

# The Ten Commandments



**FOUNDATIONS IN FAITH**

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# INTRODUCTION

The Foundations in Faith series is an introduction to the truths of God's Word as presented in Luther's Small Catechism.

## Why Study the Catechism?

In the Early Christian Church, God's people confessed their faith and witnessed to the world in brief creeds. "Jesus is Lord" (1 Corinthians 12:3). "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory" (1 Timothy 3:16). These passages from the New Testament, along with others, gave believers short, concise statements of faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. In time, the Church wrote and adopted new creeds to explain more fully the basics of the Christian faith.

The Church also wrote and adopted catechisms as summaries of the major doctrines of Holy Scripture. At first, catechisms were tools for teachers. With the invention of the printing press, catechisms were printed for pastors, teachers of the faith, and parents to use within the congregation and at home.

Luther's Small Catechism, published in 1529, covers the Six Chief Parts of Christian doctrine. In Luther's words, the catechism "is a short summary and epitome of the entire Holy Scripture" (Large Catechism, Preface). It is a summary and guide for believers, as they learn and reflect on the truths of God's Word.

The Foundations in Faith series explores Luther's Small Catechism in four parts: The Ten Commandments, The Apostles' Creed, The Lord's Prayer, and The Sacraments. The study guides may be used in any order (although the sequence in the catechism is preferred), and are designed as an *introduction* or *refresher* course for congregational or personal use. Ideally, participants will learn how the catechism presents God's Word in a clear, understandable way, in order to bring God's people to faith in Christ and to a daily life shaped and empowered by Word and Sacrament.

May God bless your study of His Word in the catechism!

# 1

## THE FIRST COMMANDMENT AND CONCLUSION TO THE COMMANDMENTS

### Pray Together

My heart is full today.  
I am so grateful for all that God has done for me.  
I cannot see Him, but I can see the works of His hands.  
He is a merciful and loving God.  
He is a righteous and faithful God.  
He is a majestic and powerful God.  
He is a forgiving God.  
He takes me back to His loving heart when I go astray.  
He is in this world today.  
And those who recognize and belong to Him  
are building on foundations that are eternally secure.  
How grateful I am to my God today! Amen.

### Discover

God alone is God. In the Ten Commandments, God forbids all kinds of idolatry—worship of other gods. In Christ, our heavenly Father forgives our sin, and helps us to fear, love, and trust in Him throughout our lives.



# The Catechism

## THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

You shall have no other gods.

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

People fear many things. People love and trust in many different things. The First Commandment confronts us with the main thing: fear, love, and trust in God *above all things*. The only true God is the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Martin Luther notes in the Large Catechism: “The purpose of this commandment is to require true faith and trust of the heart, which settles upon the only true God and clings to Him alone. It is like saying, ‘See to it that you let Me alone be your God, and never seek another.’”

1. What images come to mind in the words *fear* God? *love* God? *trust* God?

2. Idolatry, at root, is placing other things above God. What kind of idols do we make and worship today?

3. Describe what it means to *cling* to God.



## God's Word

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." So Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD." And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you."

But Moses implored the LORD his God and said, "O LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people, whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? (Exodus 32:1-11, 14)

4. In what ways are people today like the people of Israel?

5. Why, from your experience, do people turn to idols?

6. What does the story reveal about God's attitude toward idolatry? toward His people?

God forbids us to have other gods. Whenever we regard people, possessions, status, or achievement as our highest priority in life, we worship idols. Whenever we worship any god other than the true God, we worship idols. Whenever we fear, love, and trust in any part of creation as the main thing, we worship idols.

In Jesus, God forgives our idolatry and gives us His grace and strength to fear, love, and trust in Him in our lives.

- In what ways does faith in Christ enable you to keep the main thing the main thing?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- In what ways does faith in Christ shape everything in your life?

## God's Word

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. . . .

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided." (Genesis 22:1-3, 6-14)

7. Describe your thoughts and feelings about God's test for Abraham.

8. In what ways does Abraham demonstrate his complete trust in God?

9. How does the story of Abraham and Isaac remind you of the heavenly Father's sacrifice of His Son?

By God's grace, we live in faith, forgiven and renewed in Christ, our Savior.

- We fear God above all things as we revere Him, honor Him with our thoughts, words, and actions, and seek to follow our Savior's will.
- We love God above all things as we cling to Him and devote ourselves to His care and service.
- We trust in God above all things as we commit ourselves completely to His goodness in Christ and rely on Him for all our needs.

## The Catechism

### 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." (Exodus 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.

In the Small Catechism, Luther used God's Word in Exodus 20:5–6 as an appendix to the Ten Commandments (The Ten Commandments, "The Close of the Commandments"). The words, originally spoken by God to Moses, contain both "a threatening word and a friendly promise. These are to terrify and warn us. They are also to lead and encourage us to receive and highly value His Word" (LC I 322).

As a jealous God, the heavenly Father hates sin and requires us to obey His commandments. He will not share His glory with idols. And He will punish all who reject and hate Him.

But in Christ, God is compassionate and forgiving. He takes away our sin and guilt and gives us His strength to love and keep His commandments. In His mercy, He blesses us with His good gifts—above all, forgiveness, life, and salvation.

10. In our day some prefer the title The Ten Suggestions. In what ways do people no longer regard the Ten Commandments as serious or important?
11. Jesus alone has fulfilled God’s Law—for us! How does His daily forgiveness help you through failures and hardships in your life?
12. What comfort do you have in knowing that God now invites us to “take in and prize” His commandments as His forgiven children in Christ?

## **A Verse a Day**

**Sunday:** Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.  
(Deuteronomy 6:4)

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

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

**Wednesday:** The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good. (Psalm 14:1)

**Thursday:** For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. (Psalm 96:4)

**Friday:** 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.” (Matthew 22:37)

**Saturday:** Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5–6)



# The Catechism

## 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.

God's name is good. God's name is holy. God's name reveals His identity, His nature, and His attributes.

