks and bombs and guns or something different? Again, what weapon(s) do we use?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, then to the Greek (Romans 1:16).

Day Five: The second petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come." has been called the mission petition. Why do you think it has been called that? (You may need to figure out what a mission according to the church's use of the term.) What do you think we are also asking for beyond God's kingdom coming more to us in this second request?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Romans 10:14-15).

Day Six: You can't possibly tell everyone in the world about Jesus, although God does call us to share the good news to whomever we can. Since we pray that God's kingdom would come in every way, how do you think he will bring his kingdom to people all around the world? What is all involved in bringing forth God's kingdom through his church? How might you, in particular, put yourself in a position where you can tell plenty of people about Jesus' love for you and the joys of being in his kingdom.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Then He said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest." (Matthew 9:37-38).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: WEEK FOUR

The Third Petition: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What does this mean? The good and gracious will of God is done even 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 hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die.

This is His good and gracious will.

Day One: As we come to the third request in the Lord's Prayer, we will note that although God will surely fulfill all these requests, we especially pray that he will fulfill all these requests with us - for us and through us. We ask him to help us show that his name is holy in all we say, think, and do so others are encouraged and seek him out because of us. We ask him to bring his kingdom all the more to us and through us to others so people can be saved by our witness of Jesus. What, then, do you think we are asking for when we pray, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven?" What does that have to do with us and how is this different than simply praying "Thy kingdom come!"?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: [Jesus] rebuked the unclean spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," He said, "I command you to come out and never enter him again." After shrieking and convulsing him violently, the spirit came out... His disciples asked Him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" Jesus answered, "This kind cannot come out, except by prayer." (Mark 9:25-29).

Day Two: When we pray, "Thy will be done..." we pray as Luther rightly taught that all which opposes God's will be destroyed in my life and in the world. Since we are sinful and sin opposes God's will, are we asking that God destroy us? How about enemies of God - those who still reject God - are we asking that they be destroyed since they oppose God's will? Is it okay to pray for the destruction of God's enemies?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: The weapons of our warfare are not the weapons of the world. Instead, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We tear down arguments, and every presumption set up against the knowledge of God; and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (Colossians 2:4-5)... Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him. "For all who draw the sword will die by the sword (Matthew 26:52). Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Carefully consider what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible on your part, live at peace with everyone. Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but leave room for God's wrath. For it is written: "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord." (Romans 12:17-19). The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Day Three: One of the biggest enemies we pray against in this petition is our own sinful nature. Did you know that there is a part of you which will never want to do God's will? (This is why sometimes you don't want to go to church, read the Bible, listen to others in authority like parents, or obey other commandments.) When we pray "thy will be done" we are asking God to destroy the part in us that is called our sinful nature. We ask this for everyone. What can you do in your life more to put to death all which oppose God?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men. It instructs us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live sensible, upright, and godly lives in the present age (Titus 2:11). From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the child of God is thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Day Four: When will God ultimately answer our prayer “Your will be done in my life and in the world!”? Why is it good to know that God will answer this petition fully one day?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21:3-4).

Day Five: How evil is the world? Where do you see signs that things are not right with the world, especially with people who do not know Jesus? What are things we should hope for about them and about us in relation to those in the world who reject Jesus?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world... “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.” (John 17:15-17).

Day Six: Why is it so important that God’s will be done over all things, even our own personal will? (Does this explain why so many prayers end, “Your will be done.”?)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2).

LORD’S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

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THE LORD'S PRAYER: WEEK FIVE

The Fourth Petition: Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean? God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread? Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

Day One: Plenty of people who don't love Jesus still get fed everyday and they don't even pray. So, why bother to pray for daily bread? (Anything in Luther's explanation help answer this question?) Once you find the answer, start counting up all the good things you get in your life - not just food and not just needs but everything good. What does asking God for "daily bread" bring to mind about every good thing we have?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given (John 1:16).

Day Two: Explain the difference between a need and a want. The Passage Reference below shows that "daily bread" is a request which only asks for what's needed, not what's wanted. What's the danger in asking for more than what we need? And would you still love God if he only answered your needs and not your wants? The fact that God not only gives us our needs and more and gives us some wants too should cause us to...

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "Two things I ask of you, LORD; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God" (Proverbs 30:7-9).

Day Three: In our previous petitions, we ask for very spiritual things. Finally, after three petitions, we now ask for an earthly thing. Compare this to your other prayers or prayers you have heard from others. Are prayers generally more for earthly things or spiritual things? Why is it important to be spiritually minded, not earthly?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory (Colossians 3:1-4).

Day Four: Our daily bread is all our needs in life, not just our need for food. Name all the things you need for your body and life.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: When you pray, do not babble on like pagans, for they think that by their many words they will be heard. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him (Matthew 6:7-8).

Day Five: The things we need are too much to number when we think about it. For example, we need food. What's it take for you to get that food on your table at home? You need "bread-winners?" or the ability to have work and earn bread to eat. You need streets to get to work. You need street construction workers. You need oxygen for them to breath. You need plants. You need the sun. You need the galaxy and universe to hold it all... Think about help for your body. When you get really sick, what all do you need? List that and all it takes for you to have it.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word (Hebrews 1:3).

Day Six: Though we might think of this as an earthly petition while the rest are all spiritual, you may have already noted that this too is a request with spiritual purposes in mind. This is why Martin Luther said that this "petition is aimed against the devil" who likes to bring chaos and rob us of all our earthly needs whether disruption in the government or in society as in third world countries or too much wealth and earthly prosperity in first world countries. How does such chaos hurt us spiritually?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: WEEK SIX

The Fifth Petition: And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor 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 sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

Day One: This fifth request to the Lord “forgive us our trespasses - sins - as we forgive those who trespass against us” has been called the lynchpin of the entire prayer. (A lynchpin means something that keeps the whole thing together and is vitally important.) Why would someone call this petition the one that makes the whole prayer pleasing and effective regarding all other requests?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's trespasses against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:17-19)...

