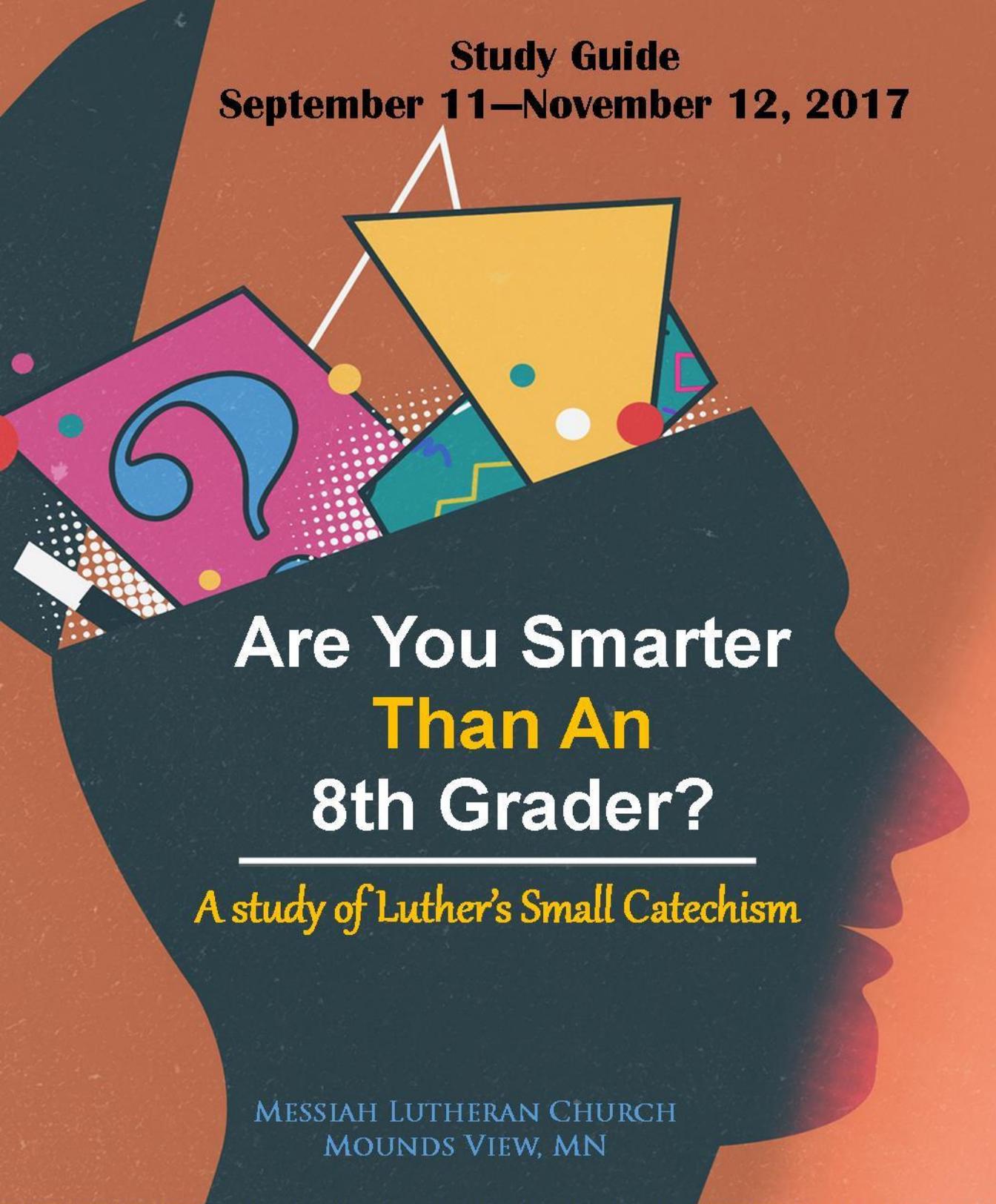


**Study Guide**  
**September 11—November 12, 2017**



**Are You Smarter  
Than An  
8th Grader?**

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*A study of Luther's Small Catechism*

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH  
MOUNDS VIEW, MN

# ARE YOU SMARTER THAN AN 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADER?

MESSIAH'S CATECHISM STUDY GUIDE 2017

## INTRODUCTION

2017 is a special year - it is the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation and this Fall, Messiah is going to be remembering the legacy of the Reformation through a special Fall Sermon Series. Starting on Rally Day (Sep 10<sup>th</sup>), we will kick off a Fall Sermon Series based on Martin Luther's Small Catechism called 'Are You Smarter Than an 8<sup>th</sup> Grader?'

