LUTHER’S SMALL CATECHISM WITH EXPLANATION VISUAL EDITION

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE • SAINT LOUIS
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In 1517, when Luther posted on the Castle Church in Wittenberg his Ninety-Five Theses, or call for discussion on how one is saved, he began a movement that continues to change the world, even five hundred years later. Luther helped believers in small Wittenberg, in Germany, in Europe, and eventually, on every continent to remember and to be confident in the Gospel’s promise of forgiveness, life, and salvation graciously given through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These timeless truths of God’s Word stood stronger than hostile human authorities, the fallen world’s threats, and Satan’s wiles and rage.

It is worth asking how this Reformation message reached the world that it came to shape in so many ways. It is no exaggeration to suggest that the single most important reason Luther’s message prospered is the Small Catechism. First published in 1529, Luther’s Small Catechism contains fewer than three thousand words (in German). It condenses the biblical story and message and provides succinct meanings for the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and passages about Baptism and the Lord’s Supper (with Confession).

This little document, the Small Catechism, has been a powerful tool for a task the Church has engaged in since the Day of Pentecost—teaching the Christian faith to new believers and children. Luther composed it because he discovered an appalling ignorance about Christian faith and life in Germany—baptized Christians with “no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine” (Luther’s Preface to the Small Catechism). It served the purpose of providing basic, crucial knowledge of the Christian faith for those first users. It has continued ever since as a tool that teaches what God forbids and what He commands (the Ten Commandments);
who He is and what He has done for the world (the Creed); how we may and should seek His richest blessings for our lives (the Lord’s Prayer); how He has made us His own (Baptism); and how He sustains and nurtures us in repentant faith and in the confidence of His forgiving presence in Christ (Confession and the Sacrament of the Altar).

Through the years and centuries, the Small Catechism has been wonderfully adaptable, serving as a foundation and starting point for learning and growing in the faith. Already in Luther’s lifetime, countless versions were produced—versions that included not only Luther’s text but also additional explanatory material. With the expansion of Christianity beyond Europe into the Americas, Africa, and Asia, the Small Catechism was translated into numerous languages and became perhaps the single most important Lutheran missionary tool for bringing the Gospel to people who knew nothing of it. Already in the 1600s, the Small Catechism was the first book translated into a Native American language in the Americas. In other parts of the world, many Lutheran churches were established with the Small Catechism as the first (and often the only) confessional document—understandably so, as it provided an eminently practical tool for new believers as well as a confessional framework for thinking as a Lutheran Christian.

In the United States, the Small Catechism was part of the layman’s library for Lutheran immigrants alongside the Bible and a hymnbook. In LCMS history, a German edition of Luther’s Small Catechism with explanatory material by Johann Konrad Dietrich (1575–1639) was of great significance. C. F. W. Walther (1811–87) modified Dietrich’s work. Heinrich Christian Schwan (1819–1905) then built on that same heritage. In 1943, the Synod revised the material in response to the needs of its day. In 1991, the Synod revised the explanation section yet again.

LUTHER’S SMALL CATECHISM WITH EXPLANATION, 2017 EDITION

The 2013 Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod recognized that once again it was time to address new questions and circumstances. After receiving feedback from a lengthy period of research, discussion, and field testing, a new edition was released in 2017. Only the Explanation has been revised, not the actual Small Catechism from Luther himself. (The translation of Luther’s texts has not changed from the 1991 edition.) Resolution 3-13A of the 2013 Convention cited as a key reason for the revision the “many changes in the understanding of morals, civil law and natural law in church and society” since the Explanation’s last revision.

Most notable about the 2017 Explanation is an additional layer of structure to help readers both learn and confirm the timeless truths of God’s Word in their daily lives. After each essential section of the catechism (for example, the First Commandment), the new edition includes the following:

- **The Central Thought** summarizes the key point for Christian identity and faith, with a key biblical narrative and questions for reflection and application.
- **A Closer Reading** of the Small Catechism gives specific attention to the pattern and wording in Luther’s text with key supporting Bible passages.
- **Connections and Applications** provides wider application and addresses additional relevant matters, together with further biblical and confessional support.
- **Psalm, Hymn, and Prayer** invite devotional use of that portion of the catechism.
This revision was guided by several goals. The 2017 Explanation seeks to be the following:

- **Basic**: focused on the actual wording of Luther’s Small Catechism and its powerful biblical insights
- **Biblical**: providing both
  - key verses for treasuring in the heart through memorization and
  - memorable narratives for thematic illustrations and further reference
- **Stimulating**: inviting people to use the Small Catechism to not only learn basic truths but also to explore further lifelong study and growth in faith and life
- **Flexible**: usable by adults and children in a variety of settings (for example, pastors can simply use the Central Thought portion in an adult catechetical class and teachers can use the Connections and Applications section to teach apologetics to youth)
- **Devotional**: encouraging the use of the timeless truths of Christian faith for prayer, praise, and further contemplation
- **Responsive**: especially to the questions and concerns raised during the time of the new Explanation’s writing

THE VISUAL EDITION

What you hold in your hand is a new approach to teaching the timeless truths included in Luther’s Small Catechism. Alongside the more “classic” looking edition of the 2017 Explanation, Concordia Publishing House has also produced this highly visual edition. The written content of the Small Catechism and Explanation is the same. The big difference is the open-design approach, including full color for engagement and reference, helpful illustrations and charts, callouts, and iconography to help the reader better navigate and use the new Explanation to its fullest. Our desire is that you will be empowered to use this new visual Explanation more freely at home, on your own, and with others. This edition is divided into three major sections.

- **The Small Catechism** This section, pages 12 to 29, includes the original text of Luther’s Small Catechism. Each part of the Small Catechism is presented on two-page spreads.
- **The Explanation** Within this section, pages 32 to 329, you’ll find the new Explanation content. The colors and overall themes of each chief part match the two-page Small Catechism spread in the opening pages. In addition, we’ve included illustrations and lists to help aid learning. Another helpful feature is the iconography, which will help you better navigate the different kinds of notes for each question. The icons for these notes match the theme below.

  - **READINGS** help point you to additional Bible narratives and passages that illuminate the theme.
  - **NOTES** provide helpful additional information on the question.
  - **ISSUES** provide information that is primarily helpful as you wrestle with and defend important faith issues in culture.
  - **SEE ALSO** notes redirect you to other related sections of the Small Catechism with Explanation.
CONFESSIONS notes denote quotations or references from the Book of Concord or other significant Lutheran writings and may be useful for helping direct you there for further information on a question.

- The Appendix This section, pages 330 to 367, includes a series of essays and lists that relate to the timeless truths included in Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation, including reference material and indexes.

It is our hope that with this visual edition of the Small Catechism you'll find new and exciting ways to engage the timeless truths of the faith. Many blessings as you receive the gifts of God's Word, much like your brothers and sisters in Christ who first learned the words of Luther's Small Catechism nearly five centuries ago.

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)
LUTHER’S SMALL CATECHISM
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 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.

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.

[The text of the commandments is from EX. 20:3, 7, 8, 12–17.]

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.
AS THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY SHOULD TEACH IT IN A SIMPLE WAY TO HIS HOUSEHOLD

THE FIRST ARTICLE—CREATION

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

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

I believe that God 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.

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.

He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil.

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.
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, who 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, 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.

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.

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.

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.
THE LORD’S PRAYER

AS THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY SHOULD TEACH IT IN A SIMPLE WAY TO HIS HOUSEHOLD

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.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours now and forever. Amen.

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.

THE FIRST PETITION
Hallowed be Thy name. Hallowed be Your 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!

THE SECOND PETITION
Thy kingdom come. Your 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.

THE THIRD PETITION
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Your will be done on earth as 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.
THE FOURTH PETITION
Give us this day our daily bread.
Give us today 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.

THE FIFTH PETITION
And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?
We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look 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.

THE SIXTH PETITION
And lead us not into temptation.
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.

THE SEVENTH PETITION
But deliver us from evil.
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.

THE CONCLUSION
For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.* Amen.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours now and forever.* 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.”

*These words were not in Luther’s Small Catechism.
THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM
AS THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY SHOULD TEACH IT IN A SIMPLE WAY TO HIS HOUSEHOLD

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)

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)

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)

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)
CONFESSION

HOW CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE TAUGHT TO CONFESS

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 CONFESSION?
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?

A SHORT FORM OF CONFESSION
[Luther intended the following form to serve only as an example of private confession for Christians of his time. For a contemporary form of individual confession, see Lutheran Service Book, pp. 292–93.]