Rudolph Norden writes in *Day by Day with Jesus*,

Names are important. God has revealed Himself to us by name, not by number. His name is Yahweh, the Lord, the Almighty, God Most High, or, with reference to the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God's name is not just a word tacked on, but it is God Himself as He has revealed Himself. . . . God's name describes God as He is. (p. 177)

The Second Commandment shows that God's name is important: God wants us to use—to speak—His name as He has commanded in His Word.

1. In what ways do people misuse God's name today?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. When have you called on God's name in trouble? in praise and thanksgiving?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. *Jesus* means "Savior." How does knowing Jesus as Savior encourage you to call on God's name in your need?

## God's Word

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the



midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And He said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings. . . .

"Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:1-7, 10-14)

4. What does God reveal about Himself in the burning bush? in the name "I am who I am"?

5. How does Moses recognize that he is unworthy to stand before God? that he is completely dependent on God's mercy?

6. How does God's promise encourage you in the tasks you have?

God's name is holy. We misuse His name when we speak it uselessly or carelessly, and when we

curse—speak evil of God or mock Him;

swear—speak an oath falsely, thoughtlessly, or in trivial matters;

use satanic arts—speak God's name in occult practices (fortune-telling, astrology, magic, etc.);

lie or deceive by His name—speak God's name in false teaching or hypocritically.

Though we have sinned against God in our speaking, thinking, and doing, He offers His rich forgiveness in Christ.

## God's Word

On the way to Jerusalem He was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered a village, He was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When He saw them He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well." (Luke 17:11-19)

7. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" What hardships would the ten lepers have faced in life?

8. Describe the differences between the nine lepers and the one leper.

9. In what ways does Jesus speak to us today, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well"?

Through Christ, we call on God's name in faith, asking His help in our troubles, praising Him for His goodness, and giving thanks for all His blessings.

## The Catechism

### 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.

*Sabbath* means "rest." After He created the heavens and the earth, God rested on the seventh day from all His work. The Scriptures report,

And on the seventh day God finished His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all His work that He had done in creation. (Genesis 2:2-3)

In the Old Testament, the Sabbath was *Saturday*. It was a day of rest and a day devoted to hearing and meditating on God's Word. For the Christian Church, *Sunday* is generally the day of rest and worship. Since Christ rose from the dead on Sunday, His people gather especially on Sunday to hear His Word and rest in His salvation.

10. How have attitudes toward Sunday as *the Lord's Day* changed in your lifetime?

11. How do God's people sin against the Third Commandment?

12. In what ways is the Sabbath rest for the *body*? for the *soul*?

## God's Word

Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing Him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for Him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for Him. After three days they found Him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. And when His parents saw Him, they were astonished. And His mother said to Him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for You in great distress." And He said to them, "Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying that He spoke to them. And He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And His mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2:41–52)

13. How does Jesus demonstrate His obedience to His Father?

14. "In My Father's house." What blessing have you received from worshiping and studying in God's house?

Forgiven in Christ, we cherish God's Word. Our heavenly Father invites us to worship regularly, to hear His Word preached and taught, and to learn of His grace in Jesus.

## **A Verse a Day**

**Sunday:** For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them. (Matthew 18:20)

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

**Tuesday:** And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me. (Psalm 50:15)

**Wednesday:** Six days work shall be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. (Exodus 35:2)

**Thursday:** Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)

**Friday:** So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from His. (Hebrews 4:9–10)

**Saturday:** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

# 3

## THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

### Pray Together

Thank You, God,  
for all these things that reveal Your love.  
Thank You for the heavens that cover us,  
for the earth beneath our feet,  
for the sun in the day and the stars at night,  
for the snow and the rains,  
for the mountains and valleys and trees and flowers.  
Thank You, God,  
for those people who demonstrate Your love.  
Thank You, God,  
for choosing me to be one of Your people,  
for calling me and equipping me to communicate  
Your love to the world around me.  
Thank You, God.

### Discover

By His divine power, God rules His creation. In the Ten Commandments, God forbids us to dishonor His representatives or to reject their authority. In Christ, our heavenly Father forgives our failures and helps us to honor His gifts of authority in our lives.

### Introduction

Most nations today have ambassadors. Envoys of the highest rank, ambassadors *represent* their government—the laws, policies, and customs of their nation—to other nations. As the officer in residence, ambassadors are appointed by presidents and rulers and act with full authority.

- Describe how ambassadors benefit our nation and the world.

- In what sense do ambassadors represent the values and principles of their nation?

## The Catechism

### 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.

Parents and other authorities in our world are God’s representatives. They are gifts from God, who act on His behalf to promote peace, stability, and growth in our homes and communities.

In general, authorities include

home: parents—father, mother, or guardians;

school: teachers and administrators;

work: supervisors and managers;

government: elected and appointed officials; national, state, and local law-enforcement agencies and officers, judges, and designated leaders;

church: pastors, DCEs, deaconesses, and other church workers and leaders who serve Christ and His people.

1. In what ways are parents God’s representatives in their families?
2. Describe *honor*. How is honor toward parents and other authorities *more than* love?
3. What blessings does God give through authority in our community? in our nation? in our world?

## God's Word

And at the end of four years Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed to the LORD, in Hebron. For your servant vowed a vow while I lived at Geshur in Aram, saying, 'If the LORD will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will offer worship to the Lord.'" The king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron. But Absalom sent secret messengers throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then say, 'Absalom is king at Hebron!'" With Absalom went two hundred men from Jerusalem who were invited guests, and they went in their innocence and knew nothing. And while Absalom was offering the sacrifices, he sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city Giloh. And the conspiracy grew strong, and the people with Absalom kept increasing.

And a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom." Then David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee, or else there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Go quickly, lest he overtake us quickly and bring down ruin on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword." And the king's servants said to the king, "Behold, your servants are ready to do whatever my lord the king decides." So the king went out, and all his household after him.

And all the land wept aloud as all the people passed by, and the king crossed the brook Kidron, and all the people passed on toward the wilderness. . . .

