

Catechism Study Guide

Ten Commandments

For a more in depth look at the Catechism, you can read Luther's explanation in the Large Catechism found in the Book of Concord or online at <http://bookofconcord.org/lc-3-tencommandments.php>

First Commandment

I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods.

Read Exodus 20:2-6 & Romans 1:19-25, Luke 10:27

1. Can you identify any idols in your life?
2. In what ways are these people/things idols?
3. How does it make you feel to recognize that you might have a number of gods in your life that are not the one true God?
4. Martin Luther said that when we fulfill the First Commandment, all the other Commandments are fulfilled: we love God and we love our neighbor. When we break the First Commandment, all the other Commandments fall, too. Discuss why it is you think Luther would say such things. Do you agree or disagree with Luther?
5. The words immediately following the First Commandment, in Exodus 20:5, give us more to grapple with when it comes to the First Commandment: "For I the Lord am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me."
 - a. How does this verse make you feel?
 - b. Is God's jealousy (He wants your heart all to himself) a bad thing?
 - c. Does this verse in Exodus seem fair?
 - d. Is there any example in Scripture where God is fair or is he unfair?
 - e. How is God treating you unfairly the same as God forgiving you? Is being forgiven a fair thing or is it something you don't deserve?

Second Commandment

Do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Read Psalm 50:15, Psalm 145:18, Romans 10:13

1. In order to get along with God, to obey the First Commandment, you need to have His name. Why is this the case? See Joel 2:13 and Romans 10:13 for a helpful hint. How do these verses inform what God wants from you?

2. To what extent, if any, have you ever thought of God as a person with a name? How does that shape your understanding of God?
3. Discuss what happens when we attempt to keep God as an idea and when we deal with God the person. Think of it in terms of the difference between asking the question “what?” vs. “who”. Does God want to be known as a thing (what?) or a person (who)? What difference does it make?
4. Have you ever thought of Baptism as the moment in which you are given God’s name? What is that full name of God given to you in Baptism (In the name of...)?
5. Having God’s name establishes a personal relationship with God, you have God’s “calling card” when you have His name. Discuss some of the things people might experience or anticipate, both positively and negatively, as the result of such a personal relationship.
6. Exodus 20:7 says ““For the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.” Discuss why you think God is concerned about our proper use of His name, and how that relates to our ability to call on Him in good times and in bad times.
7. What happens when you try to change God’s name to something God did not give you to call upon?

Third Commandment
Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.

Read Exodus 20:11, Mark 2:26-28, Luke 10:38-42

1. Martin Luther wrote that God did not give the Ten Commandments for Christians to observe (See Luther’s Large Catechism). They were specifically given to the people of Israel through Moses. Does this surprise you? Is it something you’ve thought about or heard before?
2. As you think about this, think about who it is that determines a Christian’s relationship with God. Does Moses dictate a Christian’s relationship with God?
3. If the Commandments weren’t given for Christians to observe, and so they do not affect our standing before God (our righteousness) why do you think Christians learn them? In other words, what are they good for?
4. List the variety of ways you have understood, or you know others have understood, what is meant by “hallow the day of rest?” Which of these understandings make you feel burdened and which offer you freedom?
5. What do you think of when you hear the word “holy?” After watching the video, discuss any differences between your understanding of the word holy and the word holy as it is depicted in Scripture.
6. Reading Luther’s explanation of the Third Commandment in the Small Catechism, how do we “keep holy” the day of rest? Is it kept “holy” by the clothes we wear or the work we do or don’t do? Something else?

7. What role does a pastor/preacher play in keeping the day holy?
8. Read the story of Mary and Martha, Luke 10: 38-42. Discuss how this text helps inform your understanding of the Third Commandment.

Fourth Commandment
You are to honor your father and mother.

Read Exodus 20:12, Ephesians 6:1-4

1. Discuss how it is that it is out of God's love He gives us the command to honor our parents.
2. After watching the video, discuss the difference between honoring and loving someone.
3. Why do you think God would command us to honor our parents, but He doesn't say "love" our parents?
4. Give some examples of concerns people might have with this Commandment. In other words, what are some ways people might say, "But..." or "What about...?"
5. After watching the video, discuss ways to respond to those concerns.
6. In the Large Catechism, Martin Luther wrote that people in all other positions of authority, such as government, police officers, etc.. derive their authority from the authority God gives parents. Talk about how that understanding affects the way you might think about people in those positions.

