

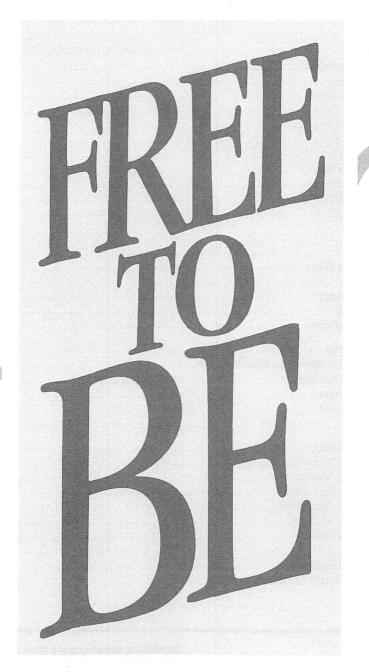
A HANDBOOK TO LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM





TEACHER.GUIDE





A Handbook to Luther's Small Catechism

TEACHER GUIDE

by Susan Johnson

Augsburg Fortress Minneapolis

CONTEN	VIS		***************************************	
Introduction 3				
	The	Commandments	6	
	The same	God's Decision	8	
	2	More Than a Name	10	
	3	The Last Word	12	
1	4	The Highest Office	14	
	5	The Gift of Life	17	
	6	Saying No to Say Yes	19	
	7	A Parade of Thieves		
	8	Fencing the Heart		
		Counterfeit Hope		
1	10	A Jealous God	28	
The Creed				
10 (0.02		I Believe		
Day Sand		Not How but Who	400	
monthonesis per diff	13	Mystery Man	***	
Danished Alla	13	Friend of Sinners		
SSA	15	God the Verb		
	16	Saints and Sinners	42	
_				
	The	Lord's Prayer	44	
H-/// 1	17	Christ Puts the Words in Our Mouths		
	18	Praying for Our Father	48	
M_{N}	19	Victory Is Certain		
	20	Every Day a Gift		
	21	Deliverance	54	
The Means of Grace				
100000000000000000000000000000000000000		How Do You Know?		
STATE OF THE PARTY	22	The Greatest Miracle		
B \ \	23 24	Off the Merry-go-round		
B. Y APPEND		Letting Go to Take Hold	64	
	25 26	More Than a Memory	66	
	27	Opening the Future		
	28	Two Traps		
	40 29	Key to the Kingdom	72	
	29 30	Conversation and Consolation	74	
)()	Conversation and Consolation		
1	r>	diament	76	

FREE TO BE

This Teacher Guide is accompanied by a Student Book.

Theological background writer: James A. Nestingen Editors: Susan R. Niemi, Carol A. V. R. Throntveit, and Ann L. Rehfeldt

Designer: Judy Swanson

Scripture acknowledgments: Scripture quotations from the Small Catechism are from Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1946-71 by Division of Christian Education, National Council of Churches, and are used by permission. All other Scripture quotations are from New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission.

Catechism quotations are from *The Small Catechism by Martin Luther in Contemporary English with Lutheran Book of Worship Texts* (1979 Edition), copyright © 1960, 1968 by Augsburg Publishing House, the Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, and Concordia Publishing House. Excerpts from the Smalcald Articles and the Augsburg Confession are from *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church,* edited and translated by Theodore G. Tappert, copyright © 1959 Fortress Press. Material identified as *LBW* is reprinted from *Lutheran Book of Worship,* copyright © 1978.

Copyright © 1993 Augsburg Fortress

All rights reserved. May not be reproduced, with the exception of the unit reviews on pages 76, 77, 78, and 79.

Manufactured in U.S.A.

INTRODUCTION

Course overview

Learning about faith is important; faith is God's gift to us. With this gift, God has provided means by which we can learn about God and God's will for us. As we do so, this God, who claims us and whom we claim, increases and deepens our faith.

This is a course designed to be used by those preparing to affirm, in the rite of Affirmation of Baptism, both their Baptism and faith. The overall purpose of this and any course of confirmation instruction is to foster a deeper understanding of and participation in the mission and ministry of the church. In keeping with this purpose, Free to Be helps students know and understand what God chooses to do and does through the Word and sacraments. This is achieved by studying Luther's Small Catechism as an interpretation of the gospel message.

This 30-session course is divided into four units. The topic for the first unit is "The Commandments" (Sessions 1-10); the second unit's topic is "The Creed" (Sessions 11-16); the third unit's topic is "The Lord's Prayer" (Sessions 17-21); and the fourth unit's topic is "The Means of Grace" (Sessions 22-30). For background information on each unit, see pages 6, 30, 44, and 56 in this guide.

Course materials

The primary materials for this course are this teacher guide, the student book, and a Bible. The Bible translation used throughout the course is New Revised Standard Version. The teacher guide is three-hole drilled so you can take it apart and put it in a three-ring binder. You then can insert in it other materials pertinent to a particular point as well as your own teaching notes. For each session, have available Bibles as well as chalkboard and chalk or chart paper and markers.

The teacher guide contains theological background materials and instructions for teaching each session. It also includes many suggestions for enhancing session learning and for personally exploring session themes. This is explained more completely in "Session Format," which follows. Worship suggestions are provided for each session.

On pages 76-79 of the teacher guide, you will find a review for each of the units. Review and evaluation is an important part of the educational process because it can help you discover whether learning objectives have been accomplished. Use the reviews as a way to add value to what has already been taught and learned in your class. The reviews may be photocopied for individual use by your students. Answers for the reviews are on page 80.

The student book is made up of 30 chapters, which correspond to the session materials in the teacher guide. The portion of Luther's Small Catechism covered in a chapter is printed in the student book.

Session format

Each session has four parts. This format will make it easy to prepare the sessions by organizing the session plan in easy-to-follow steps.

First things first. This section provides an overview of session content, the learning objectives, and suggestions for pre-session activities and group worship.

Introduction. This is a succinct summary of the student book material.

W Objectives. Objectives help establish a focus for learning and can be helpful in evaluating what learning has taken place.

W Gathering activity. This activity is intended to fill the time between the arrival of the first few students and the actual beginning of the session. Most of these activities are informal and require little explanation, so students who arrive later can join in the activity.

Worship. Worship sets the tone for the session by reminding the students who it is that calls them together and for what purpose. Included in this section may be Bible texts and discussion ideas, prayers, and object lessons. You may wish to incorporate songs as well. Several times throughout the course the students will have opportunity to plan and lead worship. Even when this is not the case, you may want to ask if students have particular prayer concerns to share, additional comments or questions about the Bible text, or a hymn they would like to sing. You also might want to make use of the daily prayers on pages 207-208 in the student book.

are designed to be 60-90 minutes long. The majority of the session time is spent going over the material presented in the student book. (This guide assumes that the students will have read or looked at the student book material prior to each session. If you plan to read the material during class, plan to meet for 90minute sessions.) The teacher guide provides activities and discussion questions to accompany the student material. These follow the sequence of the student book material, and frequent references are made to specific passages in the student book. Please remember that the questions and ideas for discussion that are presented here are intended to guide, not limit, discussion. No teacher

guide can be attentive to all the needs and situations of

individual students. It is up to you, the teacher, to tailor

the materials to fit your particular group of students.

Check out the student book. Free to Be sessions

Possibilities and projects. This section includes a number of ideas from which you can choose in order to fit the needs and interests of your specific group of students. There are six options here. The first three, "Memory," "Key Concepts," and "Journal," are included in every session, though the focus changes with each session.

Memory. Assigned memory work from the Catechism (and occasionally from other parts of the Confessions) is included in each session. When divided over 30 sessions, this does not amount to more than a few sentences each time. Yet some students will find even this difficult. Students will feel more successful in their memorizing and thus keep at it if you can be flexible in your expectations. For instance, key concepts or phrases can be memorized instead of whole passages. Remember, too, that when assigning memory work, it is important for students to understand how the passage being memorized relates to the material being studied and why memorization is worth their while.

W Key concepts. In each session there are a number of key words that need to be understood if the student is to have some feel for what is being presented. Some of these words are identified in this guide. Work with the students to identify others you feel are important. Specific suggestions for using key concepts are included in each session.

▼ Journal. Often session time allows little opportunity for personal reflection on what is being learned. One way to encourage such reflection is through writing. To that end, suggestions for journal entries, to be completed apart from session time, are included in each session. While the suggestions are specific, tell students that these are thought-starters and they are free to write about whatever thoughts, concerns, or questions they have. Encourage students to reread their previous entries from time to time. Students often find this an interesting mirror into themselves. You may find it beneficial to keep a journal yourself. Periodically you may want to review journal entries. If this is the case, be certain students know from the beginning that this will happen so that they can choose how much confidential information to include in their journals. Or give students an opportunity to remove confidential entries before you read the journals.

In addition to these regular "Possibilities and Projects" options, there are three other suggestions for continuing and enhancing learning. These may include Bible studies, drama, creative writing, guests, discussion topics, field trips, and research projects.

Things to come. Since it is important that the students read and have some understanding of the *Free to Be* student book material before each session, questions to guide their reading are included for all but the first chapter. Share these questions with the students when you assign the reading for the next session. To save time, you

may want to make a copy of the questions for each student before class and hand the questions out at the end of the class period. (If the students are keeping journals, they could write the questions there.) The questions also can be used at the end of the session to evaluate what the students have learned.

Please note that an additional assignment having to do with the Session 25 "Gathering Activity" is included under "Things to Come" in Session 24.

The students

Though students a little younger and even those much older may find *Free To Be* exciting and challenging, the course is targeted toward students in the ninth grade (about 14-15 years of age). This is a difficult age group to categorize, as is evidenced by the inability of school districts to agree on whether to include these students in junior or senior high school. As you prepare to teach these students, keep the following things in mind.

▼ Your students may be in the same grade but attend different schools. If this is the case, you may need to work more intentionally at creating a cohesive atmosphere.

■ By this age, many students have already invested much time in and commitment to developing specific talents and interests. As a result, they may appear to have a single focus, perhaps in an area that seems to have little relationship to what you are attempting to teach. Your challenge is to take some of the enthusiasm for and commitment to these endeavors and redirect it toward issues of faith and life. A key to accomplishing this goal is to show genuine interest in what your students are doing in all facets of their lives.

▼ The emotional and physical changes that come with adolescence can at times seem to your students to be more than they can bear. Their self-image is fragile, and consequently they may avoid new situations, especially if there is a chance of failure or peer ridicule. Be sensitive to this. Provide opportunities for your students to succeed, while at the same time challenging them to set new goals and try new thoughts and ideas. It is often helpful to have students at this age work in small groups with friends they trust, particularly when discussing personal faith and life issues.

▼ Attention span at this age is approximately 15 minutes, less if the student cannot easily discern what the activity has to do with what is being studied. Therefore you will need to establish clear objectives for session activities and plan for variety in meeting those objectives.

▼ Ninth graders aren't willing to "do religion" just because their parents do or because it's "good for them." In other words, don't spoon-feed them religious platitudes and moralisms. Share the gospel with them, the same gospel that forms your faith. When they hear a message like this that touches their lives, they have incredible capacity to respond with faith and commitment.

The teacher

It is important that you try to get to know all your students and find out what their needs and goals are, since students are likely to learn more easily when there is a good student-teacher relationship. This is especially important when dealing with matters of faith. Your task is not to make believers of your students. Leave that to the Holv Spirit. Concentrate instead on witnessing to your own faith in God and God's promises. Your faith, as it becomes evident in relationship with your students, is often the key element in whatever growth in their faith takes place. Let your students know that your faith journey, like theirs, is far from complete. Don't be afraid to admit your own doubts and sense of inadequacy. Admit to them that there are things you don't know or can't explain. Assume a teamwork approach toward teaching and learning from this course. Help your students understand that as they share their faith with you, your own faith is increased. One last thing: Remember to pray for your students-by name, every day.

The learning setting

Free to Be can be adapted to fit a variety of learning settings. Rather than always meeting on a weekly basis, consider spending two or three days in a retreat setting and concentrating on an entire unit of study (for example, "The Creed"). You might also combine a couple of sessions and use them as the focus of a half-day session on a Saturday morning or a Sunday afternoon.

Individualized instruction is also an option chosen by some congregations. This allows students to work through the material at their own pace. Students work individually on reading and research assignments and then meet periodically with small groups of students for the purpose of discussing and interpreting what they have learned. Occasionally the whole group takes part in an activity, such as a service project or field trip. In an individualized course of instruction, your role is primarily that of a resource person who answers students' questions, leads small group discussions, arranges group activities, and most importantly, provides opportunities for the students to interact with others who can share their faith with the students and listen as the students share theirs.



THE COMMANDMENTS

Luther's explosive understanding of the First Commandment is one of the best kept secrets of the Catechism. If anyone is responsible for keeping it a secret, it has to be the old sinner in us, for once the First Commandment gets loose in all of its power, it kills and makes alive—destroying the seeking selves in us and raising up new people.

The purpose of these theological background articles at the beginning of each unit is to outline the theological basis used in writing the student book. For this unit it is Luther's understanding of the First Commandment, the distinction between law and gospel, and the death and birth that go with them.

The First Commandment

According to Heinrich Bornkamm, a great German Reformation scholar, "The majestic love of God manifested itself to Luther from the First Commandment as from no other passage in the Old Testament" (*Luther and the Old Testament* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969], p. 179). The First Commandment is such a majestic manifestation because in it God promises to be our God. It is God's promise, God's decision for us.

One of the biggest obstructions to hearing the First Commandment as a promise is the common assumption that God is our God by nature—that God became our God because he created us. As popular as this view is, it is far from the biblical understanding of how God works.

God created the earth and all its people, but out of all the people of the earth, God chose Abraham and his children (Genesis 12:1-3). God is the Lord of all nations of the earth, but out of all the nations, God chose to deliver the people of Israel (Deuteronomy 7:6-11). In the same way, God now chooses those who hear the Word, who are baptized in Christ's name, and who receive the gift of faith (Ephesians 1:3-10).

Thus when God says, "I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods" it is good news. To Moses and the people of Israel who heard this promise, it was the good news that as God had led them out of Egypt, he would establish them as his own people. And to those who hear this promise in Christ, it is the good news that God has chosen to make us his own.

In his writings, Luther speaks of the sure and certain principle that where the Scripture speaks of the First Commandment, it refers to Christ. Heard in Christ, the First Commandment contains the whole gospel. In him God says, "You are mine," and as our God, gives us all of the gifts of the gospel, including forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation.

The law and the gospel

When this promise is proclaimed and learned, it always raises a question: Don't we have to do something in order to get this promise? And if we don't, why did God give the law?

The answer to the first question is "No, we don't have to do anything." When God gives the Word and promise, God takes full responsibility. God both speaks the Word and gives us the faith to believe it. It is justification by faith—grace alone, faith alone, the Word alone. All three "alones" say who alone justifies, who alone gives faith, who alone works in the Word: God alone. "So," as Paul says, "it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy" (Romans 9:16).

Once again there is a common assumption that bars the door to hearing this promise. It comes in response to the second question: Why did God give the law? The answer often given is that God gave it to show us how we could make ourselves righteous.

When Luther came to understand the promise, he answered the question in a much different way, as Paul did before him. The law is not, was not, and never will be a means of justification. From the very beginning, God has justified people by faith (see Romans 4 and Galatians 3). And this faith that justifies is not our work but God's work in us, given in the Word (Romans 10:5-13).

The law is given for two other reasons. First, it is to control the old sinner in us—the sinful self—to keep the world in order for the promise. As nations make laws to preserve the peace and establish justice, God gives laws to protect us from one another and to see to it that all are justly cared for.

Second, the law is given to drive us to the promise. It is God's "strange work," as Luther called it, that when God justifies, God pushes us to the conclusion that God alone can justify, that we cannot rely on ourselves or our obedience or our own faith for our future.

That's why the First Commandment is both a promise and a command. The promise is for faith. In it, God tells us the decision concerning us, promising to be our God and to give us everything good. The command is for unbelief. Because in our bondage we will not take God at his word, God commands us not to have any other gods. In this way, God keeps our unbelief in check and drives us back to the promise so that we will ask for the faith commanded, relying on God to complete the work in us.



The old self and the new

It is the old Adam or Eve in us that binds us to ourselves. It wants to make it seem that God is our God by creation, and it always wants to make it appear that we have to do something in order to be justified.

Speaking of the old self in this way, as is done throughout the book, can be complex. The old sinner in us is so subtle and works in so many hidden ways that it is almost impossible to understand it completely. In fact, Luther once said that it is God's grace that we can't understand the old self completely because if we did, we would lose all hope.

But at the same time, the experience of the old selfs power in us is part and parcel of daily life for people of every age—from the youngest children to the elderly. And though only the Spirit can reveal to us our own sinfulness, we can recognize how the old self works in our strivings and withdrawals.

The old self is the selfish person in each of us—the originally sinful person who wants to get hold of as much as can be gotten. It is the desire we have to control what is going to happen to us. It is the desire for self-reliance in relation to ultimate things, the wish to be self-sufficient and self-sustaining.

Because of these desires, the old sinner in us either doesn't want to rely on God for anything or only wants to rely on God for what will benefit the self. Because of these desires, too, the old self throws us into conflict with our neighbors and the earth.

When God kills the old self, God kills the self-seeking, self-desiring, self-reliant self—this you in us who literally raises hell as long as it lives. And when God raises up the new you, the new person in us, God makes us believers, giving us the faith to go with God's promises. It is the new you who in faith loves the neighbor, surrendering itself in service. It is the new you who cares for the earth as Adam and Eve were made to care for it.

The two yous, the old you naturally born and the new you born in the waters of Baptism, make their presence felt in the conflicts within us. "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want," as Paul said, "but I do the very thing I hate" (Romans 7:15). As long as we live, that struggle continues. On the last day, when we die, the old self will die forever. Then we will be what Christ is: the righteousness of God.

Resources

Following is a list of resources that you may find helpful. The most important is Luther's own Large Catechism, avail-

able in The Book of Concord or as a separate publication.

For a discussion of law and gospel, see Gerhard Forde's Where God Meets Man: Luther's Down-to-Earth Approach to the Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972). In Luther's writings, see the commentary on Romans and "Bondage of the Will," both available in Luther's Works (respectively, Volume 25, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972; page 92 of Volume 32, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958).

The following resources are out of print but could be helpful if you have access to them.

Bornkamm, Heinrich. *Luther and the Old Testament*. Translated by Eric W. and Ruth C. Gritsch. Edited by Victor I. Gruhn. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969.

Ebeling, Gerhard. *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought.* Translated by R. A. Wilson. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970.

Girgensohn, Herbert. *Teaching Luther's Catechism*. Translated by John W. Doberstein. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1959.

Käsemann, Ernst. *Jesus Means Freedom*. Translated by Frank Clarke. 1st American ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972.

Prenter, Regin. *Luther's Theology of the Cross.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971.

Rupp, E. Gordon. *The Righteousness of God: Luther Studies*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1953.



GOD'S DECISION



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction.

The First Commandment is the most important of all the Commandments. It announces God's decision regarding God's relationship with us and introduces the ever-present tension between law and gospel. This tension runs throughout the Commandments. In the student book, the tension is described in terms of the struggle between the old Adam or Eve (the old you) and the new you called out by God.

Luther said that the First Commandment is the whole sum of the law and the whole sum of the gospel. It sums up all of the laws and commands of God in requiring the faith of the whole person. It also is the overarching promise of God, the umbrella over all other promises. This course depends upon understanding this combination of promise and command.

Objectives...

The session will help students

- ▼ understand the Ten Commandments, specifically the First, in the context of relationship;
- wexplore the First Commandment in terms of promise and command;
- ▼ articulate what God's promise and command mean for personal understanding and for growth in faith and knowledge of God's gracious gifts of love and salvation.

Gathering activity.

To help the students get to know one another and begin to see that God's Ten Commandments deal with God's relationship with us and our relationships with one another, invite the students to tell about themselves in terms of their own relationships. Encourage them to use descriptive words and phrases like "sister of a younger brother," "eldest son in a family of four," "friend of Bernice," and so forth. Be sure to include yourself in this activity.

Worship

A brief opening worship time can help students focus on the session and create an atmosphere of cooperation and respect. In some circumstances, however, it may be preferable to end rather than begin the session with worship. Worship suggestions are provided for each session. This session deals directly with the struggle between the old you and the new you. An appropriate worship text is the struggle between the mortal and spiritual selves that Paul describes in Romans 7:14-25. Read this text aloud. (Go slowly; it's a tongue twister!) Ask the students to summarize what you read. Then invite them to talk about instances in their own lives when they have felt this same struggle. Conclude with the following prayer or one of your own asking for God's direction and guidance.

Dear Lord, sometimes I feel like there are two people inside of me. One wants to listen to your Word and follow your lead. The other seems bent on doing what is wrong and hateful. Help me, Lord. I need your presence and your guidance. Amen.



God's decision. This teacher guide is written with the assumption that students will have read the appropriate chapter in the student book prior to the class session. The activities and questions comprising "Check Out the Student Book" are designed to evaluate students' understanding of what they have read and to help them assimilate that information.

This opening section announces that God has made a decision about us, and God's decision is a promise. Have the students think about the relationship words they used to describe themselves in "Gathering Activity." Ask, "Can you decide to be or not be part of such relationships? (Some, perhaps, but not all.)" Explain that God has made a decision about God's relationship with us. Then ask, "What is it? (To be our Lord, our God, our creator, our parent, forever.) How does God make known this decision? (Through Baptism and through others who love us.) What difference does God's decision make in your life? (God accepts me as I am and gives me life, forgiveness, and future.)"

The two yous. This section introduces the idea of the old you and the new you at war with one another. Divide the students into two groups. Have one group make a list of words and phrases describing the old you. (Selfish, meanspirited, antagonistic to God and God's commands and promises, wants its own way, independent, wants to be in control.) Have the other group describe the new you. (Selfless, neighbor-lover, believes in God and appreciates God's commands and promises, cares for the earth.) Compare the two lists.

The old you. Point out to the students that the old you, the "I would rather do it myself" you, cannot accept God's decision and promise to be "the Lord our God." This old you does all it can to frustrate God and separate itself from God. At some point, however, this you realizes it can't go it alone. The result? The old you creates idols to give it a sense of power, control, or security. Ask the students to define idol. (That which we fear, love, and trust above all else.) Then have them develop a list of things that can become idols. Ask them to explain how and when idolatry occurs in a person's life. (When a thing, a belief, a goal, another person, or something else possesses one's time, energy, interest, and heart, it becomes an idol.)

The new you. Share the following with the students: "The new you is the self born in God's decision for you, drawn out of the waters of Baptism, and sustained by God's promise. It is the you who fears, loves, and trusts God above anything else, the you God is creating anew." Discuss why God is so interested in creating this new you. (The first paragraph in this section of the student book, the one beginning with "God likes to be God...," is helpful.) Ask, "What is our part in all this? (We have none. God does it all. After all, there will be plenty for us to do when God is done.) What does God want of the new you? (Love, belief, trust, identification with Christ.) How do you feel about God's decision? (Answers will vary. Some may feel relief that the decision is out of their hands. Others will lament loss of control. Still others will yearn to do something to earn God's love and approval.)"

Commands for the old you. God gives us commands even though God plans to make us new persons with God's promises. Ask the group to talk about the rules, regulations, and laws they live under. Have them discuss why they react to rules the way they do and why rules are necessary. Continue by asking, "What are the purposes of God's Commandments? (To give us a sense of what is most important; to keep the old self in check; to teach the sinner in us its limits; and to turn the new you toward the promise.) Can the Commandments save us? (No. They can only guide us in the meantime. Point out that as the promise takes hold, the Commandments become less and less necessary. God's grace eventually replaces altogether the need for the law. We are saved by grace.)"

The whole sum. Luther referred to the First Commandment as the whole sum of the law and the whole sum of the gospel. It is both command (law) and promise (gospel). Have the students read the First Commandment and identify the command and the promise. Talk about why command and promise are put together. (Together they give us a picture of God: a loving parent who understands the need to provide guidance and direction in our lives as we mature and grow in a deeper relationship with

God.) Encourage the students to talk about how this makes them feel about their relationship with God.



Though most of the session time will likely be spent on the questions and activities included under "Check Out the Student Book," you may want to consider working into your session plan one or more of the following options to be done by the students. These could also be used as homework assignments or as projects accomplished over several class sessions. Take time to review explanations and additional suggestions for "Possibilities and Projects" on page 4 of this guide.

- 1. *Memory*. Memorize the First Commandment and its meaning.
- 2. Key concepts. Come up with key concepts included in this session (promise, God's decision, command, the two yous, idol). Write each concept on a note card. Use these cards each session to review what was learned in the previous session. (Suggestions for creative ways of using these cards will be included in future sessions.)
- 3. Journal. Begin a journal in which you can share what you are learning and how you feel about what you are learning. Journal entries might include factual information, summaries of classroom discussions, personal thoughts and prayers, poetry and words of inspiration. Suggestions are given in each session.
- 4. Advertising lure. Peruse a variety of advertisements to see how the media appeals to the old you in encouraging us to buy and use specific products.
- 5. Role play. Develop a role play in which the two yous debate the pros and cons of relationship with God.
- 6. Bumper sticker. Design a bumper sticker that says something about your faith and your relationship with God. Recall other faith-related bumper stickers you have seen. Talk about why people use such stickers.

Things to come_

Have the students read Chapter 2, "More Than a Name," in the student book before the next class session. Encourage them to look for answers to these questions as they read: What meanings are in the name *God*? Why did God give us God's name? Why did God attach a threat to the Second Commandment?



2 MORE THAN A NAME

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction .

In past ages, one could learn quite a bit about a person from his or her name; each name had a particular meaning. Today this kind of identification has been all but lost. The origin and meaning of names has become a study for specialists.