But David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered. And all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went. (2 Samuel 15:7–16, 23, 30)

4. In what ways did Absalom dishonor David as his *father*? as his *king*?

5. How does Absalom's rebellion threaten his *family*? the entire *nation*?

6. In what ways does lack of honor and respect for authority undermine public stability?



God forbids us to dishonor His chosen representatives. Dishonor includes despising, not respecting, and angering parents. It also includes disobeying the lawful authority that parents and others have by God's design. When authority is rejected and undermined, we often suffer the consequences—individually and collectively.

## The Family: Foundation

In his book *The Ten Commandments*, Norbert Oesch explains that the family serves as the channel for God's authority. From the family, the law is spread to the whole community.

- What connections do you see between healthy families and healthy communities?
  
- What happens, in your experience, when authority breaks down in homes? in communities?

## God's Word

So Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, "My father and my brothers, with their flocks and herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan. They are now in the land of Goshen." And from among his brothers he took five men and presented them to Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What is your occupation?" And they said to Pharaoh, "Your servants are shepherds, as our fathers were." They said to Pharaoh, "We have come to sojourn in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants' flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. And now, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen." Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is before you. Settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land. Let them settle in the land of Goshen, and if you know any able men among them, put them in charge of my livestock."

Then Joseph brought in Jacob his father and stood him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How many are the days of the years of your life?" And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my sojourning are 130 years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers

in the days of their sojourning.” And Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from the presence of Pharaoh. Then Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father’s household with food, according to the number of their dependents. (Genesis 47:1–12)

7. How did Joseph honor his family, especially his father?

8. In what ways was Joseph’s family blessed in Egypt?

9. In what ways does God provide for and bless His people through unbelievers?

God gives His mercy and strength to His people. Because of His love in Christ, God forgives our sins and enables us to serve Him by honoring His authority.

## Honoring Authority

In his Large Catechism, Martin Luther extends the sphere of God-given authority in our world.

In this commandment belongs a further statement about all kinds of obedience to persons in authority who have to command and to govern. For all authority flows and is born from the authority of parents. . . . So all whom we call “masters” are in the place of parents and must get their power and authority to govern from them. . . .

Yet there is need that this truth about spiritual fatherhood also be taught to the people. For those who want to be Christians are obliged in God’s sight to think them worthy of double honor who minister to their souls [1 Timothy 5:17–18]. They are obligated to deal well with them and provide for them. (LC I 141–142, 161)

10. Why is it difficult to honor government leaders?
11. Describe, as completely as possible, the blessings you have received through good government.
12. In what ways can you show “double honor” to your spiritual leaders—pastors, DCEs, teachers, and other servants of Christ?

## God’s Word

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. (Romans 13:1–7)

13. What does St. Paul reveal about authority in our world?

14. What does it mean to “submit to the authorities”? Why should God’s people submit?

15. How does God’s mercy in Christ motivate us to accept and forgive leaders for their failures?

In His death and resurrection, Jesus forgives our sins against the Fourth Commandment. He renews us and gives us His strength to honor parents and authorities as *His* representatives and to serve Him as we serve and obey, love and cherish our leaders.

## A Verse a Day

**Sunday:** “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” (Ephesians 6:2–3)

**Monday:** Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. (Proverbs 23:22)

**Tuesday:** Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. (Colossians 3:20)

**Wednesday:** Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work. (Titus 3:1)

**Thursday:** You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:32)

**Friday:** They said, “Caesar’s.” Then He said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Matthew 22:21)

**Saturday:** Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17)

# 4

## THE FIFTH AND SIXTH COMMANDMENTS

### Pray Together

O God,  
in the grace and strength You grant daily,  
I find reason for celebration.  
I asked for security,  
and You encompassed me with love.  
I looked to You for life,  
and You granted me life everlasting.  
I sought for identity,  
and You adopted me as Your child.  
Whatever is of value and worth in my life  
has come through Your rich blessings.  
I find so many reasons for praising You, O God.

### Discover

All life is God's gift. In the Ten Commandments, God forbids us to destroy life and relationships in any way. In Christ, our heavenly Father forgives our failures and unfaithfulness and gives us His strength to live as kind, forgiving, and sexually pure children of God.

### Introduction

*Murder and sex!* In many respects, the phrase is a summary of contemporary novels, films, and theater.

Yet art imitates life. Daily headlines chronicle the violence in our communities. Newscasts report sexual scandals and stories of abuse. Though art imitates life, life also creates art.

- In what ways has violence affected your community?
- “Sex. In America an obsession” (Marlene Dietrich). Agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

## The Catechism

### 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.

Most people agree: murder is morally wrong. Yet murder is more than drive-by shootings and premeditated killings. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches that murderous acts and intentions all flow from sinful human hearts (Matthew 5:21–22; see also Matthew 15:15–20). In the commandment “You shall not murder,” then, God forbids

- taking of human life in all forms: homicide, manslaughter, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide;
- any words and actions that physically harm other people, as well as anything that shortens or makes their life bitter;
- constant and deep-seated anger and hatred in our hearts toward other people.

1. What recent headlines in the news relate to the Fifth Commandment?
2. In what ways is hurting or harming another human being an offense to God the Creator?
3. Describe how God’s people can “help and support” each other in our physical needs.

## God's Word

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, You have driven me today away from the ground, and from Your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. (Genesis 4:1-16)

4. What motivated Cain to kill his brother?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. "Am I my brother's keeper?" In what ways is Cain's response a universal human excuse?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How does God demonstrate His grace in the account of Cain and Abel?



Murder is wrong! Murder, in all its forms, is an affront—a sin—against the God who created life. From gang revenge to killing the unborn or the elderly, murder is forbidden in God’s holy Word. Moreover, God forbids us to hurt or harm our neighbor through our attitudes and behavior.

No one has kept the Fifth Commandment—except Jesus. In His ministry, Jesus demonstrated the kindness and compassion of God to all people. Though innocent, He was killed—murdered on the cross—for our forgiveness and life.