Day Two: Through the forgiveness of sins and faith in Christ to receive full pardon, we can God our Father. As such he listens to our prayers and agrees to answer them according to his will. How much has God forgiven you? Do you feel like he has forgiven you much? Do you feel like he has forgiven you far more than other people? Do you feel like he has forgiven you more than any other person ever? Why is it important that you consider yourself to be in need of infinite forgiveness versus only needing to be forgiven a little bit? After giving an answer, examine the passage.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “I tell you, because her many sins have been forgiven, she has loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little” (Luke 7:47).

Day Three: Why do you think Jesus wants us to ask forgiveness while also having a willing heart to forgive anyone else for anything else done to us?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: The kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. “At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins.[i] He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’ “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart” (Matthew 18:23-35)

Day Four: When Jesus tells us to ask the Father for forgiveness, what does he know needs to happen in order for his Father to grant that request for you?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and in His name repentance and forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed to all nations” (Luke 24:46)

Day Five: Why would God the Father want to forgive your sins? And why would you want to forgive someone who sins against you?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy (Titus 3:5).

Day Six: In the previous petition about daily bread, we see the word “daily” which suggests that we should pray this prayer daily. Why does the fifth petition’s need also suggest another reason to pray this prayer daily, or better yet, constantly?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. (Romans 7:21-25)

LORD’S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: WEEK SEVEN

The Sixth Petition: And lead us not into temptation.

What does this mean? God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.

Day One: In this sixth request we ask God to "lead us not into temptation." What's a temptation? Can you explain the difference between a temptation and a test? Though God never tempts us, does he test us? Can you give an example of where something might be a temptation for you but God intends to use this that same thing as a test?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: I am afraid, however, that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may be led astray from your simple and pure devotion to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:13). When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone (James 1:13). You know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (James 1:3-4). Because of these surpassingly great revelations... I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

Day Two: Why do you think temptation is such a big deal?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: But each one is tempted when by his own evil desires he is lured away and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death (James 1:14-15).

Day Three: How do you beat a temptation which you can't get away from? After some suggestions, consider the following passages.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts (James 4:7-8). As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another (Proverbs 27:17). Two are better than one... If either of them falls... one can help the other... But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them (Proverbs 4:9-10).

Day Four: One of the ways the devil seeks to crush you in temptation is to get you to believe that temptation you are facing is worse than anyone else has ever experienced before. What are we to think? Do we even have a chance if the devil pursues us like a lion, the devil who is more powerful than any of us?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide an escape, so that you can stand up under it. Therefore, my

beloved, flee... (1 Corinthians 10:13-14)... Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you will honor me (Psalm 50:15).

Day Five: If we think we are immune to temptation and that it's no big deal, what are we destined to experience? What will happen to us? How have people shown in their lives that they need help against temptation? Have you experienced the same thing yet? Give examples if you feel comfortable.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: The one who thinks he is standing firm should be careful not to fall (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Day Six: One of the most powerful tools the devil uses regarding temptation is silence. If he can only get God's people to close up about what they are struggling with, then, he can corner us and devour us. What does Jesus want for us among the body of believers since this is one of the devil's greatest tactics?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness (John 12:46)... You ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow (2 Corinthians 2:7).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: WEEK EIGHT

The Seventh Petition: But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.

Day One: What is evil? (Name as much evil - and the source of all evil - which you find in the world and which the Bible warns us about.)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: To Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:17-19). The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure (Jeremiah 17:9). There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:4). The wages of sin is death... (Romans 6:23).

ILLUSTRATION: Like cold is the absence of heat or darkness is the absence of light, so evil has been called the absence of God's good and perfect presence.

Day Two: So, when you pray for God to deliver you from evil in this world, what are you ultimately praying for?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better (Philippians 1:21-23).

Day Three: Are you really ready to go to heaven? Would you want to go there right now if you could, or are there things on earth you want to do first? (Pause for some answers: Why do you think there are things on earth which would be better to have experience than what's waiting for us in heaven?)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no heart has imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Day Four: What reason is there for why God doesn't just take us home to heaven right now and deliver us from all evil the moment we begin to believe in him?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: To remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake (Philippians 1:24)... Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, until the end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20).

Day Five: What do you think it will be like in heaven? What do you think it will be like to see Jesus? Is there anything better than to be in God's presence forever and worship him always? (If we ever think that heaven is less exciting than something in this life, how can we be sure that sin is blinding us from the greatness to come?)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked (Psalm 84:10). He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true" (Revelation 21:5). In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going away to prepare a place for you? 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and welcome you into My presence, so that you also may be where I am (John 14:2-3).

Day Six: Since heaven is our home and our citizenship is in heaven, our true country, how should we live in this world?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: It is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." Since you call on a Father who judges each one's work impartially, live your lives in reverent fear during your temporary stay on earth. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life you inherited from your forefathers (1 Peter 1:17-18). whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in[a] Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:7-11).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: WEEK NINE

The Conclusion: For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

What does this mean? This means that I should be certain that these petitions are pleasing 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. Amen, amen means "yes, yes, it shall be so."

Day One: Though the Gospel writers of Matthew and Luke do not state that Jesus' taught us to conclude the prayer he taught us with the "conclusion" written above, why is this a fitting way to conclude a prayer?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all" (1 Chronicles 29:11).

Day Two: When we say, "to God belongs the Kingdom," why is that important? (Hint: What's the difference between saying "this is your Kingdom, Lord" as opposed to "this is my Kingdom" or someone else's? Think in terms of God's holiness versus our sinfulness or his ability to make things last forever versus our inability which makes nothing last very long.)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:17)

Day Three: When we say to you belongs the "power" what again are we saying in particular? (Hint: What's the difference between saying "yours is the power" versus mine "is the power" or someone else's? Again, think in terms of the enemies we are up against which we just prayed against? Daily need, daily need for forgiveness, temptation, absolute evil...)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26).