God wants God's name to mean something to us. The special meaning attached to the name *Lord*, or *God*, has stayed constant through the ages, as evidenced in the Bible. For some people today, however, God's name appears to mean nothing. Yet to call upon God's name is reserved for special use: to talk personally with God.

Objectives

The session will help the students

■ understand that God's name is a means of relationship between God and God's people;

wexplore what "freedom in God's name" means;

▼ appreciate the command and promise with which God gifts us in the Second Commandment.

Gathering activity ____

Help students become better acquainted and at the same time begin to focus their attention on the theme for this session: the meaning and purpose of God's name. Give students large sheets of chart paper and markers and ask them to create an acrostic with the letters in their names. To make the acrostic, write the names vertically, and then for each letter, write a word or phrase beginning with that letter. Tell the students to use words and phrases that give insight into their personalities and interests. Encourage them to try an acrostic that makes a statement like the example below.

Example: Joyfully

Encouraging
All people
Not to

Accrue wealth at the expense of others

Worship

Begin by explaining that many names have meanings that have come down through the ages. Ask students who know what their names mean to share this information with the rest of the group. Explain that in biblical times

there was much importance attached to names and their meanings. Names were chosen with great care and said something about the person's situation or calling. Have a volunteer read aloud Matthew 1:18-21. Point out that God chose Jesus' name and by doing so announced that this was the child God had chosen to save God's people. End with the following prayer.

Dear God, thank you for knowing us by name and for sharing your name with us. Amen.



More than a name. Remind the students that Session 1 dealt with God's decision to be our God. If you asked the students to memorize the First Commandment and meaning, have them recite it. If not, have them read it aloud. It is found on page 5 in the student book. Explain that after stating the decision to be our God, God gave us a way to keep in touch. Write the Second Commandment and its meaning on the chalkboard or a sheet of chart paper. Ask the students to identify how we can get in touch with God. (By calling upon God's name.) Use questions like these for further discussion: What is the value in knowing someone's name? (We can use it to get that person's attention; to gather more information about that person; to determine if and how that person is related to others we know.) What is God's name? (Suggestions may include Jesus, Father, Creator, Savior, and Lord. Include, too, the answer found in the paragraph that begins "What is God's name, then?" on the bottom of page 16 in the student book.) Summarize by telling the students that knowing God's name means freedom: freedom to call on God as children call on a loving parent, confident that God will hear and answer.

Making the name nothing. This section introduces the idea that to take God's name in vain is to use it as if God is nothing and God's name is good for nothing. Read aloud together the Second Commandment and its meaning. Have the students suggest ways this commandment is broken. (Most will probably name cursing.) Ask them to speculate on why it is so easy to fall into the habit of cursing. (Hearing others curse, cursing in the media, desire to seem tough or adult, and so forth.) Read together the paragraph in this section that begins "When God's name is used in such a way. . . ." Afterward develop picture clues to summarize the misuse of God's name. (Excla-

mation points or commas to signify how cursing cheapens God's name by treating it as a form of punctuation; a steaming tea kettle to signify how cursing treats God's name as if it were nothing, merely a way to let off steam.)

Propping up a lie. Although cursing is the most obvious way of misusing God's name, it isn't the only way. This section presents three other ways of breaking the Second Commandment. Have the students scan this section to identify these ways and create picture clues for them as they did in the previous section. (Examples may include a crutch to signify propping up a lie; a magic wand to signify superstitious use; a halo over the word God to signify false piety.) Use the following questions to further explore this topic: What kind of excuses do we make to get around this commandment? (Everybody does it; the commandment doesn't exactly specify...; I'm really a good person and I go to church so I don't really mean anything when I curse.) What are we really doing when we misuse God's name? (We are acting as if God's name is unimportant and that God means nothing to us.) What difference does this understanding make in how seriously we take the Second Commandment? (Answers will vary. Students may not be comfortable with the idea that by misusing God's name they are saying that God doesn't matter.) How can we use and not abuse God's name? (Suggestions include calling on God in prayer; telling others about God; discouraging others from misusing God's name; treating God's name as a very special gift.)

Freedom in the name. This section points out that to know God's name is a great and precious gift that brings with it all sorts of possibilities for growing closer to God. Use an imagination activity to explore this idea: Ask the students to imagine that they have been given a beautifully wrapped package. Tell them nothing about the contents except that the box is marked "Fragile" and the gift inside the box is more wonderful than they could ever imagine. Have one of the students pretend to open the package. Encourage the others to gather around so they can see what is inside. Encourage the students' imaginations by making comments and giving suggestions ("The box is taped shut. Here's a knife to cut the tape.") Note the students' responses upon discovering the gift. ("It's beautiful. It's just what I've always wanted.") Ask another student to lift the gift item from the box and show it to the person next to him or her. Remind them to be very careful; the gift is precious. Then have this student very carefully pass the gift to another student. Continue passing the gift until all, including you, have had a chance to hold it. Once the gift has been passed, have the last student display the gift on a desk or table in the class area. Follow this activity with a discussion of God's name as gift. Point out that God gives us this gift to use, not to keep in the box. It is our personal connection when we pray. Talk about other ways

of using God's name that are included in the meaning to the Second Commandment (praise and thanksgiving) and how these are natural responses when one receives a wonderful gift.

Conclude this portion by reviewing the command and the promise in the Second Commandment.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory*. Memorize the Second Commandment and its meaning.
- 2. *Key concepts.* Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (God's name, curse). Use the cards from Sessions 1 and 2 to review together the material covered in these sessions.
- 3. Journal. Research your name and write in your journal about what you discover. Books about names and some dictionaries provide information about the meanings of both given and family names. Find out how your name was chosen and by whom. Learn if there are others in your family with the same name. Write how you feel about your name and if your feelings changed because of what you learned.
- 4. Record keeping. Keep a one-day tally of the number of times you hear God's name taken in vain on television, in the lyrics of songs, and among people with whom you have contact.
- 5. *Prayer.* Write short prayers of thanks, praise, and request. Be sure to ask for God's presence and help in your own and others' lives. (Use the prayers during worship in future sessions.)
- 6. The name of God. Use Bible dictionaries and concordances to learn more about God's name. Write up a minireport on what you learn. Publish the reports in your congregation's newsletter.

Things to come.

Have the students read Chapter 3, "The Last Word," in the student book before the next class session. Ask them to look for answers to these questions: How are the words of God like all other words? How are they different? How is Sunday like a rest stop? Why do we rest on Sunday? How does God speak God's word to us?





FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction

This is the last commandment in the first "table" or section of God's law, which deals particularly with God's relationship to us. We are so important to God that God wants to communicate with us. To do so, God speaks to us through the same kind of words we use ourselves. Knowing how bombarded we are with words and how busy our days are, God commands us to stop our daily routine on one special day each week to listen to God.

People listen in different ways. Some people listen with their ears; some listen with their eyes to words in print or in sign language; others listen with their fingertips to words in braille.

It can be hard to listen. Not only is there a myriad of sounds and messages coming to our ears, eyes, and fingertips all the time, but often when someone is "talking" to us, we already are thinking of the next thing we are going to say. Therefore we do not hear much of what is being said to us. It is also difficult to listen when we have something else on our minds.

God promises to speak to us, however. And God not only gives us ears, eyes, and sensitive fingertips with which to listen, but above all, God sends the Spirit to open our hearts to God's message.

Objectives _

The session will help the students

▼ learn that God speaks to them and commands them to take time to listen;

■ understand that the Third Commandment emphasizes the importance of God's word rather than the day;

▼ listen for God's word for them in the midst of so many other words.

Gathering activity.

The focus of this session is on the importance of listening for God's word for us. Begin the session with a listening exercise. Have the students listen to a vocal recording of an unfamiliar song and note the key word or words. (Familiarize yourself with the song prior to class.) Afterward ask the students to share their findings. Ask, "Was it easy or difficult to choose one word over another? Did it become easier to zero in on a particular word the more you heard the song? Why? (The more familiar a song is, the easier it is to focus on the theme

or message.)" Conclude by telling the students that listening for what is most important isn't always easy. Listening takes practice.

Worship.

This session deals with God's command to hear and treasure God's word. Begin by telling the students that God specified time for us to rest from doing everyday tasks and to listen to God's word. This time is a gift and not to be taken for granted. Invite the students to listen to one person's response to this gift as it is recorded in Psalm 122:1. End the worship time with prayer. If the students did the "Prayer" activity included under "Possibilities and Projects" for Session 2, you may want to use their prayers here.



The last word. Introduce this section by telling the students to all talk at the same time. It doesn't matter what they talk about, but have them start and stop on signal. Afterward note that many words were being said but not being heard. Encourage the students to give suggestions as to why people talk but don't listen. (They are distracted by something else; they tune out those things they don't want to hear; they assume the message isn't meant for them; they are busy planning what they are going to say next.) Assure the students that of all the words they'll hear in their lives, God's word is the most important and God wants us to hear this word. Ask the students to talk about what they think God has to tell us. Have them think back to the first two commandments for some ideas. (God has decided to be our God: God loves us and desires our love in return; we have been given God's name so we can call upon God in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving; God is working to make us new people.)

The new day coming. This section points out that God's word is both power and promise. Have students find the following Bible texts and identify the power or the promise of God's word in each.

Genesis 1:3 (The power to create)
Genesis 12:1-3 (The promise of blessing)
Exodus 4:10-12 (The power to call out prophets)
Matthew 28:18-20 (The promise of presence)
Mark 4:35-39 (The power to control nature)
Mark 7:32-35 (The power to heal)

Luke 23:32-34 (The power to forgive)
Luke 23:39-43 (The promise of life everlasting)

Continue with a discussion about how knowing the power and promise of God's word affects our eagerness to hear the word and our willingness to set aside time to focus on the word.

Conclude by telling the students that God's word is not only the most important word, but it is also the last word—the word that will win out over all others. To illustrate this point, have the students read through the funeral service in your congregation's worship book. Note the words of promise proclaimed throughout this service.

Resting in the word. This section points out very clearly that the word makes the Sabbath and not the other way around. Write the Third Commandment on the chalkboard or chart paper. Ask students to share what they think the commandment is saying. (Possible answers may include make Sunday activities different from weekday activities; go to church on Sunday; don't fight with family members on Sunday; pray or read the Bible on Sunday; don't work on Sunday.) Add Luther's meaning to the Third Commandment on the chalkboard or chart paper. Ask the students to share any new insights this meaning gives to their understanding of the commandment. Ask, "What is the emphasis of the commandment? (Hearing God's word.) Why do you think God commands us to set aside a particular day to listen to God's word? (To help us remember.) If we are able to read the Word of God by ourselves, why is so much importance placed on attending church together to hear this same Word? (So that we can share and be strengthened in our faith with others and so that we can receive the sacraments.) Who is with us as we gather to hear God's word? (Jesus.) How does God speak to us? (See the paragraph in this section on page 25 that begins 'How does it happen, then?') How can observing the Sabbath fuel us for the rest of the week? (We are fueled bearing God's word of promise that provides bope, assurance, and future.)"

The ear and day plugger. Our sinful self does everything in its power to discourage us from listening to God's word. Ask the students to list excuses people use for not going to church to listen to God's word. (Answers may include that church is boring; church is only for old people; my friends don't go to church; I can read the Bible on my own; I feel closest to God when I'm in nature; I have too much to do; my faith is between God and me—I don't need to be around other Christians.) Afterward discuss how God helps us to remember the Sabbath. (Suggestions include through the encouragement of other believers; through conscience; through inner longings for relationship with God; by giving us a specific time to listen.)

This session concludes the study of the first table of the law, the commandments dealing directly with God's relationship with us. Briefly review these commandments by asking the students to identify God's promise and command in each. (God decided on a relationship with us, shared the name God with us as a means of address, and promised to speak to us. Having given these gifts, God forbids us to have other gods or to use God's name wrongly and orders us to listen to God.)



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory.* Memorize the Third Commandment and its meaning.
- 2. *Key concepts*. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (Sabbath, word). Add these to the flash cards from Sessions 1 and 2, and quiz each other.
- 3. Journal. Keep a record of activities for Sunday and for one other day of the week. Write a paragraph about the differences and similarities between the two days. Write another paragraph sharing your plans for keeping the Third Commandment.
- 4. *People.* Develop a list of people who shared God's word with you during the past week. Note when and where these incidences happened and talk about why we tend to set aside special times to talk about the Word.
- 5. Sabbath laws. Research Sabbath/Sunday laws in colonial North America. (Colonists were prohibited from traveling, playing football, horse racing, bear baiting, fishing, hunting, dancing, and working. Attending church was mandatory.) Discuss whether these laws emphasized the importance of hearing God's word or only the day. Talk about the difficulties in keeping the Third Commandment today when we accept that people will work on Sunday. 6. Listening practice. Attend worship and listen carefully to the words read, spoken, and sung during the service. What is God's word for you? How do all these ways help get across God's message?

Things to come.

Assign Chapter 4, "The Highest Office," to be read before the next class session. Ask students to look for answers to these questions as they read: What responsibilities are given to parents? Who are parents' helpers? How does the commandment protect both parents and children? What is the one limit on this commandment?

Gather various newspaper advice columns dealing with parent-child relationships for use during "Gathering Activity" on page 14 of this guide.



THE HIGHEST OFFICE



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction

The second table of the Commandments focuses on our relationships with other people. The Fourth Commandment deals specifically with our most vital human relationship, that between children and their parents. This commandment protects life itself in the family and home where life begins. It protects parents, children, and parent helpers.

Parents have the highest office in all creation because through them God gives life. Those in the office of parent are given responsibility for the care and nurture of their children. The office of son or daughter carries the corresponding responsibility of honoring parents.

The word *bonor* has great significance. It involves love and respect. To help students grasp these abstract concepts, identify behaviors that demonstrate love, respect, and honor. Chapter 4 in the student book suggests some of these behaviors. You might think of others.

Because God wants each of us to be taken care of properly, God has surrounded us with parents and other helpers. The importance God places on this protective relationship is indicated by the inclusion in the commandment of a promise of a happy and long life.

Objectives.

The session will help the students

- we see how God protects, nurtures, and sustains life through parents and others in authority;
- w understand the Fourth Commandment in terms of mutual honor, respect, love, and care between children and parents:
- appreciate and give thanks for good relationships they
 have with adults.

Gathering activity_

Have copies of advice columns (such as "Ann Landers" or "Dear Abby") for the students to read when they arrive. Choose columns that relate to parent-child relationships. Invite the students to react to both the problem and the response that is given by the columnist. Afterward use these questions for further discussion: Is it easy to be a parent? A child? What is important for good relationships between parents and children?

Worship

Tell the students that the apostle Paul understood that good parent-child relationships are built upon mutual honor and respect. Illustrate this point by having one student read Ephesians 6:1 aloud and another read Ephesians 6:4. Continue by saying, "In a perfect world all relationships are governed by these commands. But the world isn't perfect and neither are parent-child or guardian-child relationships." Ask the students to take a few moments to pray silently for God's forgiveness and healing in their relationships with their parents or guardians. End the worship time by dividing the group into four parts to pray the following prayer.

Group 1: We are all children. Help us to honor our parents. Group 2: For all who parent, help them to honor their children.

Group 3: Warm our hearts to one another.

Group 4: Warm the hearts of all people to the Lord.



The highest office. Before beginning the study of the Fourth Commandment, point out to the students that the Commandments are divided into two groups, or tables. The first three have to do with God's relationship with us. The final seven deal with our relationships with one another. Illustrate this idea by drawing a vertical line on the chalkboard or chart paper to indicate the intent of Commandments 1-3. Then cross this line with a horizontal line to indicate the intent of Commandments 4-10. The end product will be a cross—the symbol of Christ, who through his death and resurrection reconciled us to God and to one another.

Direct the students' attention to the Fourth Commandment by writing the commandment and its meaning on the chalkboard or chart paper. Ask, "Why do you think God places this commandment in the fourth position, immediately following the commandments pertaining to our relationship with God? (Because the second most important relationship, second only to our relationship with God, is the relationship between parent and child.)" Have a volunteer read aloud the last paragraph in this section on page 28 in the student book.

Representatives in your house. The nurture and protection of life is God's purpose in giving the Fourth Com-

mandment. What part do parents play in this? To answer this question, read aloud the paragraph that begins "Maybe you haven't..." on page 28 in the student book. Then have students make a list of things parents do for them on a daily basis. (Students may focus primarily on the provision of material necessities.) Ask, "How are these actions a fulfillment of God's expectation for the high office of being a parent? (They nurture and protect life.) What else does God expect of parents? (Answers may include that parents will love their children, train them to respect others, teach them helpful skills and attitudes, and share God's word and promise with them.)"

God has also given a high office and great responsibility to children. Ask "What does God command children to do? (Honor their parents.)" Write the words honor and love on the chalkboard or chart paper. Ask the students to suggest actions that relate to these two words and to identify similarities and differences between these actions. (Help the students recognize that the two are not synonymous, though they do overlap in some ways. For an excellent commentary on honor, see the paragraph that begins "You've heard . . ." on page 29 in the student book.) Next, ask students to describe ways that they honor their parents and others. (Answers may include by obeying them, speaking well of them, going out of the way to show recognition and thanks for what their parents do for them, helping them, seeking to emulate them, and praying for them.) Use the following questions to discuss the effect honoring one's parents can have: How do you think your parents feel when you honor them in the ways you have just described? (Proud, confident, loved.) How do parents who are never honored feel? (Frustrated, angry, like failures, frightened, unsure.) Do you think parents act differently toward their children if they are never honored? Why? (Answers may vary. Sometimes a child's honor for one's parent and a parent's love for one's child build on each other. However, much of love is unconditional, and that love can exist whether it is bonored or not.)

A large target. Remind students that parents, guardians, and those who support parents' work are God's representatives in the home. They have a huge job to do and consequently are a large target for the old self, the self that fights God every step of the way. Acknowledge that parents can and do fall short of their calling to be God's representatives. Ask, "What happens then? Does the command to honor one's parents no longer apply?" Use these questions to introduce the safety valve God provides for such situations and the limit God places on the Fourth Commandment. These are discussed on page 31 in the student book. Have a volunteer read these sections aloud.

Remind students that it isn't only parents who fall prey to sin. Children are also targets. Discuss this angle by using questions such as the following: What are some

conditions that occur within a home when the old self is on the loose in children? (Children cease to acknowledge and appreciate what their parents do for them or even that they care about them; children come to see family members as servants; children purposely attempt to frustrate and manipulate parents.) What is the end result if such actions and attitudes are allowed to continue? (The bome ceases to be a place of love, nurture, and protection.) Is it possible for the old self to be more visible in one party in the parent-child relationship? (Yes.) What should a person do when he or she always seems to be on the receiving end of the anger of the other party? (Answers will vary. Be prepared to speak directly to this question offering the reassurance that God does not condone abuse under any circumstances. God's purpose in giving the Fourth Commandment is to protect us.)

Parents' belpers. It isn't only parents or guardians who are included under the tent of honor, as this section points out. Make a list of parent helpers whom God commands children to honor. (See page 33 in the student book for suggestions.) Then have each student create a relationship pyramid that lists the names of people who are God's representatives in their lives. The names should be listed in order of importance, placing the most important at the top. Remind the students to place God at the very pinnacle of the pyramid for God is more important than even their parents.

The second table. Use this section to help students summarize what they have learned. Students should be able to identify the promise and the command in the Fourth Commandment as well as the purpose of the second table.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory.* Memorize the Fourth Commandment and Luther's statement of meaning.
- 2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (honor, God's representative, first table, second table). Add these to the flash cards from previous sessions. Choose one flash card and create a cinquain exploring the meaning of the concept listed on the flash card. A cinquain has five lines and is a very simple form of poetry. Follow the formula on the next page to create one (an example appears in parentheses).

One word: title (Parent)

Two words: describe the title (God's representative) Three words: express action (Loving, providing, caring) Four words: express feelings (Mine tries real hard) One word: recall the title (Dad)

Review Sessions 1-4 by asking each student to share his or her cinquain.

- 3. Journal. Use the following questions to guide your journal writing for this session: What kind of relationship is God calling me to have with my parents? What am I doing to encourage such a relationship? What more, if anything, can I do?
- 4. Conflict resolution. In groups of two or three, identify five or six of the major issues that cause conflict in the home. Place these on the chalkboard or chart paper, and then try as a class to rank them in the order of importance. Then have each group take one conflict on the list and suggest ways that children could reduce tension in the home relative to that issue. Share resulting ideas with the whole group. Next, have the groups suggest what parents might do in regard to the same issue. Share these suggestions with everyone. (Students' parents could be invited to participate in this project.)

5. Guests. Interview teachers to find out how they fill the role of parent helper. Or, invite a counselor, lawyer, or social worker to talk with the class about child abuse. Discuss the application of the Fourth Commandment in such situations.

6. Family day. Work with parents or other adults in the congregation to plan a family day to honor both parents and children.

Things to come_

Assign Chapter 5, "The Gift of Life," as reading for the next class session. Tell students to look for answers to these questions as they read: What is the purpose of the Fifth Commandment? What gift does this commandment protect? What kind of killings does it prohibit? How does this commandment apply to issues such as war and abor-

Gather newspapers for use in "Gathering Activity" described on page 17 of this guide.





FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction.

God gives life—and God takes measures to protect the lives of God's people. With the Fourth Commandment, God protects life where it begins, in the home with our parents. Now with the Fifth Commandment, God protects us outside our homes, as we meet and interact with other people.

The commandment carries a broad meaning of the notion of killing, a meaning that includes murder (premeditated, passion, accidental), suicide, withholding help or food, anger, insults, name-calling, and refusing to speak to someone.

Thus God protects the gift of life and puts us to work using our gifts to help others. You will note insights on the issues of war and abortion through this chapter. Please read Chapter 5 in the student book carefully!

Objectives

The session will help the students

■ learn that God gives the Fifth Commandment to protect them and their neighbors;

we explore the kinds of abuse encompassed by God's command not to kill;

▼ identify ways to protect and preserve life through their attitudes, words, and deeds.

Gathering activity

We live in a violent society. In some parts of the country, murders are tabulated on a daily basis. Have the students look through newspapers for articles about killing, murder, and suicide. Ask them to keep track of how many of these articles they find. Ask the students to speculate on why there is so much killing. Why do newspapers devote so much space to this kind of news? How do such articles make them feel?

Introduce the session focus by writing the Fifth Commandment and Luther's statement of its meaning on the chalkboard or chart paper.

Worship

Like all the other commandments, the Fifth Commandment both prohibits one type of action and requires another type. The kind of action God requires in this commandment is illustrated well in the story of the good

Samaritan. Have volunteers take turns reading this story aloud from Luke 10:25-37. Afterward write the following questions on the chalkboard or a sheet of chart paper: Who is my neighbor? What is my responsibility to my neighbor? Explain that these questions will be addressed in today's session. End the worship time with a short prayer like the one that follows.

Dear Lord, help us to take to heart your command to cherish and protect life. Give us the courage to speak out against and take action to end abusive situations. Help us to be our neighbor's keeper. Amen.



The gift of life. Remind students that the purpose of Commandments 4-10 is protection of life. Ask, "What kind of protection does the Fourth Commandment offer? (It protects us in our homes by giving us parents and parent helpers to love us, provide for our needs, and protect us from evil and harm.)" Explain that in the Fifth Commandment God's concern is to protect us in our neighborhoods and the world. Ask, "Why does God do this? (Because God is the giver of life and God loves us.)"

Murder and the living death. Have a volunteer read aloud the opening paragraph under "Murder and the Living Death" on page 36 in the student book. Then have the students list the different ways of killing that are included in that section. (Murder-premeditated, passion, and accidental; suicide; withholding help or food; anger, insults and name-calling; and refusing to speak to someone.) Ask, "Why is it wrong to kill? (Answers may include that only God has power over life and death; we usurp God's power when we kill; killing is against God's law; and killing desensitizes us to the value of human life and increases the likelihood of other forms of violence.) How do we attempt to 'get around' this commandment? (We categorize killing. For example, although first- and second-degree murder and voluntary and involuntary manslaughter are all forms of murder, they are not perceived to be equally serious offenses. In the same way, we point our finger at those who take their own or another's physical life while downplaying the more subtle and frequent ways we kill inwardly through anger, insults, and name-calling.) Why do you think God prohibits inward forms of killing, such as anger, insults, name-calling, and refusing to speak to one another? (God is passionate about

preserving and protecting life. These inward forms cause injury and suffering and can destroy life as surely as a gunshot or a knife.)"

Point out that the Fifth Commandment includes both prohibition and requirement. Have the students identify the two as they are spelled out in Luther's meaning to the commandment. ("Do not hurt our neighbor in any way"; "help him in all his physical needs.") Ask, "Who are our neighbors? (Anyone who needs our help.) What is our responsibility to our neighbor? (We are to help our neighbor with all physical needs.) What is included in this? (Food, clothing, shelter, and anything else that helps to maintain a full life.) How will we know when our neighbor needs help? (We will know because we have chosen to know, because we have not closed our eyes to our neighbor's situation.)" End by having students work together to compile a list of gifts God has given them that can be used to help their neighbors with physical needs.

How far does it go? The old self chafes under God's command to help our neighbor and immediately asks, "How much help do I have to give?" In asking this question the old self seeks to observe the letter but not the spirit of the law. But God's answer demonstrates that God is not foiled by such tactics. Have the students look up Luke 6:31 to learn just how far God intends us to go in helping our neighbor. ("Do to others as you would have them do to you.")