## God’s Word

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.” (Luke 10:29–37)

7. In what ways did the priest and Levite “hurt and harm” the beaten man?

8. How did the Samaritan “help and support” the beaten man?

9. How does the “Good Samaritan” remind you of Jesus?

“Go and do likewise.” On our own, we cannot do what God requires. But in Christ, we want to—and with His strength can—help and support our “neighbors.” We want to, as Rudolph Norden writes in *With Jesus Every Day*,

Because our Savior, Jesus Christ, chose to become involved in our behalf. He did for us in a spiritual way what the Good Samaritan did for his victim: He took proper measures to heal us from the wounds of sin, save us from death, and make us well. We cannot repay Jesus for this, but we can show our thankfulness by helping others in need. (p. 185)

## The Catechism

### 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.

In a time and place of diverse views on sexuality, God’s Word offers trustworthy absolutes. A sexually pure and decent life means

we regard sexuality as God’s good gift to His creation;

we honor marriage—one man and one woman—as instituted and blessed by God;

we engage in acts of sexual intimacy only with our spouse;

we control our sex drive in ways that please God.

10. Is it more difficult today to live a “sexually pure and decent life”? Explain your answer.

11. What temptations do God’s people face in relation to their sexuality?

12. Describe, as completely as possible, love and honor in a marriage relationship.

## God's Word

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man He made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man."

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:18-25)

13. How does God's Word reveal the interdependence of male and female, husband and wife?

14. What blessings has God given to our world through marriage? through singleness?

Adultery, divorce, sexual immorality, and indecency are part of our fallen world. Yet God forgives *all* sexual sin in Christ. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection we have new life; we can, by the power of God's Spirit, avoid temptation and use our sexuality to honor and glorify God.

## A Verse a Day

**Sunday:** Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in Your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. (Psalm 139:16)

**Monday:** Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. (Proverbs 31:8)

**Tuesday:** Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” (Romans 12:19)

**Wednesday:** Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger. (Ephesians 4:26)

**Thursday:** Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. (Hebrews 13:4)

**Friday:** So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. (Matthew 19:6)

**Saturday:** Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)

# 5

## THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH COMMANDMENTS

### Pray Together

My heart bursts with praises to God;  
every fiber of my being reaches out in rejoicing!  
How can I ever forget His many blessings?  
He forgives all my sins;  
He touches my afflictions with healing;  
He snatches me back from the gaping jaws of hell;  
He covers me with concern and love;  
He fulfills my deepest desires and gives me  
meaning for life and purpose for living.  
Whoever and wherever you are,  
lift your hearts in praise to God.

### Discover

God gives us possessions and our reputation. In the Ten Commandments, God forbids us to steal or to give false testimony. In Christ, our heavenly Father forgives our sins against His Word and helps us to live honestly and honorably with all people.

### Introduction

A story from ancient times is told about Diogenes, a Greek philosopher who fashioned himself a “watchdog” of contemporary morals. In a stinging indictment of his fellow citizens, Diogenes began a search, in broad daylight with a lighted lantern, for “honest people.”

He found none.

- In what ways is honesty a rare trait in our world?

- “Honesty is the best policy.” Why is honesty difficult in business? in politics? in our families?

## The Catechism

### 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.

Stealing is common. For some people, stealing is a “minor matter,” an insignificant concern among the many other social problems. “Nobody gets hurt in shoplifting.” “Everybody cheats on taxes.” “The restaurant will never miss the extra 10 dollars.”

In the Seventh Commandment, God forbids every kind of stealing, including robbery, theft, and dishonest ways of acquiring possessions.

1. What specific kinds of actions fall under *stealing*?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What, at root, does stealing reveal about human hearts?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. In what ways can we “improve and protect” our neighbor’s “possessions and income”?

## God’s Word

He entered Jericho and was passing through. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” So he hurried and came down

and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:1–10)

4. What attitudes and feelings would people have held toward Zacchaeus? would Zacchaeus have held toward the people?

5. In what ways does Jesus change Zacchaeus?

6. What does it mean that Jesus came "to seek and to save the lost"?

Through Christ and His strength, we can serve others by respecting and protecting their possessions, by improving and enriching their lives, and by sharing our blessings.

## The Catechism

### 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.

In *Keeping the Faith*, Terry K. Dittmer writes,

The Eighth Commandment is about telling the truth. It's about reputations and what we say about other people. . . . The Eighth Commandment is also about how we use language. What we say about someone may ruin their reputation. What we say may also help to build another's reputation. (p. 43)

The Eighth Commandment is about minding our tongue and being careful about what we say about each other.

7. How do false testimony, lies, and slander destroy lives? destroy societies?
  
8. In what ways is the Eighth Commandment important in a positive Christian witness?
  
9. “Explain everything in the kindest way.” What blessings come from putting the “best construction” on actions at work? in our family?

## God’s Word

But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and with his wife’s knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.” When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.

After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.” And she said, “Yes, for so much.” But Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things. (Acts 5:1–11)



10. In what ways did Ananias lie? In what ways did Sapphira lie?

11. How did their false testimony threaten the believers' fellowship in the church?

12. In what ways are honesty and truthfulness vital characteristics of life together in the body of Christ?

God forbids us to tell lies in a court of law, in the workplace, at home, and everywhere. We sin against His will when we speak words that betray someone (break a trust), slander someone, or damage another person's reputation.

Though we are all guilty of breaking the Eighth Commandment, God gives us His grace in Christ. Jesus' death and resurrection are our forgiveness. By the power of His Spirit alive in us, we can

- defend our neighbor from all false allegations;
- speak well of others;
- explain their actions in the best possible way.

## **A Verse a Day**

**Sunday:** “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 7:12)

**Monday:** Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. (Ephesians 4:28)

**Tuesday:** Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. (Hebrews 13:16)

**Wednesday:** Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25)

**Thursday:** Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered. (Proverbs 11:13)

**Friday:** Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven. (Luke 6:37)

**Saturday:** Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

# 6

## THE NINTH AND TENTH COMMANDMENTS

### Pray Together

The Lord is my constant companion.  
There is no need that He cannot fulfill.  
Whether His course for me points  
to the mountaintops of glorious joy  
or to the valleys of human suffering,  
He is by my side.  
He is ever present with me.  
My security is in His promise  
to be near me always  
and in the knowledge  
that He will never let me go.