In the church today we often associate Luther's Small Catechism with Confirmation because it's about the only place that we see it openly used. We use Luther's Small Catechism in Confirmation because it does such a good job of summarizing the basic teachings of Christianity. In his 1528 Preface to the Catechism, Luther reminds us that the Catechism "contains the minimum of knowledge that a Christian should have."

Although Luther's Catechism is commonly used by churches and their pastors to teach the faith, that was not its only intended purpose. Most sections of the Catechism begin with the following phrase: "As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household." One of the great legacies of the Reformation was getting God's Word into the hands of everyone, and not just the pastors and priests. For Luther, Christian education started in the home. That is why he wrote the Catechism in a simple straightforward way. He wanted a book that any parent could learn, regardless of their theological background, and then use to teach the faith to their household.

This Fall, I would like to encourage you to remember the legacy of the Reformation by putting into practice what Luther expected of EVERY Christian family. In his 1528 Preface, Luther said, "It is therefore the duty of every family to examine his children and household members at least once a week to see what they have learned of the Catechism." Messiah is excited to help you do that!

This Fall, Messiah will have a Small Catechism available for every household – you can pick them up at the Welcome Center, starting on Sunday September 10<sup>th</sup>. We will also equip you with this reading guide that will have short daily readings from the Catechism or related Bible verses, and questions that you can use for personal reflection or discussion with your family. In addition to having print copies available, the daily readings can also be found on Messiah's website, [www.messiah-lutheran.org](http://www.messiah-lutheran.org), or you can download an

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electronic copy of Luther's Small Catechism (by Concordia Publishing House) for free from the App Store.

In his 1530 Preface to the Catechism, Luther talked about how studying the Catechism can be a great blessing to families, saying: "If they show such diligence, I can promise them – and they themselves will experience – that they will reap a harvest and that God will make fine persons of them, persons who in time will make the excellent confession that the longer they use the Catechism, the less they know of it and the more they have to learn." Even though Luther wrote the Catechism, he still read it on a daily basis and he constantly gained new insights. I am excited to walk alongside the people of Messiah this Fall as we remember the Reformation and do the same.

Rev. Chris Kollmann  
Associate Pastor – Messiah Lutheran

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## WEEK 1 – LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD COMMANDMENTS 1-3

Luther's Small Catechism is divided into Six Chief Parts. These 6 Chief Parts are central teachings of the church. This week and next, we will explore the First Chief Part, the Ten Commandments. As we read and reflect on the Ten Commandments, which God gave to Moses and the people of Israel on Mount Sinai, we realize how we have all sinned and fallen short of God's expectations. We also learn that because of that sin, we need a Savior.

The Ten Commandments are divided into two sections. Commandments 1-3 primarily deal with our relationship with God, while Commandments 4-10 focus on our relationships with our neighbors. We will also read through some parts of Luther's Table of Duties, which fit in well with the themes of the Ten Commandments.

### September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – The First Commandment and Explanation (p2)

- Do you know anyone who worships a different god? If so, who/what do they worship?
- What are the three things you think about the most during the day when you are bored or have nothing to do?
- How do you think Christians can strike a balance between 'good things' and making those good things into 'gods'?

### September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – The Second and Third Commandments, and Explanations (p2-3)

- Describe a time when you saw someone say 'Oh my God' or "OMG." Do you think they are actually trying to talk to God? Why or why not?
- What are some things/activities that get in the way of going to church regularly?
- How often do you think Christians should go to church? Explain

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September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Mark 12:28-34 – Love the Lord your God

- In our reading for today, Jesus mentions two commandments, neither of which are part of the 'Ten Commandments.' How do you see Jesus' command to 'Love the Lord your God' reflected in Commandments 1-3?
- It has been said that when we break any of the commandments, we also break the First Commandment. How is this the case?