THE PENITENT SAYS:
Dear confessor, 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 servant, maid, etc., I, sad to say, serve my master unfaithfully, for in this and that I have not done what I was told to do. I have made him angry and caused him to curse. I have been negligent.
and allowed damage to be done. I have also been offensive in words and deeds. I have quarreled with my peers. I have grumbled about the lady of the house and cursed her. I am sorry for all of this and I ask for grace. I want to do better.

**A MASTER OR LADY OF THE HOUSE MAY SAY:**
In particular I confess before you that I have not faithfully guided my children, servants, and wife to the glory of God. I have cursed. I have set a bad example by indecent words and deeds. I have hurt my neighbor and spoken evil of him. I have overcharged, sold inferior merchandise, and given less than was paid for.

[Let the penitent confess whatever else he has done against God's commandments and his own position.]

If, however, 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 make confession a torture. 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.

**THEN THE CONFESSOR SHALL SAY:**
God be merciful to you and strengthen your faith. Amen.

**FURTHERMORE:**
Do you believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness?
Yes, dear confessor.

**THEN LET HIM SAY:**
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.

A confessor will know additional passages with which to comfort and to strengthen the faith of those who have great burdens of conscience or are sorrowful and distressed.

This is intended only as a general form of confession.

**WHAT IS THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS?**
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.

**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)

**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.

*This question may not have been composed by Luther himself but reflects his teaching and was included in editions of the catechism during his lifetime.
THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR
AS THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY SHOULD TEACH IT IN A SIMPLE WAY TO HIS HOUSEHOLD

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.”

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.

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.”

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.
DAILY PRAYERS
HOW THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY SHOULD TEACH HIS HOUSEHOLD TO PRAY MORNING AND EVENING

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.

HOW THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY SHOULD TEACH HIS HOUSEHOLD TO ASK A BLESSING AND RETURN THANKS

ASKING A BLESSING
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.
CERTAIN PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE FOR VARIOUS HOLY ORDERS 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
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

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 wrongdoer. 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

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

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

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 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

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

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.
CHRISTIAN QUESTIONS WITH THEIR ANSWERS*

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.

*The “Christian Questions with Their Answers,” designating Luther as the author, first appeared in an edition of the Small Catechism in 1551.
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 TIMOTHEY 2**.

*Note:* These questions and answers are no child’s play, but are drawn up with great earnestness of purpose by the venerable and devout Dr. Luther for both young and old. Let each one pay attention and consider it a serious matter; for St. Paul writes to the Galatians in chapter six: “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked.”
AN EXPLANATION OF THE SMALL CATECHISM

Designed to help students understand and apply Luther’s Small Catechism, the following Explanation section, like those found in earlier editions, was not written by Dr. Luther. An Explanation section, however, has regularly accompanied editions of Luther’s Small Catechism since the early days of Lutheranism.
1. WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH?

The Christian faith is the confession that Jesus Christ is the world’s only Savior and Redeemer.

1 John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

2 Acts 4:12 There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

3 1 John 5:11–12 This is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Note: Christianity was first called “the Way” (Acts 9:2; 24:14, 22). The term Christian was first used at Antioch (Acts 11:26). This question speaks of the content of the faith that we confess as Christians. Later, we describe the faith by which each individual Christian trusts in Jesus.

2. WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

Jesus is true God and true man in one person. He is the eternal Son of the Father, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary to be our Savior and Lord. This God who became flesh in the person of the Son, Jesus Christ, is the only true God, the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

4 John 17:3 This is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

5 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.

Note: In Matthew 3:13–17, we hear the Father’s voice as He pours out the Holy Spirit on Jesus at His Baptism.

3. WHAT HAS THIS ONE GOD DONE?

God made all things and loves His creation, especially His human creatures. Beginning with our first parents, all humanity has rebelled against Him and fallen into darkness, sin, and death. God the Father sent His only Son into the world to become man and to redeem and save humanity by His death and resurrection. God sent His Spirit so that people might once again be His own through faith in His Son, Jesus, who is the world’s only hope, life, and salvation.