### Discover

God wants His people to be content. In the Ten Commandments, God forbids us to covet anything that belongs to our neighbor. In Christ, our heavenly Father forgives our sinful desires and actions and enables us to live as His grateful, joyful people.

### Introduction

In many parts of our world and nation, the key word is *simplicity*: simple lifestyles, simple needs and wants, simple pleasures in work and relationships.

“All the loveliest things there be  
Come simply, so, it seems to me.”  
(Edna St. Vincent Millay)

- What do you appreciate about simplicity?

- In your experience, in what ways can simplicity lead to contentment?

## The Catechism

### 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.

In the last two commandments, the word *covet* refers to sinful desires for anyone or anything that “belongs” to another person. *Covetousness* is misdirected desire; it focuses on what is rightfully—morally and legally—not ours. It is, of course, not wrong or sinful to want a new car. It is, however, wrong and sinful to want our neighbor's new car. To covet in our hearts often leads to hurtful actions toward others.

1. “Covetousness is simply craving more of what you have enough of already” (H. Robinson). Agree or disagree? Share your response.

2. The Ninth Commandment centers on property: “your neighbor's house.” In what ways is your home or farm part of who you are?

3. How can we help others to “keep” their house and property?

God forbids us to covet another's property or to make plans to acquire it in an open or deceptive way.

## God's Word

Now Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And after this Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house, and I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money." But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers." And Ahab went into his house vexed and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him, for he had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and would eat no food.

But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, "Why is your spirit so vexed that you eat no food?" And he said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money, or else, if it please you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" And Jezebel his wife said to him, "Do you now govern Israel? Arise and eat bread and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and she sent the letters to the elders and the leaders who lived with Naboth in his city. And she wrote in the letters, "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth at the head of the people. And set two worthless men opposite him, and let them bring a charge against him, saying, 'You have cursed God and the king.' Then take him out and stone him to death." And the men of his city, the elders and the leaders who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them. As it was written in the letters that she had sent to them, they proclaimed a fast and set Naboth at the head of the people. And the two worthless men came in and sat opposite him. And the worthless men brought a charge against Naboth in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king." So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death with stones. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned; he is dead."

As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead." And as soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it. (1 Kings 21:1-16)

4. What are Ahab's and Jezebel's sins? How were their actions the result of sinful desires?
  
5. In what ways did their sins affect Naboth's family? the larger community?
  
6. How does covetousness in our day hurt society as a whole?

A favorite Christian hymn notes:  
We give Thee but Thine own,  
Whate'er the gift may be;  
All that we have is Thine alone,  
A trust, O Lord, from Thee. (LSB 781:1)

Because God gives us all that we have, He calls us to be thankful and to live in contentment. God wants His people to serve others with the gifts He has entrusted to our care.

## The Catechism

### 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.

7. In what ways is coveting like idolatry—putting something else before God?

8. The Tenth Commandment centers on people and livelihood: spouse, workers, farm animals, and so forth. In what ways does family and career define who we are in life?
9. How can we encourage others to be faithful in their relationships and callings?

A Christian teacher once remarked, “Next to faith this is the highest art—to be content with the calling in which God has placed you. I have not learned it yet.”

Because of sin, we are often restless and unsatisfied in life. Yet Christ forgives our sinful desires and deeds. He renews us with His mercy and love. He strengthens us to live in love toward all people.

## God’s Word

And as he was setting out on His journey, a man ran up and knelt before Him and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” And he said to Him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.” And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

And Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” And the disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to Him, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.” (Mark 10:17–27)

10. Describe the man's attitude toward his life and toward his wealth.
11. What does Jesus' response, "Sell all that you have . . . ; and come, follow Me," reveal about God's kingdom?
12. What comfort do you have in knowing all things—including our salvation—are "possible with God"?

Each commandment confronts us with the question, "Have I kept God's Law? Have I obeyed His Word in all my thoughts, my words, and my actions?"

Our answer is a clear no.

God gave His Law for three purposes:

as a curb, to keep order in the world and control flagrant sinfulness;

as a mirror, to enable us to see our sins and failures as well as our need;

as a guide, to show how God intends His forgiven people to live for Him.

The Law, then, points us to Christ, the world's one Savior. Jesus fulfilled God's Law perfectly in His life, and in His death, He suffered the punishment for our disobedience to God's Word. In His resurrection, He defeated sin, death, and Satan and now pours out His forgiveness, life, and salvation through the Gospel.

In Christ alone, we have the power to seek God's will in our lives. Through Christ, God's Word in His commandments is "a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105).



## A Verse a Day

**Sunday:** Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. (Philippians 4:11)

**Monday:** But godliness with contentment is great gain. (1 Timothy 6:6)

**Tuesday:** Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

**Wednesday:** And [Jesus] said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12:15)

**Thursday:** Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. (Colossians 3:5)

**Friday:** Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4)

**Saturday:** Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8)

# LEADERS NOTES

The format for each session is similar. For notes on how to guide participants through the parts of the Study Guide, see session 1.

As you prepare to lead the session,

- read the Study Guide and answer the questions as fully as possible.

As you prepare for your time together

- arrive early to make sure the setting is comfortable;
- greet participants by name;
- introduce participants to one another;
- thank participants for their time and commitment;
- keep in mind that sometimes participants may be reluctant to share their thoughts about some issues. Help participants see that God's solid Word guides us as we apply Law and Gospel to our lives. In Christian love we can discuss difficult issues, even though at times we may differ on how God's Word can be applied to our lives.

# 1

## THE FIRST COMMANDMENT AND THE CONCLUSION TO THE COMMANDMENTS

### **Pray Together**

Use the prayer as you begin the session.

### **Discover**

Read aloud the session theme.

### **Introduction**

Read aloud, or invite a participant to read aloud, the brief introduction to the session. In general, spend 5–10 minutes on the Introduction questions.

Allow participants to write down and share aloud their questions.

- Answers will vary but may include financial security, career, sports, family, etc.
- Answers will vary. Encourage participant discussion.

