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Abbreviations Used

AC Augsburg Confession
Ap Apology of the Augsburg Confession
BEC Brief Exhortation to Confession
Ep Epitome of the Formula of Concord
FC Formula of Concord
LC Large Catechism of Martin Luther
LSB Lutheran Service Book
LW Luther’s Works, American Edition
SA Smalcald Articles
SD Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord
Tr Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

Citation Examples

AC XX 4 (Augsburg Confession, Article XX, paragraph 4)
Ap IV 229 (Apology of the AC, Article IV, paragraph 229)
BEC 32 (Brief Exhortation to Confession, paragraph 32)
FC SD X 24 (Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord, Article X, paragraph 24)
FC Ep V 8 (Epitome of the Formula of Concord, Article V, paragraph 8)
LC V 32, 37 (Large Catechism, Part V, paragraphs 32 and 37)
LSB 656 (Lutheran Service Book, hymn 656)
LW 24:89 (Luther’s Works, volume 24, page 89)
SA III I 6 (Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article I, paragraph 6)
Tr 5 (Treatise, paragraph 5)
As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household

The First Commandment
You shall have no other gods.

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

The Second Commandment
You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God 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.

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.
The Fourth Commandment  
Honor your father and your mother.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

The Fifth Commandment  
You shall not murder.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.

The Sixth Commandment  
You shall not commit adultery.

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.

The Seventh Commandment  
You shall not steal.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor’s money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income.

The Eighth Commandment  
You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.
The First Commandment

You shall have no other gods.

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

The Central Thought

All people everywhere are constantly looking for happiness, identity, security, and meaning in life.

Where do people today look to find these things?

Read Luke 12:13–34. Notice the foolishness of the rich man and the reasons Jesus gives for putting our trust in God.

As Christians, we look to the one true God for all that we need. This is the God who created and sustains us, who redeemed us by giving Himself to be crucified for us in the God-man, Jesus, and who sanctifies us through the power of His Holy Spirit. There is no other God.

In what ways does God generously provide me with all that I need for my daily life and my eternal salvation?

A Closer Reading of the Small Catechism

24. What does it mean to have a god?
It means to trust in and rely on something or someone wholeheartedly to help us in times of need and to give us all good things.

59 Isaiah 45:20 They have no knowledge who carry about their wooden idols, and keep on praying to a god that cannot save.

60 Proverbs 11:28 Whoever trusts in his riches will fall.

61 Matthew 10:37 [Jesus said,] “Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”
25. Why does God not want us to have any other gods besides Him?

As our Creator and the only true God, God loves us and knows that only He can provide us with all we need for time and eternity.

62 Isaiah 42:8 I am the LORD; that is My name; My glory I give to no other, nor My praise to carved idols.

63 Matthew 4:10 [Jesus said,] “You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.”

64 Romans 1:22–23 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

65 1 Corinthians 8:4 We know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.”

26. What does God require of us in the First Commandment?

We should fear, love, and trust in Him above all.

66 Psalm 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.

67 Deuteronomy 6:5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

68 Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

27. Should all people fear, love, and trust in God?

Yes. He created all people to live under His care and to trust and rely upon Him. He is the one true God, who reveals Himself in Jesus Christ, the world’s only Savior. There is no other God.

69 Psalm 22:27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You.

70 Acts 17:28–29 “In Him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we are indeed His offspring.” Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or
silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

71 1 Corinthians 8:5–6 For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—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.

28. What does it mean to fear God above all things?
It means to take God seriously as our Creator and Judge. He means what He says when He threatens to punish those who disobey.

72 Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil.
73 Matthew 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Read Psalm 96:4–13, which tells us to fear the only true God, who made all things and will judge the world.

29. What does it mean to love God above all things?
It means that we cherish and adore God more than anything else and gladly devote our lives to Him.

74 Psalm 73:25–26 Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
75 John 14:15 If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

Read Mark 10:17–27, which warns about things that keep us from following God.

30. What does it mean to trust in God above all things?
It means that we rely on God to take care of us and to keep all of His promises to us.

76 Isaiah 30:15 For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of
Israel, “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.”

77 1 Peter 5:6–7 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.

78 Philippians 4:5–6 The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Read Proverbs 3:5–10 and Psalm 115:4; note the various ways that we trust or do not trust God. Our Lord Jesus perfectly trusted His Father in all things (see Luke 23:46).