6 Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

7 John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

8 Galatians 4:4–5 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

“The Large Catechism teaches us to say: “I am God’s creature” (LC II 13). Martin Luther uses the term creature frequently in his writings to emphasize the Creator-creature relationship. Creature expresses the Christian understanding that all of life exists because of and under God, the Creator and Lord of life. It also reminds us that as creatures we belong to God, who made us and loves us, and not to ourselves. We depend on Him and are accountable to Him. This is in contrast to the perspective that all of life is the result of a random series of events and the notion that we define our own existence. For these reasons, the term human creature is sometimes used as a synonym for human being or person in this Explanation.”
4. WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

A Christian is someone who, by the power and work of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, believes in and confesses Jesus as Savior and Lord. Through Baptism, a Christian is adopted into the Father’s family, the Church.

9 Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”

10 Romans 10:10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

11 1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

12 1 Corinthians 12:3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

5. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CONFESS JESUS CHRIST AS MY LORD?

To confess Jesus as my Lord means that I trust Him in life and in death as my Savior and my God. His death and resurrection have atoned for all my sins and assured me of my resurrection to eternal life. I am His own and want to live for Him.

13 John 20:28 Thomas answered Him, “My Lord and my God!”

14 Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

15 Romans 10:9, 13 If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. . . . For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”


17 Colossians 2:6–7 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Note: In Romans 10:13, Paul quotes Joel 2:32, thus identifying Jesus as Yahweh (God’s personal name in the Old Testament; see Question 42 below on God’s name).

6. WHERE DO WE LEARN ABOUT JESUS?

God’s truth about Jesus Christ is made known in the Bible and is its central message. We call this truth the Gospel, namely, the promise of the forgiveness of sins for Jesus’ sake.

18 John 5:39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me.

19 John 20:31 But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.

20 2 Timothy 3:15 From childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The Bible gathers together the writings of God’s chosen prophets and apostles over a period of more than a thousand years. Through the Holy Spirit, God Himself gave these writers the thoughts and words they recorded (verbal inspiration), such that the Bible is God’s Word. For this reason, the Scriptures are both infallible (incapable of error) and inerrant (containing no mistakes). Holy Scripture is therefore entirely reliable and gives us everything we need to know and believe for Christian faith and life.

21 Hebrews 1:1–2 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.

22 Ephesians 2:19–20 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone.

23 2 Timothy 3:16–17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

24 2 Peter 1:21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

WHY CAN WE BE CONFIDENT THAT THE BIBLE IS THE AUTHORITY AND INERRANT WORD OF GOD?

In the Gospel, the central message of the Bible, God promises us new life on the basis of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. God’s promises alone create faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself, whom we trust, declares that all the Scriptures are God’s own words, completely dependable in all they teach, and without error.

A. Jesus uses the Old Testament Scriptures as God’s Word. He continually affirms Scripture as authoritative with phrases such as “It is written” and “Have you not read?” (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; 19:4). He assures us that “Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35).

B. Jesus claims the same authority for Himself, saying, for example, “I say to you” (Matthew 5:22, 28, 32), or “Truly, truly, I say” (John 6:47; see also John 5:47), or explicitly claiming His words to be “spirit and life” (John 6:63; see also John 8:31–32).

C. Just as God called and authorized prophets in the Old Testament, put His words in their mouths, and fulfilled their prophecies, so also Jesus called and authorized His apostolic witnesses to speak His Word, guided by His Spirit (Luke 10:16; John 14:26; Acts 1:8; 2 Peter 1:16–21; 1 John 1:1–4).

Note: We believe the Word of God has the power in itself to convince the reader or hearer of its authority. Because it is God’s Word, it is self-authenticating. The Word of God does what it says. Read Isaiah 55:10–11.

DO WE USE HUMAN REASON TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

Yes, but human reason must be used within appropriate limits, as a servant of the text. To understand the Bible’s meaning properly, the guidance of the Holy Spirit is essential.

A. Because Scripture is given in human language, to read and rightly understand what it says, we must humbly use human reason in such matters as context, grammar, and logic.

25 Psalm 119:73 Give me understanding that I may learn Your commandments.

26 Matthew 22:37 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

27 Acts 17:11 They received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

B. Because the Bible is God’s Word and, unlike all other books, is inspired and inerrant, it is wrong to use human reason to question or deny its truthfulness.

28 Romans 3:4 Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, “That You may be justified in Your words, and prevail when You are judged.”
29 2 Corinthians 10:5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

30 Colossians 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

31 2 Timothy 4:3–4 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

32 2 Peter 3:15–16 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

Note: The fact that the Bible is written in human language does not imply fallibility or error. Here, the incarnation guides our thinking. Jesus was true man, without sin, and true God. So also, the Bible is truly human, without error, and truly divine, the very Word of God in the words of men (Hebrews 4:15 and 2 Peter 1:20–21). For this reason, the Bible’s truthfulness should not be questioned or denied (as happens, for example, with historical criticism).