Day Four: Among Christians there is a popular phrase: To God alone be the glory! (Glory is the praise that is due someone for the work they have accomplished.) Why is this a good phrase? (Think in terms of any good thing we need which we should pray for. If it is given, is it ever because of the person asking or a person's effort?)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Not to us, Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness (Psalm 115:1)

Day Five: The word Amen is found in the original Bible languages of Greek and Hebrew. In the Greek, Amen simply means: "in all truth" or "this is sincerely true." The Greek word comes from the Hebrew word which further means, "This is to be believed as most certainly true." Why is this an excellent way to end every prayer in Jesus' name?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: One must ask in faith, without doubting, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not expect to receive anything from the Lord (James 1:6-7).

Day Six: Why is it fitting to conclude our prayers with “your will be done” and “in Jesus’ name we pray?”

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “Yet not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42b) ... “Whatever you ask in my name [Jesus’], this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13).

LORD’S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

DAILY PRAYERS

Morning Prayer

In the morning when you get up, make the sign of the holy cross and say:

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. If you choose, you may also say this little prayer:

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Then go joyfully to your work, singing a hymn, like that of the Ten Commandments, or whatever your devotion may suggest.

Evening Prayer

In the evening when you go to bed, make the sign of the holy cross and say:

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. If you choose, you may also say this little prayer:

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Then go to sleep at once and in good cheer.

HOLY BAPTISM: WEEK ONE

First: What is Baptism?

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's word.

Which is that word of God? Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matt. 28:19)

Day One: When you think of baptism, what comes to mind? What do you picture? What do you think is happening physically and spiritually? Why do you think we baptize people?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit" - Jesus (John 3:3-6).

Day Two: The baptizing of people first began with John the Baptizer (30AD) who started his ministry about six months before Jesus began his ministry. (John was called to spread the news that the Messiah was coming. John was to prepare people spiritually for his arrival.) Before John came, only objects were baptized and only for religious ceremonial purposes (Mark 7:1-4). (Baptism comes from a Greek word "baptizo" which simply means to apply water (dip, sprinkle, immerse...) to something, and, again, this was for a religious purpose.) The purpose was for ceremonial cleansing. Why do you think John started baptizing people?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:11-12).

Day Three: Baptism is associated with the beginning of repentance and faith according to the Scriptures. What do you think of when you hear the word "repentance?" What does repentance mean? (HINT: Specifically, in the Greek the word we translate for repentance is metanoia which means "change your mind." Change your mind about what?)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "Repent (turn from sin and turn to trust in Christ) and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Day Four: From our discussion over the last few questions, we are starting to see from the Scriptures all the more why Martin Luther explained baptism as more than just plain water. We can see that God commanded baptism in Jesus' last words before he ascended (Matthew 28), because it offers a cleansing of the soul, of the sinful heart, a cleansing away of sin. How might you answer someone who when hearing that baptism washes away sin, says, "I thought Jesus' sacrifice alone washes away sin. How can the application of water do such things?" (After discussing this question, be sure to note the passage and the accompanying illustration.)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him 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. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection” (Romans 6:3-5).

ILLUSTRATION: It’s water that hydrates our bodies and preserves our life. But, how do we get that water? We need a means by which to receive water. We use water from our city or from wells through pipes to bring us water which preserves us. Baptism is the package in which Jesus’ saving work of the cross and resurrection is delivered to us. The Bible is yet another package where the message of Jesus’ work in our place is delivered to us. We’ll see in another part of our study that the Lord’s Supper is yet another package by which Jesus’ gospel comes to us. This is why we speak of Baptism offering forgiveness. It’s a tool, means, package, pipe, by which God’s grace in Christ flows to us for our salvation. Apart from Christ’s work and promise, baptism would just be plain water.

Day Five: When Jesus commands his people to baptize others to make them disciples – this is the first thing he tells us to do in making disciples – we recognize baptism to be more than just water because of the words we are told to say accompanying baptism: We are to say, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” What do you think it means to be baptized into the name of something, especially God’s own name – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? (Again, be sure to refer to the passage and accompanying illustration below for a clear answer after discussing.)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:26-27).

ILLUSTRATION: Traditionally, when a woman marries, she takes on a new name signifying that she has joined another family – one that her husband and she are making with the husband’s last name. She has been “married in or into the name of...” Something similar is going on with baptism. When one is baptized into the name of the Triune God, they now are part of a new family. They are made a son or daughter of God, and now their old family name of sin and death is no longer their identity/family name. That’s a good thing! So, receiving God’s family name at baptism means you are adopted into the family of God. Therefore, we recognize that “baptized into the name of” means we’re baptized into the family of and inheritance of all that belongs to God such as eternal life, peace, light, joy, love...

Day Six: Must one be baptized in order to be saved, since from the Scriptures we see that through baptism we are brought into the family of God? Is baptism necessary for salvation, in other words? (Hint: After discussion, see the passage and accompanying explanation.)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

TRUTH: Baptism is necessary in as much as it gifts a person with faith or an increase of faith in Jesus. But, as Mark 16:16 points out, it is faith in Jesus’ work that saves, faith which can be gifted through hearing the word or receiving the word of promise in baptism. It’s faith in Jesus that is key. The criminal on the cross, apparently, wasn’t baptized yet, he was promised heaven through faith in Jesus as were all the Old Testament believers. Baptism is a gift offering Christ, and so we will want to baptize all people and those who believe will want to be baptized.

LORD’S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

HOLY BAPTISM: WEEK TWO

Second: What benefits does Baptism give?

It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

Which are these words and promises of God?