September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – The Fourth Commandment and Explanation (p3), 'To Parents,' 'To Children' (Table of Duties, p29-30)

- What are some ways that children can honor their parents, even when they are in the middle of a conflict with them?

September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – 'Of Civil Government' (Table of Duties p27-28)

- Christians are called to respect the authority of the government, even if it is not a 'Christian' government. What challenges might this present to Christians, both in the United States, and throughout the world?
- When Christians disagree with something that the government or its leaders do, how might they respond, while still keeping the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment?

September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – 'Of Citizens' (Table of Duties p28-29)

- What benefits do you see to always praying for your current leaders, regardless of whether or not you agree with the things they are doing?

September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – 'To Workers,' 'To Employers,' 'To Youth,' 'To Widows,' 'To Everyone' (Table of Duties, p30-31)

- Identify a few examples of where the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment is found here.
- How do Commandments 4-10 fit in with Jesus' command to 'Love your neighbor as yourself?'

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## WEEK 2 – LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF COMMANDMENTS 4-10

In Mark Chapter 12, Jesus sums up the Ten Commandments into two when he calls us to ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength,’ and to ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ This week, we will continue to explore the commandments that involve loving our neighbor.

God’s Law, as found in the Ten Commandments, functions in three different ways for the Christian. First, it acts as a curb. When God commands us not to do something and we know that it is wrong, we are less likely to do it. When we break God’s Laws despite knowing that it is wrong, the Law functions as a mirror – it convicts us of our sins and reminds us of our need for a Savior. Now that we have been redeemed by Christ and He has paid for our sins, the Ten Commandments function as a guide for how we should live. Instead of keeping them because we fear the consequences, we gladly keep them out of love for our Lord.

September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – The Fifth Commandment and Explanation (p3)

- Aside from literally taking their life, what are some ways that we might hurt or harm our neighbor?

September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017 - The Sixth Commandment and Explanation (p3)

- How is God’s plan for relationships and marriage in the Bible similar and different from what we often hear about in our culture today?

September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – ‘To Husbands,’ ‘To Wives’ (Table of Duties p29)

- In what ways are husbands called to ‘give’ to their wives?
- In what ways are wives called to ‘give’ to their husbands?
- How do the husband and wife both benefit when this takes place?

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- September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017 – The Seventh Commandment and Explanation (p4)
  - Why do you think God would give us the commandment ‘You shall not steal’?
  - What are some of the most common ways that people ‘steal’ these days?
  
- September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017 – The Eighth Commandment and Explanation (p4)
  - Describe a time when you or someone you know told a lie about someone else, or talked behind their back. How did it turn out?
  
- September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 – The Ninth and Tenth Commandments and Explanation (p4-5)
  - What are some things that you have coveted recently? What do you think happens when people covet?
  
- September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – The Close of the Commandments and Explanation (p5)
  - In Exodus 20, God pairs a threat of punishment with a promise of blessing. Both are serious, but which one has more ‘emphasis’? What does that say about God?
  - Which of the Ten Commandments is the easiest for you to keep? Which is the hardest? Why?

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## WEEK 3 – THE CREED FIRST AND SECOND ARTICLES

While the Ten Commandments show us our sin, the Second Chief Part, the Apostles Creed, shows us our Savior. For the next two weeks, we will learn about our Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

A ‘creed’ is a statement of what we believe. The Apostles Creed has been used since the very earliest days of the church (first or second century AD) to summarize what scripture says about who God is, and what God has done for us. This week’s readings also include some of Luther’s Daily Prayers, which fit in well with the themes of the Creed.

September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – The First Article of the Creed and Explanation (p6)

- What are the three main topics/subjects that Luther talks about in the Explanation to the First Article?
- In addition to making the heavens and earth, what are some other things that God the Father does for us?