A clue in our neighbor. This section addresses the difficult question of how to apply the Fifth Commandment to the complex issues of war and abortion. Raise the following questions with the students: Are there times when it is necessary to kill? (Answers will vary.) What might they be? (Suggestions may include an abortion to save the mother from death or a living death; a war waged to protect others from an aggressor; a murder in self-defense or to protect another whose life is in immediate danger.) Is killing under these circumstances wrong? Why or why not? (Yes. Killing under any circumstance is wrong, but sometimes killing can be the better of two extremely bad alternatives.)

Conclude this portion of the session by having the students read through the newspapers used in "Gathering Activity" and find examples of people helping others in need. Have them report their findings to the group.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. Memory. Memorize the Fifth Commandment and its meaning.
- 2. *Key concepts*. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (kill, neighbor). Make a review sheet using these and the key concepts from previous sessions.
- 3. *Journal*. Address the question "How have I broken the Fifth Commandment most recently?" Ask forgiveness from those whom you have harmed.
- 4. Servant mission. Discuss and decide on some servant mission to do together (visit people who have difficulty leaving their homes, collect money or food for those in need, help with Special Olympics). After the activity is completed, talk about how it felt to take part in the activity. 5. Panel discussion. Invite a war veteran and a pacifist or conscientious objector to come to class to discuss their positions on observing the commandment not to kill. You may want to work together to provide some questions or guidelines for your speakers to follow.
- 6. Position papers. Work with partners to write a position paper expressing views on how the Fifth Commandment applies to one of the issues listed below. Present your papers at a future session.

Euthanasia

Anti-abortion protests that use violent tactics

Drug and alcohol abuse

Military spending versus money for social programs Care for the terminally ill

Things to come.

Assign Chapter 6, "Saying No to Say Yes," to be read before the next class session. Encourage the students to look for answers to these questions as they read: What are the purposes of marriage? What are three different kinds of adultery? What are the consequences of adultery?

Ask the students to bring pictures of their friends to the next class session. These will be used to create a friendship bulletin board during "Gathering Activity."



SAYING NO TO SAY YES



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction.

As the Fourth and Fifth Commandments protect life itself, the Sixth Commandment protects that which is nearest and dearest to life itself: friendship and marriage.

From the very beginning, God has been concerned about companionship. God desires all people to have some friends or companions so that no one is left alone. Companionship is one of the best and most important gifts next to life itself. We usually think of it in terms of friendship and marriage. Marriage is the only kind of companionship that is closer than friendship.

Objectives.

The session will help students

■ gain an understanding and appreciation of the gift and sanctity of marriage in terms of both companionship and procreation;

▼ identify the consequences of adultery to the marriage, children, and the community;

w recognize sexuality as a gift from God.

Gathering activity_

Friendship is a gift from God. To celebrate this gift, involve the students in making a bulletin board with a friendship theme. Ask the students to bring pictures of their friends, making sure the students know the pictures will be used on a bulletin board. (Remember to bring pictures of your friends, too.) Have available a variety of materials, including construction paper, magazines, books about friendship, books of quotes, markers, scissors, tape, glue, and pushpins. Work with the students to create a picture and word collage about friendship.

Worship

Give the students time to prepare short prayers thanking God for friends and the gifts that come with friendship. Have them share their prayers for the worship.



Saying no to say yes. Write the Sixth Commandment and Luther's meaning of the commandment on the chalkboard

or chart paper. Remind students that the purpose of all the Commandments is protection. Ask, "What is God protecting with the Fourth Commandment? (Our lives where they begin, in our homes.) How about the Fifth Commandment? (Our lives in our neighborhoods and the world.) What do you think God is protecting with the Sixth Commandment? (Answers may include marriage or sexuality.)" The best answer to this question is found on page 41 of the student book, in the final paragraph of the introduction to this chapter. Have a volunteer read this paragraph aloud, beginning with "The purpose of this commandment..."

When two become one. Direct the students to the bulletin board they created during "Gathering Activity." Add the following statement to the board: Next to life itself, friendship is one of the best and most important gifts that God gives us. Discuss this statement using questions such as these: What does it mean to have a friend? What do you expect of a friend? Is it possible to have a friend without being a friend?

Continue by telling the students that there is only one kind of companionship closer than friendship. Ask them to name it. (Marriage.) Ask volunteers to read aloud the last three paragraphs on page 42 in the student book, beginning with "When a man and a woman become one flesh in marriage..." and ending with "their gifts and needs; their whole selves." Reiterate that marriage is the only kind of companionship closer than friendship and God has special purposes for marriage. Work together to identify and discuss God's purposes for marriage. (Companionship; procreation/family; furthering of community.) These are addressed on page 43 in the student book.

When two become three. Examples from friendship may help students understand adultery. Have them think of two very close friends. Then ask them to imagine that these friends ceased to be friends. Ask, "What might have caused the break-up of these friends?" Two possibilities are included below:

▼ A third person became friendly with one of the two friends but not the other. Before long, the friend and the third person had become very close, and the first relationship seemed to be broken. Feelings were hurt and since no steps were taken to correct the problem, the relationship between the original friends died.

▼ One of the friends betrayed a confidence. Consequently the trust and confidence once felt between the friends was broken. Even though the friend apologized, the trust was not renewed and the relationship died.

Point out that marriages can also end because someone comes between the marriage partners and breaks them apart. Explain that this is what happens in adultery. (You may want to illustrate this point by using a carpenter's wedge to separate two pieces of wood that have been joined together.)

Divide the students into two groups. Have one group come up with a list of rules for friendship. (These may include don't betray secrets; do talk often; don't make light of a friend's problems; do go out of your way to help a friend.) Have the second group list rules for marriage. (Suggestions may include do treat each other as best friends; don't betray confidences; don't keep secrets from each other; do loving things for each other on a daily basis; don't fall in love with someone else.) Compare the lists. Where do they overlap? How are they different? End this portion of the session by asking a volunteer to read aloud the last two paragraphs under "When Two Become Three" on page 44 in the student book. This is a fine summary of God's reason for setting down a specific law to govern marriage.

Adultery kills. Remind the students that earlier in the session they learned that God has three purposes for marriage. List these on a chalkboard or chart paper as the students name them. (Companionship; procreation/family; community.) Then talk about the consequences that adultery has on marriage companionship, children, and community.

By now the students are probably wondering what this commandment has to do with them. Raise this question: Why do you think God gives you this commandment long before you're likely to be married? After listening to their answers, have the students look up Matthew 5:27-28 in their Bibles. Ask, "How do Jesus' words change your understanding of adultery? (Suggested answer: According to Jesus, adultery isn't only having sex with someone to whom you aren't married. Adultery includes thinking of and treating others as objects for our own personal pleasure and sexual gratification.)" Remind students that God's purpose in giving this commandment is to protect us. Reinforce this by reading aloud the final paragraph under "Adultery Kills" on page 45 in the student book.

For a lifetime. Invite the students to share their feelings about the value of making marriage a lifelong relationship. Follow this with an acknowledgment that many marriages do not last. Discuss how the Sixth Commandment applies in the case of irreparably broken marriages. (Divorce is never right, but in some situations divorce may be the best of bad alternatives.)

Conclude this portion of the session by having the students identify the command and the promise in the Sixth Commandment. A summary of this is contained in the last two paragraphs of this chapter in the student book.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. Memory. Working in pairs, take turns reciting from memory Commandments 1-5 and their meanings. Memorize the Sixth Commandment and its meaning.
- 2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (marriage, adultery.) Using all the flash cards from Sessions 1-6, arrange them in chronological order (according to sessions) and explain how each concept relates to the commandment studied in that session. 3. Journal. Watch an evening of television and then write about how television depicts sex, marriage, and friendship. Do these depictions honor or dishonor the Sixth Commandment? Are such depictions harmful or harmless? Support your answer.
- 4. Guests. Invite married couples who can be open and frank to come to talk about marriage. Write questions on paper that you would like to have the couples answer.
- 5. Sexuality as a gift. Find magazine and television advertisements in which sex is being used to sell products. Discuss how such tactics are abusive of God's gift of sexuality.
- 6. *Catch-up*. Hear and discuss reports of activities carried on outside of class. If you wrote position papers as described in "Possibilities and Projects" in Session 5, present them at this time.

Things to come_

Assign Chapter 7, "A Parade of Thieves," to be read before the next class session. Have the students look for the answers to these questions: Why is God concerned about our property? How are we dependent upon others as we go about our daily tasks? What does it mean to be a steward? What are the responsibilities that go along with being entrusted with property?



A PARADE OF THIEVES



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction.

This commandment protects property—and time—from all kinds of theft. The parade of thieves is long and inclusive, and the old self is right in there urging the thieves along, soothing their consciences.

The new you is described in terms of a steward who has been given responsibilities by God. To be entrusted with God's property carries with it responsibilities of caring for and using the property for the benefit of our neighbors and God. In this case, the responsibility also includes helping our neighbors improve and protect their property and means of making a living. The concept of stewardship means much more than giving money!

Objectives

The session will help students

- ▼ understand God's purpose in entrusting us with property;
- ▼ discover how property is to be used;
- W give thanks to God for gifts of property.

Gathering activity.

There are many precautions safety officials encourage the public to take in an effort to discourage or frustrate thieves. One example is to never leave car keys in the ignition when away from the car. Have the students list other examples. Talk about the effectiveness or the ineffectiveness of such precautions. Announce that the focus of the session is God's plan for ending theft.

Worship.

Create a worship litany of Bible texts. Begin and end the litany with everyone reading Exodus 20:15. In between, ask volunteers to read the following verses: Exodus 23:4-5; Leviticus 19:35-36; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Peter 4:9-11. End with a prayer asking for God's help to be honest in all our words and deeds.



A parade of thieves. Up to this point, God's commands have been directly concerned with the protection of life.

Does the Seventh Commandment deviate from this theme? Not at all. Introduce the study by writing the Seventh Commandment and its meaning on the chalkboard or chart paper. Then pose this question to the students: In the previous commandments, God has been concerned with the important task of protecting life. Why in this commandment is God worrying about property? (Answers will vary.) After listening to the students' answers, share the following information: God may seem to be concerned with protecting property, but actually God is protecting the things we need to live. God's main concern still is life. God gives us what we need to live, and now God forbids anyone from taking these things from you unfairly. But there is another reason why God gives us this commandment. God made everything. In addition to protecting your interests and your neighbors' interests, God is protecting what God has made and what rightly belongs to God.

It takes a thief. This section presents two scenarios. The first is of fair trade, the way God intends for the world to work. The second is of what happens when sin takes over and tempts us to gain through dishonest means whatever we can. Divide the class into two groups. Have both groups read the first four paragraphs of this section. Then have one group role-play an example of a fair trade. Have the other group role-play an example of something for nothing. Afterward talk about who lost and who gained in each scenario. Explain that it is God's desire that everyone should benefit. But with stealing, there is always a loser. That is why God forbids stealing. Have the students brainstorm several kinds of stealing. (Several are mentioned in the student book.)

The most common theft. In the previous section, the students identified the most obvious forms of stealing. Now encourage them to think creatively to come up with some less obvious ways of breaking the Seventh Commandment. Write their suggestions on the chalkboard or chart paper. (Suggestions may include breaking copyright laws to copy music, recordings, computer software, and printed materials; cheating on taxes; asking for reimbursement for expenses that were personal, and not business expenses; embezzlement; purchasing an item, using it, and then returning it; false advertising; and plagiarizing.) After making this list, have the students reread Luther's meaning of the Seventh Commandment, inserting "money and services" where it reads "money and property." Now what additional kinds of theft can the students name? Add these to the list on the chalkboard or sheet of chart paper. (Suggestions may include taking extralong coffee and lunch breaks; failing to leave a tip for good service; coming to work late or leaving early; working inefficiently or not up to one's potential; paying unfair wages; not providing adequate and safe working conditions.)

Ask the students to offer definitions for the word *thief*. Then share this definition with the students: A thief is anyone who tries to get more from his or her neighbors than he or she is willing to give in return. Ask the students to look through the list of thefts they have named. Ask, "Are you guilty of any of these or of any other actions in which you tried to get more from someone than you were willing to give in return? (Most will say yes.) Who is God talking to in this commandment? (All of us). Why did God give us this command? (By forbidding stealing, God protects each of us so that we will be able to keep what we need to live until the new day.)"

The Creator's stewards. Explain that as with all the other commandments, God doesn't only forbid one kind of activity, God also requires another. Ask, "What does God require of us in this commandment? (That we help our neighbors improve and protect their property and means of making a living.)" Tell the students that God is requiring us to be stewards, or caretakers, of the gifts God has given both to us and to our neighbors. Ask, "What are the traits of good stewards? (They are trustworthy and use what they have been given to benefit all.) What are some things God has entrusted to your care? (Answers will vary.) How can you be a better steward of these gifts? (Answers will vary.)"

Who is that generous? This section talks about God's generosity. Have the students review the first three paragraphs of this section on their own and look for examples of God's generosity. Go over the answers as a group. (Answers include that God is generous in deciding to be our God, in the good gifts God gives us though we do not deserve them, and in the trust God has in us to use these gifts generously and wisely to benefit ourselves and our neighbors.)

Summarize this session by having the students identify the command and the promise in the Seventh Commandment.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory*. Memorize the Seventh Commandment and its meaning.
- 2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (property, stewardship, theft). Add these to the flash cards from the other sessions and quiz each other on the concepts.
- 3. *Journal.* List the abilities you have. Indicate ways in which you are presently using them. Write a statement on "How I can better use what God has given me for the benefit of my neighbor and myself and to the glory of God." Write a prayer thanking God for these gifts.
- 4. Stewardship. An important part of being a good steward is returning to one's master a portion of what one has been given. God has given you time, money, and possessions. Contributing to the church through regular giving of time and money is one way of being a good steward. Do students in your congregation receive offering envelopes or time commitment sheets? If not, explore that possibility.
- 5. *Drama*. Act out the parable of the talents from Matthew 25:14-30. Consider staging the parable in a contemporary setting. Present the drama to another class, and follow it with a discussion on the Seventh Commandment.
- 6. Environmental concern. Hold a class discussion on an issue related to the environment or ecology. One possibility is "How can we care for what we have so there will be something left for future generations?" You also might want to undertake a service project related to environmental or ecological concerns.

Things to come.

Have the students read Chapter 8, "Fencing the Heart," before the next session. Encourage the students to look for answers to these questions as they read: Why is a good name important to us? What is included in "bearing false witness"? What does it mean to "speak the truth in love"? How does Jesus suggest differences between neighbors should be handled?



FENCING THE HEART



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction.

God's name is protected in the Second Commandment; in the Eighth Commandment, God protects *our* names and reputations. God wants others to treat our names with respect. If our reputations are bad, that limits the places we can go, the people we can see, the things we can do. If we have good names, there is freedom in each of these areas.

The old self wants the freedom a good name has, but it can only get it at the expense of other people's names. Thus it actively hunts for names it can drag down and attacks the good names of people, groups, and races. In that way, it tries to ruin people's names, break their spirits, or prod them to fight, and thus restricts their freedom and instills the seeds of prejudice against them. Students are all too familiar with how a person's reputation can be ruined by careless spreading of rumors or how a person's life can be destroyed when a group decides to discriminate against him or her.

The new you, on the other hand, aims to boost its neighbors and goes out of its way to find good things to say about them. There are bound to be differences between people. The old self is always ready to make something disruptive out of the first sign of a difference. But God speaks to us through Jesus Christ to help us gain benefits from these differences. So we have another gift (freedom) of the promise, a command for the purpose of protection, and then gifts to help carry out the command. This is God's way.

Objectives_

The session will help students

- w understand how God protects our freedom and the freedom of others by protecting our names;
- we explore how and why people dishonor the names of others:
- ▼ appreciate and abide in their calling to be children of God and inheritors of God's holy name.

Gathering activity.

Listed in the next column are the birth names and the assumed names of several famous people. Write all or

some of these names on the chalkboard or chart paper (do not list them in order). Have the students try to match each birth name with the proper assumed name. Go over the correct answers in class. Talk about why people, not only famous people, change their names. (Answers may include image, difficult spelling or pronunciation, adoption, to avoid ridicule, for protection [for example, government witnesses], a new beginning [for example, some immigrants and refugees], and attention [for example, a man who changed his name to a number].)

on who changed his runne to a namon j.)				
Fred Astaire	Frederick Austerlitz			
Jack Benny	Benny Kubelsky			
George Burns	Nathan Birnbaum			
Jerry Lewis	Joseph Levitch			
Ginger Rogers	Virginia McMath			
Roy Rogers	Leonard Slye			
John Wayne	Marion Michael Morrison			
Shelley Winters	Shirley Schrift			
Judy Garland	Frances Gumm			
Anne Bancroft	Anna Maria Italiano			
Julie Andrews	Julie Wells			
Lucille Ball	Diane Belmont			
Marilyn Monroe	Norma Jean Daugherty			
George Eliot	Mary Ann Evans			
O. Henry	William Sydney Porter			
Boz	Charles Dickens			
Currer Bell	Charlotte Bronte			

Worship.

Explain that in the early Christian church, it was customary to take a new Christian name at the time of one's Baptism. (Most baptisms were adult baptisms.) This new name was added to the person's given name as a sign that in Baptism one is reborn. Have the students look at the Service of Holy Baptism used in your congregation and note the words that are said as the baptismal waters are poured on the person's head or the person is immersed in the water. Have students read the words silently, inserting their given names in the appropriate place. Then invite the students to dip their hand in a basin of water and touch their forehead as a way of remembering that in Baptism they were claimed and named by God. Follow this with a brief time of silent prayer.



Fencing the heart. Say, "Your name is very important to God. God is as concerned about your name as God is about his own." Remind the students that God gave us a commandment that has to do with honoring God's name. Ask the students to recite this commandment (the Second Commandment) and its meaning. Ask, "Why did God give this commandment? (To protect the name of God and preserve it for a special use: for us to use to call upon God in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving.)" Explain that God also gives a commandment concerned with preserving and protecting our names and the names of our neighbors. Write the Eighth Commandment and its meaning on the chalkboard or chart paper. Read it aloud together.

The freedom in your name. Our names and our reputations go hand in hand. Introduce this idea by naming one at a time several well-known people. Ask the students to respond to each name with the first thing that comes into their mind. (For example, "Mother Theresa" might bring responses such as devout, kind, Christian, and friend of the poor. Conclusion: Mother Theresa has a good name in that she has a reputation for being a very good person.) Some names with which students may be familiar are Michael Jordan, Adolph Hitler, Jesus, Sally Ride, Martin Luther King Jr., George Washington, Lee Harvey Oswald, and Princess Diana.

Continue with a discussion of how we acquire our reputation and how difficult it is to change one's reputation (even though it may not be true). Ask the students to think of people they know who have a bad name or reputation. How do others treat them? (They may avoid or ridicule them and blame them for things they haven't done.) How do people treat those with a good name or reputation? (They may extend more trust, friendship, and caring.) Do our names or reputations affect how we see ourselves? (Yes. People with bad names are more likely to think of themselves as failures and may even try to live up to their poor reputations. People with good reputations are likely to be more confident and eager to interact with others. They try to keep their good reputations.)

How then, do we acquire a name? Have the students offer both positive and negative examples for how this happens. (Suggestions include the following: Positive—working hard to be a good student, athlete, or musician; staying out of trouble; treating others with respect; being trustworthy and honest; going out of our way to help others. Negative—spreading gossip and lies about others in order to make ourselves look good; pretending to be someone or something we aren't.)

Sum up this discussion and lead into the next one by reading aloud together the final four paragraphs of this section

The name dropper. The student book suggests several ways people bad-mouth others in an effort to make themselves look better (bearing false witness, slander, betrayal, gossip, truths, half-truths, and rumors). Work with the students to identify these ways and talk about how they can cause irreparable harm to another's name or reputation. Remind the students that all these actions are forbidden by God.

As with the other commandments, God not only forbids one action, God requires another. Say, "God forbids us to dishonor another's name, but God also goes a step further by requiring us to go out of our way to honor our neighbor's name." Ask for examples of how we can fulfill this command. (Refuse to listen to gossip; dispute information about our neighbor that we know to be untrue; give our neighbor the benefit of the doubt when he or she does something wrong; look for chances to praise or say something good about our neighbor; refuse to speculate on our neighbor's actions.) Point out that the commandment not only forbids us from making unkind statements in public about our neighbor, but it also forbids us to enjoy in silence a neighbor's faults. In other words, do not gloat or think ill of your neighbor.

The last portion of this section deals with the first and second steps of Jesus' protection of the Eighth Commandment. Both involve speaking to your neighbor. Ask students why Jesus would command us to talk things over when we are upset with our neighbors. (It shows respect; it is fair; it gives opportunity for working out differences.)

A second chance. Jesus protects the Eighth Commandment by going a step further and suggesting a way to handle differences between neighbors. Divide the class into small groups. Have them read Matthew 18:15-17 to identify and discuss the strategy that Jesus outlines in this text. (Talk with your neighbor privately; take one or two witnesses along with you and talk to your neighbor again; tell the authorities.) Encourage them to consider questions such as the following: Is this a reasonable way to deal with problems? What is the rationale behind each of these steps? How can this strategy protect your neighbor's good name? How can it protect yours? Why does Jesus make private confrontation the first step and not a last resort? If all disputes were handled in this way, do you think people would try harder to get along? Why or why not? Why is it so difficult to confront someone who has wronged you? Have the small groups share some of their observations with the whole group. (Note: New Revised Standard Version Bible refers to the offender as "another member of the church" while Revised Standard Version refers to the offender as "your brother." For this exercise,

use the term *neighbor* to represent the offender, as is done in the student book.)

End this portion of the session by asking a volunteer to read aloud the last two paragraphs of this section.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory*. Memorize the Eighth Commandment and its meaning. Review Commandments 1-7 as well.
- 2. *Key concepts*. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (name/reputation, false witness, gossip). Post flash cards from Sessions 1-8 in the class area for individual review.
- 3. *Journal*. Write about some specific way you have broken the Eighth Commandment. Ask for God's forgiveness. Then go to the person you have wronged and ask that person to forgive you as well. Write about it in your journal.

- 4. Slander, gossip, and half-truths. Look through supermarket tabloids for examples of slander, gossip, and half-truths. Talk about why this kind of journalism sells so well. Discuss the relationship between it and the Eighth Commandment.
- 5. Stereotypes. Share some common stereotypes that exist in our country (for example, "women are the weaker sex"). Talk about how stereotypes are usually formed with little regard for the truth and how they go hand in hand with prejudice. Discuss how you can help combat prejudice.
- 6. *Epitaphs*. Write epitaphs for your tombstone that express what you want people to remember about you.

Things to come _____

Have the students read Chapter 9, "Counterfeit Hope," before the next class session to find out the protective nature of the Ninth and Tenth Commandments. Have them look for answers to these questions: What is coveting? What is hope? Why is coveting called "counterfeit hope"? What do these commandments protect us from?

Ask one of the students to prepare a short prayer for worship in Session 9.



9 COUNTERFEIT HOPE



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction.

The Ninth and Tenth Commandments have to do with the protection of relationships and belongings that are precious to us and that can be taken away by a covetous person. They also protect us from harmful attitudes and actions of our own.

The word *covet* means to desire, to long for, or to want someone or something that belongs to another person. In order to understand fully the implication of these two commandments, it is necessary to distinguish between hope and coveting, for they include some of the same characteristics. It is God who gives us hope. Hope is centered on God's promises, and it means having something to look forward to, to wait for. The old self offers coveting as a false hope, centered not on God's promises but rather on ourselves.

Objectives _

The session will help students

- ▼ explore the difference between hoping and coveting;▼ understand how God protects them from both their
- neighbor's wishes and their own;

 W thank God for the hope that is theirs in Christ Jesus.

Gathering activity.

Begin to focus on what is to come by going around the room and asking each student to complete the following statement: "I wish I _____." You may want to provide an example by beginning yourself. Acknowledge that everyone has wish lists and aspirations but that sometimes even good and seemingly harmless wishes can get out of hand and endanger others and ourselves. Explain that this is the focus of Session 9.

Worship

This session deals with the struggle within each of us to place our hope in God's promises or to be swept away by the counterfeit hopes created from our own coveting. Jesus addresses this struggle in the parable of the rich fool, found in Luke 12:15-21. Read this text aloud. Discuss with the students the point of Jesus' story. Close with prayer. If you asked a student to prepare a prayer as was suggested in Session 8, have him or her offer it now.



Counterfeit hope. Begin the session by asking the students to define the words *hope* and *wish*. Write their suggestions on the chalkboard or chart paper. Ask the students to compare the two definitions. How are hope and wish the same? (Both have to do with our desires for someone or something.) How are they different? (Hope is something we can't live without. This becomes more apparent when one considers that the opposite of hope is despair, while the opposite of wish is not to wish or desire. Hope is based in something and entails the possibility for fulfillment. Wish is nothing more than "wishful thinking." Hope, by providing something to look forward to in the future, helps us to live productive lives in the present. Wishes focus our attention on that which may never come to be. Because of this, wishes may lead to envy, jealousy, resentment, and frustration.) Point out that a synonym for wish is covet. Continue by saying, "God knows the difference between hoping and wishing, and while providing us with all kinds of hope, God also seeks to protect us from our own selfish desires or wishes and those of our neighbor. God does this by giving us two commandments." Since the commandments and their meanings are quite long, you may want to ask the students to read the commandments and meanings as they are printed on page 59 in the student book rather than write them out for the students to read.

Ask the students to suggest examples of the kinds of hope God provides. (Answers may include hope for a new self and a new day when we will live with God; hope in God's promise to care for and provide for them; hope in God's never-ending love; hope in the forgiveness God gives them in Christ.) Discuss how such hope empowers them in their daily lives. One way to do this is to ask the students to imagine what it would be like to live without the hope God provides.