Fifth Commandment
You are not to kill

Read Exodus 20:13, Matthew 5:21-22, Matthew 25:42-43

1. Jesus "turned up the heat" on this Commandment by making it clear that being angry at someone is breaking it. (Matthew 5:21-22) Why do you think Jesus would say this?
2. Talk about some of the roots of murder and anger. How do those roots relate to the rest of the Commandments?
3. Can you identify ways you might be breaking this Commandment without actually ending someone's physical life?
4. Luther recognized that this Commandment not only tells you what you are not to do, but it also tells you what you are to do. What do you think are some things God wants us to do, based on the Fifth Commandment?
5. Read Matthew 25:42-43. How do you think those verses relate to the Fifth Commandment?
6. Does God make any exceptions in this Commandment? In other words, does He limit the way He wants us to treat others to only our friends?

Sixth Commandment
You are not to commit adultery

Read Genesis 1:28, Matthew 5:27-28, Matthew 15:19

1. The first marriage was established with Adam and Eve. Read Genesis 1:28. How does that affect the way you understand marriage and its purpose?
2. What does the video say is God's main concern in this Commandment?
3. In Matthew 5, Jesus makes it clear that this Commandment doesn't apply only to married people. Read Matthew 5:27-28 and talk about why Jesus would make it clear this Commandment is a lot broader you might think at first.
4. Have you ever thought of adultery as "looking at someone lustfully" as Jesus says? Does that surprise you, make you uncomfortable, something else? Why?
5. How does breaking this Commandment relate to breaking the First Commandment? In other words, what is the relationship between the First and Sixth Commandments?

Seventh Commandment
You shall not steal

Read Matthew 6:25-26, 25:14-30

1. Have you ever thought of God as liking property? Does that make you think any differently about God - or about property? How so?
2. After watching the video, talk about how it is that trust, faith in God, is at the heart of God's command not to steal.
3. Give some examples of stealing that aren't as obvious as a bank robber.
 - a. Can you think of examples where people try to get more from their neighbor than they are willing to give them in return?
 - b. Are all of these examples considered bad in our society?
 - c. Can you think of examples where people try to save their property for themselves because they're afraid for the future?
 - d. Are such practices promoted in our culture?
4. How does the story about the servant who buries his money (Matthew 25:14-30) relate to the Seventh Commandment?
5. How does God want you to use your money and property? Why?

Eighth Commandment
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor

Read Matthew 18:15-17

1. Why do you think God is concerned about protecting your name?
2. List as many examples as you can of the variety of ways we break this Commandment.
3. How does social media impact this Commandment? Talk about some of those impacts.
4. Luther wrote that we are to talk about everything our neighbors do in the most positive way possible. What do you think he meant by that? Give some examples of what that might look like.
5. What does Jesus tell us about how we are to handle it when someone sins against us? (Matt 18:15-17) Talk about how you might do what Jesus is talking about.
6. How do Jesus' words in Matthew 18 relate to the Eighth Commandment?

Ninth & Tenth Commandments You shall not covet

Read Exodus 20:5b-6, Matthew 15:19, Luke 12:13-21

1. Talk about the definition of coveting. Why do you think God would prohibit coveting? In other words, what are we saying about what God is giving us if we are coveting?
2. There is an expression that "we are slaves to what we wish for." How does that expression relate to the Ninth and Tenth Commandments? How does your heart (what you love) relate to what you wish for?
3. How do commercials and advertising relate to these Commandments?
4. When you are coveting something you don't have, how does that make you feel about what you do have?
5. Read Matthew 15:19. When you are coveting, where is your attention and focus? With that in mind, can you see how these verses relate to these Commandments about coveting?
6. What is the relationship between the First Commandment and the Ninth and Tenth Commandments? How does that relate to Exodus 20:5b-6?