31. What does it mean to fear, love, and trust in God above all things?

It means that we look to God first and foremost for our well-being, rather than to

A. human achievements such as intellect, technology, or medical advances (Genesis 11:1–9);
B. human goodness or religious devotion (Luke 18:9–14);
C. money and possessions (Luke 18:18–24);
D. pleasures such as food, drink, sex, sports, or entertainment (1 Corinthians 6:12–20);

32. What happens when we trust in these things rather than our Creator?

We confuse God the Creator with His creation and thus break all the other commandments as well.

79 Matthew 6:19, 21 Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. . . . For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Read Exodus 32:1–10; Romans 1:18–25; and Ephesians 5:5.
33. What is the relationship between the First and the other commandments?

We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things, and therefore gladly seek to keep all of His commandments. When we fear, love, and trust other things more than God, we break all the other commandments as well.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Read Deuteronomy 30:19-20 and Proverbs 11:28.

34. Can anyone keep this commandment to fear, love, and trust in God above all things?

No. Jesus Christ alone perfectly kept this and all of God’s commandments for us and in our place. But all who have faith in Him by the power of His Spirit willingly strive to obey these commandments.

Ecclesiastes 7:20 Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

1 John 1:8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Connections and Applications

35. How do we know there is a God?

Reason, nature, and experience all testify to the existence of God.

A. We live in a world that we did not make.
B. All people trust in something to organize their life, seeking meaning and purpose.
C. The universe and all of life is orderly, governed by laws—the “laws of nature.”
D. Humanity shares many common moral ideas.
E. Scientific discoveries increase life’s deepest mysteries; they do not resolve them.

These universal truths and observations are all best explained when we accept that God exists and is the Creator of all things.
Yet, they do not tell us about the gracious nature and character of the true God.

36. Who is the only true God?

The true God reveals Himself in Jesus Christ, crucified and raised from the dead for us. Jesus shows us the Father. The Father and Son give the Holy Spirit, who always points us to Jesus Christ, the Father’s only Son. Thus, the only true God is the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three distinct persons in one divine being (the Holy Trinity).

Read Genesis 1:1–3; Matthew 3:16–17; and John 1:1–3. Note how the three persons of the Trinity are present and active.

83 Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

84 2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

85 Numbers 6:24–26 The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

37. What are some of God’s attributes?

A. God is good (kind, desiring our welfare).

86 Psalm 145:9 The Lord is good to all, and His mercy is over all that He has made.

B. God is gracious (showing undeserved kindness) and merciful (full of compassion).

87 Psalm 116:5 Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; our God is merciful.

C. God is faithful (keeping His promises).

88 2 Timothy 2:13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful—for He cannot deny Himself.
D. God is spirit (a personal being without a body).

89  **John 4:24**  God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

E. God is eternal (without beginning and end).

90  **1 Timothy 1:17**  To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

F. God is immutable (His nature, being, and promises do not change).

91  **Malachi 3:6**  For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.

G. God is almighty, all-powerful (omnipotent).

92  **Matthew 19:26**  But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

H. God is all-knowing (omniscient).

93  **Psalm 139:1–4**  O Lord, You have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, You know it altogether.

I. God is present everywhere (omnipresent).

94  **Jeremiah 23:24**  Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord.

J. God is holy (sinless and hating sin).

95  **Isaiah 6:3**  Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!

K. God is just (fair and impartial).
96  **Deuteronomy 32:4** The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is He.

L. God is love.

97  **1 John 4:8** Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

38. **Read Exodus 20:1–3. Why do the Commandments begin with the words “I am the **Lord** your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt”?**

These words identify Israel’s God. He rescued them from Egypt. The same Redeemer who rescued Israel also rescued us from sin and death, sending His Son to die and rise for us. Read **John 3:16**.

39. **Read Exodus 20:4. What are carved (or graven) images?**

Carved images include artwork, carvings, or other visual depictions that are worshiped as gods or are believed to have spiritual power.

*Note: Since God has become visible in the flesh of Jesus, Christians may rightly use visual depictions to teach biblical truths.*

40. **Read Exodus 20:5. Why does God make these threats and promises?**

God will not tolerate any other gods, for no other “god” can give and sustain our life.