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.” (Mark 16:16)

Day One: What comfort do you believe God wants you to have when you think about your baptism? If you need help sharing the kind of comfort God has in mind, feel free to reflect upon Luther’s explanation above in its individual parts: 1) Forgiveness of sins; 2) Rescue from death and the devil; 3) Eternal salvation...

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “This water (of the flood) symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body (not symbolic/outward cleansing) but the pledge of a good conscience toward God (an inner cleansing of the conscience with forgiveness). It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21).

Day Two: One of the other benefits of baptism is that it not only unites us to God but to all his other children who profess faith in Jesus Christ. Baptism, in other words, brings us into God’s family, the communion of saints, the Holy Christian Church. What benefits do you receive when you recognize that you are part of a family of believers? What are all the things you can do to benefit your brothers and sisters in the faith?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:12-13a).

Day Three: One of the ways the devil assaults us is to keep our sins always before us and he tempts us to believe that because of those sins you could never be forgiven – that God’s Word of forgiveness, though it may apply to others, it doesn’t apply to you in particular because your sin is too great. How does baptism disprove the devil and serve us in a way that the general proclamation of the word may not be able to?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:26-27).

Day Four: We have seen through Scripture that baptism is more than just a ceremony we observe where we dedicate ourselves to God. It’s a sacrament where God works faith in the salvation/forgiveness Christ provided for all those baptized. If this is the case for those baptized, why do you think Jesus was baptized? (Jesus had no sin and no need for forgiveness or being washed clean, yet Jesus declared he was to be baptized, something that took John the Baptizer by surprise.) (See if you can figure that out from the three passages referenced here.)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?” But Jesus answering said to him, “Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he permitted Him (Matthew 3:13-15). “He was numbered with the transgressors for he bore the sin of many” (Isaiah 5:12). “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Day Five: If someone is baptized, are they automatically saved no matter what? (How would you answer something similar: Suppose someone says they were baptized and that they don't need to go to church, read their Bible, or do anything that God proclaims in his word because they are already saved?)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away" (Luke 8:13).

Illustration: Faith is described as a seed which needs to be nourished and needs to grow. When one is baptized they receive the seed of God's Word which turns into faith. And just like all plants, faith needs to be nurtured with more of God's Word or it shrivels up and dies. For those who think they are saved and that this cannot change do not understand the nature of faith or Jesus' warning not to let faith wither and die.

Day Six: What can you and your family do to make sure your faith or that of your family's does not wither away? (Think in terms of things you should do and things you should not do.)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

HOLY BAPTISM: WEEK THREE

Third: How can water do such great things?

Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God's word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three: "He 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." (Titus 3:5-8)

Day One: How would you explain that Baptism is not some magic trick where you pour a little water on someone and boom, they're saved? What gives this water power to bring people to Jesus, to repent, and to put one's faith in Christ's forgiveness?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "My word that proceeds from My mouth will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please, and it will prosper where I send it" (Isaiah 55:11). "He 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" (Titus 3:5-8).

Day Two: We often see pastors baptize people. Does baptism do special things also because of the person baptizing someone, like a pastor or John the Baptist? Can anyone baptize another person or does it have to be a public minister – pastor?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). (In this passage, Jesus is talking to all believers. Anyone can baptize another person as long as it is according to Jesus' word of promise. We have pastors baptize people as a general rule simply because he represents the congregation, God's people.)

Day Three: What if a person falls away from the faith and comes back to trust in Jesus. Do you think such a person needs to be baptized again since they fell away and lost faith?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27).

ILLUSTRATION: Just like someone who rejects the family they were adopted into – rejects their own adoption papers – they do not need to be adopted again when they come back to their loving, forgiving family, so it is with baptism. People who leave the faith, leave the blessings of their baptism, but upon returning in faith, their baptism blessings are restored apart from being rebaptized. Scriptures nowhere speak about being baptized again.

Day Four: What's more important, the day of your physical birth or the day of your baptism? Explain your answer, and check your answer in light of the following passage.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit (John 3:5-6).

Day Five: What if two kids are playing church in the backyard and baptize each other or if there are actors acting out a baptism on tv? Are these examples, true baptisms? Or what about people who are not Christian but have a form of baptism but don't teach that Jesus really saves by grace? (Latter Day Saints – Mormons – and Jehovah's Witnesses are two such groups.) Or what if one doesn't use water or uses rose petals instead? Or what if someone baptizes someone else but doesn't really believe baptism gives the forgiveness of sins Jesus won on the cross? (Talk about these examples. Are these valid baptisms or not?) (Hint: How does the follow passage help us answer these questions?)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12).

ANSWER: (Don't read until the above has been discussed): Everything depends on whether or not God's Word is being followed. Are people being baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit according to Jesus' Word? In the cases of “playing” baptism, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and rose petal baptisms, these are not valid baptisms because none of these abide by Jesus' word and command. The example of one who has no faith baptizing, would be a valid baptize regardless, as long as Jesus' Word is followed. It all comes down to adhering to the Word of God which is the power of baptism.

Day Six: What are different things we can do as individuals and families to celebrate the sacrament of baptism? (A sacrament is something God began, offers forgiveness, and is attached to an earthly element. There are only two sacraments: Baptism and Communion.)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7““You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

HOLY BAPTISM: WEEK FOUR

Fourth

What does such baptizing with water indicate?

It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written?

St. Paul writes in Romans chapter six: “We were therefore buried with Him 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.” (Rom. 6:4)---

Day One: Though Baptism happens only once baptism serves us daily. (No one needs to be rebaptized because baptism is the day God adopted you into his family and those adoption papers cannot be revoked.) Explain how baptism serves us daily according to Luther’s explanation.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “We were therefore buried with Him 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” (Romans 6:4).