Explain that no one can live without hope. But since our old self, the self bound by sin, cannot find hope in the Lord, it creates counterfeit (false) hope. In place of the hope based on God's promises, it offers coveting. It sets our hearts on getting something or someone who belongs to someone else.

Fencing the wish. As this section points out, our wishing, or coveting, threatens the safety of our neighbors just as

their desire to have what we have threatens our safety. Have the students offer examples of how this works. (One example involves the popularity of certain kinds of athletic shoes and jackets. Some of these items are in such demand that young people have killed other young people in order to steal their clothing.) Explain that God's first purpose in giving us these commandments is to keep us safe. Have a volunteer read aloud the final paragraph of "Fencing the Wish" on page 62 in the student book.

The bad penny comes back. God has another purpose in giving us these commandments. That purpose is to keep us free. Talk with the students about instances when a dream someone possessed came to possess him or her. One illustration would be the use of steroids by athletes. In their pursuit to be the best, some athletes have relied on the illegal and unethical use of steroids to boost their performances. In many cases, the result has been the loss of career, health, even life. How is this just another form of slavery? Give some examples of how we can become enslaved to possessions as well as to dreams. (See page 63 in the student book, "Cars aren't the only culprits..." for some insights.)

Protecting us from ourselves. Say to the students, "The old self is resilient. When one false hope is dashed, the old self finds another to replace it. This routine continues until there is no more hope and we are left in despair. God's purpose is to nip coveting in the bud, to put an end to our search for false hope before we ever get started. That's why God says, 'You shall not covet...'" Point out that though the Commandments forbid coveting, they don't discourage hoping. Look again at the definition for hope that you came up with at the beginning of the session. This is the kind of hope God wants us to have: hope that comes from knowing God's promises, hope that gives life and does not harm us. Conclude this portion of the session by reading the final paragraph of this section.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory*. Memorize the Ninth and Tenth Commandments and their meanings.
- 2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (hope, covet). Use these and the flash cards from previous sessions to play a review game. Divide into two groups. The groups race each other to provide the correct question for a specific concept (the concept is the answer to the question). For example, show the flash card that reads "neighbor." Students should respond with a

question such as "Who is anyone who needs my help?" 3. Journal. Make a list of things you wish you had. Then make another list of the things you already have. Write a prayer thanking God for your many blessings and asking for assistance in not becoming enslaved by your wish list. 4. Drama. Have small groups dramatize some aspect of a young person's daily life, showing in an exaggerated way how the possessions and activities youth prize can enslave them. Allow 15 minutes of preparation before each group makes its presentation to the class. Discuss how real the possibility of such enslavement is.

5. Scams. There are many stories about how people fall prey to schemes, even though they know that the schemes must be "too good to be true." Talk about why that happens. Share stories about scams that have suckered good people out of thousands, even millions, of dollars. Discuss why people fall for scams and how counterfeit hope may play a part.

6. *Bible study.* Read and consider how the following texts apply to what you have studied in Session 9: Romans 15:4-5; Leviticus 19:9-10; 1 Kings 21:1-16; Psalm 37:1-11; Amos 5:11-15, 24; Romans 7:7-12; Colossians 3:5; James 1:13-15.

Things to come.

Have the students read Chapter 10, "A Jealous God," in the student book before the next class session to find out what God wants to tell us about God and God's Commandments. Have them look for answers to these questions: What does God mean when God says God is jealous? How do our sins affect future generations? What is the purpose God has in mind for us?

Since Session 10 is the last session dealing with the Ten Commandments, set aside time during the session to complete any activities or projects begun in earlier sessions. You might want to make plans to use the review on page 76 of this guide.



10 A JEALOUS GOD



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction _

In this epilog to the Commandments, God lets us know in no uncertain terms that God means business. But God also is acting out of love. It is as if God were saying, "If you won't listen to the Commandments for my sake, listen to them for your own good."

It is because of the tenacity of the old self that God makes these statements so strong, speaking of jealousy, terrible threats, and an even greater promise. The old self in each of us is no joke. It is that wily, sneaky, tricky old Adam or Eve that makes us selfish, concerned first, foremost, and always about ourselves. It is the old self inside of us that continually fights, squirms, and struggles to come between God and us and between our neighbor and ourselves.

In no way, by ourselves, are we any kind of a match for the old self in us. God knows that. Nor by ourselves can we become the kind of persons God intends us to be, since the old self grabs every opportunity to prevent the new you from coming into being.

So through the Commandments, God controls the old self while God helps the new you. God guides and protects us while the old self is on the loose, and God continues to talk with us, guide us, and protect us through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Objectives.

The session will help the students

- wunderstand that God's jealousy is God's love;
- ▼ identify God's threat and promise and explore God's presence in both;
- ▼ appreciate God's Commandments as gifts that help us live safe, happy, and productive lives.

Gathering activity_

God, our loving parent, has established some very important rules for us to live by. These rules, called the Ten Commandments, are given out of love for us and concern for our safety and well-being. To ensure that these rules are taken seriously, God imposes strong penalties for breaking them. It may be easier for the students to understand this idea if it is compared to the way things work in their own homes. Ask the students to share one rule or expectation that their parents have for them. Use these questions for discussion: What is the purpose of the rule?

What is the consequence if the rule is broken? Why do parents punish children when they break rules?

Worship -

Since this is the last session having to do with God's gift of the Commandments, use the worship time to write a litany of thanks for the Commandments. Have the students work alone or in small groups to write a line or two offering thanks for a particular commandment. Be sure all the Commandments are addressed in the litany. (You may want to combine the Ninth and Tenth Commandments). When all have finished, pray the litany aloud.



A jealous God. Begin the session by asking the students to share some examples of jealousy in a friendship, in a professional (work-related) relationship, or in a marriage. Talk about what, if anything, jealousy has to do with love. Have the students read aloud together the epilog to the Ten Commandments that is found on page 65 in the student book. To talk about what it means to refer to God as a "jealous God," use these questions: Are we to understand God's jealousy in the same way as we understood jealousy in the situations described earlier? Of whom is God jealous? What has God's jealousy got to do with love? (Answers will vary.) Explain that God's jealousy has everything to do with love. God is jealous because God doesn't want anyone or anything else claiming your love. God's love is a more intense love than we can ever imagine, a passion that is constantly at work to bring us closer to the God who is the source of all love.

The threat and the promise. This section points out that God loves us and is jealous of anything or anyone that tries to take God's place in our lives. Because God loves us so much and is so determined to make us his own, God attaches a terrible threat and a wonderful promise to the Commandments. Have the students identify the threat God makes ("visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children ... of those who hate me") and rephrase it in their own words (God will punish those who break the Commandments). Use the following questions to discuss the students' feelings about the threat God makes: Does this sound like the words of a loving parent? (Answers will vary. Keep in mind that loving parents do set down

rules for their children and determine consequences if those rules are not kept.) Why do you think God felt it was necessary to make such a strong threat? (To get our attention and to make us see that God is serious about the Commandments; to remind us that God is in control and that God will have the last word.) Do you think God means to keep the threat? (God loves us too much to let us live with all the consequences of our sins but God will hold us responsible for our actions and the results that come from them.) To whom is the threat directed? (To all who break God's Commandments.) Does this include you? (Yes. No one is without sin.)

God also warns that future generations will live with the consequences when we break the Commandments. One example of how this happens is described on page 67 in the student book, beginning with "The consequences can keep going, too." Have the students suggest other possibilities. (Suggestions may include that children with alcoholic parents frequently grow up to be codependent or alcoholics themselves; whole families can suffer abuse because of the criminal activity of one family member.)

Remind the students that God is gracious and though God's threat is great, God's willingness to forgive is even greater. This is apparent in the promise God attaches to the Commandments. Have the students identify the promise ("showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments"). Then ask, "Why do you think God made such a wonderful promise immediately after making such a terrible threat? (For the same reason God made the threat: to get our attention and to make us see that God is serious about the Commandments and that God is determined to be our God.)" Have a volunteer read aloud the paragraph on page 68 in the student book that begins "Both the threat and the promise have the same purpose." Remind the students that this is the same as when their parents give them rules to follow until they are old enough to make their own decisions and care for their own needs.

The promise and the purpose. Acknowledge that all the Commandments are precious gifts for us from the God who loves us, but they are not equal in importance. The First Commandment is the most important. In small groups, have the students discuss why the First Commandment is the most important. (Each of the other commandments could actually begin with the First Commandment: "I am the Lord your God, therefore you...") A summary of the relationship between the First and the rest of the Commandments is found on page 69 in the student book, beginning with "All the rest of the Commandments follow from this one."

Jesus sums up all 10 of the Commandments very succinctly in two sentences. Have the students look up Jesus' summarization in Matthew 22:34-40. Talk about what it means to love oneself. Be sensitive to students in the

group who may not have a good self-image. Help them understand that to love oneself means to recognize oneself as a beloved and forgiven child of a merciful God. Our Baptisms can't be nullified. We are God's children forever. God's love is steadfast.

God is at work. Conclude this portion of the session by having the students talk about what they think God's new creation will be like.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory*. Memorize the epilog to the Commandments and its meaning.
- 2. *Key concepts*. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (jealousy, love). Use the flash cards from Sessions 1-10 to review the Commandments and what the students have learned.
- 3. *Journal*. Write a letter to God thanking God for the Commandments. Give reasons why they are important to you.
- 4. Family systems. Invite a counselor to talk with the class about family systems. This can shed some light on how future generations can and do suffer for the sins of their forebears.
- 5. *Guests.* Ask three or four people to come to class and talk about how a specific commandment has had special meaning for them. This provides opportunity to hear expressions of faith from others in the congregation.
- 6. *Catch-up*. Complete all projects from previous sessions. Write thank-you notes to any guests who visited the class to share their expertise and faith.

Things to come-

Have the students read Chapter 11, "I Believe," in the student book before the next class session. This is the first of six sessions on the Apostles' Creed. Ask the students to look for answers to the question "How do I get to know God?"



Hidden behind the simplicity of Luther's explanations of the three articles of the Creed is one of the most crucial distinctions in theology. It is the distinction between a theology of glory and a theology of the cross. This turns everything over, shifting the focus from the heaven-storming religious person to the earth-storming God who, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, takes hold of us.

The difference is a change in direction. In a theology of glory, the direction is from us to God. We are supposed to find God, get to know God, let God into our lives, and make decisions about God. We are active; God is passive. We have the verbs; God sits still in nouns and adjectives.

In the New Testament, and in Luther's theology of the cross, the direction is just the reverse. God's action stands frontstage, backstage, and center: God alone creates; God alone redeems; God alone sanctifies. God is active; we are passive. God has all the verbs and the verbs are for us, breaking in upon us to kill and make alive (1 Samuel 2:6).

It's this reversal of directions that shapes each of Luther's explanations. Rather than attempting to draw a picture of God, as a theology of glory attempts to do, Luther proclaims the "down-to-earth" God who in grace creates, redeems, and sanctifies.

The creator God

Whether it is a sophisticated philosophical argument for God's existence or a youth's seemingly simple request for some kind of proof, a theology of glory always assumes that finding God is something we do. We take the initiative as human beings, using reasons or moral efforts to look for God.

Luther started out on this basis: How can I find a gracious God? But his breakthrough didn't come in the form of an answer to that question. Rather, it came when he realized that the directions were reversed—that it is not a matter of our finding God but rather of God finding us.

The breakthrough came in Luther's study of the phrase "the righteousness of God." As long as he understood "righteousness" as a quality of God that people have to find and define, the phrase filled him with fear and terror. But when he understood that Scripture uses "righteousness" to mean "the righteousness by which God makes us righteous," everything turned over. For then it was not a matter of our seeking to make ourselves righteous by righteous deeds. Rather, God himself makes us righteous by God's own doing.

Getting to know God, then, or finding out what God is like, is not the result of our action, whether it is the

action of reason or some other human capability. Our own action blinds us to God. Rather, God reveals God's own self to us. God takes the action, revealing himself as our Father and Lord in the cross. "So also in John 14," Luther says, "where Philip spoke according to the theology of glory: 'Show us the Father.' Christ forthwith set aside his flighty thought about seeking God elsewhere and led him to himself saying, 'Philip, he who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9). For this reason true theology and recognition of God are in the crucified Christ..." (*Luther's Works*, vol. 31 [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957], p. 53).

Beginning from this understanding, when he explains the First Article, Luther doesn't indulge in some kind of speculative description of God. "We should emphasize the words *maker of heaven and earth*," he says in the Large Catechism. "What is meant by these words . . .? Answer: I hold and believe that I am a creature of God; that is, that he has given and constantly sustains my body, soul, and life . . ." (Book of Concord, p. 412).

The explanation of the First Article has two focal points: God's creating and our creatureliness. God is the maker of heaven and earth. We are known by what we are: creatures. We are not self-generating, self-sustaining, or self-sufficient. Without God's creating and sustaining gifts, we would not exist.

His only Son, our Lord

In understanding Christ, a theology of glory keeps the same sense of direction. It begins with our action, makes Christ a glorified accessory to it, and assumes that the whole purpose of the Second Article is to show how we move toward God.

So the explanation of Jesus according to a theology of glory goes something like this: God made us with a free will, and we sinned. God gave the law to show us the way to salvation. It didn't work, so Christ came to make up for us and put us back on the track again. The two most important features of the Second Article for this view are Christ's divinity and the work Christ did to preserve the law.

Luther not only turns that over, he attacks it at just about every point. We do not have a free will. We are "lost and condemned" persons, in bondage to sin, death, and the power of the devil. The law is not, was not, and never will be a way of salvation. Christ is not and was not some kind of repair job to the law, fixing us up so that we could make it on our own.

Rather, it is just the reverse. The law is temporal and



Christ is eternal. "He was in the beginning with God," as John says (1:2). He is "the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Revelation 22:13). From the beginning of time, before the world was made, it has been God's intention to come to each of us in Christ, to break us out of bondage to the law and set us free as "a child then also an heir" (Galatians 4:7).

Thus Luther's explanation of the Second Article is "down-to-earth." "Let this be the summary of this article," he says, "that the little word *Lord* simply means the same as Redeemer, that is, he who has brought us back from the devil to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness, and now keeps us safe there. The remaining parts of this article simply serve to clarify and express how and by what means this redemption was accomplished—that is, how much it cost Christ and what he paid and risked in order to win us and bring us under his dominion" (*Book of Concord*, p. 414).

The emphasis in the explanation, then, is on Christ's divinity in his humanity, his hiddenness, suffering, and death for us. The atonement is understood not as a transaction between God and himself or between God and us, but as God's gracious act in Christ on our behalf.

The Spirit of life

The Holy Spirit doesn't have much of a place in a theology of glory. It either gets relegated to some supernatural corner of life where all it does is perform heavenly stunts, or else it gets locked up in an institution so that the church claims to do what only the Spirit can do.

Either way, the theology of glory continues to emphasize our movement toward God. "Since Christ has done this for you," the standard line goes, "you should do something for him." Then the blanks are filled in with some currently fashionable cause or concern.

Luther opens his explanation with a radical attack on that kind of thinking: "I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him." Again, it is the theology of the cross zeroing in on us. The heaven-storming creature trying to make it by its own reason or strength gets leveled and destroyed.

Its place is taken by a new creature, raised to newness of life by the gift of God in the Spirit. "I cannot ... but the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and kept me in true faith." All of this happens not through religious dreaming, ecstasy, or supernatural stunts, but in the most common of all places—the Christian congregation—

through the most common of all means—the Word and the sacraments.

Finally, the distinction between a theology of glory and the theology of the cross shapes not only Luther's explanation of the Creed, but his understanding of the purpose of the Creed. To a theology of glory, the Creed is a law describing what we have to believe to be closer to God. In a theology of the cross, the Creed is a joyous proclamation and confession of what God has done to come close to us. It can be prayed, sung, and shouted, not because we somehow have to move in on God, but out of joy and gratitude that God moves in on us, creating, redeeming, and sanctifying us in faith.

Resources

Some sources for further reading follow.

On the Creed itself, J. N. D. Kelly's *Early Christian Creeds* (New York: Longman, 1972) is a fine discussion of the historical development of the Creeds.

On the Second Article, see Gustaf Aulen's *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement* (translated by A. G. Hebert; American ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1961).

For a discussion of the change of directions and the theology of the cross, see Forde's Where God Meets Man (see page 7 of this guide). In Luther's own writings, see the Large Catechism; Volume 31 of Luther's Works [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957], which contains "Heidelberg Disputation," sermon on "Two Kinds of Righteousness," and "The Freedom of the Christian"; and commentaries on Romans (Luther's Works, vol. 25 [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972]) and Galatians (Luther's Works, vol. 26-27 [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963 and 1964 respectively]).

The following resources are out of print but would be helpful if you have access to them.

Knutson, Kent Sigvart. *His Only Son Our Lord: Ideas about the Christ.* Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966.

Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *The Apostles' Creed in the Light of Today's Questions*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972.

Thielicke, Helmut. *I Believe: The Christian's Creed.* Translated by John W. Doberstein and H. George Anderson. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968.

Wingren, Gustaf. *Creation and Law.* Translated by Ross McKenzie. American ed. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961.

Wingren, Gustaf. *Gospel and Church*. Translated by Ross McKenzie. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964.





FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction.

This chapter introduces the Creed by telling us that we cannot get to know God on our own; God makes God known to us. That each of us might believe, God helps us to know who God is, what God does, and what we can receive and expect from God. The Creed summarizes what God has revealed.

The ways in which God chooses to be revealed to us are also introduced, each to be dealt with separately in the following chapters. God is revealed through the Word in events, as with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets; through Jesus Christ and his doings among people; and through the Holy Spirit—all that we might say "I believe."

The tensions between the old self and the new you, evident throughout the Commandments, are present also in this situation, as might be expected. In the Creed, it is not only revealed to us how the old self dies, but also how God raises up the new you who can say "I believe,—in God, the Father almighty, in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,—and in the Holy Spirit."

Objectives .

The session will help the students

- ▼ discover how God becomes known to us;
- wunderstand that God chooses to be revealed to us in order that we might believe;
- ▼ consider things in their own lives that discourage faith and those that help them believe.

Gathering activity

To focus the students' attention for this first session on the Apostles' Creed, have them make a list of "I believe" statements. Invite the students to use a variety of colored markers to write their statements below the heading "I Believe..." written on a large sheet of chart paper. Encourage participation by listing one or two things that you believe.

Worship.

Chapter 11 begins with comments about God that are based on two parables from the gospel of Luke. After having volunteers read the stories from Luke 15:3-10, use these questions as the basis for discussion: How is God portrayed in these parables? (As a woman searching for a lost coin and as a shepherd who risks the rest of the

flock to look for a lost lamb.) Who might the lost coin and the lost sheep represent? (Us.) What descriptive words or phrases for God come to mind when you think about these stories? (Answers may include loving, concerned, diligent, parental, and willing to take risks on our behalf.) Conclude by saying, "These parables tell us something very important. They tell us that God, the God who decided to be our God, comes to look for us. Why? Not to scold or punish us, but to show us what God is like, to walk with us, to care for us, to share every part of our lives, and to fill our lives with hope and joy." Pray the following prayer.

Gracious God, come into our hearts and our lives and help us to believe. Amen.



I believe. Since the Apostles' Creed is the focus of this and the next five sessions, it would be both appropriate and helpful to provide some historical information about the Creed and to take a cursory look at the Creed in its entirety. Begin by reading the Creed aloud to the students. Go slowly and encourage the students to raise their hands anytime they have a question about what is being read. On the chalkboard or chart paper, write their questions, but do not attempt to answer them at this time. Keep a copy of these questions, as they will serve as a way to evaluate learning at the culmination of the study of the Creed.

On the chalkboard or chart paper, also write the questions listed below. Use information from the student book and from other resources from your pastor or church library to provide background information on the Creed. Some important points you will want to cover include the following:

- What is a creed?
- ₩ Why is this creed called the Apostles' Creed? What is an apostle?
- What is the Creed's purpose? (Consider Luther's comment that through the Creed we learn "to know God perfectly.")
- When and how is the Creed used? (Look at various orders of service including Holy Baptism, Affirmation of Baptism, Burial of the Dead, and Holy Communion.)

God comes out of hiding. This section explains why we can't know God in the same ways we know others—

through observations and reasoning. The following activities will help the students understand this.

Have students talk in pairs about how they got to know a good friend. Apply this to attempts to get to know God. What difference does it make that we can't see God or talk to God face to face?

Share this statement from page 74 in the student book: "If we can't see God, maybe we can find God by looking at the world around us, observing what happens, and reasoning back from there." Using these questions, talk about the kind of picture of God we get from observing nature: What's wrong with this picture? (See pages 74-75 in the student book.) Why isn't the picture of God we get from nature satisfactory? (Remind the students of the "seeker" God from the parables in Luke 15.)

Point out that in the previous exercises you tried to get some notion of who God is and what God is like. Ask, "What did we learn about what happens when we try to know God on our own terms, by our observations and reasoning? (We don't meet with much success. Our methods don't apply, and the end results are either wrong or unsatisfactory.) If we can't find God by our own reason or strength, effort or understanding, how can we know who God is and what God is like? (We don't find God. Rather, God makes himself known to us.) How does God do this? (In the Word and in the things the Word does, as with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets; in Christ; and through the Holy Spirit.)" Explain that the Creed summarizes what we know about God, what God has revealed of himself to us.

A word that works. Point out that the Apostles' Creed is divided into three "I believe" statements. Have the students name them. (I believe in God, the Father almighty; I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; I believe in the Holy Spirit.) Explain that together these statements contain the sum and substance of God's activity in our lives: God creates, God saves, God sustains. Introduce the terms Holy Trinity, triune God, and God the Three in One. Some students may not be familiar with these names for God. Talk about them in terms of the "I believe" statements in the Creed. (It may be helpful to read aloud the first nine paragraphs of this section.)

As was pointed out earlier, God makes himself known to us in a variety of ways. But above all, it is in Christ that God makes himself known to us. Take time to reflect on the person of Christ. Consider the following: Who was he? What did he do? What did he teach about God? Ask a volunteer to read aloud two paragraphs on page 78 in the student book beginning with "Once we begin to know what God is like in Christ...."

Invite student responses to the question "Why does God want us to know him?" (Answers will vary. Help students understand that God's purpose in revealing himself to us is to inspire in us the confidence that God is our God and God's promises are for us and to enable us

to say "I believe"). Use the following activity to help the students understand that believing in God isn't automatic and it isn't always easy. In groups of three or four, have the students discuss things that happen in their everyday lives that discourage them from believing in God. Talk about the part the old self plays in discouraging faith. Then repeat the activity but this time have them name things that help them believe. End by assuring the students that God is at work in our lives, destroying our unbelief and making believers of us.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory*. The Creed is divided into three articles. Begin to memorize the First Article and its meaning as found on page 81 in the student book.
- 2. *Key concepts*. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (Creed, apostle, Trinity). Work with a partner to write definitions for each concept.
- 3. Journal. For one week, write down instances when you feel that in some way God affects your life. Comment on how such instances reveal something about God to you and how such revelation helps you believe. Talk about this with your friends and classmates.
- 4. *Bible study.* Read the first two chapters of Genesis and the first chapter of John. Talk about what these texts tell you about God. Make a creation collage reminding you of these insights.
- 5. *Interview.* Ask parents, grandparents, or friends why they believe in God. Write a short paragraph about what you learned from their responses. Next session share this information with your classmates.
- 6. The Holy Trinity. The Creed presents the full expression of God as Father, Son, and Spirit. Use materials from your pastor or your church library to further explore the Trinity. You will discover that the Trinity is symbolized in a number of ways (such as three interlocking rings). Talk about the different symbols. Then create the symbols using a variety of materials and techniques. Decorate the class area with the finished products.

Things to come.

Have the students read Chapter 12, "Not How but Who," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: What question does the Bible answer about creation? What was at the heart of the temptation in the Garden of Eden? What are some of the gifts God gives us? Why does God give us these gifts?



$12\,$ NOT HOW BUT WHO

C

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction_

The First Article expresses belief in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth (including you and me and all that exists), giver of all that we need to live day to day. God the Father almighty promises to be our Lord and God and to give us every good thing.

Remember the intent of the Creed as explained in Session 11: God becomes known to us, is revealed to us, that we might believe. We discovered further that God does this in and through Jesus Christ. Jesus is our truest source of knowledge about God. Through him we learn to call God "our Father."

If we want to learn more about God, we need to ask the right questions. These are "who" questions: Who made heaven and earth? Who gives life? Who provides for our daily needs? The corollary question "Why?" leads us right back to God's love for us.

The old self always wants to ask "How?" How did God do it? While this question may be important in other contexts, for faith the prior question is far more basic: that is, *Who* made the heavens and the earth? That is the question both Bible and Creed are intent on answering. They steer us away from the old self's traps and toward the path of discovery.

Objectives.

The session will help the students

- wunderstand what it means to be God's creatures;
- wexplore God's gifts to us and God's purpose in giving them;
- ♥ offer thanks and praise for God's good gifts.

Gathering activity.

God's gifts to us are bountiful in number and variety. Invite the students to share examples of gifts God has given to them, naming gifts that begin with the various letters of the alphabet. Gather the students (and yourself) into a circle. Toss a ball or beanbag to one person in the circle and have him or her name a gift beginning with the letter a, such as athletic ability. That person then tosses the ball or beanbag to someone else, who must name a gift beginning with the letter b. The game continues in this manner through the whole alphabet. Try to keep the game moving quickly. After all, God's gifts are so abundant that we shouldn't need much time to think of examples!

Worship

The focus of this session is the First Article of the Creed, which expresses belief in God the creator of heaven and earth and giver of all good gifts. In keeping with this theme, use Psalm 104 as a worship text. Point out that this is a song of praise to God the creator and provider. You might also suggest that the students look for parallels between the psalm and the story of creation. Read Psalm 104 responsively.