The Large Catechism reminds us how God seeks to draw us to Himself: “I, yes, I, will give you enough and help you out of every need. Only do not let your heart cleave to or rest on any other” (LC I 4).

41. **Do all religions worship the same god?**

No. All religions do not worship the same god.

A. Some religions teach that life includes a spiritual dimension, but they reject the Creator and His salvation in Jesus (for example, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, and also various folk religions). Read **Romans 1:16–25**.
B. Some religions claim to worship the God of Abraham and may even regard the Old Testament as sacred writings, but they reject the triune God by rejecting His salvation in Jesus Christ (for example, Islam and Judaism). Read John 5:19–23, 39–47.

C. Some religions claim to be Christian and hold the Bible sacred, but reject Scripture’s witness that Jesus is the true Son of God, one with the Father, and therefore also deny the doctrine of the Trinity (for example, Mormonism and the Jehovah’s Witnesses). Read John 10:22–30.

D. Some religious practices involve seeking help from supernatural forces rather than God the Creator, who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ (for example, Wicca or satanic arts such as sorcery, superstitions, spirits of the dead, good-luck charms, psychics, Ouija boards, astrology). Read 1 Samuel 28 and note how Saul disobeyed God.

E. Some “religions” or moral philosophies combine elements of the above, idolize humanity, or simply believe in a generic deity (for example, moralistic therapeutic deism, humanism, certain lodges). They reject God’s exclusive revelation of salvation in Jesus Christ alone. Read Psalm 14:1; 53:1.

F. The one true God reveals Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This one true God, in the person of the Son, became flesh in Jesus Christ. There is no other God.

Psalm 1, Hymn (LSB 581, stanzas 1–2)

Prayer: Lord God, author and source of all that is good, give us wisdom to fear Your wrath, strength to love You above all things, and faith to trust in Your promises alone, that by Your grace we may serve You all our days and finally come to inherit Your heavenly kingdom; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.
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.

The Central Thought

When we trust God with our hearts, we use our lips to call upon Him as our Creator and Redeemer.

How is God’s name used today? How does this reflect and affect the way people think about God?

Read Luke 1:39–56. What inspired Mary to praise God’s name?

As Christians, we treasure and honor God’s name with our prayers, praise, and witness.

How can I show that God is my Creator and Redeemer by the way I speak and in my daily conversations with others?

A Closer Reading of the Small Catechism

42. What is God’s name?

God Himself reveals His name to us in Scripture.

A. In the Old Testament, God reveals His personal name: Yahweh (“I am”).

98 Exodus 3:13–15 Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The LORD [Yahweh], the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God
of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”

B. In the incarnation, God reveals the fullness of His grace with a new personal name: Jesus, which means “Yahweh saves.” Christians also confess, “Jesus is Lord,” meaning Jesus is Yahweh in human flesh.

99 Matthew 1:21 You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.
100 1 Corinthians 12:3 No one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.
101 Philippians 2:10–11 So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Note: In confessing Jesus Christ as Lord, we confess that Jesus is Yahweh, namely, the one true God, the God of the Old and New Testaments, come in our human flesh. See also Romans 10:13, as it quotes Joel 2:32.

43. For what purpose did God reveal His name to us?

God gave us His name so that we might
A. know who created and redeemed us;

102 Psalm 9:16 The Lord has made Himself known; He has executed judgment; the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands.
103 Isaiah 44:24 Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: “I am the Lord, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by Myself.”
104 Exodus 20:2 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

B. call upon Him personally as children do a father;

105 Genesis 4:26 At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord.
106  **Luke 11:2** [Jesus] said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be Your name.’”

C. proclaim His name among all peoples.

107  **Isaiah 12:4** And you will say in that day: “Give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name, make known His deeds among the peoples, proclaim that His name is exalted.”

108  **Matthew 28:19–20** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

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**44. How do we fear and love God in keeping the Second Commandment?**

First, we fear and love God by not using His name

A. to swear thoughtlessly or meaninglessly (in vain) or as a “curse” word;

109  **Exodus 20:7** For the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

B. to try to manipulate God for our purposes in sorcery, as a magic charm, or to curse others;

110  **James 3:8–10** No human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

Read **Acts 19:11–20**: the Sons of Sceva used Jesus’ name superstitiously as a magical formula. In **Luke 9:51–55**, Jesus rebuked the disciples’ desire to curse a village so God would punish it; and in **Acts 23:12–15**, the chief priests swore an oath to kill the apostle Paul. Read **Deuteronomy 18:10–12**: God’s people do not cast spells, call up spirits, tell fortunes, consult the dead, or engage in other occult practices.
C. to lie to others or deceive them by speaking or teaching falsely about God.