September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Genesis 1:1-2:3 – God Creates and it was Good

- While reading, keep track of how many times God calls his creation ‘good.’

September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Matthew 6:25-34 – Do Not Worry

- Pray “Return Thanks After a Meal” (Daily Prayers, p25)
- What are some things that God provides for you on a daily basis that you might take for granted sometimes?

September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Pray Luther’s Morning Prayer (Daily Prayers, p23)

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- Do you notice any similarities between Luther's Morning Prayer, and his explanation to the First Article of the Creed (p6)? If so, what are they?

September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Re-Read First Article of the Creed and Explanation

- What have we done to deserve everything that God has blessed us with?
- What does that say about God?

September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – The Second Article of the Creed and Explanation (p7-8)

- What are some things that you know about Jesus that the Second Article of the Creed does not mention?
- Why do you think the Second Article includes certain information about Jesus, but omits other things that he did? Is there a pattern in terms of what it does include?

October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017 – Luke 2:1-12 – Jesus is born, God and man.

- What do verses 6-7 tell us about Jesus?
- How do the angels identify Jesus in verse 11?
- Why is it important that Jesus was both God and a man?

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## WEEK 4 – THE CREED SECOND AND THIRD ARTICLES

This week we will continue to explore what the Creed says about God the Son, as well as God the Holy Spirit. A key part of the Holy Spirit's job is to bring people to faith, and gather and sustain the Christian Church. That makes this a great time to hear what Luther says in the Table of Duties about the responsibilities of both pastors and their parishioners.

A common theme that you might notice in the Creed is that it is not about us. Just as God created the heavens and the earth without any merit or worthiness in us, Jesus redeemed us while we were lost, condemned, and without hope. Finally, because our sinful nature prohibits us from choosing to follow God on our own, we rely on the Holy Spirit to create and sustain faith in us. When it comes to our faith, God is truly the subject of all of the 'verbs' – He is the one doing all of the action! Thanks be to God!

October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 201 – John 3:16 – God gave the life of his Son

- According to John 3:16, why did God give His only Son? What does this have in common with last Friday's (Sep 29<sup>th</sup>) discussion on the First Article?

October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 – Isaiah 53:5, Ephesians 1:7

- What was the price that Jesus paid in order to save us?

October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – 1 Corinthians 15:12-20

- Why is the resurrection of Jesus the cornerstone of the Christian faith?
- What are some things that would be different if Jesus never rose from the dead?

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- How does the fact that Jesus died and rose from the dead change your life today?

## October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – The Third Article of the Creed and Explanation

- What is the only way that Christians can come to faith?
- How does the Holy Spirit work in the church today?

## October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – To Bishops, Pastors and Preachers (Table of Duties, p26)

- Paul gives very specific qualifications for pastors. How might the church be harmed if its pastors do not follow these guidelines?
- How might the church and its people benefit if they follow these guidelines faithfully?

## October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – ‘What Hearers Owe their Pastors’ (Table of Duties, p27)

- According to Hebrews 13:17, what special responsibilities do pastors and church leaders have?
- What are some ways that you can encourage your pastor(s) and church leaders?

## October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – 1 Corinthians 15:50-57 – The Hope of the resurrection

- What does 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15 tell us about what will happen on the Last Day?
- Our culture today often relates the Last Day with ‘scary’ things. What are some exciting things that Christians should look forward to when Christ comes again?

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## WEEK 5 – THE LORD'S PRAYER PETITIONS 1-4

The Third Chief Part of the Small Catechism is the Lord's Prayer. During the next two weeks, we will explore some of the things that Jesus taught about prayer, as well as the specific prayer He taught disciples (and us).

Although the Lord's Prayer is short, it covers a variety of topics in great depth, as we will find when we explore Luther's explanations in more detail.

October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Read Matthew 6:5-8 – Jesus' Teachings on Prayer

- How does Jesus instruct the disciples to pray (or not to pray)? Why do you think Jesus tells them these things?
- In what setting or environment do you most commonly find yourself praying? Why?