Not how but who. This section points out that recognition of the gifts in our lives inspires us to ask, "Who makes all of this happen? How does it work?" The first question is by far the most important. To help students grasp this idea, ask them to imagine that upon arriving home from school, they discover a beautifully wrapped package outside the door. The tag on the gift clearly states that the gift is meant for them, but there is no indication of who sent it. Discuss the students' reactions by asking questions such as the following: How would you feel? (Excited but curious.) What would you do? (Try to find out who had sent it.) Why would you want to know who had given the gift to you? (In order to tell them it was liked and to thank them for both the gift and the thoughtfulness.) Explain that the same is true for our relationship with God. When we recognize the many gifts we have been given (through no effort of our own), we instinctively desire to knowthe Spirit inspires us to ask—who is responsible for the gifts, so that we can offer our thanks and praise.

Now turn to the First Article of the Creed and its explanation on page 81 in the student book. Look at the gifts that are mentioned. Consider whom we name as being responsible for these gifts. ("I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of beaven and earth.") Note our response to the gifts and attitude toward the giver. ("Therefore I surely ought to thank and praise, serve and obey bim.")

Point out that there is another question that comes to mind concerning God's gifts to us. Invite the students to suggest what it might be. (How does all this happen?) Discuss the question to help the students understand how God uses us to deliver God's gifts. This is summarized beginning at the bottom of page 84 with the paragraph that begins "God makes us hands or channels for God's purposes."

The old you's answer. The question "How does all this happen?" has merit in that it assures us that God blesses our gifts and abilities and uses them to accomplish God's purpose. But the question can also lead to trouble. Work together to come up with a list of problems that develop if we place our emphasis on "how" rather than "who" questions. (The crux of the matter is that we forget or play down the fact that God gives the gifts and instead fall into the I-can-do-it-myself trap.) Reflect on the statement "God helps those who help themselves." How is this statement indicative of the old self unleashed in our lives? Point out that this is not a verse from the Bible, though many people think it is.

Have the students work with a partner to read from Genesis 3:1-13 the story of Adam and Eve's rebellion and answer the following questions: What were God's gifts to Adam and Eve? (Promise to be their God; one another; the earth and its animals; a responsibility to care for the earth.) What else did God give them? (Limits, specifically that they could not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.) How can limits also be gifts? (Approach this by pointing out that parents set limits for their children in order to protect them and see to their well-being.) Did Adam and Eve recognize God's limits to be gifts? (No.) What happened as a result? (They fell into temptation and rose up against God.) What was at the heart of the temptation in the Garden of Eden? (The old self's determination to take charge of its own future, proclaiming that its will what it wants and what it likes—is all that matters.) What's wrong with this? (Our future, like our present and our past, is a gift from the God who gave us life in the first place. Our future is God's business.) What happens when we try to take charge? (The old self keeps us from directing attention where it should be: God, the earth, our neighbors.) Conclude this portion of the session by discussing what it would be like to know what will happen to us on a day-to-day basis before it happens. Would you like this? Why or why not? What would be the need for faith?

POSSIBILITIES AND PROJECTS

The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory*. Continue to memorize the First Article of the Creed and its meaning.
- 2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (God the Father, creation, rebellion). Reflect on these concepts and those from Session 11. Which are the most difficult for you to understand? Talk about them with your teacher, pastor, or other classmates. What insights do they provide?
- 3. Journal. Think about what the First Article tells you about God. Write in your words what God is telling you.

- 4. God's gifts. Keep track for one day of the foods you eat, the clothing you wear, and the other things you use. Identify the original source (plant, animal, and so forth) of these things. Discuss in what sense these things are gifts of God. Whom did God involve in sharing these gifts with you?
- 5. Daily devotions. Reflect on what you learned in this session about God's gifts. Name seven specific gifts God has given you. Write each gift on a separate note card. Each night for one week place a different note card under your pillow before going to bed. First thing in the morning, reach under your pillow, read the card, and offer a prayer of thanks to God for this gift. Then spend a few minutes reflecting on how you praise God by using this gift to serve others.
- 6. *Follow-up*. Hear and discuss reports of activities carried on outside of class. These may include activities 3 and 5 listed under "Possibilities and Projects" in Session 11.

Things to come

Have students read Chapter 13, "Mystery Man," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: What was Jesus' central activity? What made Jesus such a mystery? Why was Jesus such a threat to so many people? Who does Jesus say that he is? What is the clue to solving the mystery of Jesus?



13 MYSTERY MAN



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction

Chapters 13 and 14 deal with the question of who Jesus is from three different perspectives: as if he were just another person; by trying to figure out who Jesus thought he was (Chapter 13); and by considering God's answer to the question "Who is Jesus?" (Chapter 14). It is important to relate the ideas of these two chapters, even though they may be studied separately and are treated separately in this teacher guide. It is also important to relate the notions of the Second Article (Chapters 13 and 14) to the First Article (Chapter 12) to begin to understand the concept of the triune God.

Chapter 13 gives insights from the first two perspectives. It is incomplete in answer to the question "Who is Jesus?" but helpful toward gaining a fuller understanding—thus the title "Mystery Man." From the first perspective, the gospels tell us that Jesus was a person, a human being (contrary to the notion that he just looked like a man or pretended he was a man), and that he was a preacher. What made him a mystery was how he made everything and everybody who listened new. For example, by saying the word, he gave sight to the blind.

From the second perspective, "Who does Jesus think he is?" a search of the gospels reveals only one verse where he comes out and says that he is the Messiah (Mark 14:62). Others, however, conclude this on the basis of what he does and what happens to him. He reveals the new you perfectly, completely reversing the old self's direction.

While these two questions give important insight, the mystery deepens: Who is this man who can say and do such wondrous things? Are there any clues as to how we might find out? Fortunately, there are. Jesus let his actions do the talking. We find out who he is from watching him, listening to him, and observing what happens to him.

Objectives

This session will help the students

- will discover what the gospels tell us about who Jesus is;
- wunderstand how Jesus' identity is revealed;
- w confess faith in Christ Jesus.

Gathering activity.

Most people are curious about the people and events that make up their past. Invite the students to talk about their ancestors and to share family stories that have been handed down through the generations. Be sure to share bits and pieces of your family history with the students. Use this discussion to introduce the idea that though everyone has their own personal pasts, all who bear the name *Christian* trace their roots to Jesus the Christ, who is the focus of this session.

Worship

Some have called John 1:14 the shortest Christmas story in the Bible. Read this text for opening worship. Discuss its meaning with regard to God's incarnation in Christ. (It will be helpful to explain that *incarnation* refers to the union of the human and the divine.)



Mystery man. In "Gathering Activity" it was pointed out that our roots as members of the Christian church are based in the person of Jesus the Christ. This section addresses the questions "How do we know about Jesus?" and "What do the gospels tell us about him?" Begin by asking students to tell in 30 seconds as much as they can about Jesus' life. Then talk about how they know these things. (Parents, teachers, friends, and others may have told them, but ultimately they know because these things are included in the Bible.) Point out that only four books in the Bible tell the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. These books are called gospels, which means "good news." Why is this an appropriate name for such books? (What better news is there than the story of God's love for us in the person of Jesus?) What are the four gospels? (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.)

Write the question "Who is Jesus?" on the chalkboard or chart paper. Begin to answer this question by directing the students to the Second Article of the Creed, on page 87 in the student book. What are the first two events from Jesus' life that are named in the Creed? (Jesus' birth and death.) What does this tell us about Jesus? (That Jesus was a human being.) Write this fact below the question on the chalkboard or chart paper. Point out that Luther, in his explanation to the Second Article, uses the words "true God, son of the Father from eternity" and "true man, born of the virgin Mary" to identify Jesus. Talk about why Luther makes a point of Jesus' divinity and his humanity. (Jesus was God incarnate.)

The next thing to consider in answering the question of who Jesus is, is what kind of person Jesus is. The Creed says nothing of Jesus' daily activities, but according to the gospels, what did Jesus do? (He was a preacher.) What did Jesus preach? (Have the students read Mark 1:15 to answer this question.) To whom did he bring this message? (To answer this question see Luke 4:18-21 and the comments on this text found on pages 89-90 in the student book.) If time permits, you may want to have the students further explore Jesus' preaching by having them read and then summarize Jesus' message as it is revealed in the following texts: John 3:1-16; Matthew 5:1-11; Luke 6:27-31; and Luke 12:22-31. Encourage the students to use creative ways, such as sermon titles, short dramas, songs, interviews, or brief newspaper stories, to present their findings.

Next, compare Jesus with others who tell us about God. How is Jesus unique? (Jesus not only preached, he made people new with his preaching: sins were forgiven, bodies and minds were healed, hearts were turned toward God and neighbor, hope was restored.) Write a brief summary of this information on the chalkboard or chart paper. What were people's responses to Jesus? (Misunderstanding, fear, anger, awe, wonder, and desire to know more.) Go over what you have learned about Jesus' identity. Then list two more questions on the chalkboard or chart paper: How did Jesus do this? Where did he get his power and authority? Explain that this mystery behind who Jesus is is our next focus.

Who does he think he is? Have each student write down 10 different answers to the question "Who are you?" (Son/ daughter, child of God, brother/sister, skate boarder, pianist, and so forth.) Ask them to circle the two answers that they feel are most important. Then have students work in pairs, showing one another their lists and discussing the differences and similarities. As a group, talk about how this process is helpful in answering this question: Who are you? (Going directly to the source is usually a good way to find out about someone or something.) Talk about what happened every time someone tried to use this approach to solve the mystery of who Jesus was. (Use texts such as Mark 8:27-29; Mark 14:61-62; Matthew 27:11-12; and John 5:31 to discover how Jesus either evades answering this question or clouds his answer in mystery.) Conclude this section by hypothesizing as to why Jesus didn't come right out and tell us who he is. Write down the reasons given and save them for Session 14, which deals with this question.

The clue. Jesus doesn't come right out and say who he is, but he does give us a very important clue. Read aloud this section to discover what it is. (Jesus let his actions do the talking.)



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory.* Begin memorizing the Second Article to the Creed and its meaning, found on page 87 in the student book. It may be helpful to note that there is a chronological order in the article.
- 2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (Christ, true God, true man). Have each student choose one of these key concepts and prepare an explanation of it. Then ask students to share their concepts and what they know about it with two people who are not part of the class. Afterward discuss how teaching others can further our own understanding of something.
- 3. Journal. Reflect on the statement "Actions speak louder than words." Based on what you learned in this session, why does this statement seem especially appropriate to knowing who Jesus is? Write your thoughts in your journal. 4. Survey. Work together to come up with 10 questions about Jesus. These may be true/false, multiple choice, or fill-in-the-blank questions. Be sure you all know the correct answers to each question. Then use the questions to survey what friends and family members know about Jesus. Report your findings to the rest of the group.
- 5. Bible study. Read the gospel of Mark and write down the major events in the life of Jesus. Afterward reflect on these questions: What did you learn that you didn't already know? What event stands out for you? Why? What things that Jesus said or did were difficult for you to understand? Do you think it would have been easier to believe in Jesus if you had witnessed these events firsthand? Why or why not?
- 6. Names for Jesus. Brainstorm names that are attributed to Jesus. (Messiah, teacher, rabbi, Prince of Peace, Counselor, Son of man, Savior, Christ, Son of God, Emmanuel, Lord.) Use Bible dictionaries and concordances to discover what these names mean or tell us about Jesus.

Things to come

Have the students read Chapter 14, "Friend of Sinners," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: Who is Jesus? Why didn't Jesus just say who he was? What is the promise of Christ's word, the new word? When you hear Christ's word, what changes take place?



14 FRIEND OF SINNERS

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction

The question of who Jesus is was only partially answered in Chapter 13. A mystery (Who is this man who can say and do such amazing things?) and a clue (Jesus let actions do his talking) remain.

The cross and the resurrection were the biggest events in Jesus' life. Jesus was crucified and died for love, love for sinners of all kinds. He chose to bear our sins and die in our place. Thus he was nailed to the cross and died. The Easter event and Christ's empty tomb were the biggest surprise of all history: Jesus rose from the dead!

Now we might ask, "How did this happen?" But remember, "how" questions are of the old self; the important question is "Who?" (See Chapter 12.) Who did this miraculous thing? Only one answer is possible: God, the Father almighty. Who is Jesus? Jesus is Lord, God in the flesh of a person like us. Why didn't Jesus come right out and say that he was God? Because God wanted people's personal and sincere response, not their awe. Why then did Jesus have to die? Because God wouldn't go only halfway for us. God went all the way to shake off the old self and claim us.

Objectives

This session will help the students

- understand God's purpose in clouding Jesus' identity in mystery;
- ▼ discover why Jesus died and what his death means for us:
- ▼ recognize the changes Christ's word works in them that enable them to live in joyful anticipation of each new day.

Gathering activity.

How familiar are the students with the formative events of the Christian faith? Write the following on the chalk-board or chart paper: Christmas, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter, and Pentecost. Have the students explain what central event is observed in each. Then draw symbols to serve as reminders of these key events in the life of the church.

Worship

Since ancient times, Christians have greeted each other with the Easter proclamation "Christ is risen!" and the

response "He is risen indeed." Divide the class into groups of two or three people. Explain that each group (and you) will be involved in creating a litany for opening worship. Ask each group to write a statement that ends with the proclamation "Christ is risen." (For example, "When we are sad or fearful, Lord, your promise gives us hope. Christ is risen!" or "We praise you God for the marvelous things you have done. Christ is risen!") Begin the litany with your statement. Than have the groups take turns offering their statements. Between each statement have everyone say "He is risen indeed!" End with "Amen."



Friend of sinners. This session continues the quest begun in Session 13 to answer the question "Who is Jesus?" Use the following questions to review the material covered in the previous session: How do we know about Jesus? (From the gospels.) What are two important things that the gospels tell us about Jesus? (He was a human being and a preacher.) What did Jesus preach about? (The coming of God's kingdom.) How was Jesus' preaching different from that of others'? (Jesus didn't just talk about newness of life. With his word, Jesus actually made people new.) What is the mystery of Jesus? (Who is this person who can say and do such amazing things?) What is the clue that can help us discover the answer to this mystery? (Watch what Jesus does and what happens to him.)

Look again at the list of events considered in "Gathering Activity." Keeping in mind that the mystery of who Jesus is can best be solved by looking at what Jesus does and what happens to him, which events are the most important? (Jesus' death on Good Friday and Jesus' resurrection on Easter.) Explain that these will be the focus of the session.

The lights of Easter. Divide the students into four groups. Have each group read a different one of the gospel accounts of Jesus' death and resurrection: Matthew 27:27-61 and 28:1-10; Mark 15:16-47 and 16:1-8; Luke 23:26-56 and 24:1-12; John 19 and 20:1-18. Discuss what can be learned about Jesus from the accounts of his death (That like all people he felt pain and fear; that he truly died.) What do the accounts of his resurrection tell us? (That God raised Jesus from the dead.) Together what do these two events accomplish? (They tell us that Jesus is God incarnate, God himself in the flesh of a person like us, God being himself, doing what God does, for us.)

Turn now to a question that was raised during discussion of "Who Does He Think He Is?" in Session 13. (See page 37 in this guide.) Go over the responses the students offered at that time to the question of why Jesus didn't just come out and say that he was God. Give the students opportunity to offer additional suggestions. For an answer, have the students turn to page 94 in their books and ask volunteers to read aloud the last four paragraphs under "The Lights of Easter" that begin with "Why all the mystery, then?"

The cross was no mistake. This section considers the question "Why did Jesus have to die?" The important point to make is that Jesus didn't have to die; he chose to die, bearing our sins in his body and dying in our place. Discuss the difference between Jesus as a sacrifice to God and Jesus as sacrifice for us. (The gift was not to God, it was to us.)

The new you and the new age. Use the questions and answers below to lead into a discussion of this section.

▼ The old promise and the new promise. Remind the students that in the First Commandment, God made a promise. What was it? (To be our God.) In Christ's death and resurrection, God makes a new promise. What is it? (Though we die, we will live.) Read Matthew 26:26-29. Explain that the word covenant means "promise." At what cost does God make this new promise? (Christ's death.)

▼ Freedom. Christ's new word, his new promise, is a word of freedom. Read Luther's explanation to the Second Article, found on page 87 in the student book. Who has been set free? (Us.) By what means were we set free? (Jesus' suffering and death.) Freed from what? (Sin, death, and the old self's power over us.) Because of this, what are we free to be? (Free to be what God made us to be: the new you.)

▼ The new you. God's new promise in Christ has a profound effect on those who hear it. The old you dies and the new you is born. How does this change your relationship with God? (You view God as a loving parent, not as an enemy who stands in the way of your quest to be your own god.) With other people? (They are no longer rivals but friends, Jesus' friends and your friends.) With the earth? (It is no longer something to be used and exploited for your own purposes; it is a gift God gave you to love and care for.)

▼ The old self. What happens to the old self when Christ's word is spoken? (The old self dies, but not easily. It continues to struggle for power within us. Yet the word of the cross and the resurrection is the word of freedom, freedom from the power of the old Adam or Eve, freedom from sin and death.) Conclude this portion of the session by reading aloud the last two paragraphs under "The New You and the New Age" on page 100 in the student book.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory*. Continue memorizing the Second Article to the Creed and its explanation.
- 2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (crucified, resurrection, sacrifice, redemption). Choose a partner. Then take turns quizzing each other on the concepts from Sessions 11-14.
- 3. Journal. Think about what the Second Article tells you about God and write about it in your own words. Afterward go back and read through the paraphrase of the First Article that you wrote in Session 12. How do the two together give you a more complete picture of God's presence and purpose in your life and in the world?
- 4. What about death? Share with each other the experiences you have had with death. Discuss feelings about death. Talk about why people fear death and how God's promise of life everlasting helps us deal with this fear. Visit a funeral home or invite a mortician to come and talk about the practical concerns of death as well as about the role he or she has seen faith play in people's coping with death.
- 5. For another. Several things happen when we hear Christ's word. For one thing, we begin to see beyond ourselves. When that happens we become less concerned with getting what we want and more concerned about making sure our neighbors have what they need. Look around you. What do your neighbors need? How can you help them? Do one thing today to help your neighbor. Do it even if it means sacrificing time, energy, or resources. Compare the sacrifices you made with Christ's sacrifice on your behalf.
- 6. Redemption. Use a grocery coupon to illustrate the concept of redemption. Begin by talking about how stores sometimes offer coupons for free merchandise so that people will try a new product or come to the store. Explore how this fits with the Second Article statement "At great cost he has saved and redeemed me." Then have the students make coupons to remind them of what they have learned. (These could be made into refrigerator magnets or wallet cards.)

Things to come

Have the students read Chapter 15, "God the Verb," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: How do we learn who the Holy Spirit is? What four things does the Holy Spirit do? What tool does the Spirit use to do its work among people? What is the intended result of the Spirit's work?



15 GOD THE VERB



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction.

Chapters 15 and 16 both deal with the Third Article of the Creed: the Holy Spirit, God in action in and among human beings. What the Spirit does is the focus of Chapter 15. The means by which the Spirit works, where the Spirit works, and what we will be when the job is done form the focus of Chapter 16.

It is important to relate the ideas of these two chapters, even though they may be studied separately. It is also important to show the relationship of the Third Article to the First and Second Articles of the Creed in order to gain some understanding of the concept of the triune God.

Chapter 15, "God the Verb," considers the questions "Who is the Spirit?" and "What does the Spirit do?"

Who is the Spirit? The one who makes known to us the story of Jesus Christ and gives us his gifts. The Spirit is God becoming known to us. The Spirit is the giver of life.

What does the Spirit do? The Spirit calls us individually; gathers all of us together as a church; and enlightens each of us by using words that tell of Christ and what happens through him, to the point at which we say "That's for me!" These three works of the Holy Spirit are dealt with in this chapter.

The fourth work of the Holy Spirit, sanctification, is the focus of the next chapter. It is introduced in this chapter in conjunction with the works of the Spirit. It is explained as making us "holy," that is, making us what God intended us to be. Questions of how this is done are left for the next chapter.

Objectives.

This session will help the students

- wunderstand who the Holy Spirit is;
- wexplore what the Holy Spirit does;
- we see the Holy Spirit at work in their lives.

Gathering activity.

The stubborn claim of the old self is that we can do just fine without God's help. This claim shows up time and again in phrases such as "God helps those who help themselves," "I'd rather do it myself," and "I know what's best for me." This session deals once again with the old self's desire to tie us up in ourselves so as to point us

away from God. Begin by reading or telling the story *The Little Engine That Could*. This children's book is available in several editions by different publishers.

Worship

Announce that the focus for this session is the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, which has to do with the work of the Holy Spirit. Ask students to close their eyes and think of a time when they felt alone or in need of support. Where did they go? Remind them that prayer is always an option at such times. Then pray the following prayer.

Come now and always, Holy Spirit. Fill us with your presence. Be part of us. Strengthen us when we are weak. Be with us when we are alone. Do that which we cannot do: create us again, new each and every day. Amen.



God the verb. Remind the students of the key phrase in the book The Little Engine That Could. ("I think I can.") Is this phrase bad? (Not necessarily.) What are some instances when such an attitude is helpful? (Any time we attempt a new skill, as long as that which we are attempting is within the realm of possibility given our personal resources and abilities. The challenge must be realistic.) Read aloud the Third Article and its explanation. Note how the explanation begins ("I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort..."). What is it we cannot do by ourselves? (Believe in Jesus.) What are the dangers of an "I think I can" attitude with regard to faith? (We come to see salvation as something we do, rather than something God does for us—works instead of grace. We fall prey to the hopelessness that comes from never knowing whether or not we have enough faith.) If we cannot believe on our own, how can we have faith? (God uses the Holy Spirit to send us gifts and open us up to receive them.)

The Spirit of life. The section's focus is "Who is the Holy Spirit?" Divide the class into groups of two or three. Give each group a sheet of chart paper that has been divided into quadrants with one of the following questions written in each quadrant. Have the groups discuss the questions and record their answers to report to the large group.

What images come to mind when you think about the Holy Spirit?

What questions do you have about the Spirit?

What do the following Bible passages tell you about the Spirit? John 14:16-19; John 14:25-26; John 15:26-27; John 20:19-23; Acts 2:1-4; Mark 1:9-11; 1 Corinthians 2:9-13.

▼ How is the Spirit at work in your lives?

To save time, you may want to divide the Bible passages in question 3 among the groups. Remind students to think about what they read in this student book section. Share ideas as a large group when all are done.

The verb. Remind students that the student book makes the point that the Holy Spirit is a verb. Ask, "What is the difference between a noun and a verb? (A noun is a person, place, thing, or idea. A verb shows action.) What are some examples of each? (Friend, Canada, and religion are nouns; read, appreciate, and compare are verbs.) What does it mean to say the Holy Spirit is a verb? (The Spirit is always at work.)" Direct the students to Luther's explanation of the Third Article on page 101 in their student books. Have the students circle the verbs Luther uses to describe the Spirit's work. (Calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies.) Discuss the first three works using the questions below. Session 16 deals with the final work, sanctification.

▼ Calls. What does it mean to be called by God? (To be brought as individuals into relationship with God.) How does the Holy Spirit call us? (Through the gospel.) When were we first called by the Spirit? (In our Baptism.) When does the Spirit continue to call us into relationship with God? (In the preaching of the Word and in the giving of the sacraments.)

▼ Gathers. What does this mean? (To be put together with other believers.) How does the Spirit gather us? (With the Word.) What are some examples of being gathered together by the Spirit? (Worship, sacraments, church school, Bible study.) What is the church? (People gathered by the Spirit to bear the Word and receive the sacraments.)

▼ Enlightens. What does this mean? (To make sense of something confusing; to clear up mysteries; to bring light to darkness.) How does this apply to our faith? (The Spirit tells us of Christ and what he does for us.) How does the Spirit enlighten us? (With the Word. Note that this is the same tool the Spirit uses to call and gather us.) What are some examples of how the Spirit has enlightened you? (Through preaching, in church school classes, during family devotions.) What is the goal of the Holy Spirit's efforts to enlighten us? (To make things understandable and clear to us so that we reach an "Aha!" moment when we recognize who God is, how God works, and then want God's Word and promise in our lives.)

Conclude by looking again at one of the questions addressed during small group time: How is the Spirit at work in your lives? What new insights do you have from the study of this session?



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

1. *Memory.* Begin memorizing the Third Article to the Creed and its explanation. It may be helpful to note that the explanation is filled with verbs that describe the work of the Holy Spirit.

2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (Holy Spirit, call, gather, enlighten). Divide into small groups and assign one or more key concept to each group. Take turns explaining your concepts in a way that doesn't involve speaking or writing.

3. *Journal*. Read Galatians 5:16-26 to discover those things that are evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in us. They are called "the fruit of the Spirit." List them in your journal. During the next week, watch for evidences of the Holy Spirit in yourself and in others. Keep a daily record of what you see. Share your findings with someone.

4. *Pentecost.* Use Bible dictionaries to research the Christian festival of Pentecost. What is it? When is it observed? Then use your congregation's worship book to find out what special Bible verses, prayers, and hymns are used on Pentecost. Read through some of them and reflect on God's gift of the Spirit.

5. Devotions. Plan a three-part worship time, to be used in Session 16, based on the three articles of the Apostles' Creed. Have three groups take a different article of the Creed and choose how they will incorporate it into the worship time (music, poems, Bible reading, prayer). Be creative!

6. Movement. One concept emphasized in this session is that the Holy Spirit is a verb. Create body or dance motions that illustrate three works of the Holy Spirit: call, gather, enlighten. Combine these with a reading of the Third Article for a visual presentation of this concept.