111 Matthew 7:21 Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.

112 Jeremiah 23:31–32 Behold, I am against the prophets, declares the Lord, who use their tongues and declare, “declares the Lord.” Behold, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, declares the Lord, and who tell them and lead My people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or charge them. So they do not profit this people at all, declares the Lord.

Read Matthew 26:69–74: Peter swore that he did not know Jesus (also Leviticus 19:12; Matthew 5:33–37).

Second, we fear and love God by using His name to
A. seek from Him all good things for ourselves and others;

113 John 16:23 In that day you will ask nothing of Me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to you.

114 1 Timothy 2:1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.

Luke 11:1–4 tells how our Lord regularly called on His Father in prayer and taught His disciples to do the same.

B. call upon Him in times of trouble;

115 Psalm 50:15 Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.

Read Isaiah 36–37, where King Hezekiah prays to God when the overwhelming armies of Assyria are surrounding Jerusalem. See also Matthew 27:38–49, where Jesus calls on God in His darkest hour.

C. acknowledge in thanks and praise that all good things have come from Him alone;
116 **Psalm 150:2** Praise Him for His mighty deeds; praise Him according to His excellent greatness!

117 **Psalm 118:1** Oh give thanks to the **Lord**, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever!


D. speak and teach truthfully about God in accordance with His Word.

118 **Jeremiah 23:28** Let him who has My word speak My word faithfully.

Read **John 17:11–19**; notice the connection between God’s name and truthfully teaching His Word.

### Connections and Applications

**45. What “names” does God have in the Bible?**

The Bible refers to God by various titles (such as God, the Almighty, the Lord, Father, Immanuel, the Most High, Son of God, Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit). The New Testament also reveals that God is rightly named as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (see **Matthew 28:19**, where name is singular). When we pray in Jesus’ name, we are calling upon the God who made all things (read **John 14:13–14**). This commandment applies to our use of all such terms.

**Note:** In the Old Testament, God primarily used His personal name—Yahweh. (“Jehovah” is a misrepresentation of Yahweh.) By New Testament times, the name Yahweh was no longer spoken aloud. When the Bible was read, the word Adonai (“Lord”) was substituted for Yahweh. This tradition continues in English Bibles that substitute “LORD” (with small capitals) for the name Yahweh.

**46. What does God say about vulgar or coarse language?**

God calls His people to use wholesome speech (see also the Sixth and Eighth Commandments).
119 **Ephesians 5:4** Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.

120 **Matthew 15:11** It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.

### 47. Does God forbid us to swear oaths in His name?

We are to speak the truth at all times in our daily life and discourse (**Ephesians 4:25**), without having to “swear” by God’s name (or by anything else). Jesus says, “Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil” (**Matthew 5:37**).

A. Swearing by God’s name is wrong whenever it is done falsely, thoughtlessly, in order to boast, or in any other sinful, uncertain, trivial matter.

B. An oath sometimes honors and glorifies God or serves our neighbor. Examples include swearing to tell the truth in court or marriage vows, where we assure our neighbor that we are accountable to God to tell the truth and keep our promises.

121 **Leviticus 19:12** You shall not swear by My name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.

122 **Numbers 30:2** If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

123 **Romans 13:1** Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

*Note:* Jephthah swore thoughtlessly and sinfully (**Judges 11:30–40**). Jesus testified under oath that He was the Messiah (**Mark 14:60–62**). Paul called on God to witness the truthfulness of his testimony (**Romans 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:23; and Galatians 1:20**).
Psalm 135, Hymn (LSB 581, stanza 3)

Prayer: Holy Father, purify our lips from every misuse of Your name by cursing, swearing, superstition, lying, or deception. Open our mouths to reverence Your holy name, calling upon it in every time of trouble, praying for what You promise to give, praising You for Your glory, and giving thanks to You as the giver of every good and perfect gift; this we ask in the name that gives us access to You, the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.