Read the introductory paragraph on the Ten Commandments as God's Law.

### **The Catechism**

Read the First Commandment and Luther's explanation from the Small Catechism. Read aloud, or invite a volunteer to read aloud, the paragraphs and questions on the meaning of the commandment.

Invite participants to share their responses.

1. Fear is reverence, respect, awe, admiration, and a proper sense of the majesty, glory, and righteousness of God. Love means to cherish, to cling to God, to devote our lives to Him, and to regard God as our dear Father. Trust is faith in the heart, commitment to God as Lord and Savior, and reliance on Him for our needs.

2. Answers may vary but will likely include the responses mentioned in the Introduction under “main thing.”

3. To cling to God is to hold on to His Word, His will, and His ways, to adhere to His message of love and forgiveness in Christ, and to cherish with our whole heart His goodness to us.

## God’s Word

Invite a participant to read aloud this portion from Holy Scripture. Use the questions for reflection and discussion on the text.

4. Encourage participant discussion. People today are like the people of Israel in our natural tendency to idolatry, our quick abandonment of God’s will, our forgetfulness toward God’s goodness and mercy, etc.

5. Answers will vary but may include the sinful desire for new experiences, new “types” of satisfaction, or new patterns of worship.

6. The story of the golden calf reveals God’s contempt for idols and His righteous anger toward idolatry. Yet God is always merciful and seeks to spare and save His people because of His great love in Christ.

Read aloud the paragraphs on idolatry and God’s forgiveness in Jesus. As possible, encourage participants to discuss the bullet questions.

- The main thing for Christians is their relationship to the triune God through Baptism and faith. Allow participants to share how their faith impacts their daily life.
- Encourage responses on how faith in Christ shapes their attitudes, priorities, work habits, etc.

## God’s Word

Invite a participant to read aloud this portion from Holy Scripture. Use the questions for reflection and discussion on the text.

7. Allow participants to express their thoughts and feelings on the remarkable story of Abraham and Isaac. Responses may include fear, brokenness, faith, assurance, or comfort in the midst of death. If time permits, share Hebrews 11:17–19:

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of

offering up his only son, of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

8. Abraham demonstrates his complete trust in God by hearing God’s command, believing God, trusting Him in the midst of an uncertain outcome, and obeying His Word.

9. Allow participants to reflect on the ways that the story reminds us of God’s sacrifice of His Son for the sins of the world. Like Isaac, Jesus goes willingly, at His Father’s desire, to the place of sacrifice. Unlike Isaac, however, Jesus died to win forgiveness, life, and salvation for fallen, sinful human beings.

## The Catechism

Invite a participant to read The Close of the Commandments and Luther’s explanation. Then allow participants to reflect on and answer the questions.

10. Answers will vary, but may refer to opinions that the commandments are no longer binding or relevant for our modern day.

11. Encourage participants to share how Jesus’ forgiveness gives encouragement and strength in the midst of life’s many failures and hardships.

12. Encourage participant responses.

## A Verse a Day

Encourage participants to read and memorize the Bible verse for each day.

# 2 THE SECOND AND THIRD COMMANDMENTS

## Pray Together

Use the prayer as you begin the session.

## Discover

Read aloud the session theme.

## Introduction

Read aloud, or invite a participant to read aloud, the brief introduction to the session.

- Answers will vary but may include that our words tell about our background, priorities, religious beliefs, values, etc.
- Answers will vary. Encourage participant discussion on the ways books, movies, and television shape our identity and behavior.

## The Catechism

Read the Second Commandment and Luther's explanation from the Small Catechism. Read aloud, or invite a volunteer to read aloud, the paragraphs and questions on the meaning of the commandment.

Invite participants to share their responses.

1. Accept participant responses. Answers may include cursing by God's name, profanity, swearing, etc. Encourage participants to identify specific situations where people misuse God's name.

2. Allow participants to share times when they have called on God's name in their times of trouble and times of praise and thanksgiving.

3. Encourage participants to share their encouragement in knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior.

## God's Word

Invite a participant to read aloud this portion from Holy Scripture. Use the questions for reflection and discussion on the text.

4. In the burning bush, God reveals that He is the all-powerful God, the holy and eternal God, who is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is, therefore, the creator of the universe and the Lord who called His people into existence through Abraham. In the name I AM WHO I AM, God reveals Himself as the eternal God, the One from everlasting to everlasting, who is beyond human understanding and strength.

5. Moses took off his shoes in the presence of God and hid his face, because he was overwhelmed by the glory and power of God.

6. Accept participant responses. Like God's promise to Moses, "I will be with you," God speaks His promise to us: "I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20). For our small and large tasks, God gives His grace and strength.

## God's Word

Invite a participant to read aloud this portion from Holy Scripture. Use the questions for reflection and discussion on the text.

7. The lepers would have faced the hardship of physical pain, poverty, isolation, and perhaps public scorn. For these partners in suffering, life was difficult.

8. The nine lepers, although perhaps grateful, have no time or inclination to return to Jesus and express their thanks. The one leper demonstrates his gratitude by returning to Jesus, falling at His feet, and thanking Him.

9. Accept participant responses. Jesus forgives us and, according to His purpose, heals and provides for us so that we may serve Him. Through faith, we receive His blessings of life and salvation.

## The Catechism

Invite a participant to read the Third Commandment and Luther's explanation and the paragraphs on the Sabbath. Then allow participants to reflect on and answer the questions.

10. Allow participants to share how attitudes toward Sunday as the Lord's Day have changed, e.g., in family plans, store hours, more emphasis on recreation, less on rest and worship, etc.

11. God's people sin against the Third Commandment when they neglect worship, refuse to hear and study God's Word, attend church reluctantly, and in general when they fail to recognize God's gifts in the day of worship.

12. A regular day of rest—Sunday—provides our bodies with needed rest. Regularly, weekly worship brings us God's Word and Sacraments to strengthen our faith and draw us closer to our Savior, Jesus Christ.

## God's Word

Invite a participant to read aloud this portion from Holy Scripture. Use the questions for reflection and discussion on the text.