Things to come.

Have the students read Chapter 16, "Saints and Sinners," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: Why is the church called the Spirit's workshop? What does the Spirit tell the people it gathers? What does it mean to be holy? What is the Spirit making of us? You might want to make plans to use the review for the Creed, which is on page 77 of this guide.



16 SAINTS AND SINNERS

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction.

Chapter 16 continues to explain what the Spirit does. It also clarifies what we will be when the Spirit's job is completed. In the last chapter, we found out who does God's work (the Holy Spirit), some of the work the Spirit does (calls, gathers, enlightens), and the Spirit's basic tool (the Word). In this chapter, we look at the Holy Spirit's workshop (the church), the Spirit's tools (the Word and sacraments), and what the Spirit is making of us (holy people). Through the Spirit's work, the church is made the communion of saints and we are made holy.

This work of the Holy Spirit is called "sanctification." Wherever the Holy Spirit goes, people are called and gathered together to hear the Word and receive the sacraments. Whether in a small congregation or a worldwide gathering, this gathering together by the Holy Spirit is one mark of the church.

The Word and the sacraments, as they enlighten and sanctify those who have been gathered, are the second and most important hallmarks of the church, for it is through these that the Spirit speaks and gives its gifts.

Objectives

This session will help the students:

- wunderstand the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit;
- wexplore how the Spirit works in and through the church;
- wappreciate the Holy Spirit's work in their lives.

Gathering activity

One of the concepts to be covered in this session is "communion of saints." Have on hand a list of the saints' days observed in the Lutheran church. (Such a list can be found in *Lutheran Book of Worship* under "Lesser Festivals and Commemorations," which appears in the "Calendar" section.) Encourage the students to read through the list. Which names are familiar? What do they know about these people? Are there any good candidates for sainthood alive today? Who are they? Do any of the students see themselves as saints? Why or why not? Explain that this question will come up again later on in the session.

Worship

Use the worship activity included under the Session 15 "Possibilities and Projects." If you did not choose to do

this activity, involve the students in an informal sharing of "I believe" statements based on what they have been studying in the Creed. Close with a prayer asking for the Holy Spirit's presence.



Saints and sinners. As Session 16 is a continuation of the study of the Third Article begun in the previous session, take a few moments for review. On the chalkboard or chart paper, write "Who is the Holy Spirit?" and "What does the Holy Spirit do?" Have volunteers write responses to these questions. (The Spirit is the one who makes God known to us; the Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies.) Then write three more questions: What is the Spirit's workshop? What tools does the Holy Spirit use? What is the Holy Spirit making of us? Point out that these questions will be the focus for this session.

Before going on, discuss what we mean when we say the Holy Spirit sanctifies us. The student book says that the Spirit makes us holy, makes us what God wants us to be—a new people. How does the Spirit do this? (The same way the Spirit calls, gathers, and enlightens us: through the Word.)

The Spirit's workshop. This section explores how the Holy Spirit works in and through the church. Reiterate that the Holy Spirit is at work in the Word and sacraments, making us holy people. Ask, "Where is the Spirit going about the work of making us holy?" Point out that the words Word and sacraments provide a clue, for where do we hear the Word and participate in the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion? (In the church.) Direct the students to the question "What is the Spirit's workshop?" on the chalkboard or chart paper. Write in the answer. (The church.)

Use these questions for further discussion: What is the church? (Accept general answers, then distinguish between the church in terms of the people of God gathered together by the Holy Spirit to hear the Word and receive the sacraments and the buildings in which the church worships.) What makes the church different from social organizations? (Christ is the center of the church.) What is the church called in the Creed? (Holy, catholic, the communion of saints.) What does it mean to call the church "holy"? (Set apart for the gospel.) Why do Lutherans confess to believe in the "holy catholic Church"? (Turn to the Third Article

on page 101 in the student book. Note the small c in catholic. Catholic in this instance means universal. The church is made up of all the people throughout the world that the Spirit has called and gathered. To get even a small idea of the size and diversity of the church, count the number of churches listed in your telephone directory's yellow pages.) How do you understand the concept "communion of saints"? (Encourage the students to consider the meanings of the two words separately in order to better understand the whole. Talk about how this name for the church is helpful when thinking of the church in terms of people rather than place.) How is our class a part of the Spirit's workshop? (Answers will vary.) If the church is the Spirit's workshop, what are the Spirit's tools? (Word and sacrament. Write this answer in the appropriate spot on the chalkboard or chart paper.) Summarize this section by reading aloud the last two paragraphs under "The Spirit's Workshop" on page 111 in the student book.

God's saints. This section explores the question "What is the Spirit making of us?" which you presented to the students at the beginning of the session. Point out that you touched on this earlier in defining the sanctifying work of the Spirit (making us holy). Now discuss how it is that we are both unholy (sinner) and holy (saint). What is it that moves us from the first to the second? (Christ's word of forgiveness spoken to us by the Spirit; see page 111 in the student book.) What does this word say to our past? (God holds nothing against you—all is forgiven; the slate is clean; your innocence is restored.) To our future? (Death has no power over you; Jesus is going to raise you from the dead.) Have the students reconsider the questions about saints presented in "Gathering Activity." How would they answer them differently, given what they have learned?

Divide the class into small groups. Ask half of the groups to discuss the question "What do you think it means to be with God forever?" and the other half "As the Spirit makes you new, how will your life be different?" Allow time for sharing. Conclude by answering the last question on the chalkboard or chart paper: What is the Holy Spirit making of us? (New people who are everything God intended us to be.)

POSSIBILITIES AND PROJECTS

The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory*. Continue memorizing the Third Article to the Creed and its explanation. Review this and all previous memory work on the Creed.
- 2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (sanctify, church, catholic, holy, commun-

ion of saints). Choose one key concept from this session or Session 15 and use it to create a cluster chart. Do this by clustering explanatory words around the particular key concept you selected.

3. Journal. Think about what the Third Article tells you about God and write about it in your own words. Afterward go back and read through your paraphrases of the First and Second Articles. Remember that Luther once said that through the Creed, we learn "to know God perfectly." Do you think you know God perfectly? What do you know or understand now that you didn't prior to studying the Creed? List these things in your journal.

4. The whole church. The Holy Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth." In every country of the world, the Spirit gathers God's people around Word and sacrament. Ask your pastor or someone else at your church to share mission information with you that can help you know what it is like to be a Christian in another part of the world.

5. The Spirit's workshop. Use copies of your congregation's newsletter and weekly bulletins to make a list of the various activities that happen in your church. How might these activities be an indication of the Spirit's work?

6. Review. At the beginning of the study of the Apostles' Creed, in Session 11, the students made a list of questions they had about the Creed. Go through the questions and see how many the students are able to answer now that they have finished studying the Creed. Refer any unanswered questions to your pastor.

Things to come.

Have the students read Chapter 17, "Christ Puts the Words in Our Mouths," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: Why can we call God "Father"? Why does God command us to pray? What does God do to help us pray? What does *Amen* mean?



THE LORD'S PRAYER

If, as Helmut Thielicke refers to it, the Lord's Prayer can be called "the prayer that spans the world," it can also be called "the prayer that spans all time" for while it reaches forward in hope to the future God has promised, it also reaches into our daily existence under the sign of the cross.

Command and promise

As with the Creed and in all of his thinking, Luther's explanations of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer work out from the theology of the cross.

To a theology of glory, prayer is a means of ascending from this earthbound existence to move closer to God. Prayer then becomes a performance, something we are supposed to do for God. As a result, the focus shifts from God's commands and promises to our own sincerity in prayer and all the benefits we get from it.

As Luther understood it, prayer is not a performance by us, but a gift of the commanding and promising God. Its basis is not some supposed sincerity that we possess in ourselves, but God's command to pray, God's promise to hear us as we pray, and his teaching us how to pray.

As Luther explains it in the Large Catechism, the command to pray takes precedence. "To pray, as the Second Commandment teaches, is to call upon God in every need," he says. "This God requires of us; he has not left it to our choice. It is our duty and obligation to pray if we want to be Christians" (*Book of Concord*, p. 421).

Whenever this point is made, the protest that almost always accompanies it is "But that's law." It is law, a plain commandment. And that's just the point. Prayer is not rooted in some kind of attitude or performance of our own but in the command and promise of the God who kills and makes alive. As Ernst Käsemann has written: "How little it is noticed, even in the Christian world, that Jesus did not first teach his disciples to worship, but to ask. . . . For him, the attitude that man has to express is primarily that of need, which is not surpassed even by worship" (Jesus Means Freedom [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972], p. 32).

While reversing the direction in order to expose our needs, the command is at the same time bursting with the promise. God commands us to pray because God wants us to ask, because God wishes to hear our prayers and be our God. It is, as we have called it in the student book, a "friendly command," as when a parent says to a child, "Tell me what's bothering you."

The basis of prayer, that which creates the possibility of praying, is God's gracious action on our behalf. God kicks the spiritual climber out of us with the command, promises to hear us when we pray, teaches us to pray, and intercedes for us, as Paul says, "with sighs too deep for words" (Romans 8:26). Though that certainly doesn't exclude concern for sincerity, it puts the focus where it belongs: God gives; we ask.

Leaning forward

If the command to pray brings us down to earth so that we can ask, the Introduction and first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer set up its direction. They are alive with hope for the future God has promised, the new day that will come when God establishes his kingdom.

It has been customary, in keeping with a theology of glory, to interpret God's "kingdom" exclusively in the present tense, as if it refers only to the church. In this view, the future hope has been cut down to the hope of a personal resurrection or left hanging as an appendix.

God's kingdom does come now in the church, "when our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word," as the explanation of the Second Petition says. But the church is not the kingdom. Nor do we "extend" it or do its work.

As Jesus speaks of the kingdom, it is God's work and God's work alone. And while it breaks in upon us through the Spirit's work in the Word and the sacraments, it is at the same time our future hope. The whole New Testament is alive with proclamation of God's new day coming, not only for a personal resurrection, but for the "new heaven and new earth" (Revelation 21:1-6), the day when Christ will put all his enemies under his feet (1 Corinthians 15:25).

The first half of the Lord's Prayer, then, is our prayer for now and the future. In the First Petition, we ask that God's name be hallowed among us now and that the day come when the whole earth hallows God's name; in the Second, that as God establishes dominion over us now in Word and sacrament, God will take dominion over the whole earth and bring in the kingdom; in the Third, that as God does his will among us now, God will hinder and defeat all that opposes the coming of the new day.

Under the cross

The remaining petitions are shaped by the first three. Having prayed for God's future and our own, in the Fourth through Seventh Petitions we pray that God will give us what we need to live each day while we await the new day: bread, forgiveness, help in time of temptation, and finally, deliverance from evil.



Again, Luther's explanations come out of the theology of the cross. The Fourth and Fifth Petitions bring us down to earth. In the Fourth, we acknowledge that everything we work for, strive for, and seek to earn is finally God's gift. We are not self-sufficient but are askers and receivers. In the Fifth, asking for forgiveness, we acknowledge the sinfulness behind all of our pretensions and our unwillingness (however lame) to see ourselves as caught in the same sinful plight as our neighbors.

It is in the Sixth and Seventh Petitions, though, where the difference between the theology of glory and the theology of the cross really comes out. The driving force behind a theology of glory is the desire to escape from temptation, to clear a spot in daily life where we are free from doubt, suffering, and struggle. In a theology of the cross, the driving force is from God to us. As noted in the meanings of these petitions, the down-to-earth God comes to us, "even though we are so tempted," with a promise that gives us hope that "at our last hour [God] would mercifully take us from the troubles of this world to himself in heaven."

The sign under which we live now is the cross. We are not in heaven yet; our lives are "hidden with Christ in God," as Paul says in Colossians 3:3. Like a magnet, faith attracts its opposites: fear and doubt. So, as long as we live, we live in the midst of temptation, in jeopardy, in ambiguity and suffering.

But "when Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). As we are taken hold of and held by the Spirit through Word and sacrament, we are given hope for that new day when we shall see "face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Therefore the Lord's Prayer begins and ends on the same note: the hope for a new day. "Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Corinthians 3:5-6).

Resources

For Luther's comments on the Lord's Prayer, see the Large Catechism and Volumes 42 and 51 of *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969 and 1959 respectively).

The following resources are out of print but may be helpful to you if you can locate them.

Ebeling, Gerhard. On Prayer: The Lord's Prayer in Today's World. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978, © 1966.

Girgensohn, Herbert. *Teaching Luther's Catechism.* Translated by John W. Doberstein. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1959.

Lohmeyer, Ernst. "Our Father": An Introduction to the Lord's Prayer. Translated by John Bowden. New York: Harper and Row, 1966, 1965.

Thielicke, Helmut. Our Heavenly Father: Sermons on the Lord's Prayer. Translated with an introduction by John W. Doberstein. New York: Harper, 1960.



CHRIST PUTS THE WORDS IN OUR MOUTHS

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction

This chapter considers both the Introduction and Doxology of the Lord's Prayer. It aims to answer these questions: How can we pray with confidence that God will hear and answer our prayers? How is it that we can say "Our Father" to God?

That it is Jesus who teaches us this prayer is significant. Jesus is God himself, making God's self known to us. Jesus Christ is the one who hears and answers our prayers, who put the words into our mouths to teach us how to pray.

But God doesn't stop there. When our prayers become meaningless routine, or if we do not know what to pray or how to express it, the Holy Spirit prays for us, as Paul says (Romans 8:26). That's how far God goes to help us pray.

Objectives

This session will help students

▼ realize that God invites, commands, and teaches us to pray and prays for us;

with complete confidence;

w grow more comfortable in their own praying by studying the Lord's Prayer and by identifying the kinds of things they might talk about with God.

Gathering activity_

Encourage the students to think about their personal prayer life by having them complete a brief survey on prayer. Be sure to include yourself in the survey. Take time to ask for volunteers to share their responses. Include questions such as these: Who taught you to pray? What was the first prayer you learned? How often do you pray? Why do you pray—or why don't you? Is there a place where you are especially comfortable praying? What is the focus of most of your prayers? Do you most often pray silently or aloud?

Worship

Have volunteers read aloud the two versions of the Lord's Prayer found in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4. Then talk about the versions' similarities and differences. Point out that the last section of the prayer as we know

it is called the Doxology. Though the Doxology isn't found in either Matthew or Luke, it has been part of the Lord's Prayer since the first century.

Have the students turn to page 118 in the student book. Invite volunteers to read aloud the three middle paragraphs, beginning with "The fact that it is Jesus who teaches us this prayer is most important."



Christ puts the words in our mouths. This section presents the idea that God wants us to pray. Ask the students to speculate as to why God wants us to pray. (God who created, redeemed, and sanctified us isn't willing to just back away and leave us to our own devices; God, like a loving parent, wants to be an important and intimate part of our lives; God knows what shape our lives will take and wants us to know how to get in touch with God when we need help.)

Praying for certain. As this section points out, God is very emphatic about the importance and power of prayer in our lives. To illustrate this, have individuals look up all or some of the following Bible passages and read them aloud to the rest of the group: Psalm 50:15; Matthew 7:7-8; Luke 21:36; Romans 12:12; Philippians 4:5b-6; Colossians 4:2; James 5:13; Jude, verses 20-21.

Afterward ask, "What do these verses tell us about the place of prayer in our lives. (Prayer must be a priority in our lives.) What do they say of God's response to our prayers? (God will hear and answer when we pray.) What do we learn from them about the focus of our prayers? (We can pray for anything we or our neighbors need; to express joy and thanksgiving; to offer praise to God.) How must we pray? (In faith, confident that God will hear and answer.)"

The mechanics of prayer may not pose any great difficulty for us. But praying "with complete confidence" is another matter altogether. Explore this idea by pairing up the students and having them take turns directing one another in a trust walk. To do this, ask one student to close his or her eyes. Have the other student use only verbal commands to safely guide the student with closed eyes from one place to another. Then have them switch places. (Be sure this is done in an area where students will not trip or hurt themselves.) Afterward use questions like these to talk about the experience: What effect did

having your eyes closed have on your physical ability to walk? (None.) What made the walk more difficult than it would have been if your eyes were open? (It was difficult to trust that our partner had our welfare in mind and was giving good directions and not trying to lead us astray.) If you had been guided by a stranger, would you have been more or less likely to react confidently to their instructions? (Probably less.) Why? (Trust isn't a given. We grow to trust others by witnessing their trustworthiness in a variety of ways over a period of time.)

Refer the students to page 115 in the student book, and ask them to read the Introduction to the Lord's Prayer and its meaning. Discuss what it means to pray with complete confidence. (To pray trusting that God will hear and answer our prayers.) Then ask the students to answer this question: Why can we pray to God as we would speak to loving parents, confident that God will hear and answer our prayers? (Because God promises to do just that; because in Jesus' death and resurrection we have witnessed God's incredible love for us; because God wants so much for us to pray that God even commands us to pray; because God teaches us to pray; and finally because God, through the Holy Spirit, prays with and for us.)

Calling God Father. Remind the students that in the Second Commandment God gave us God's name to use to call upon God "in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving." Ask the students how they address God when they pray. Tell the students that when Jesus prayed, he addressed God as Abba, which means "father." Ask, "How is this a sign that Jesus prayed in complete confidence? (Jesus' name for God demonstrates that Jesus recognized God as a loving parent who will hear and respond to the needs of a child.) How are we able to call God Father? (God became our Father when we were baptized; God dwells with us now in the Word and the sacraments; God will stay with us in the future.) The Lord's Prayer ends with another sign of Jesus' confidence. What is it? (Amen.) What does this mean? (That's the way it's going to be.)"

Continue by asking, "With all that God does to convince us that we can pray in complete confidence, why do we sometimes find it difficult to ask God for assistance or to come to God with our fears and doubts? (The old self isn't comfortable with prayer, because when we pray we admit that we need God's help and grace. This is contrary to the old self's creed of 'going it alone' or 'doing it myself.') How does the old self treat prayer? (As something automatic and pointless or as a kind of hocus-pocus that makes God do our bidding.)" End this portion of the session by talking about ways prayer can become more meaningful.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory*. Memorize the Lord's Prayer and Luther's meanings to the Introduction and the Doxology of this prayer. 2. *Key concepts*. Divide the students into groups of two or three students. Have each group make flash cards for two key concepts covered in this session (for example, prayer and amen). Encourage the groups to compare and support their choices.
- 3. *Journal*. Write the Lord's Prayer in your own words. Compare it with what you pray so often. What are the differences? The similarities? You may want to share these during worship in future sessions.
- 4. The whole gospel. Both the Lord's Prayer and the First Commandment can be referred to as a summary of the whole gospel—of all God's promises. Divide the class into groups of two or three and ask them to talk about this. Have them share their observations with the rest of the groups.
- 5. Prayer collection. Spend time reading prayers from sources in your church library or from your congregational prayer book. Note the variety of things people pray for and about. Choose one or two prayers that you find particularly appropriate or meaningful to you. Write them down and take time each day to offer these prayers. Add to your collection in the weeks ahead.
- 6. *Prayer survey.* Include copies of the prayer survey used during "Gathering Activity" in the Sunday bulletin or church newsletter. Invite congregational members to fill out the survey. Tabulate their responses and publish the results.

Things to come

Have the students read Chapter 18, "Praying for Our Father," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: How is the Second Commandment related to the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer? What are we asking when we pray "Hallowed be your name" and "Your kingdom come"? What does the Third Commandment have to do with the Second Petition?



18 praying for our father

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction.

Both this and the next chapter deal with petitions or prayers for God. When we pray "Hallowed be your name," we are asking God to call out the new you in us who will use God's name as God intends it to be used. That means we'll speak of God to others, call upon God for help, and give God praise and thanksgiving. We are asking God to see to it that God's name is used properly whenever, wherever, and by whomever it is spoken.

Of course, the old Adam or Eve aims to keep this from happening. It delights in hearing God's name taken in vain (Second Commandment).

When we pray "Your kingdom come," it is important to know that God's kingdom is God's rule—that is, wherever God rules or reigns. So we are praying for the new you and the new day. We are asking God to establish God's rule over us personally and over all the earth.

But God has a rival in the old you who is constantly fighting to keep this from happening. There are also rivals across the face of the earth. We know that none of these rivals is anywhere near as powerful as God! God's name will be hallowed; God's kingdom will come.

Now we can see that we are praying in these petitions not only for God, but also for ourselves. We know that as God answers our prayers, we shall be blessed as God's will for us is carried out.

Objectives _

This session will help students

- wunderstand why we are praying for these things;
- appreciate the dual focus of these petitions on God and ourselves

Gathering activity.

Have the students consider how each of the following actions benefits not only others but also themselves: riding a bike or walking rather than driving everywhere; taking responsibility for the care of their room and possessions; practicing singing, a musical instrument, or a sport; being honest; doing volunteer work; and attending worship and church youth activities. Work together to come up with other examples.

Worship

Ask a student to read aloud Matthew 5:14-16. Invite the students to share their ideas about what Jesus means by this analogy. Then read aloud the first two petitions to the Lord's Prayer and ask the students to comment on how the analogy sheds light on our prayers that God's name be hallowed and God's kingdom come. (We bring bonor to God by letting God's love for us show to others.)



Praying for our Father. This section introduces the first two petitions of the Lord's Prayer. Before actually getting into the petitions themselves, it may be helpful to look at how the Lord's Prayer is organized. Remind the students that in the last session they studied the Introduction and the Doxology of the Lord's Prayer-in other words, the beginning and the end of the prayer. Now have the students look at the body of the Lord's Prayer. (If you have copies of the Small Catechism available, use them for this activity. Otherwise have students page through the appropriate chapters in their student books.) Ask them to divide the body of the prayer into sections. How many sections are there? (Seven.) Explain that these sections are called petitions. Invite students to define "petition" in this context. (A petition is a request.) Summarize by pointing out that the Lord's Prayer includes both our requests and our declaration that God will hear and answer us when we bring our requests to God in prayer.

Look again at the First and Second Petitions of the Lord's Prayer. Ask, "To whom are we praying? (God.) What are we asking? (For God's name to be kept holy and for God's kingdom to come.) For whom are we praying? (For God, but also for ourselves.) Why do we pray for God at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer? (Invite students' responses at this point, but explain that the goal of the session will be to answer this question. Encourage the students to keep in mind, however, that our prayers for God, like our actions for others, are to our benefit, as well.)"

God's name and goal. As this section points out, there is a correlation between the Introduction and First Petition of the Lord's Prayer and the First and Second Commandments. To illustrate this, write these portions of the Lord's Prayer on the chalkboard or chart paper and write the two commandments across from them. Talk about how when we pray that God's name be hallowed, we are in

fact asking God to help us keep the Second Commandment.

Read aloud Luther's explanation to the First Petition, on page 121 of the student book. Have the students offer examples of how they might fulfill the petition to hallow God's name by speaking God's Word in "truth and purity." (It would be helpful at this point to review briefly what you learned in the Second Commandment study.) Discuss how praying for God's name to be holy is a prayer for God. (It is a way of showing God the respect and honor God deserves.) How is it also a prayer for us? (We are asking that God will continue making a new you in us who will use God's name properly). For a description of this new you, review the middle two paragraphs on page 124, beginning with "As the new you that God calls out in Baptism takes shape...."

The name properly used. Though it isn't as obvious as the correlation previously described in "God's Name and Goal," there also is a correlation between the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer and the Third Commandment. Add these, one across from the other, to the chalkboard or chart paper. Invite students to share their ideas about how the two are related. If they seem stumped, have them compare the meaning to the Third Commandment and Luther's explanation of the Second Petition.

Invite the students to share their ideas about what we mean when we talk about God's kingdom. Afterwards share this answer from page 125 of the student book: "God's kingdom isn't a place.... God's kingdom is wherever God rules or reigns. God's kingdom comes wherever God takes charge. It will finally come when God takes control of all the earth and makes all things new."

Conclude this portion of the session by discussing the following questions: When did God begin to rule over us? (In our Baptism.) How has God continued to rule over us? (Through the Holy Spirit's work of calling, gathering, enlightening, and sanctifying us.) Who are the rivals who would keep God's kingdom from coming in our lives and in the world? (Suggestions include the old you and the devil. Have a volunteer look up Ephesians 6:12 and read it aloud to the group for a very graphic description of those rulers and authorities who oppose God.) When will our prayer "Your kingdom come" be completely answered? (Look up the following Bible texts for insight: Mark 13:32-37; John 14:1-3; Revelation 21:1-4.) How is it being answered now? (It is being answered whenever Christ's name is proclaimed in faith and truth; whenever we love the Lord with all our heart, mind, and strength and love our neighbor as ourselves.) What do we gain by praying "Your kingdom come"? (God's continued presence in our lives creating a new you and a new day.)

Praying for God. This section in the student book brings the session full circle by reiterating the initial question, "Why do we pray for God?" Invite the students to respond to this question by considering the following questions:

Why do we pray to God? (Because we need help or guidance or because we need someone to talk to or to thank. God also can do something about our concerns.) Do we pray for God for the same reasons? (Hardly. God doesn't need our help, guidance, permission, or praise. God doesn't depend on us; we depend on God.) So, why do we pray for God, asking that God's name be hallowed and God's kingdom come? (Because in doing so, we are also praying for ourselves. We are asking God to keep God's name holy among us and to bring God's kingdom to us.) End the discussion by reading aloud the final paragraph in Chapter 18, on page 128.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. Memory. Memorize the Lord's Prayer and Luther's explanations of the First and Second Petitions of this prayer.
 2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (hallowed, kingdom). Have students choose one concept from this session or Session 17 and create an acrostic that defines or says something about the concept. To make the acrostic, write the concept vertically, and then for each letter, write a comment (beginning with the letter) about the concept.
- 3. Journal. What does it mean when we ask God in the First and Second Petitions of the Lord's Prayer to take charge over us? Write what you think it means. Then write how you feel about God taking charge over you.
- 4. Worship. Work together to choose a theme for a short worship service. Then divide the class into groups of two or three students. Have each group prepare one part of the service. (If you have a small class, work together.) Suggestions include choosing a Bible text to read, writing a prayer, or choosing and leading music. Incorporate the service into "Worship" in a future session. If your group is large, plan to do two or more services.
- 5. *Guest.* Have someone come and tell why he or she regularly sets aside a definite prayer time. Have the person tell how we can become managers of our time and how we can set aside time to talk with God.
- 6. Research. Use encyclopedias, Bible dictionaries, and books from your church library to learn about prayer practices and postures in biblical times and in other cultures. Share with others what you learn.