Apostles' Creed

First Article

Read Matthew 6:26-30, Genesis 1, Psalm 104, Romans 1

The Apostles' Creed tells you who God is and what He is up to in your life. In the First Article, we confess **"I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth."**

1. How do you think "God as Creator" relates to the First Commandment (Exodus 20:2-5)? In other words, what is God doing for you as your God, your Creator?
2. When you confess God is the Creator - of you and of all things - what role does it leave to you in establishing and sustaining your life? List ways people might misperceive the role they play in their own life, in the lives of others, and in all of creation itself.
3. What reaction do most people have when they know that God provides good things to everyone, including people who are wicked? In what ways does believing the First Commandment (Exodus 20:2-5) change your attitude toward all of God's creatures, even those people you don't like?
4. Two things are certain in this First Article: God created you, and He cares about what He created. Discuss how this relates to God sustaining you as well as His being possessive and jealous when you don't recognize that you have a God. Have you ever considered that your Creator has a jealous side?
5. Throughout the Bible, you know who God is through what God does. List the things God has done and continues to do for you and for all of creation. Read Genesis 1 and identify what God uses to establish creation and what God uses to sustain creation. When you see people and the earth sustained on a daily basis, what else does that tell you?
6. If God creates and sustains by speaking (See Genesis 1 and the miracles of Jesus in the Gospels) what role can you play in God's creative and sustaining work?
7. Discuss how the First Article of the Creed might rub people the wrong way - especially people who like to think they are self-made, or have "pulled themselves up by the bootstraps."

Second Article

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord.

Read Matthew 1:18-25, Matthew 4:1-17, Luke 23:18-49, Luke 24:1-12, Romans 6:1-14, Romans 10:8-10

1. List the variety of ways people think Jesus helps them in their lives. To say it another way, what good does it do to believe in Jesus? Do all of these ways correspond with understanding Jesus as the Lord of their life?
2. When the Apostle Paul says that Jesus saves those who call on His name (Romans 10), what do most people think Jesus is saving you from? Watch the video again. How does the video help to inform your understanding of being saved?
3. Read Genesis 3:1-15 and Matthew 4:1-17. What similarities in those two passages do you find in the way Satan deals with God's word of promise?

4. In Genesis 3:15, God talks about what Jesus will do to Satan. How does this relate to Matthew 4?
5. What does the word "lord" make you think? Can you think of both positive and negative ways people think of the word lord? After watching the video, talk about what it means to have Jesus as Lord.
6. When Jesus died on the cross, He took on your sin and suffered the consequence of your sin, which was death. How does this relate to Jesus being your Lord? In what ways does being resurrected from the dead make him the Lord? How does this give you freedom? (read Romans 6:1-14)

Third Article

I believe in the Holy Spirit, one holy Christian church, the community of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Read Matthew 4:18-22, John 20:19-23, Titus 3:4-7, Romans 8:9-30

1. Talk about what role people think they play in their faith lives. Now look at the way Luther starts his explanation to this Article: "I believe that I cannot, by my own understanding or effort, believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him..." Does Luther's explanation surprise you? Does he leave any wiggle room or options for us to have a role?
2. Who makes you a Christian?
3. What is it that makes you holy? Have you ever thought of yourself as a holy student, parent, child, friend?
4. Think about a time when you've been worried about something. Did you have peace then? How does having faith in God give you peace, according to the video? Can you think of any examples of this in your own life?
5. What role does the Holy Spirit play in your life? (see Romans 8:9-30) What are the first fruits of the Spirit?
6. What does the Holy Spirit contribute to your life? In other words, what happens to you when the Spirit makes you holy and how does this relate to being the person God created you to be?

The Lord's Prayer

Introduction

Our Father who art in heaven

Read Luke 11:1, 9-13 Matthew 6:8, Romans 8:26 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

1. Are you comfortable praying out loud in front of other people? Talk about your response to that question. What makes people nervous or uncomfortable about praying?
2. In which Commandment is God commanding us to pray? Does that make it easier or harder for you when you think about praying?
3. Does knowing Jesus gave us the words to the Lord's Prayer affect the way you feel about praying it?
4. Talk about some of the ways we describe a father. Now talk about what it means when we pray to God the Father. If you want, watch the video again and listen for the difference between fathers here on earth and God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth. Talk about the difference between the two.
5. How is praying the Lord's Prayer "sending it to the right address"? In other words, how is praying the Lord's Prayer fulfilling the First Commandment?

First Petition
Hallowed be your name.