13. Jesus demonstrated His obedience to His Father as He heard God's Word taught in the temple, as He devoted Himself to His Father's ways, and as He modeled His reverence for God's house.

14. Encourage participants to share the joy, peace, and other blessings they have as they gather with friends and fellow believers in weekly worship and study.

## A Verse a Day

Encourage participants to read and memorize the Bible verse for each day.



# 3

## THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

### Pray Together

Use the prayer as you begin the session.

### Discover

Read aloud the session theme.

### Introduction

Read aloud, or invite a participant to read aloud, the brief introduction to the session.

- Answers will vary but may include fostering peace and goodwill among nations, combating international crime, helping trade arrangements, etc.
- Answers will vary. Encourage participant discussion.

### The Catechism

Read the Fourth Commandment and Luther's explanation from the Small Catechism. Read aloud, or invite a volunteer to read aloud, the paragraphs and questions on the meaning of the commandment.

Invite participants to share their responses.

1. Parents are called by God to represent His authority, will, and love in their families. They have been given a sacred trust in children, and God calls them to teach their children His Word.

2. Honor includes respect, esteem, and regard for one's position. Honor is not given on the basis of what one does, but rather

who one is. Honor is more than feelings of affection; it is proper respect for what one represents.

3. Answers will vary, but may include stability, peace, order, prosperity, education, commerce, industry, safe streets, global cooperation, etc.

## God's Word

Invite a participant to read aloud this portion from Holy Scripture. Use the questions for reflection and discussion on the text.

4. Absalom dishonored David as his father by trying to take David's rightful place in the family and by speaking falsely about David. Absalom dishonored David as king by claiming in effect that David was a poor judge and that Absalom would make a better king.

5. Absalom's rebellion threatened to break down David's entire family by creating a crisis in parental authority. The rebellion also threatened the entire nation by creating a crisis in the law and the governance of the people.

6. Lack of honor and respect undermines public stability by creating dissension, gridlock, hatred, and other forms of discord.

## The Family: Foundation

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the paragraph on the family as the channel of God's authority in the world. Then ask participants to reflect on and answer the bullet questions.

- Answers will vary on the connections between healthy families and healthy communities but may include safe, stable neighborhoods, good schools, low crime rates, etc.
- Accept participant responses.

## God's Word

Invite a participant to read aloud this portion from Holy Scripture. Use the questions for reflection and discussion on the text.

7. Joseph honored his father by welcoming him to Egypt and presenting him to Pharaoh—an extraordinary privilege in the ancient world! He also honored his father by showing great kindness to his brothers, his father's sons.

8. Joseph's family was blessed with a good place to live and a livelihood. Joseph arranged the details, but all the blessings came from God.

9. God provides for and blesses His people through unbelievers in good government, technology, medicine, business, agriculture, etc.

## Honoring Authority

Invite a participant to read the paragraphs on authority in the world. Then allow participants to reflect on and answer the questions.

10. Accept participant responses. Answers may include differing political views, differing views on policy, reputations, past actions, etc.

11. Encourage participants to share the blessings they have received through good, stable government.

12. Again, encourage participants to reflect on and suggest ways that they can honor their spiritual leaders, as Luther notes in his Large Catechism.

## God's Word

Invite a participant to read aloud this portion from Holy Scripture. Use the questions for reflection and discussion on the text.

13. Authority is God's gift to the world; all authority exists by His will and establishment. Unlawful rebellion against government is a sin against God's will.

14. To submit is to honor and respect authorities, obey the laws of the land and decisions of the courts, and to live with integrity in our speech and actions. God's people submit in order to honor God and His Word. When nations make laws and rulings that violate or contradict God's Law, God's people are called to obey God, not human authorities.

15. Encourage participants to respond to Christ's forgiveness in our lives and our forgiveness of others, including political and spiritual leaders.

## A Verse a Day

Encourage participants to read and memorize the Bible verse for each day.

# 4 THE FIFTH AND SIXTH COMMANDMENTS

## Pray Together

Use the prayer as you begin the session.

## Discover

Read aloud the session theme.

## Introduction

Read aloud, or invite a participant to read aloud, the brief introduction to the session.

- Answers will vary but may include murder, rape, abuse, and other violent crimes and actions, both in “real life” and in the media.
- Answers may vary. Encourage participant discussion but be sensitive to differing viewpoints.

## The Catechism

Read the Fifth Commandment and Luther’s explanation from the Small Catechism. Read aloud, or invite a volunteer to read aloud, the paragraphs and questions on the meaning of the commandment.

Invite participants to share their responses.

1. Accept participant responses. Answers may—and should be—broader than murder.
2. Any word or action that hurts or harms another person is a sin against God, for God is creator of all and His creatures are called to live in peace with one another. If time permits, share

James 3:9–10: “With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.” God’s Law applies to both our speech and actions.

3. Answers will vary. Encourage participant discussion.

## God’s Word

Invite a participant to read aloud this portion from Holy Scripture. Use the questions for reflection and discussion on the text.

4. Cain was angry at God, at his brother, and likely at himself. His anger blinded him to God’s forgiveness.

5. Accept participant responses. In one sense, all people, by nature, excuse themselves from caring for other human beings.

6. God’s patient and steadfast love offered Cain an opportunity to live and repent. In Christ, God offers His grace to all—even to the worst murderers.

## God’s Word

Invite a participant to read aloud this portion from Holy Scripture. Use the questions for reflection and discussion on the text.

7. The priest and Levite hurt and harmed the beaten man by ignoring and neglecting his needs.

8. The Samaritan, in contrast, helped and supported the beaten man by bandaging his wounds, transporting the man to an inn, and providing for his recovery.

9. The Good Samaritan is a picture of Christ, the compassionate Savior who rescues, heals, and restores His people.

## The Catechism

Invite a participant to read the Sixth Commandment and Luther’s explanation. Then allow participants to reflect on and answer the questions.

10. Accept participant responses. Some may affirm that it is more difficult to live a sexually pure and decent life today because of the many forms of sexuality expressed in media, books, etc.