Things to come -

Have the students read Chapter 19, "Victory Is Certain," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: What are the three opponents of God's will? How does God hinder and defeat these opponents? How does God strengthen our faith?



19 VICTORY IS CERTAIN

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction.

The special concern of the Third Petition is the constant struggle between what Jesus teaches us to pray—"Your will be done"—and the old self's deepest wish and prayer—"My will be done." The old Adam or Eve constantly works, struggles, and schemes to have its way. Wherever God's promises and Word are heard in the world, there is opposition.

God's will is to bring out the new you in each of us to hallow God's name and to bring in God's kingdom. When we pray "Your will be done, on earth as in heaven," we are asking God to give us the certainty of God's promise in the midst of any and all opposition, pain, and trouble. We are asking that God's will be done also in and among us.

Three opponents identified by Luther work to keep this from happening: our own sinful self, the world, and the devil. God deals with these opponents in two ways: God "hinders and defeats every evil scheme and purpose" through the Commandments; at the same time, God takes away the opponents' weapons and uses them against themselves. God also "strengthens our faith and keeps us firm in his Word as long as we live," through God's Spirit, God's Word, and the sacraments.

Objectives .

This session will help students

- wunderstand what God's will is:
- ▼ identify the opponents at work to keep God's will from being done among us;
- ▼ recognize and appreciate how God frustrates God's opponents and exercises God's will in our lives.

Gathering activity.

Involve the students, or several of them if your class is large, in a tug-of-war. Choose a safe area to do this, perhaps out-of-doors. You also could ask the students to pretend they are involved in a tug-of-war. Then relate this activity to the struggle between God's will for us and the opposing will of the old self, the world, and the devil. Invite the students to share examples of when they have felt especially torn between the two.

Worship

If the students prepared a short worship service according to the directions given in the worship activity under "Possibilities and Projects" in Session 18, have them lead opening worship. Or, if the students wrote their own versions of the Lord's Prayer as described in the journal activity under "Possibilities and Projects" in Session 17, invite one of them to offer a prayer at this time. Otherwise, divide the class into small groups and have each group prepare a petition to be used in a prayer litany. Encourage each group to focus on a different part of the Lord's Prayer, for example, keeping God's name holy, living in God's kingdom, or doing God's will. Between petitions pray "Hear us, Lord" or a similar refrain. Close with the Doxology from the Lord's Prayer.



Victory is certain. Use the following suggestions to help the students better understand the concept of God's will.

▼ Work together to create two lists: one describing our will for ourselves and the world and the other describing God's will. Compare the lists.

- ▼ Read Matthew 11:2-6. Discuss what this text says about the will of God. (God's will is that all might have faith and wholeness in Christ Jesus.)
- ▼ Consider the comment "It was God's will," which is sometimes heard during times of tragedy or when someone dies. Is it God's desire that we suffer and die? (No. God's will is life. Death is contrary to the will of God.)
- Invite volunteers to read aloud the Third Petition to the Lord's Prayer and Luther's comments on page 129 in the student book. Discuss the petition using these questions: How does Luther describe God's will? (God's will is to bring out the new you in each of us to hallow God's name and not oppose the coming of God's kingdom.) Is God's will dependent upon our prayer "Your will be done"? (No. God is God; God is going to take control, no matter what.) So why do we pray? (We are asking that God's will be exercised in our own lives.) Why should we pray for ourselves? (With all the suffering and pain in the world and in our own lives, we may lose sight of God's presence and begin to doubt God's promises. Our prayer is a request that God give us the certainty of the promise

in the midst of the opposition, pain, and trouble that we know.)

The opponents. This section names and describes those things that stand in opposition to God's will for us and the world. Divide the class into three groups. (The groups can be as small as one or two students.) Ask the groups to read in the student book, the first group beginning on page 132 with "By now you are familiar with the first opponent"; the second group beginning on page 132 with "The second opponent is familiar to you, too"; and the third group beginning on page 132 with "The third opponent of the gospel is the devil."

Have the groups make posters on which they identify the opponent to God's will named in each section (the old self, the world, and the devil) and describe how the opponent frustrates God's will. Have each group share with the other groups what they learned. Additional discussion questions on this section might include the following: Why is there opposition to God's will? (Submitting to God's will means putting aside my will; submitting to God's will demands admitting that we need God because we can't live on our own; God's will is perceived as being less fun or exciting than what the devil offers us.) How does opposition to God's will show up in your life? (Answers will vary but may include rebelling against God by refusing to be part of the church; seeking to do things that are evil and harmful; breaking God's Commandments.) What's wrong with the world's creed of good luck, hard work, and getting ahead? (Good luck denies that we have any control of or responsibility for the consequences of our actions; without much effort at all we can find examples of people who have worked very hard and have little or nothing to show for it; many who subscribe to the creed of getting ahead end up aimless and unhappy.) How does the devil disguise itself as God and tempt us? (The devil deceives us by having us believe that there are conditions on God's love for us and so comes to us saying, "I will love you if...")

Hindering and strengthening. According to this section, God deals with those who oppose God's will by hindering them and strengthening us. To get at this idea, have the students brainstorm things they might do to deal with or control an opponent or enemy. List their ideas on a chalkboard or chart paper. Explain that God has a strategy for dealing with those who oppose God's will. Have the students look through the list they made for any strategies they think God might employ. Circle their suggestions. Refer the students to Luther's explanation to the Third Petition. Luther outlines two strategies. What are they? (God "hinders and defeats every evil scheme and purpose" and God "strengthens our faith and keeps us firm in his

Word as long as we live.") The student book describes several ways God hinders his enemies and strengthens his people. Have the students scan this section to discover what these ways are. (God hinders enemies by using the Commandments to keep order; God takes away the enemies' weapons and turns them around on the enemies; in Christ, God has taken the enemies upon himself, speaking the word of the promise; God strengthens us through the Spirit, who works in the Word and the sacraments.)



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory*. Memorize the Lord's Prayer and Luther's meaning to the Third Petition of this prayer.
- 2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (God's will, God's opponents). Work with a partner to review these concepts and concepts from previous sessions.
- 3. Journal. Make a list of things you do that displease you. See if you can put down a reason why you do each. Consider how you might eliminate some of these things. If you find something on your list that troubles you, talk about it with your pastor or some other person you can trust.
- 4. *Interview.* Go in pairs to interview members of the congregation about how they determine God's will for them in their daily lives. Bring the information back to class and talk about it.
- 5. *Guest.* Ask a person who has experienced grief or a setback to come and tell why he or she still prays "Your will be done." Talk about why there is so much suffering if God is really in charge of the world.
- 6. Role play. Read Ephesians 6:10-20. Discuss the pertinence of this text to the petition "Your will be done." Work together to come up with a creative way of presenting this text. Share it, as well as some of what you learned in this session, with members of the congregation.

Things to come.

Have the students read Chapter 20, "Every Day a Gift," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: What is meant by daily bread? Why do we pray for this since God provides for all people without being asked? What are the consequences of worrying? What results does God's word of promise bring?



$20\,$ every day a gift



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction

In the Fourth and Fifth Petitions, the focus shifts from praying for the great and glorious gifts of God (God's name, kingdom, and will) to praying for the things of daily life. Too often we take these for granted, not realizing that these, too, are gifts of God.

When we worry about what we need in order to live and about what others think of us, our old self is delighted. Worrying means that we are looking to ourselves to get (or avoid) those things instead of looking to the promise of God.

God gives us the gifts of food and forgiveness. It's the old Adam or Eve in us who gets us to worrying that maybe God won't take care of us, that maybe we have to take care of our needs and our sins by ourselves.

Looking away from ourselves and to the promise of God is the way to break out of the strangling hold of worries, guilt, and fear. The Spirit gives us this new way of looking as it speaks the promise to us.

Thus, we pray for daily bread and forgiveness. We can be confident God will answer; thus, we are freed from worry and guilt. We are freed to be in joyful service of God's people.

Objectives -

This session will help students

- ▼ understand what they are praying for when they pray for God's gifts of daily bread and forgiveness;
- ▼ identify instances of worry, guilt, and fear in their own life experiences and claim the freedom God offers;
- week and welcome opportunities to offer God's gifts of bread and forgiveness to others.

Gathering activity_

God's gifts include forgiveness and all that we need from day to day. Worry and fear are gifts offered to us by those who oppose God. Invite the students to list on the chalkboard or chart paper things that worry them. Be sure to add some worries of your own. This list will be used later on in the session.

Worship

A good worship text for this session is Matthew 6:25-34. Ask a student to read the text aloud. Then take a few

moments to talk about what it means. Afterward pass out slips of paper to the students. Invite them to write on the paper something that worries them. Then reread Matthew 6:33-34. As you do so, have the students tear their worries into little pieces. (Pass a receptacle to collect the pieces to be thrown away.)



Every day a gift. This section points out that we run into trouble on two counts when we fail to recognize that daily bread and forgiveness are not of our own doing but rather are gracious gifts from a loving God. When we fail to recognize them as gracious gifts, we either take them for granted or we worry ourselves sick about how to get them. To illustrate this, have the students compile a list of the things they need on a daily basis in order to live. Encourage them to include both material items (food, shelter, clothing) and nonmaterial items (health, love, forgiveness, affirmation). Afterward have the students go through their lists and circle those items they are most likely to take for granted. Next have the students go through their lists once more and underline those things that they feel they are responsible for providing for themselves.

Read aloud together the Fourth Petition and Luther's answer to the question "What is meant by 'daily bread'?" (page 135 in the student book). Have the students compare Luther's list with their lists of daily necessities. Then read aloud together Luther's answer to the question "What does this mean?" What does Luther say should be our attitude toward our daily bread? (We need to recognize that daily bread is not of our own doing but a gift God gives to all in spite of our sin. Our attitude can be one of thanksgiving.) What does this say about our attitude of taking daily bread for granted or assuming that we provide for our own needs? (These attitudes are wrong. Daily bread is a gift, pure and simple.)

Looking to ourselves. This section deals with the issue of worry, one consequence of forgetting that daily bread is God's gift. Refer the students to the list of worries they made during "Gathering Activity." Go through the list and have the students rank the items in order of importance. What do the students worry about the most? The least? Talk about worrying, using questions such as the following: What does worrying accomplish? (Nothing.) What are

the consequences of worrying? (More worrying; headaches, ulcers, and other health problems; decreased ability to cope with frustrations and challenges.) Given all this, why do we still worry? (Answers will vary. The student book points out that we worry because that is how the old you, the world, and the devil work.) Explain to the students that worry is a gift from God's opponents and a direct consequence of believing that it is our responsibility to provide for our own daily needs rather than recognizing that daily bread is God's gift to us.

Looking to the promise. Worrying about our daily needs of bread and forgiveness stops when the Holy Spirit turns our focus away from ourselves and toward God and God's promises. Have the students brainstorm ideas on how to break the "worry circles" people have. Discuss their ideas using questions such as the following: Will simply deciding not to worry end our worrying? Can we stop worrying on our own, or do we need help? What is the opposite of worry? How can focusing on what we are confident of dispel our worries? What has God done to dispel our worries? (This last question provides opportunity to review God's promises.)

The last point of the session is that once we realize God gives us all that we need as gifts and we cease worrying about these things or taking them for granted, we become free to share with others what we have been given, whether it be daily bread or forgiveness.

End this portion of the session by reading and discussing the last page of this section (page 140), beginning with "Hearing this promise, you can receive all that God gives you for what they are: gifts."



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

1. *Memory.* Memorize the Lord's Prayer and Luther's explanations of the Fourth and Fifth Petitions of this prayer. 2. *Key concepts.* Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (daily bread, sins). Have volunteers choose a concept from Sessions 17-20 and share how their understanding of it has changed or increased as a result of their study of the Lord's Prayer.

3. Journal. In your journal identify by initials a person you dislike or consider an enemy. During the next week, pray for this person as you would for someone about whom you care deeply. Pray for yourself as well that you might come to better understand the source of your dislike and move beyond it. Try to behave toward the person in a manner that reflects and fulfills your prayers. Then at the end of the week, reevaluate your feelings about

this person. Did your feelings change? If so, how? Write about it in your journal.

4. God's promises. God has provided us with promises in abundance to dispel our worries and calm our fears. Work together to make a list of God's promises to us. Write them on the chalkboard or chart paper opposite the list of worries you compiled during "Gathering Activity." For every promise you list, cross out or erase two worries. (After all, God's promises are far stronger than our worries!) Do not quit until all the worries are gone.

5. Bread for the world. As Christians, we are called to follow Christ's example to care for our neighbors. Find out what your congregation does to provide food and other necessities to people in need. Evaluate your own support of what your congregation is doing. What more can you and your family do? Contact the following organizations for ideas on what you can do.

Bread for the World 802 Rhode Island Avenue, NE Washington, D.C. 20018 (202) 269-0200

Habitat for Humanity International 121 Habitat Street Americus, Georgia 31709-3498 (912) 924-6935

Lutheran World Relief 390 Park Avenue South New York, New York 10016 (212) 532-6350

6. *Bible study*. Read Exodus 16, the story of God's provision of manna to the Israelites wandering in the wilderness. Discuss the pertinence of this story to the Fourth and Fifth Petitions of the Lord's Prayer. Use questions such as these: How are we too often like the Israelites who gathered more than a day's portion of manna? What does this say about our trust in God's promises? What part does forgiveness play in this story?

Things to come –

Have the students read Chapter 21, "Deliverance," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: What is the difference between little temptations and big temptations? What are the two dangerous temptations named by Luther? Why are they so dangerous? How does God help us when we are tempted? What is meant by "deliver us from evil"?

You might want to make plans to use the review of the Lord's Prayer that is on page 78 of this guide.



21 DELIVERANCE



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction-

The Sixth and Seventh Petitions go together as prayers relating to temptation. In the Sixth Petition, we pray that God will help us day by day as we are tempted. The two questions answered in this chapter are "How are we tempted?" and "How does God help us when we are tempted?"

When we pray the Sixth Petition, "Save us from the time of trial," we are asking God to help us now as we are tempted in any way. According to Luther, this includes both "puppy" or smaller temptations—such as cursing, lusting, stealing, lying (recall the difficult struggles between the old self and the new you that were discussed during study of the Commandments!)—and the dangerous temptations. These latter temptations always come silently or secretly and therefore are more difficult and dangerous. Their target is always God's promise that God will be our God.

Examples of hidden tempters identified by Luther are ∇ false belief: believing in self rather than in God's promises, or believing that God only goes part way and we must go the rest;

despair: the temptation to lose heart in the face of problems and troubles, to feel helpless and hopeless.

The important thing to realize is that God does not take us out of or away from temptations, either big or small, or make us immune from temptation. But God does give us God's grace, which enables us to live in the midst of temptation. God's Word comes to us through the Spirit, to overcome whatever temptations we face, to help us win the victory. (See the student book for other examples to help clarify this concept of grace.)

When we pray the Seventh Petition, we are asking that on the last day God will deliver us from whatever threatens and tempts us in any way (all evil); destroy all God's old enemies (old self, the rebellious world, and the devil); and take us unto God (raise us from the dead). Amen!

Objectives-

This session will help the students

- wunderstand the powerful nature of temptation;
- ▼ realize the nature of God's help in time of temptation;
- ▼ identify the big tempters in their own lives and pray to God for deliverance.

Gathering activity-

Begin the session by asking the students to gather in small groups and talk about the temptations that confront youth today. Encourage each group to choose one or two ideas and use pantomime to present them to the rest of the class. Afterward announce that the focus of this session is on the final two petitions of the Lord's Prayer, both of which have to do with temptation. Have the students recite the Sixth and Seventh Petitions from memory.

Worship

Ask volunteers to read aloud the following texts: Isaiah 43:1-3a; 1 Peter 5:6-11; Revelation 21:1-5. Encourage the rest of the group to listen for the common theme in all three texts (God's promise of deliverance from temptation, evil, and suffering). Note that in none of the texts does God remove the person from the temptation. Instead, God gives grace, which enables the person to live in the midst of temptation and yet within sight of God's promises. Pause for a brief moment and offer silent prayers asking God for deliverance from personal temptations.



Deliverance. This section introduces the idea that there are greater and lesser temptations. Have the students consider the temptations they presented in "Gathering Activity." Were some greater temptations than others? What made them so? Read the Sixth and Seventh Petitions and Luther's explanations to them on page 141 of the student book. Who is responsible for these and all temptations? (The devil, the world, and our sinful self.) What temptations does Luther specifically name? (False belief and despair.) Explain that the temptations to false belief and despair are the most powerful and most dangerous. Luther calls other temptations "puppy sins," because they are weak in comparison to these. Work together to make a list of such temptations. (The student book mentions the temptations to curse, lust, steal, or lie and gossiping and coveting.) It is for deliverance from all temptations, great and small, that Jesus teaches us to pray. "Save us from the time of trial" is our prayer to help us face our temptations now, to keep us in faith while we await the new day. "And deliver us from evil" is our prayer that on the last day, at

the very doorstep of God's new day, God will remove us from all temptations and every evil to take us to himself.

The hidden tempters. Remind the students that the only temptations actually named in Luther's explanation to the Sixth and Seventh Petitions are false belief and despair. Hypothesize as to why these get mentioned and not others. (Possible answers include that these temptations are threats to the First and greatest Commandment: "I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods." These temptations rob us of the freedom and hope of God's promises.) Look again at the explanation to the Sixth Petition. How are we tempted to false belief and despair? (We are deceived.) Talk about what we mean by the word deception. Invite the students to share examples of when they did something because they thought it would bring them pleasure or happiness and discovered too late that their actions resulted in disappointment and misery. Explain that deception is one of the criteria Luther uses in categorizing temptation, for the greatest and most harmful temptations are those that come silently or secretly to attack God's word for us. In other words, these seemingly harmless temptations are sneaky, silent, and deadly. (The story of the fall in Genesis 3:1-19 is a fine illustration of such temptation. If there is time you may want to include a brief study of it during the session.)

Before going on to the next section, help the students get a better handle on the meanings of false belief and despair and why they are so dangerous. (They, in their subtle and deceitful ways, deny and lead us away from the promise that God has decided to be our God in Christ, forgiving and adopting us and creating in us a new you for the new day.) Use questions such as these to encourage discussion: What are some examples of false belief? How can we avoid false belief? We all have bad moods from time to time. How are bad moods different from despair? How can such moods deceive us and lead us to despair? What help does God give us to get out of such moods?

Power in weakness. As was pointed out in the texts read during "Worship," God doesn't deliver us from temptation by removing the temptation but rather by empowering us in its midst. How does God do this? Read 2 Corinthians 12:7b-10 to find out. (God gives us God's grace, which is all that we could ever need.) The student book describes God's grace in three ways on page 146: the grace of God's promise to be your God; the grace of God's promise to take you as you are; and the grace that comes to you in the Word and the sacraments. Read aloud this section and discuss the relationship of grace to temptation. Talk about how we obtain God's grace and what it means to live in God's grace.

Conclude this portion of the session by reading the accounts of Jesus' temptation recorded in Matthew 4:1-11

and Luke 4:1-13. Talk about how Jesus met temptation. (Armed with the power of God's Word.) How can knowing about Jesus' temptation help us when we are tempted? (We, like Jesus, can fight temptation empowered with God's Word; we can find hope in the fact that the God who delivered Jesus from the power of the devil is also our God and will deliver us from all evil.)



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory.* Memorize the Lord's Prayer and Luther's explanations of the Sixth and Seventh Petitions of this prayer. Choose a partner and take turns reciting the petitions and their explanations to one another.
- 2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (temptation, false belief, despair, deliverance). Divide into two groups. Have each group create a work sheet for the other group based on the key concepts from this session and previous sessions on the Lord's Prayer.
- 3. Journal. Make a private list of the temptations that you have had this past week. What did you do about them? Did you talk to someone? Did you pray? Write down something you learned in this session that will help you face future temptation. Then pray, asking God to strengthen you and keep you in God's grace.
- 4. Guest. Invite a Christian counselor to come to class and talk about the impact of despair on peoples' lives. Ask the counselor to talk about the role faith plays in helping those whom he or she counsels.
- 5. *The faithful*. Use encyclopedias, biographies, and books on saints and religious leaders to research the lives of Christian leaders who resisted, even to the point of death, the temptation to deny their Lord. Possibilities include Martin Luther; Joan of Arc; John Hus; and Elizabeth, Princess of Hungary.
- 6. Collage. Since you have now completed the study of the Lord's Prayer, take some time to talk about what you have learned. Then work together to create a large collage of pictures, words, and colors that express newfound insights into the Lord's Prayer.

Things to come –

Have the students read Chapter 22, "How Do You Know?" before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: What are the means of grace? How does God give us God's Word? How is God's Word different from other words?



THE MEANS OF GRACE

Justification by faith alone is frequently misunderstood. When misunderstood, faith becomes our decision, our work, and so something we are supposed to do. With the gift taken out of it, justification then becomes action we ourselves take when we decide to believe or become sincere enough. In this way, the good news is stripped out of the gospel and it gets proclaimed as one more law.

The purpose of the unit on the means of grace is to proclaim the gift God gives in faith, showing that God gives faith through the means of grace.

Faith the gift

The quotation from the Augsburg Confession printed at the beginning of Chapter 22 sets out the main theme of the unit: "Through these [that is, through Word and sacrament], as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel."

Because its direction is from us to God, a theology of glory turns faith into a work. This is done in any one or a combination of several ways. If the emphasis is on pure doctrine, faith becomes the work of believing everything the church says. If the emphasis is on the proper attitude, faith becomes the work of being sincere. If the emphasis is on social concerns, faith becomes the work of taking care of some disadvantaged group.

One of the standard ways of trying to correct this misunderstanding is to reshape the phrase as "justification by grace through faith." In this way, grace is put in first place. But changing the phrase doesn't get at the root of the problem. Justification by faith is the appropriate formula. But faith is not by any means our work. Rather, it is God's gift to us, given in the Spirit. God has all the action. In grace, God justifies us by the faith God gives

Once that is recognized, faith can be spoken of in three ways. Faith is believing, that is, taking God at his word. Faith is trust, relying on God to keep his word and promise. Faith is also obedience, being reshaped by new priorities for God, the neighbor, and the earth. But it is always God's action in us, the Spirit taking hold of us to make us believers, to give us the confidence or trust, to make us obedient.

There's another important difference, too. Because it wants to secure an island of safety somewhere in this earthly existence, a theology of glory puts a premium on visibility, on seeing. Thus it's always looking for signs of faith, evidence with which to prop itself up.

In a theology of the cross, the emphasis falls on hiddenness. As Paul and Luther were so fond of saying, it is not sight but "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Just as we cannot see God, we cannot see our own faith. That doesn't mean that faith doesn't have any form or doesn't do anything. Rather, it means that there is no point where we can trust our own faith. It's hidden. "Before God," as Luther said, "faith is all ears."

The delivery system

"Talk to a lover," St. Augustine once said; "they know what this means." Love is faith's closest analogy, and in faith making, love making is the closest parallel. The means of grace, Word and sacrament, are the means God uses to make love to us, to make faith in us.

The most important thing about the Word as a means of grace is the power in it. To use the example of love, when the words "I love you" are spoken between lovers, the words are full of power. They do something. They create a response; they make something happen.

In the same way, when God says, "You are mine," God's words do something. They either turn people around and send them running or they fill the heart to overflowing. There is no neutrality; the words don't sit still. God's Word acts; it does something. It creates, carries, moves, fills, and gives.

So Luther emphasizes the oral word. Love isn't made on paper, by editors and writers. Love is made in the speaking of the word of love, by those who proclaim the gospel. The Word that is proclaimed by preachers, as well as the Word spoken by every Christian to another person, makes faith, not because of the preachers, but because God himself is in it, packing it full of presence and power.

The same goes for the sacraments. They are the actions of the down-to-earth God. As God opens our ears with the Word, God washes our heads—better yet, our whole bodies—with water. And as God opens our ears again and again with the Word, he opens our eyes, noses, and mouths with the sight, smell, and taste of the bread and the wine. As the Word is spoken, the sacraments are faithgiving gifts.

The whole key, then, is recognizing the direction. In a theology of glory, the words are taken as poor substitutes for action and the sacraments are explained as things we are supposed to do. They become means of demonstrating our piety, of somehow ascending from the strife-torn earth. In the theology of the cross, the Word and the



sacraments are gifts of the living, loving, down-to-earth God who commands what he gives and gives what he commands.

The church

Like the chapters on the Third Article of the Creed, this unit is tied in very closely with the church. As it discusses the means of grace and the work of the Spirit who gathers its people, this unit is really a unit on the church.

This connection should be clearly emphasized throughout the class discussions of the means of grace. Because the Spirit gives faith through the means of grace, there can be no salvation outside the church.