October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Read Matthew 6:9-15 – Jesus Teaches the Disciples to Pray

- Do you have the Lord's Prayer memorized already? If so, when and how did you memorize it?
- The Lord's Prayer covers a lot of different topics. Do you think it is important to only pray the Lord's Prayer, or to pray other prayers as well? Explain.

October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Introduction to the Lord's Prayer and Explanation (p10)

- How do you picture the God that you pray to?
- Does what you think of God make a difference in how you pray?

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October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – The First Petition of the Lord's Prayer and Explanation (p10)

- What are some ways that you have seen or heard people disrespect God's name in a literal sense?
- According to Luther, what are some other ways that we profane God's name?

October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – The Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer and Explanation (p11)

- According to Luther, what does God's kingdom on earth look like? Does this surprise you, and if so, why?

October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – The Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer and Explanation (p11)

- What would the world look like if everyone followed God's Word and obeyed his commands perfectly?

October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – The Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer and Explanation (p12)

- If God provides daily bread to everyone without our prayers, why do you think Jesus included this petition in the Lord's Prayer?
- What are some parts of 'daily bread' that you might take for granted?

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## WEEK 6 – THE LORD'S PRAYER PETITIONS 5-7

This week we will finish the rest of the Lord's Prayer. Although Jesus taught His disciples to pray using the Lord's Prayer, it is not the only prayer that we can use. We will also get a chance to pray more of Luther's Daily Prayers, and we can see how they have some very similar themes to the Lord's Prayer.

October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Ask a Blessing before a Meal (Daily Prayers, p24)

- Use this prayer before a meal today, or another day this week. How is this prayer similar or different to your typical before meal prayer?

October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – The Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer and Explanation (p12-13)

- Think of a time when it has been hard for you to forgive someone. What did they do to you, and were you able to forgive them?
- Why do you think God wants us to forgive other people?

October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – The Sixth Petition of the Lord's Prayer and Explanation (p13)

- When do you feel like the devil tempts you the most? What are you most tempted by?
- How can God help you to resist temptation? Explain.

October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – The Seventh Petition of the Lord's Prayer and Explanation (p13)

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- What are some examples of some 'evil' things that God protects you from?
- What is the hope that this petition gives to Christians?

October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Luther's Evening Prayer (Daily Prayers, p24)

- What similar themes do you see between Luther's Evening Prayer and the Lord's Prayer (p9)?
- Pray Luther's Evening Prayer tonight before bed

October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017 – The Conclusion of the Lord's Prayer and Explanation (p14)

- Why is 'Amen' a fitting ending to a prayer?

October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017 – The Lord's Prayer (p9)

- Pray the whole Lord's Prayer from start to finish. Take a short pause between each petition, and reflect on what each petition means.

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## WEEK 7 - BAPTISM

This week we will explore the Fourth Chief Part of the Catechism, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. As we will discover this week, Baptism is not just a single event that happens in the life of the Christian – it becomes a part of who you are and shapes your identity as a believer.

Although God uses simple means (like water) for Baptism, the true power comes through His Word, which can accomplish anything! Just as God the Father created the heavens and the earth by saying ‘let there be light,’ through water and the Word, God drowns the old sinful person in us, and makes us new creations in Christ.

October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 – What is Baptism? Which is that Word of God? (p15)

- What are some things that you typically think of when you think about Baptism? Why?

October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – What benefits does Baptism give? Which are these words and promises of God? (p16)

- Why is Baptism such an important thing for Christians?
- How can looking back and remembering your Baptism be a comforting thing for Christians?

October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Acts 2:38-39 – Peter explains Baptism on Pentecost

- Which of Baptism’s benefits does Peter talk about in his sermon on Pentecost?

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- Who are the promises in Baptism for?

October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – How can water do such great things? (p16)

- How is it comforting for Christians to know that the power in Baptism comes from God's Word instead of the person performing the Baptism?

October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – What does such baptizing with water indicate? Where is this written? (p16-17)

- What are some things about you that you consider part of your identity?
- How is our Baptism part of our identity today?

October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Psalm 51:5, Luke 18:15-17 – Jesus and the Little Children

- According to Psalm 51:5, why is it important for everyone, including babies, to be baptized?