10. WHAT ARE THE TWO GREAT DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE?

Law and Gospel are the two great doctrines of the Bible. We must sharply distinguish between the Law and the Gospel in order to understand the Bible rightly.

33 2 Timothy 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

11. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL?

The Law teaches what we are to do and not to do; the Gospel teaches what God has done, and still does, in Jesus, for our salvation. The Law shows us our sin and the wrath of God; the Gospel shows us our Savior and brings God’s grace and favor.

LAW SHOWS OUR SAVIOR
GOSPEL SHOWS OUR SIN

The Law must be proclaimed to all people, but especially to sinners who refuse to repent; the Gospel must be proclaimed to sinners who are troubled by their sins.

34 Romans 3:20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

35 John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

36 Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Note: See the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord, Article V, for a more complete explanation of Law and Gospel.

12. WHAT IS THE SMALL CATECHISM?

For centuries, Christians have used three important texts as a basic summary for teaching the Christian faith and life: the Ten Commandments, Creed, and Lord’s Prayer. Martin Luther helpfully included biblical passages on Baptism, Confession, and the Lord’s Supper. The Small Catechism, written by Luther in 1529, includes these texts along with brief explanations (see the front of this book). This expanded Explanation section is prepared as a teaching and learning tool.
WHAT ARE THE CENTRAL, OR CHIEF, PARTS OF CHRISTIAN TEACHING AND LIFE?

These six parts of the catechism are the central teachings, or Six Chief Parts of Christian Doctrine:

1. God makes known His will through the Ten Commandments, which summarize how God wants us to love Him and love our neighbor and also reveal our sin and inability to keep God’s Law.

2. The Creed summarizes who God is and what He has done for the world: creating and preserving all things out of fatherly love; redeeming the world in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and calling and gathering believers into the Church by the Holy Spirit.

3. In the Lord’s Prayer (or the Our Father), God the Son teaches Christians how to pray as God’s own dear children, confident that what we are praying pleases Him and is for our good.

4. Scripture teaches us that in Holy Baptism, we are cleansed from our sins and belong to the one true God, Father, Son, and Spirit, whom we trust for life and salvation.

5. As God’s believing, baptized children, we still battle against sins of thought, word, and deed. But God graciously has given special authority to His Church on earth to forgive the sins of the penitent and to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant (Office of the Keys and Confession).

6. God welcomes His children to the Sacrament of the Altar (Lord’s Supper), where Christ gives us His body to eat and His blood to drink with the bread and wine for the forgiveness of our sins and to strengthen our faith.

WHAT IS CONFIRMATION?

Confirmation is a public rite of the church preceded by a period of instruction in which baptized Christians learn about the confession, life, and mission of the Christian Church.

Note: Prior to admission to the Lord’s Supper, it is necessary to be instructed in the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 11:28). The Rite of Confirmation provides an opportunity for the individual Christian, relying on God’s promise given in Holy Baptism, to make a personal public confession of the faith and a lifelong pledge of fidelity to Christ.
And God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, 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 hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.
“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . .
“Honor your father and your mother, 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.
“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

(Exodus 20:1–3, 7–8, 12–17)
15. WHAT ARE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?

The Ten Commandments are God’s Law, His good and loving will for the lives and well-being of all people.

16. WHAT IS GOD’S WILL FOR OUR LIVES?

God wants us to trust Him above all else, to love Him, and to love our neighbor.

37. 1 Timothy 2:4 [God] desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

38. 1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification.

39. Matthew 22:36–40 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Note: Christians often distinguish the Commandments in two parts—those that pertain to love for God (the first three) and those that pertain to love for the neighbor (the last seven)—and call them the two tablets (or tables) of the Law, since God wrote the Commandments on two stone tablets.

17. HOW DID GOD GIVE HIS LAW TO US?

First, God wrote these instructions upon the heart of every human creature. (All people have a conscience—an inborn sense of right and wrong.)

40. Romans 2:14–16 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

Second, God wrote the Ten Commandments on stone tablets for the people of Israel.

Read about God giving the Ten Commandments to Israel in Exodus 20:1–17; Deuteronomy 5:6–21; and Exodus 34:1, 27–28.