Day Two: Some argue that infants should not be baptized because they can’t believe. From the three passages that follow, give three reasons why children should be baptized.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “I was sinful at birth, *sinful from the time my mother conceived me*” (Psalm 51:5). “If anyone causes one of these *little ones (literally “infants”)* who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea” (Matthew 18:6). “Therefore go and make disciples of *all nations*” (Matthew 28:19). (NOTE: Nowhere do the Scriptures forbid baptizing infants or children. Furthermore, nowhere in Scripture does it say that children are not accountable for their sin and automatically go to heaven apart from faith in Christ.)

Day Three: Since children are also in need of the blessings of baptism because they are both sinful and in need of saving, what do you think happens to children who die who are not baptized? What happens to a child who dies in the womb or is miscarried? Is there any comfort that parents can receive in such an instance as this? (This is truly an emotional question, especially for those who have had a child die before being baptized. One is encouraged to offer this question when people are open to discuss. The following passages can give some direction.)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective (James 5:16); Faith comes by hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ (Romans 10:17). As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy (Luke 1:44, recognition of Jesus by John the Baptist in the womb).

Day Four: The reason that some people reject the practice of baptizing infants is over confusion they have about how they came to trust in Jesus. Such people believe that by their own power they chose to believe in Jesus and that children can choose before a certain age because they can’t intellectually comprehend what Jesus has truly done for them. What might you say to someone who believes they chose to follow Jesus, who for lack of a better word, takes some of the credit for his believing?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: No one can say, “Jesus is Lord!” except by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). “You did not choose me, but I chose you” - Jesus (John 15:16).

Day Five: St. Augustine, a church father (Christian leader) from the 4th century once said that God designed things in the physical world to make us think upon spiritual truths. Explain how taking a daily shower or washing our hands or face daily can make us think about and, more important, live out our baptism every day. What thoughts regarding our old self and new self should come to mind?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean" (John 13:10a). Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him, in keeping with the truth that is in Jesus, to put off your former way of life, your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be renewed in the spirit of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:21-24).

Day Six: Is it ever okay to think that since I have been baptized I can sin all I want because God forgives me anyway? Explain why this thinking is wrong and dangerous.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? (Romans 6:1-3). The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23a).

LORD’S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

CONFESSION (MINISTRY OF THE KEYS): WEEK ONE

What is Confession?

Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.

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 which we know and feel in our hearts.

Which are these?

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds? Have you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm?

Day One: How do people often treat each other when there is disagreement, sin, or hurt between them? What would God have us do?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. (Genesis 4:6-8)

Day Two: What should you do when someone sins against you and there's hurt between you and someone else? (Explain why what God commands in this regard is the healthiest thing anyone in a relationship can do for another.)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 18:15-18)

Day Three: Sometimes in dealing with hurt from another, people say, "Don't worry about it." Or, they say, "It's okay. You didn't mean it." Or, they might say, "Hey, everybody makes mistakes." Though these are encouraging words, they fall short of what God would have us say to each other - "I sinned" and in response, "I forgive you." Why is it important to call out sin – even unintentional sins – as damning and in need of forgiveness, just as much as intentional and premeditated sins?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Pursue peace with all men, as well as holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. Be careful that no one falls short of the grace of God, so that no root of bitterness will spring up to cause trouble and defile many (Hebrews 12:14-15).

Day Four: When parents have to deal with the sin of a child, what approach should they take? (Answer: Parents should follow God's example. They should point out sin gently and forgive first. Then, discipline in love – point out the consequences – not anger. See Genesis 3:1-18)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His loving devotion for those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him (Psalm 103:11-13). “My son, do not take lightly the discipline of the Lord, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you. For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastises everyone He receives as a son.” (Hebrews 12:5-6).

Day Five: It may seem loving to just let someone’s sin go in their life and think, “I shouldn’t point out what they are doing because it’s none of my business... Besides I sin too...” Explain why it is important for sin to be dealt with, pointed out, and forgiven?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy (Proverbs 28:13); When I say to a wicked person, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn them or speak out to dissuade them from their evil ways in order to save their life, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood (Ezekiel 3:18). Discipline your children, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to their death (Proverbs 19:18).

Day Six: Sometimes it may feel like we could never forgive someone for what they have done to us. If we should ever feel that way, we should think about how much God has forgiven us and that we have sinned against him more than anyone could ever sin against us. Why will this help us forgive others no matter what they do?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold[h] was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. “At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’ “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.” (Matthew 18:21-35)

LORD’S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

A Short Form of Confession: WEEK TWO

Luther intended the following form (revised) to serve only as an example of private confession for Christians. As a family, practice this over the next week and make it your own so that whenever there is sin among you, you can point out that sin in love, and wash it away in your baptisms at the cross.

Day One:

The penitent (the one confessing sin, in particular, a child - son or daughter) says: Dear confessor (*one who hears a confession of sin, in particular, a father or mother*), I ask you please to hear my confession and to pronounce forgiveness in order to fulfill God's will.

I, a poor sinner, plead guilty before God of all sins. In particular I confess before you that as a child, I, sad to say, serve my parents unfaithfully, for in this and that I have not done what I was asked to do. I have made my parents angry and caused them to sin. I have been negligent and allowed damage to be done. I have also been offensive in words and deeds. I have quarreled with my siblings and parents. I have grumbled against my mother and father. I am sorry for all of this and I ask for grace. I want to do better. *Then the confessor shall say:* God be merciful to you and strengthen your faith. Amen. Do you believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness? *The penitent says:* Yes, dear confessor. Let it be done for you as you believe. And I, by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Go in peace.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

Day Two: *A father, mother, or guardian of the house shall say:* I confess before you that I have not faithfully encouraged you, my child(ren) and spouse to the glory of God. There have been times I recall where I have set a bad example by indecent words and deeds. I have hurt you and spoken evil of you. In my role outside the home I have also wronged others and sought only my own interest. *[Let the penitent confess whatever else he has done against God's commandments and his own position. Offenses against one's children are to be shared with them for the response of forgiveness. To other adults, especially one's spouse, all other sins can be recounted for the sake of receiving forgiveness.]*