October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:26-27 – Baptized into God's Family

- Have you ever thought of your fellow Christians as 'brothers and sisters' before?
- In addition to your baptism, what are some other things that you have in common with the members of your 'church family'?

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## WEEK 8 – THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

This week we will learn about the Sacrament of the Altar, also known as Holy Communion. Jesus instituted Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday, the night before he was crucified, as he celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples in the Upper Room. Christians have celebrated Holy Communion since the church's beginning, following Christ's command to 'This do in remembrance of Me.'

As was true also with Baptism, God takes an ordinary element, in this case, bread and wine, and through His Word, He gives it the power to do something great! In the Sacrament, Christians receive not only bread and wine, but also Christ's body and blood, for the forgiveness of sins, and to strengthen us in our faith.

October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017 –What is the Sacrament of the Altar? (p21)

- What are some things that you typically think of or associate with Holy Communion?

October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017 – Where is this written? (p21-22)

- Aside from the length of service, is church different for you on days when we celebrate communion? Why or why not?

November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017 – What is the benefit of this eating and drinking? (p22)

- Take a moment to reflect on the things that you receive in the Lord's Supper.

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- The next time you receive communion, say a quiet prayer of thanksgiving after you sit back down in your seat.

November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017 – How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things? (p22)

- Just as was the case in Baptism, the power of Holy Communion comes from God's Word. Why do you think this is important?

November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 – Who receives this sacrament worthily? (p22)

- Why do you think most churches wait to give Communion until after someone goes through Confirmation class?

November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 – Receiving the sacrament unworthily

- Why is it important for Christians to receive the sacrament worthily?
- Is it 'mean' or 'unloving' for Christians to have guidelines for who should and should not receive communion? Explain.

November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – 1 Corinthians 10:17 – Unity through the sacrament

- How is celebrating the Lord's Supper an expression of unity in the congregation?

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## WEEK 9 – CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

This week, we will wrap up the Small Catechism with Confession and Absolution. During the first two weeks, we learned about how the Ten Commandments convict us of our sins and showed us where we have fallen short. When we sin, we have two options. We can try to ignore or gloss over those sins, or we can bring them to the Lord and ask Him for forgiveness. The first option eventually leads to eternal separation from God, but our Heavenly Father calls us to bring those sins to him, confident that Jesus has already paid the price for them.

Jesus gave his church the Office of the Keys, namely, the ability to forgive sins on God's behalf. So Christians come to church and confess their sins, and then hear the pastor proclaim the words of Absolution, that Christ has paid for those sins, and they are forgiven. Christians are far from perfect, but part of the Christian life is acknowledging that and putting our hope in our Savior, the perfect sacrifice for us.

November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – What is Confession? (p18)

- When you do something wrong, does it help to talk to someone about it, or do you prefer to keep it to yourself. Why?

November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Which sins should we confess? Which are these? (p18-19)

- Would you feel more comfortable confessing your sins to God, or to your pastor or another person? Explain?

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- Why do you think Luther structured the catechism to start with the Ten Commandments?

November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – What is the Office of the Keys? Where is this written? What do you believe according to these words? (p19-20)

- Why do you think churches make Confession and Absolution part of the service each week?
- What are some benefits of having everyone in the congregation do Confession and Absolution together?

November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Psalm 32:5, Acts 3:19 – Who receives forgiveness?

- If God has already seen every sin that we've committed, why do you think he still wants us to confess them?

November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – 1 John 1:8-9, Isaiah 1:18 – What does forgiveness look like?

- Do you recognize 1 John 1:8-9 from anywhere? Is so, where?
- What does God promise about the sins we confess in Isaiah 1:18?

November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Luke 17:3-4 – Is there a limit?

- How many times does God call us to forgive someone if they repent of their sin? Do you think this is reasonable? Why or why not?
- Is there a particular sin that you commit over and over again? How often has God forgiven you for that sin?

November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Luke 19:1-10 – The result of repentance

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- After Zacchaeus repents of his sin, how is his life changed?
- As Christians, how can we respond to being forgiven?





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