Read Psalm 150, Psalm 46, Ezekiel 36:16-38, Leviticus 22:32-33, Philippians 2:5-11

1. The word hallowed means the same as holy. Holy means something or someone is doing what they are supposed to do.
 - a. What do you think God's name is supposed to do?
 - b. With this in mind, how is it we keep God's name holy?
2. What are some ways we dishonor God's name? It might help to look at the Second Commandment and Luther's explanation in the Small Catechism.
3. Have you ever used God's name to try to gain an advantage for yourself? How? If so, is that keeping God's name holy?
4. In what ways do we tend to lift up our name over God's name? When we do so, are we in harmony with this petition?
5. When you pray this petition, can you expect to receive glory or credit for what you do in this life?

Second Petition
Your Kingdom Come

Read Psalm 66:1-7, Psalm 110, Isaiah 40:1-5, Matthew 13,

1. Watch the video and discuss how it is we are praying against ourselves in this petition. Have you ever thought of prayer as praying against yourself?
2. Think about the word “kingdom.” What are some ways you would define or describe a kingdom? List some of the good things you think of and some of the negative things you think of when you think about being part of a kingdom.
3. Now think about the kingdom of God. What is the kingdom of God? Is it a physical place, something else?
4. In his explanation to this article, Luther wrote that “God’s kingdom comes without our prayer, and yet we pray here that it comes to us.” Talk about what Luther meant with that statement. As you talk about this, think about what the kingdom of God is, and why Jesus would tell us to pray for God’s kingdom to come to us.
5. How is it God’s kingdom comes? Do we do anything to bring God’s kingdom? Another way of thinking about this is to think about who is the “actor” in bringing God’s kingdom, and who is passive?

Third Petition

Your will be done on earth as in heaven

Read Genesis 3, Psalm 91:4. John 6:35-40 & 14:25-29

1. When you pray “Your will be done” whose will are you praying against? In other words, if God’s will is done, what happens to your will?
2. With the discussion of the first question in mind, talk about how it is that “true prayer prays against itself.” Does this affect the way you think about prayer?
3. Watch the video again. What is God’s will for you? Had you thought about God’s will in this way before?
4. When you have doubt about God’s will for you, are you at peace? With that in mind, talk about how praying these words Jesus gave us makes you feel.
5. Can you see how Jesus is being a little sneaky here - by giving you these words to pray, and thus making you pray against yourself?

Fourth Petition

Give us this day our daily bread

Read Luke 12: 24-34, Matthew 6:25-34, Philippians 4:6-7

1. What is daily bread?
2. In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther wrote that “God gives daily bread, even without our prayer...” If that’s true, why do you think Jesus tells us to pray for daily bread? To help think about this question, think about what is happening when you pray; and to whom you are speaking.

3. The rest of the quote from the Small Catechism is "...to all people, though sinful." Does that seem fair to you? If not, have you ever thought of God as an unfair God?
4. Have you heard of the "Prosperity Gospel"? That is the idea that God rewards Christians with material things, with prosperity. Is that what Jesus is telling us in the Lord's Prayer? In other words, is Jesus telling us that we must pray first, in order to receive things from God?
5. When you don't have faith that God is providing you all you need from day to day, and that He will continue to provide you these things, how does that impact the way you live?
6. Watch the video again, and listen for the whirlpool image. Discuss what that whirlpool is, and how praying to God to give you your daily bread helps pull you out of the whirlpool.

Fifth Petition

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

Read Isaiah 1:18 Matthew 6:14-15 & 7:17 & 18:22, 1 John 1:8-9, Acts 3:19, Colossians 1:13-14

1. Talk about the difference between saying, "That's OK" and "You're forgiven" when someone apologizes to you. Which one is easier for you to say? Why do you think that's the case?
2. Watch the video again as it discusses the two ways people react to Jesus' forgiving people. Why do you think people would be offended by Jesus' forgiveness? Think of it this way, in order to be forgiven what must have happened first?
3. Talk about the word "sin" and the way people react to being called "sinner." Is that something you're comfortable with? Why or why not?
4. What happens to you when you don't forgive someone who has hurt you, or sinned against you? How does that affect you?
5. When Jesus says, "...as we forgive those who sin against us" is he telling us we need to forgive others before He will forgive us? Talk about what makes you answer the question the way you answered it.
6. When you have faith in Jesus' forgiving you all your sin, do you think that affects your ability to forgive other people for what they have done to you? If so, how?