Then the confessor (child, spouse, or fellow Christian) shall say: God be merciful to you and strengthen your faith. Amen. Do you believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness? *The penitent says:* Yes, dear confessor. Let it be done for you as you believe. And I, by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Go in peace.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Day Three: If someone does not find himself burdened with these or greater sins, he should not trouble himself or search for or invent other sins, and thereby draw out a torturous confession. Instead, he should mention one or two that he knows: In particular I confess that I have cursed; I have used improper words; I have neglected this or that, etc. Let that be enough. But if you know of none at all (which hardly seems possible), then mention none in particular, but receive the forgiveness upon the general confession which you make to God before the confessor. Try this now. *Then the confessor (fellow Christian) shall say:* God be merciful to you and strengthen your faith. Amen. Do you believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness? *The penitent says:* Yes, dear confessor. Let it

be done for you as you believe. And I, by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Go in peace.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven (John 20:23a).

Day Four: Why is it dangerous for someone to be too prideful to confess their sins or to believe they have actually sinned against another person?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?' (Ezekiel 33:11).

Day Five: Why is it dangerous for someone to believe their sin could never be forgiven?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood," he said. "What is that to us?" they replied. "You bear the responsibility." So Judas threw the silver into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself (Matthew 27:4-5).

Day Six: **In the Church, we have what we call the "Office of the Keys?" which we discussed in the previous week. What do you think that means?** (Let those being instructed guess at possibilities. Answer: Office means service. Keys open and lock doors shut. In the Church, Office of the Keys means the service to others to open heaven through the forgiveness of sins granted or to lock heaven by not forgiving those who reject Christ through remaining obstinate in their sin – who refuse to repent.)

Luther's Explanation: The Office of the Keys is that special authority which Christ has given to His church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not repent.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Where is this written? This is what St. John the Evangelist writes in chapter twenty: The Lord 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." (John 20:22–23)

Luther's Further Explanation: What do you believe according to these words? I believe that when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, in particular when they exclude openly unrepentant sinners from the Christian congregation and absolve those who repent of their sins and want to do better, this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself.

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

HOLY SUPPER: WEEK ONE

What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

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

Where is this written?

The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul write: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Day One: What do you think is going on in Holy Communion, the Sacrament of the Altar? Share what you have seen, what you know about it, and what you think God says about it. How important is it and why?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him" (Psalm 34:8).

Day Two: Talk about all the stuff that you need to live in this life? (After you talk about all you can think of, check out Jesus' words below. Think hard about why he said what he did. Explain how this is true. Explain why most people don't think about Jesus' words when it comes to their greatest needs too.)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4).

Day Three: In the previous question, we discussed all that we need to live, and we especially focused on Jesus' thoughts about that. He reminds us of a truth we forget by nature. God's word – God's decrees – alone give us life. Food, water, air, shelter, clothes... aren't enough and eventually fail. Can you point out the daily reminders God made for us, and can you also show how they – food, water, and all earthly necessities – prove daily they are not enough to give us life without end?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "Your fathers ate manna (bread) in the desert and they died. But here is the bread (Jesus – God's Word) that came down from heaven which anyone may eat and not die" (John 6:49-50).

Day Four: Sometimes it may seem that the Lord's Supper at church is just something religious people do. It may even seem solemn, not necessarily joyful. The meal, however, came out of something awesome. It came from a holiday celebration. What do you enjoy about things like Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas celebrations, and 4th of July barbeques? Share with your family. Now consider whether or not the Lord's Supper is supposed to be a meal like those other holiday celebrations.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "Is not the cup of THANKSGIVING for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16a)

Day Five: Discuss a little more today what we began to think about previously. With your family discuss how the Lord's Supper should be joyful like celebrating the 4th of July, INDEPENDENCE DAY. Explain how so. Now explain how celebrating the Lord's Supper should be joyful like celebrating THANKSGIVING for the greatest gift of all. Finally, explain how celebrating the Lord's Supper should be like celebrating CHRISTMAS, the festival of Christ's coming to us. Of course, the other attitude we should have when taking of the Lord's Supper is like that of a patient who is finishing up their last round of chemotherapy, without which there would have been certain death, but now anticipating a perfectly clean bill of health. How so?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "If You, O LORD, kept track of iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with You there is forgiveness, so that You may be feared" (Psalm 130:3-4).

Day Six: The context out of which the Lord's Supper came is really important. It was a holiday meal – 4th of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas rolled into one – that God's people had celebrated for 1,500 years before Jesus was born. It was a celebration of freedom from Egyptian slavery, reason for thanksgiving, and a picture of the greater freedom from sin, death, and the devil which God would bring about in the future. At the center of the holiday meal from which the Lord's Supper came was a lamb, slaughtered, the blood of which was painted over the doors of Israelite households saving all within from the angel of death who was PASSING OVER them to take the firstborn sons of Egypt. (See Exodus 12-14. That was the reason for their first celebration.) Why do you think Jesus took that meal and created the Lord's Supper from that feast of bread, wine, lamb, and other elements?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "Get rid of the old yeast (sinful self), so that you may be a new unleavened batch – as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

HOLY SUPPER: WEEK TWO

What is the benefit of this eating and drinking?