Note: There are different ways of numbering the Ten Commandments. The Bible does not give us numbers for individual commands.

There are other laws in the Old Testament that governed the affairs of state or pertained to the particular forms of religion and liturgy given specifically to Israel. Christians have often distinguished three types of laws in the Old Testament: the moral law, which tells all people their duty toward God and others; the ceremonial law, which regulated the religious practices of Israel; and the political law, which was the “state law” of the Israelites. Only the moral law was and is written on the human heart and continues to apply to all people. People are confused by the Bible and even misuse it when they fail to realize that the Old Testament ceremonies and ceremonial law (which applied to Israel and can be hard to comprehend) do not apply to Christians, or anyone else, since Christ’s death and resurrection.

Third, God also gave these instructions in various ways throughout the Bible (for example, Exodus 22:21–28; Micah 6:8; Matthew 5:21–48; Romans 12–13; Galatians 5:16–25).

18. HOW DOES GOD USE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS IN OUR LIVES AND THE LIVES OF OTHERS IN THIS WORLD?

God uses His Commandments (the Law) in three ways. We call these the three uses of the Law.

First, for the good of His creation, God uses the Law to limit or prevent coarse outbursts of sin, thereby helping to keep order in the world (a curb).

41. 1 Timothy 1:9–10 The law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine.
**Second,** He uses the Law to reveal and condemn our sin (a mirror).

42 Romans 3:20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

43 Romans 7:7 What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”

44 1 John 1:10 If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

**Third,** He uses the Law to guide and direct our thoughts, words, and deeds as Christians in God-pleasing ways (a guide).

45 Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

46 Proverbs 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life.

**19. WHY IS THE SECOND USE OF THE LAW SO IMPORTANT?**

It shows that we all have sinned and cannot keep God’s commandments, and so it makes known our need for the Gospel of Christ, who is the fulfillment of the Law. The Law always accuses.

47 Romans 3:21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it.

48 Romans 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

49 Galatians 3:13–14 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

**20. WHAT IS SIN?**

Sin is humanity’s fallen condition. We are turned away from God and are unable to look to Him for security, meaning, and righteousness. This inner sinful condition results in actual sins of thought, desire, word, or deed that are contrary to God’s will as summarized in the Ten Commandments.

50 1 John 3:4 Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.

**Note:** Other names for sin as condition or action are debt (Matthew 6:12), disobedience (Romans 5:19), fault (Matthew 18:15), iniquity (Psalm 38:18), lawlessness (1 John 3:4), rebellion (Deuteronomy 13:5), transgression (Psalm 32:5), trespass (Romans 5:17), unbelief (John 3:18), wickedness (Genesis 39:9), and wrongs (Colossians 3:25).

**21. HOW DID SIN ENTER GOD’S GOOD CREATION?**

The devil brought sin into the world by tempting Adam and Eve, who willingly yielded to the temptation.

51 1 John 3:8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

52 Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

**22. HOW DID ADAM AND EVE’S DISOBEDIENCE AFFECT US?**

In Adam and Eve’s sin, the entire human race also fell into sin. We call this original or inherited sin.

53 Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

**Read John 3:6 and Ephesians 4:22.**
23. **HOW DOES ORIGINAL SIN AFFECT EVERY HUMAN CREATURE?**

It means that every person is now born

A. without the ability to fear and love God—we are spiritually blind and dead;

54 1 Corinthians 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Read Romans 8:7 and Ephesians 2:1–3.

B. with an endless desire to sin—we are enemies of God;

55 Genesis 8:21 And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.”

Read Matthew 7:17–20 and Galatians 5:19.

C. deserving God’s temporal and eternal death sentence;

56 Romans 5:12 Therefore just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

57 Ephesians 2:3 [We] were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Read Romans 5:12–19.

D. enslaved in a lifelong sinful condition from which we cannot free ourselves.

58 John 8:34 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.”

*Note: Christians are at the same time saints and sinners who continue to struggle daily against sin.*

Read Romans 7:14–25, where Paul describes this ongoing struggle against sin.
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.

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

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.
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.

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.

80. Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

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.

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

82 1 John 1:8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
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.

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

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

C. God is faithful (keeping His promises).

D. God is spirit (a personal being without a body).

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

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

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

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.

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

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

88 *2 Timothy 2:13* If we are faithless, He remains faithful—for He cannot deny Himself.

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

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

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