Sixth Petition

And lead us not into temptation

Read Genesis 3, Matthew 4:1-11, James 1:13, John 16:33, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Peter 2:9

1. In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther wrote that temptations come from “the devil, the world, and our sinful self.” Talk about some of the temptations of the world and of ourselves.
2. Watch the video and discuss the temptations that come from the devil. To help get you started, look at Genesis 3 and see what the very first words out of the devil’s mouth were.
3. Why do you think the temptations of the devil are actually the sneakiest and most destructive temptations?
4. The video says that “the target of all temptation is the First Commandment.” Talk about that statement and why that is the case. To help you answer, remember the First Commandment is about idolatry, and not having any other gods, or idols, than the one, true God.
 - a. What are some of the idols in your life?
 - b. How do those idols tempt you, or put a wedge between you and God’s promise for you?
5. What is the one, sure way to fight these temptations? Talk about your answer to this question. Who are you focusing on in your answer - you or Jesus?

**Seventh Petition
But deliver us from evil**

Luke 10:19, 1 John 3:7-10, Revelation 21:5

1. Why do you think we don’t talk about the devil much now? What do you think of when you think about the devil?
2. Why do you think Jesus would understand that one of the most effective tools the devil has is making you think he doesn’t exist?
3. What do you think is the main goal of the devil?
4. Talk about some of the ways the devil can achieve his goal.
5. While we know we need to acknowledge the existence of evil, we also don’t want to dwell on it. Why do you think that is the case? What happens to you when you dwell on evil?
6. What is the main tool we have to fight the devil? In other words, where do you need to go when you feel the attacks of the devil - temptation, doubt, and fear?

Doxology and Amen

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Read John 3:3-7, John 18:36, Romans 8:26, James 1:6-7

1. Watch the first part of the video where it talks about the doxology as a confession. What do you think the difference is between a confession and prayer?
2. Talk about how the Lord's Prayer results in a confession that "thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever."
3. Watch the video and write down some of the things "Amen" means. What do they have in common?
4. When we say "Amen" we are saying our prayer is certain. What is our certainty in, or why are we certain?
5. With that certainty in mind, how do you think we should pray? Boldly, timidly, something else? Talk about your answer.
6. Read James 1:6-7. Talk about those verses and how they relate to the entire Lord's Prayer.

Baptism

Read Mark 16:16, Matthew 28:19, Romans 6:1-11, Titus 3:3-8, 1 Peter 3:21

1. Before watching the first video, answer the question, "What is Baptism?"
 - a. Now, watch the first video on Baptism and answer the question, "What is Baptism?"
 - b. Did the video change your answer? If so, how?
2. Read Matthew 28:19. Jesus tells us the name to use when we baptize people. What is that full name? Talk about what that full name of God is, and what it means. Go back and look at the Apostles' Creed if you would like, when talking about this question.
3. What happens in Baptism?
4. After watching the second video on Baptism, talk about how we can use Baptism in our daily lives.
5. After watching the second video on Baptism, talk about who controls your faith, or belief.
6. How does the answer to the question about who controls your faith/belief impact the discussion about Baptism and what is happening in Baptism?
7. What promise is Jesus making to you in your Baptism?

The Lord's Supper

Read Mark 14:22-25, John 19:23, Hebrews 9:15-17, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

1. Martin Luther understood that Jesus was delivering his last will and testament at the Last Supper. With that in mind, and after watching the video, talk about these questions:
 - a. Who is the testator - the person making the will?

- b. Who are the beneficiaries - the people who get what the will-maker is giving?
 - c. What is the estate; in other words, what is Jesus giving His beneficiaries?
- 2. When you receive the Lord's Supper, what are you admitting, or confessing, about yourself?
- 3. When you receive the Lord's Supper, what are you confessing about Jesus, and what He does for you?
- 4. Can you change the words of a will and testament your grandparent makes? With that in mind, should we change the words Jesus gave us to say when we are handing over his estate in the Lord's Supper?
- 5. What do you think might happen when we change the words? What impact could that have on the people hearing the words?
- 6. Watch the video and think about the last section - how Martin Luther responded to Jesus' words, "This is my body.... This is my blood." Talk about why you think Luther was so firm in saying, "Is means is." What happens when we start trying to explain away, or change Jesus' words?