These words, “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,” show us that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

Day One: What do you think is going on in Holy Communion, the Sacrament of the Altar? Share what you have seen, what you know about it, and what you think God says about it. How important is it and why?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Day Two: Some say that the Lord’s Supper is something we do simply because Jesus commanded us to eat and drink this meal in remembrance of him, and that’s all it is. They deny that Jesus is truly there in the Supper giving us the forgiveness of sins. How does the following passage show that the Lord’s Supper is more than just a meal commemorating Jesus’ sacrifice but that he truly is present giving us the price of our salvation, his very body and blood? And how is that truth of his real presence so much more comforting than expressing our love for him?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19b)... “Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Day Three: Some think that drinking alcohol is wrong, and therefore, they use grape juice instead of wine in the Lord’s Supper. To be sure, wine was used in Jesus’ day since there was no refrigeration to keep grape juice from fermenting (turning into wine), especially by the time the Passover celebration came around, the celebration out of which the Lord’s Supper comes. When is the use of alcohol God-pleasing and when is it not? Look to the following Scriptures to guide you. Are there other examples you can think of which pertain to what we call Christian Freedom – things God has neither commanded nor forbidden? (Examples: Playing cards, dancing, tattoos, piercings, smoking...)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon!’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look at this glutton and drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and of sinners!’ (Luke 7:34). So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31). “I have the right to do anything,” you say- but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”--but not everything is constructive. (1 Corinthians 10:24).

Day Four: The bread in the Lord’s Supper was unleavened bread. That means it did not contain yeast which causes bread to rise when baking. It was flat bread, ending up like a cracker. Leaven (yeast), therefore, became symbolic of sin – sinful behavior and false teaching. How does this flatbread, wafer, do a wonderful job of making us think about Jesus’ holy body sacrificed for us? How does the wine also do a wonderful job in making us think of Jesus holy blood? (Both Jesus body and blood are truly present!) Lastly, what does unleavened bread remind us of as we finish with the Lord’s Supper and walk away. (Hint: If God looks for bread without yeast, what does he look for in us, his own body and temple?)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch--as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Corinthians

5:7)... “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Day Five: If Jesus forgives us through his word in the gospel, why do you think he attached that same word of our gospel hope to a piece of bread and a sip of wine in his very body and blood for us to eat and to drink?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16).

ILLUSTRATION: Just as on a wedding day, a bride and groom communicate love to one another through their vows, so too a healthy marriage of husband and wife will daily and regularly communicate that same love throughout their married lives. If husband and wife do not communicate that love regularly, something is obviously wrong. In the same way God communicates to us his love pronounced especially through forgiveness daily in his Word but also tangibly in water (baptism) and in bread and wine (sacrament of the altar).

Day Six: Jesus pictures heaven like it is a wedding reception, like it's a party with a family reunion, an awesome supper, and the celebration of two coming together for a true happily ever after. How can we be sure that the celebration of the Lord's Supper offers all these things: a present and future reality of a family reunion, the perfect meal, and two coming together as one?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “I tell you the truth, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine (wine) from now on until I drink it anew in my Father's kingdom” (Matthew 26:29).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

HOLY SUPPER: WEEK THREE

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?

Certainly not just eating and drinking do these things, but the words written here: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” These words, along with the bodily eating and drinking, are the main thing in the Sacrament. Whoever believes these words has exactly what they say: “forgiveness of sins.”

Day One: Think on this: The church has a practice we regularly observe called the Lord’s Supper. We observe it because through this practice we are given the very body and blood of Jesus through simple bread and wine. In other words, we receive in a way we can touch and handle the very bread of life that came down from heaven. Yes, Jesus gives his entire physical self in a supernatural way which was the very payment of our sins at the cross. Why do you think we truly believe Jesus is miraculously and really present in what we call Holy Communion, the Sacrament of the Altar, when it doesn’t look like that at all?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: As the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Day Two: Some churches teach that Jesus isn’t really in, with, and under the bread and wine because it is impossible according to our human reason. And though it is true that this idea of Jesus being truly present in the Lord’s Supper (Sacrament of the Altar) seems impossible, why do we know that this is possible? Share three things which are impossible, but which God has expressed about himself, has done, or has promised. How might these other examples address our skepticism about Jesus’ real presence in the Lord’s Supper?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “All things are possible with God” (Matthew 19:26b).

Day Three: Why should it not surprise us that God does things that are not according to our ways? Why should it also not surprise us that he is able to do things that we are not able to do? Why should it not surprise us that we can only understand the things of God so much, but that there will most certainly be things we will never be able to comprehend? Can you think of more than just the Lord’s Supper as an example or things from yesterday’s question, if you were able to focus on that?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Day Four: Much like the need for showering regularly and washing our hands reminds us of the greater need to be truly washed by God in Holy Baptism, how might the daily need for food and drink remind us of our need for Christ in the Holy Supper?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” (John 6:51).

Day Five: Though Jesus does not command us how often to take and eat the Lord's Supper, why do you think we would want to do this regularly? What is it about the sacrament that causes us to want to receive this meal as often as possible?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Luther's explanation where he quotes the Gospel writers is helpful in answering this daily question: **Certainly not just eating and drinking do these things, but the words written here: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." These words, along with the bodily eating and drinking, are the main thing in the Sacrament. Whoever believes these words has exactly what they say: "forgiveness of sins."**

Day Six: Even though our sins are already and always forgiven through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we receive the blessings of forgiveness through the Sacrament because our consciences often convict us of sin and the devil uses that conviction to accuse us and condemn us regularly. We, therefore, don't need anymore forgiveness because, again, all sins are forgiven, but understanding our consciences and how the devil accuses us and makes us feel guilty, explain why Jesus commands us to regularly receive forgiveness through the Word and Sacraments and why we most certainly need to receive forgiveness as often as possible.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

HOLY SUPPER: WEEK FOUR

Who receives this sacrament worthily?

Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training. But that person is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."

But anyone who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the words "for you" require all hearts to believe.

Day One: Of all the things God looks for from us, what would you say he desires the most? (Consider the following passages to help you answer those questions, after making some best guesses.)

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart — These, O God, You will not despise." (Psalm 51:16-17)... When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." (Luke 7:9).