11. Allow participants to share the temptations they face in life.

12. Encourage participant responses. Answers may include caring words and acts, special gifts at appropriate times, living in forgiveness, affirming each other in front of children and friends, etc.

## God’s Word

Invite a participant to read aloud this portion from Holy Scripture. Use the questions for reflection and discussion on the text.

13. In Genesis, God reveals that male and female, husband and wife, are interdependent, both in their creation and in their purpose in life. Allow participants to explore this beautiful passage.

14. Accept participant responses on both issues. Affirm that God blesses His world and His church through both marriage and singleness.

## **A Verse a Day**

Encourage participants to read and memorize the Bible verse for each day.

# 5

## THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH COMMANDMENTS

### Pray Together

Use the prayer as you begin the session.

### Discover

Read aloud the session theme.

### Introduction

Read aloud, or invite a participant to read aloud, the brief introduction to the session.

- Answers will vary but may include references to the frequent scandals in politics, business, entertainment, as well as the pressures we face to be successful in all situations.
- Answers will vary. Encourage participant discussion.

### The Catechism

Read the Seventh Commandment and Luther's explanation from the Small Catechism. Read aloud, or invite a volunteer to read aloud, the paragraphs and questions on the meaning of the commandment.

Invite participants to share their responses.

1. Allow participants to suggest specific kinds of actions that can be labeled stealing: e.g., embezzlement, fraud, shoplifting, car-jacking, etc.

2. Stealing reveals that human beings are not grateful for what they have; stealing also shows desperation in the heart and the fear that God will not provide for our needs.

3. Accept participant responses.

## God's Word

Invite a participant to read aloud this portion from Holy Scripture. Use the questions for reflection and discussion on the text.

4. Many people would have resented Zacchaeus; as a tax collector, Zacchaeus would likely have intimidated and oppressed many people in his community through his harsh tax requirements. Zacchaeus likely also felt contempt for the “common people,” who were both his victims and his livelihood.

5. In His mercy, Jesus converts Zacchaeus. He brings Zacchaeus to faith in His forgiveness and salvation, and His love breaks down the tax collector's stony heart to respond in acts of gratitude and love toward others.

6. Accept participant responses. Answers will focus on Jesus' ministry, above all His death and resurrection, as our one hope for salvation. Jesus seeks us; we do not seek Him and “save” ourselves. He is the Good Shepherd who returns the wandering sheep to the fold.

## The Catechism

Invite a participant to read the Eighth Commandment and Luther's explanation. Then allow participants to reflect on and answer the questions.

7. Encourage participant discussion. At times, lives are literally destroyed—suicide, wrong executions—by false testimony and lies. In general, society suffers the consequences of unjust and false witness.

8. Allow participants to reflect on and answer the question. Our Christian witness can quickly be damaged when we gossip, spread rumors, lie, and speak untruthfully. Our Christian witness can be strengthened and enhanced when we speak honestly, truthfully, and with integrity.

9. Accept participant responses. Some answers may include living in trust, forgiveness, love, mutual respect, etc.

## God's Word

Invite a participant to read aloud this portion from Holy Scripture. Use the questions for reflection and discussion on the text.

10. Ananias lied when he reported to the apostles that he sold the property for a certain amount, when he in fact sold the property for a higher amount. As Peter says, Ananias was free to use



the money as he wished or to donate the money to the Christian church. As a member of the body of Christ, he was not free, however, to lie to God. Likewise, Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit by participating in the deception.

11. Accept participant responses. The lie threatened the believers' fellowship by undermining mutual trust, accountability, singleness of heart and purpose.

12. Encourage participant responses. The body of Christ lives in the Gospel; it walks in the truth and serves the Savior whose Word affects every part of our life.

## **A Verse a Day**

Encourage participants to read and memorize the Bible verse for each day.

# 6

## THE NINTH AND TENTH COMMANDMENTS

### Pray Together

Use the prayer as you begin the session.

### Discover

Read aloud the session theme.

### Introduction

Read aloud, or invite a participant to read aloud, the brief introduction to the session.

- Answers will vary but may include the freedom from material possessions, from the demands of schedules, from elaborate plans, etc.
- Answers will vary. Encourage participant discussion.

### The Catechism

Read the Ninth Commandment and Luther's explanation from the Small Catechism. Read aloud, or invite a volunteer to read aloud, the paragraphs and questions on the meaning of the commandment.

Invite participants to share their responses.

1. Accept participant responses. At root, covetousness is dissatisfaction with what we already have.
2. Encourage participant responses. Our houses and farms, in fact, mirror our personalities, interests, goals, etc.

3. Allow participants to reflect on the various ways they can help others to “keep” their property.

## God’s Word

Invite a participant to read aloud this portion from Holy Scripture. Use the questions for reflection and discussion on the text.

4. Ahab’s and Jezebel’s sins include, among others, greed, sinful desire (covetousness), false testimony, murder, and stealing.

5. Naboth’s death affected his family deeply. They lost their property and may have been reduced to poverty. The larger community also suffered, because no one was exempt from the king’s sinful desires.

6. Accept participant responses.

## The Catechism

Invite a participant to read the Tenth Commandment and Luther’s explanation. Then allow participants to reflect on and answer the questions.

7. Coveting is, in many respects, idolatry: we put other people and objects above God and the gifts He has given us.

8. Accept participant responses. Our family and career give us a sense of identity, purpose, worth, continuity, etc.

9. Encourage participants to share how God uses His people to encourage others to be faithful in their individual callings.

## God’s Word

Invite a participant to read aloud this portion from Holy Scripture. Use the questions for reflection and discussion on the text.

10. The man was confident of his goodness; he felt a sense of satisfaction about his standing before God and his eternal destiny. The man was also devoted to his wealth; he was unwilling to recognize God’s claim on his life above all other commitments.

11. The kingdom of God is the highest priority in the believer’s life. Jesus’ call to follow Him affects every part of our existence.

12. Accept participant responses. Allow time to share the comfort we have in knowing God’s salvation in Christ.

## A Verse a Day

Encourage participants to read and memorize the Bible verse for each day.