Day Two: Since Jesus' body and blood are there in the Supper to bring us the forgiveness of sins, the Apostle Paul attaches a warning to the sacrament. He instructs Christians to prepare to receive the meal so that it is a blessing to us and not a curse. How are we supposed to prepare for reception of the Lord's Supper? What would you tell someone to do in order to receive Holy Communion rightly?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28-29).

Day Three: Since the Lord's Supper offers the very body and blood of Christ to benefit us with the forgiveness of sins, explain why someone should be instructed and understand what they are receiving before they receive it? Not only that, but again, what should their attitude be in receiving the Supper?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: "Anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep (died)" (1 Corinthians 11:29-30).

Day Four: Explain why someone who recognizes that Jesus' body and blood are present should still not go to the Lord's Supper, if they feel like they've been really good and don't really need the forgiveness of sins offered in the Supper. Explain why someone should go to the Supper who believes the body and blood of Jesus are there for forgiveness and also recognize that they are terribly sinful and do not deserve to go.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14)

Day Five: Just like in baptism, the Lord's Supper expresses a unity of fellow believers together into the family of God. Unity is always based on following Jesus – who he is, what he has done, and all that he taught which reflects him and his will. Understanding this, explain why the church also asks that those who attend the Lord's Supper believe the same about Jesus and his teaching? Explain what terrible things would happen to the gift of the Lord's Supper and all of Jesus' teachings, if we did not recognize unity with others based on the acceptance of all of Jesus' teachings.

PASSAGE REFERENCE: “Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf” (1 Corinthians 10:16). “If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother” (2 Thessalonians 3:14).

Day Six: The Lord's Supper is such a humble thing. To human reason, it seems like a mere ceremony just like baptism. In fact, all the ways that God comes to us and saves us whether a humble word spoken from an old book (the gospel) or a person dying on a tool of execution some 2000 years ago – it all seems like foolishness, especially apart from faith. But, this is exactly how God works. God chooses the weak things of the world to humble people who are full of pride and think they don't need God. What other things does God call us to receive, observe, and obey that are all so very humble?

PASSAGE REFERENCE: Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3-4). Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant (Matthew 20:26). After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel that was around Him. (John 13:5).

LORD'S DAY: At church or anywhere else, take note of when this catechetical truth is brought to mind. Strive to share with your family during some point in the day.

APPLICATION: To regularly prepare for the Lord's Supper, be sure to check out Luther's “CHRISTIAN QUESTIONS WITH THEIR ANSWERS (PREPARATION FOR SACRAMENT)”. Hanging a copy on the fridge or placing in a memorable place so that it is readily available prior to communion offerings is a great idea. Feel free to lead your family through this examination every time you are about to worship and receive the Lord's Supper.

CHRISTIAN QUESTIONS WITH THEIR ANSWERS (PREPARATION FOR SACRAMENT)

Prepared by Dr. Martin Luther for those who intend to go to the Sacrament

After confession and instruction in the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the pastor may ask, or Christians may ask themselves these questions:

1. Do you believe that you are a sinner?

Yes, I believe it. I am a sinner.

2. How do you know this?

From the Ten Commandments, which I have not kept.

3. Are you sorry for your sins?

Yes, I am sorry that I have sinned against God.

4. What have you deserved from God because of your sins?

His wrath and displeasure, temporal death, and eternal damnation. See Rom. 6:21, 23.

5. Do you hope to be saved?

Yes, that is my hope.

6. In whom then do you trust?

In my dear Lord Jesus Christ.

7. Who is Christ?

The Son of God, true God and man.

8. How many Gods are there?

Only one, but there are three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

9. What has Christ done for you that you trust in Him?

He died for me and shed His blood for me on the cross for the forgiveness of sins.

10. Did the Father also die for you?

He did not. The Father is God only, as is the Holy Spirit; but the Son is both true God and true man. He died for me and shed His blood for me.

11. How do you know this?

From the holy Gospel, from the words instituting the Sacrament, and by His body and blood given me as a pledge in the Sacrament.

12. What are the words of institution?

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

13. Do you believe, then, that the true body and blood of Christ are in the Sacrament?

Yes, I believe it.

14. What convinces you to believe this?

The word of Christ: Take, eat, this is My body; drink of it, all of you, this is My blood.

15. What should we do when we eat His body and drink His blood, and in this way receive His pledge?

We should remember and proclaim His death and the shedding of His blood, as He taught us: This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.

16. Why should we remember and proclaim His death?

First, so that we may learn to believe that no creature could make satisfaction for our sins. Only Christ, true God and man, could do that. Second, so we may learn to be horrified by our sins, and to regard them as very serious. Third, so we may find joy and comfort in Christ alone, and through faith in Him be saved.

17. What motivated Christ to die and make full payment for your sins?

His great love for His Father and for me and other sinners, as it is written in John 14; Romans 5; Galatians 2; and Ephesians 5.

18. Finally, why do you wish to go to the Sacrament?

That I may learn to believe that Christ, out of great love, died for my sin, and also learn from Him to love God and my neighbor.

19. What should admonish and encourage a Christian to receive the Sacrament frequently?

First, both the command and the promise of Christ the Lord. Second, his own pressing need, because of which the command, encouragement, and promise are given.

20. But what should you do if you are not aware of this need and have no hunger and thirst for the Sacrament?

To such a person no better advice can be given than this: first, he should touch his body to see if he still has flesh and blood. Then he should believe what the Scriptures say of it in Galatians 5 and Romans 7. Second, he should look around to see whether he is still in the world, and remember that there will be no lack of sin and trouble, as the Scriptures say in John 15–16 and in 1 John 2 and 5.

Third, he will certainly have the devil also around him, who with his lying and murdering day and night will let him have no peace, within or without, as the Scriptures picture him in John 8 and 16; 1 Peter 5; Ephesians 6; and 2 Timothy 2.