But after making that statement, it has to be said with equal emphasis that the church does not possess the power of salvation in itself. It is God who justifies, and God justifies the ungodly (Romans 6:1). The church then, is not the company of the self-righteous but the communion of sinners who are declared saints by the calling, gathering, enlightening, sanctifying, and keeping of the Holy Spirit. A church that regards God's gifts as possessions of its own and holds in contempt those outside of its fellowship is not the church of Jesus Christ.

There are dangers on both sides, then. On the one side there is the narrow individualism that often characterizes nondenominational groups. On the other side, there is the cultic self-sufficiency of churches that claim to own the Spirit in their institutions. Both are products of a theology of glory in which the cross is ignored or reduced to insignificance.

"For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (1 Corinthians 1:22-25).

Resources

For additional study, see *Luther's Works*, volumes 35-38 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960, 1959, 1961, 1971 respectively), on Word and sacrament. Each volume contains several helpful essays.

Edmund Schlink has a fine book, *The Doctrine of Baptism* (translated by Herbert J. A. Bouman; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), as does Martin Marty. Marty's book is called *Baptism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977, © 1962).

For a discussion of the power in the Word, see Gustaf Wingren's *The Living Word: A Theological Study of Preaching and the Church* (translated by Victor C. Pogue; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960).



22 HOW DO YOU KNOW?



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction

At the beginning of this chapter in the student book, the means of grace are introduced through a statement from the Augsburg Confession (from Article V) and following that, through an overview of the unit's focus. The basic question for this unit of study is identified: How can we know that God's decision and promise are meant for each of us?

Following the brief introduction to the unit, a detailed consideration of the first means of grace, God's Word, is given. God uses words just as we do, to speak to us. God has done so in Christ, who not only spoke God's Word, but did God's Word and is God's Word; in the Bible, which bears witness to Christ; and in the spoken Word: preaching and teaching insofar as they bear witness to Christ.

God's Word comes to us as a promise, spoken to us by another person. If we listen (in whatever way we can "hear"), somebody will say, sing, shout, or whisper God's promise to us. Then we can know; then we can be sure.

Objectives

This session will help students

- ▼ learn about God's means of grace, the ways God gives us gifts to show us that the promises are for us;
- wunderstand how God speaks God's Word to us;
- where God's Word with another person.

Gathering activity_

To begin the process of introducing the students to the concept of the means of grace, involve the students in an activity in which they must devise various methods of moving a small gift-wrapped package from a student on one side of the class area to another student on the opposite side of the area. Encourage them to be creative and come up with a variety of ways to accomplish this task. Assure them that this activity is pertinent to session learning!

Worship

The worship text for this session is 1 Peter 1:23-25. Have a volunteer read the text aloud. Then ask the students to think of the most powerful, wonderful, or meaningful word they know. Give them a moment to reflect on their word. Then ask them to share their words with the group. End with the following prayer or one of your own.

Dear Lord, you spoke your word and the world was created. You sent your Word and the world was saved. Your Word is shared by Spirit-filled people. Open us up and let your Word come alive in us. Empower us to share your Word with others. Amen.



How do you know? The means of grace are introduced at the beginning of this session in answer to the question "How do you know?" (How do you know that God has promised to be your God, to give you everything good, to forgive your sin, to raise you from the dead?) Write "How do you know?" on the chalkboard or on chart paper. Invite the students to respond to the question, and record their answers below it. Continue by writing the words means of grace. Explain that the means of grace are the ways God uses to give us gifts and to assure us that the promises are for us.

Have the students recall "Gathering Activity," in which they had to find a variety of ways to deliver a gift from one person to another. Explain that the means of grace are kind of like that. They are God's ways of telling us of God's promise to be our God, to give us everything good, to forgive our sin, and to raise us from the dead. So exactly how does God do this? What means does God take to deliver gifts and the promise?

Write "Word and sacraments" below "means of grace." Explain that together, the Word and the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion make up the means of

Direct the students to the portion of Article V of the Augsburg Confession that is printed on page 149 of the student book. Review it, asking questions and making comments that will help the students better understand what is being said.

Hidden in the Word. This section deals with the common nature of God's means of grace and presents the three ways that God gives us God's Word. Ask the students to identify the things that are needed to share the Word and the sacraments. (Words, water, bread, and wine.) Ask, "Why do you think God uses such ordinary things to bring us God's gifts? (They are readily available most of the time: they are themselves gifts that God created and chose to share with us; God's choice of using ordinary things for extraordinary purpose is appropriate in that God has

chosen ordinary and sinful people to inherit God's holy kingdom.) Why do you think God does not come to us with power and might to make us believe? (Because to do so would eliminate the need for faith.)"

Point out the three ways that God speaks to us: in Christ, in the Bible, and in the spoken Word. Divide the students into three groups and have each group use pertinent portions of "Hidden in the Word" from the student book to research one of the ways (Group 1—in Christ; Group 2—in the Bible; Group 3—in the spoken Word). In addition to the material presented in the student book, have Group 1 look up John 1:14, Group 2 look up 2 Timothy 3:16, and Group 3 look up Matthew 28:18-20 for additional information. Ask each group to share with the whole group what they learned. Summarize the learning by reading aloud the final paragraph under "Hidden in the Word," beginning with "This is God's Word, then, and this is how it comes to us."

The living Word. Tell the students that God's Word is different from other words. Ask for suggestions as to how it is different. If the students are stumped, have them read the title to this section in Chapter 22 of the student book ("The Living Word"). What clue does this give as to how God's Word is different? (God's Word is alive; it is powerful; it makes things happen; it makes us believers; it gives us life.)

Have the students recall the word they chose during "Worship." Ask volunteers to explain why they chose their particular word. Then ask the students to think about the most important word or message that they ever received from God. Talk about it using questions such as the following: What was the word? How did it come to you? Throughout your lives, who has spoken God's Word to you?

Read to the students the following from page 154 in the student book: "God has made the Word a common, ordinary, human word so that it can be spoken, so that you can hear it, so that it can be shouted, sung, whispered by one person to another. That's the whole purpose of the church: to bear the Word and speak it, to receive the sacraments and share them." Discuss this statement using the following questions: What is the church? What insights does this statement provide regarding the importance of gathering for worship? What is the challenge in this statement? To whom can you speak the Word?



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

1. *Memory*. Memorization options for this session include memorizing the portion of Article V of the Augsburg

Confession that is printed on page 149 of the student book; working together to write a paraphrase of the same portion of Article V and then memorizing the paraphrase; memorizing one of the Bible verses used in the session. 2. *Key concepts*. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (means of grace, the Word, sacraments). Use them to review session learning.

3. Journal. One of the ways God's Word comes to us is through preaching. Listen closely to the pastor's sermon at worship this week. Then write down at least one thing God told you through the witness of your pastor. Share this Word of God with someone else during the week. 4. Children's sermon. Jesus told stories and parables to proclaim the promise, speaking the promise directly, person to person. Choose one of Jesus' parables and work together to develop a short sermon for children that is based on the parable. Talk with your pastor about presenting the sermon during a worship service. (If your group is large, consider developing more than one sermon.)

5. Letter. Think about someone who has shared the Word of God with you. Write a letter thanking him or her for caring enough about you to tell you about God. Share some of what you have learned about God's Word with that person.

6. Cinquain. A cinquain has five lines and is a very simple form of poetry. Reflect on what you learned about God's Word in this session. Write a cinquain that tells something you learned. Use this formula (an example appears in parentheses):

One word: title (Grace)

Two words: describe the title (God's gift)
Three words: express action (Coming to us)

Four words: express feelings (We respond with thanks)

One word: recalls the title (Love)

Things to come –

Have the students read Chapter 23, "The Greatest Miracle," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: What is Baptism? What is the miracle in Baptism? What is the purpose of a sacrament? What gives certainty to the benefits of Baptism?



23 THE GREATEST MIRACLE



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction-

This chapter has a double function: to define the sacraments and to consider the first question addressed in the Catechism's explanation of Baptism, a question that is answered by a definition.

God uses both the Word and the sacraments for the same purpose, laying himself open to us to say "You are mine" and to make us his. But while in the Word God primarily sends the Spirit into us through our ears (in whatever way we "hear"), in the sacraments God uses our other senses as well: touch, taste, sight, and smell.

To do this, God puts the Word together with physical or earthly elements: water and bread and wine. The combination of a divine promise with a physical element is a sacrament, according to Luther's definition. The purpose of the combination is to give us the certainty that God is at work to make us God's own people.

As simple as the definition of Baptism is—"Baptism is not water only, but it is water used together with God's Word and by his command"—this definition is a battle-ground. Whether out of a desire to attack Baptism or to defend it, somehow the demand to explain the combination of water and the Word is always made. And then the fight is on.

The most common explanation is that the water is a symbol. Understood in this way, the water signifies or symbolizes something that is happening elsewhere. No matter how innocent it seems, this explanation separates the water from the Word and turns Baptism into nothing more than a symbolic washing. Then it is water only.

Against this, Luther held fast to the combination—"water used together with God's Word." In the speaking of the Word and the washing of the water, God is acting to do what he says, to make us God's people. No other explanation is needed.

Objectives _

This session will help students

wunderstand the meaning and purpose of the sacraments, specifically Baptism;

▼ appreciate the inseparable combination of God's Word and earthly elements that together make up the sacraments;

♥ find confidence in God's promise through Christ's command to go, baptize, and teach.

Gathering activity-

In keeping with the session focus on Baptism, the greatest miracle, talk about what makes something a miracle. Take turns sharing stories about miracles you have heard about or witnessed firsthand.

Worship

The worship text for this session is the story of Philip and the Ethiopian official, found in Acts 8:26-39. Have a volunteer read the text aloud. Discuss the story by inviting the students to point out things in the story that seem to have a miraculous characteristic about them. (Answers may include the mention of the angel appearing to Philip; the immediacy of the official's conversion after hearing about Jesus; the way Philip disappeared at the end of the story.) Tell the students that though these things may well be miracles, the greatest miracle in the story is the official's Baptism, for Baptism is the greatest miracle of all. It's a miracle greater than walking on water. For in it, with the washing of water and the pronouncement of his Word, God adopts each of us, takes us into the communion of saints, and gives us a future that not even death and the devil can destroy. Close with a brief prayer thanking God for the miracle of Baptism.



The greatest miracle. The students have already heard that Baptism is the greatest miracle. Now it's time to define Baptism. Ask the students to tell you what they know about Baptism. Write their responses on the chalkboard or chart paper. (Do not comment on the students' responses except to correct misinformation they may give.) Afterwards work together, using the information provided by the students, to write a definition for Baptism. Compare this definition to Luther's definition in the Catechism as it appears on page 155 in the student book.

A watery beginning. This section introduces the concept of sacrament. Since a sacrament is the combination of God's Word and physical or earthly elements, it may be helpful to review the concept of God's Word from Session 22. (God's Word is "spoken" in Christ, who not only spoke God's Word but did God's Word and is God's Word; in the Bible, which bears witness to Christ; and in the Word

we speak to one another proclaiming and bearing witness to Christ.)

Following the review, divide the class into several small groups. Have each group read "A Watery Beginning" on pages 156-157 in the student book. As they read, have them look for answers to these questions: What is a sacrament? (See above paragraph.) What is the purpose of a sacrament? (To give us the certainty that God's Word is for us and God is at work to make us God's own people.) What are the two sacraments according to Luther? (Holy Baptism and Holy Communion.) Go over the answers to these questions with the whole group.

The Word in the wash. Earlier in the session the students had opportunity to share what they knew about Baptism. Give them time now to ask any questions they may have about Baptism or to share comments they have heard about Baptism that trouble them. Assure the students that the questions may be of a practical nature and not only theological. Encourage the students to join you in answering the questions. If you don't know an answer, admit it. Then try to learn the answer so you can share it at the next session. The purpose of this activity is to bring to light some of the age-old fallacies about Baptism that come from trying to separate the Word and the water. (Be prepared to plant a few leading questions or comments if none are forthcoming from the students. Some examples are included in this section in the student book.)

Impress upon the students the all-important fact that Baptism is "water used together with God's Word." They go together. To separate them is to destroy the sacrament. Conclude this section by asking a volunteer to read aloud the final paragraph of "The Word in the Wash" on page 159 in the student book.

The loving command. This section identifies the final essential ingredient in Baptism: Christ's command. Introduce this section by reminding the students of God's adversary, the old self. Ask, "How do you think the old self feels about God's gift of Baptism? (The old self hates Baptism nearly as much as it bates Christ.) What happens to the old self in Baptism? (Baptism is the old self's funeral, the birth of the new you.) How does the old self attack Baptism? (Makes it appear that Baptism isn't God's gift to us at all but rather something we do for God.) What arguments does it use? (Tries to separate the water and the Word; makes Baptism into a magic rite, a sort of life insurance policy; denies the miracle in Baptism by concentrating on its own decisions for Christ and conversion experiences.)" Read Matthew 28:19-20. Explain that these verses are called the Great Commission because in them Christ commissions (charges, commands) his disciples to go, baptize, and teach. Ask, "In the face of the old self's attacks on Baptism, what difference does it make that Christ himself commanded Baptism? (Christ's command

provides certainty that Baptism is God's gift, the greatest miracle of all.)" Conclude by reading aloud the last paragraph of Chapter 23.

If time permits, close the session by recalling the story of Philip and the Ethiopian official read during "Worship." Discuss the relationship between this story and Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19-20 to go, baptize, and teach. Talk about what this command means for you and your students.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory*. Memorize the questions and answers from the Catechism for Part 1 on Baptism.
- 2. *Key concepts*. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (Baptism, sacrament). Add these to the flash cards from Session 22. Use these cards to review learning on the means of grace.
- 3. *Journal*. Ask your parents why they had you baptized and why they chose the sponsors they did for your Baptism. Write their responses and your feelings about what you learned in your journal.
- 4. Baptismal banner: Many churches have baptismal banners that are hung or carried into the sanctuary each time a Baptism takes place. If your church doesn't have a baptismal banner, work together to design and make one.
- 5. *Guest.* Have a person from your congregation who was baptized as an adult come and talk about the significance of Baptism to him or her.
- 6. *Devotions*. Sessions 24 and 25 continue the study on Baptism begun in this session. Invite volunteers to prepare devotions for the two sessions. Make available copies of the baptismal service used in your church and offer the following texts to help them in their preparation: Romans 6:1-14; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19; Galatians 3:23-28; Ephesians 4:4-6; Colossians 2:12-15; Titus 3:4-8.

Things to come_

Have the students read Chapter 24, "Off the Merry-goround," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: What are the benefits of Baptism? What does God put to work in us at the time of our Baptism? What is the result? What happens to the old Adam or Eve in Baptism? How is Baptism a new birth?



24 OFF THE MERRY-GO-ROUND

The F

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction -

Now we know that we won't have to wait until the last day to know God's last judgment: Not guilty! Free in Christ! We shall be raised from the dead to live with God forever, and until then, we receive forgiveness all along the way!

But what happens if we can't believe? Are all the gifts and promises withdrawn? Is all the certainty destroyed?

The old Adam or Eve would have us worry and wonder in its war on believing. It wants us to feel we can never be certain that God's gifts are for us, that we have to prove somehow that we deserve God's promises, that we need to do something to get this faith by ourselves. So soon we're trying to get it, wondering if we will, and doubting.

The truth is that God doesn't expect us to get faith by ourselves. God gives faith; God provides the belief and trust that go with the promises, through the Word and the sacraments.

We learn to trust close friends by what they do and say; they demonstrate that they are trustworthy. Similarly we come to trust God as we discover that God promises, God commands, and God gives us what God commands. God is faithful; God keeps his word.

The Bible tells us that with the gift of Baptism, God gives each of us the gift of the Holy Spirit, who works faith in us. So you don't think it has happened yet? Just wait—keep listening for God's Word—remember your own Baptism—eat the bread, drink the wine, hear the words of Holy Communion.

Objectives -

This session will help students

- ₩ understand the benefits God gives in Baptism;
- ▼ appreciate how God's Spirit works to create faith in us:
- ▼ live each day as a reflection of their new birth in Baptism.

Gathering activity -

Have you ever heard the adage "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is"? This is the argument that the old self uses with regard to God's lavish gifts in Baptism. To introduce this session, have the students consider this adage as it relates to contests, sweepstakes, and other youhad-better-read-the-fine-print opportunities. If possible, have a variety of sweepstake materials and contest entry

forms on hand for the students to look through. Have the students concentrate on discovering the various requirements and restrictions (the catch) governing the awarding of these prizes.

Worship-

If the students prepared devotions according to the instructions given in the Session 23 "Possibilities and Projects" on page 61 in this guide, turn the worship time over to them. Otherwise choose one or two of the texts listed there and ask volunteers to read them. Invite students' comments on the readings. Then use this prayer or one of your own.

Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of new life that you give to us in the waters of Baptism. Help us to live each day in faithful witness to you, the giver of all life. Amen.



Off the merry-go-round. What are the benefits of Baptism? To answer this question, refer the students to the first portion of Luther's Small Catechism quoted on page 161 in the student book. (Forgiveness, deliverance from death and the power of the devil, everlasting salvation.) Talk about these gifts so that the students come to understand them in terms of their own lives.

Then continue with Luther's second question, "What is God's promise?" Remind the students of "Gathering Activity" when they were asked to discover the catch in winning the wonderful prizes promised in any number of contests or sweepstakes. Explain that the old self would have us believe that there is a catch to our receiving forgiveness, deliverance, and everlasting salvation in our Baptism. What would the old self say is the catch? (In order to receive the gifts we must first believe in God's promises.) Explain that the focus of this session will be on demonstrating that there is no catch attached to God's gifts to us in Baptism. God's gifts are gifts, pure and simple.

The circle. This section presents the vicious circle of working, wondering, and worrying that we get caught in when we forget that faith is also a gift God gives and not something we manufacture.

To help the students understand this idea, divide the class into small groups and ask each group to discuss the ways that young people attempt to impress the people they admire. Have them list their ideas on chart paper.

Then have the groups talk about the traps these actions can create. After a few minutes have the groups share summaries of their small group discussions with the rest of the class. Illustrate these by placing key words or phrases from each group on a large circle drawn on the chalkboard or another sheet of chart paper. This way the students will be able to see the circle of working, wondering, and worrying that is the result of their attempts to impress another. (Example: Sometimes we may say or do something that makes us uncomfortable because we think the person we are trying to impress will appreciate such words or actions. The problem then becomes "Does the person like me for me or for who I was pretending to be?" The result: Our wondering leads us to work even harder to impress the other and we are caught in the circle of working to impress, wondering if our attempts paid off, and worrying about how we are going to continue to impress this person.)

Move from this circle to the circle of working, wondering, and worrying that we create when we attempt to attach conditions to the benefits God gives in Baptism. To do this, have volunteers read aloud the last three paragraphs under "The Circle," beginning with "When the old you succeeds . . ." on page 163 in the student book. Discuss this information until you feel confident that the students understand the point being made.

The faith God gives. Faith is a gift from God. In this section, the students will discover how God gives the gift of faith, why we receive this gift, and what this gift means to us.

The students' prior study of the Creed will be put to use at this point. If the meanings to the articles of the Apostles' Creed were assigned memory work earlier in the course, invite volunteers to recite the first two sentences of Luther's meaning to the Third Article. Otherwise, read it from page 101 of the student book. Discuss the impact of this statement on the circle of working, wondering, and worrying perpetuated by the old self. Use questions such as the following: What does this say about faith? (It is God's gift.) What does this say about our ability to manufacture or create our own faith? (It is impossible.) How does God give us the gift of faith? (Through the work of the Holy Spirit in the Word and in the sacraments. For an explanation of this, see the two paragraphs beginning on page 164 in the student book with "That's how God gives us the faith that goes with the promises.") When do we receive the Holy Spirit? (In Baptism. See also the third question from the Catechism printed on page 161 in the student book.)

Conclude this portion of the session by talking about the freedom that God gives us in Baptism. Divide the class into two groups. Have one group suggest responses to "In Baptism, God gives us freedom from _____." The other group should respond to "In Baptism, God gives us freedom to _____." (Responses can be found in the last para-

graph of Chapter 24, on page 166 in the student book.) Have the groups share their responses with one another.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory.* Memorize the questions and answers on Baptism from the Small Catechism that were covered in this session.
- 2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (faith, God's grace). Add these to the flash cards from Sessions 22 and 23. Divide the class into groups of two or three. Name one of the key concepts and have the groups work together to come up with a definition. Then go on to define the other key concepts.
- 3. Journal. Go by yourself to the baptismal font and think about what happened to you there. In your journal write responses to these questions: What images came to mind during your reflection? What new understandings do you have of what happened to you in Baptism? What does your Baptism mean to your life today?
- 4. *Interview.* Make a list of reasons why you know you believe in God's promises. Talk with a good friend, your parents, or someone else you admire and ask that person what would be on his or her list. Share your list with the rest of the group. Talk about how the faith of the person you talked to has an impact on your own faith.
- 5. Witness. Work together to come up with ways of explaining to children the meaning of Baptism. Consider using drama, storytelling, puppets, work sheets, music, games, and pictures to get your points across.
- 6. Research. Interview your pastor and use Bible dictionaries and books on Baptism to find out what you can about baptismal practices in the ancient church and in different cultures. Share with others what you learn.

Things to come ____

In preparation for "Gathering Activity" in Session 25, have the students learn about their Baptisms by talking with family members and baptismal sponsors. If the students have baptismal mementos, encourage them to bring these items to class. In the event there are students in the group who have not been baptized, encourage them to talk with their parents or guardians about arranging to be baptized.

Have the students read Chapter 25, "Letting Go to Take Hold," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: What meaning does Baptism have for our daily living? What are the two parts of repentance? What produces repentance?



25 LETTING GO TO TAKE HOLD



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction -

After a detailed consideration of what Baptism is, its meaning in terms of benefits and promises, and a consideration of how we can be sure it's for us (Chapter 24), we come to a crucial question: "What does Baptism mean for daily living?"

The concept of repentance is taken up here. In a parable by Jesus (Matthew 13:44), it is identified as a movement that has parts, like two sides of the same coin: a "dropping, letting go" side, and a "rising, taking hold" side.

In Luther's explanation of what Baptism means for daily living, this idea is evident. In Baptism, the old Adam or Eve is drowned; through God's grace, we let go of ourselves. Then the new you is born, arises, and gets wrapped up in the treasure of God's promises.

Keep in mind that the idea of repentance comes after God's promise to us. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15).

It is important to understand that we repent not to impress God with how penitent we are, but because of the greatness of God's promise to be our God. Then we begin to let go. As we let go, the gifts begin to take hold of us.

This chapter deals with the two parts of repentance in terms of "the drowning" and "the rising" and considers repentance in terms of the larger picture, Baptism.

Objectives -

This session will help students

- w understand the concept of repentance;
- ▼ appreciate, within the context of Baptism, new insights regarding repentance;
- widentify personal examples of repentance or need for repentance.

Gathering activity ____

At the end of Session 24, you asked the students to learn about their Baptism by talking with family members and sponsors. Encourage the students to share what they learned and to show any mementos they have from that event.

Worship -

Since this is the final session on Baptism, if possible hold opening worship around the baptismal font. If the students prepared devotions according to the instructions given in the Session 23 "Possibilities and Projects" on page 61 in this guide, turn the worship time over to them. In the event that you did not assign this option, consider using a portion of the rite for Holy Baptism as a worship focus for this session.



Letting go to take hold. This section uses one of Jesus' parables to introduce the idea of repentance. Two parables pertinent to this theme are recorded in Matthew 13. Divide the class into two groups. Ask one group to read and discuss Matthew 13:44; the other, Matthew 13:45. Then have the groups make posters that illustrate and explain the parables. Allow time for the groups to share their posters with each other.

Before going on to the next portion of the session, be sure the students have grasped these points about the parables (you may want to write them on the chalkboard or on chart paper): Both people found something of great value; in response to the treasure, both willingly gave up everything they had.

The drowning. This section deals with the first movement involved in repentance: letting go of the old. Invite the students to share examples from their own lives when a new interest or talent inspired them to give up something else to concentrate on what had now become more important to them. You might begin by offering an illustration of this from your own life. To encourage the students to talk about their actions, ask questions such as these: How did you discover this new interest or talent? Why did you decide to pursue it? What changes has this decision had on how you spend your time or energy or money? Why (or why not)? What parallels can you see between what you did and the parables we read earlier in the session?

The previous two activities were designed to help the students understand what it means to repent. Ask the students to identify the common theme in these activities. (They had to do with letting go of one thing upon being

taken bold of by something of great value.) Write the word repentance on the chalkboard or chart paper, and encourage the students to offer definitions for it, keeping the previous activities in mind. (Repentance isn't "feeling bad" about what we have or haven't done. Repentance is a movement involving two parts: letting go of the old sinful life and taking hold of the new life of God's promises.) Then have the students explore the relationship between repentance and Baptism by reading and discussing the Catechism question and response on page 167 in the student book. (Letting go: daily drowning of the old self; taking hold: arising of the new you wrapped up in the treasure of God's promises.)

Help the students realize how it is that we come to repent. Have them read the following texts and identify the gift that is offered and the response it evokes: Mark 1:14-15; Luke 19:1-10. (Our repentance comes in response to the wonderful gifts God offers us in the promise. It isn't that we repent and then God shows us the gifts. Repentance is in response to the sheer joy of the gift.)

The rising. The previous section dealt with the letting go movement of repentance. This section deals with the second part: taking hold of the gift. The key concept is that we don't take hold of God's gifts and promises; rather, they take hold of us. You may want to have volunteers read aloud this short section before discussing this point.

Everything turns around. What is the end result of repentance? What does Baptism mean for daily living? The student book describes it like this: "Once God's gifts and promises take hold of you, your whole way of looking at things turns around, so that as Paul says, you 'walk in newness of life' " (page 171).

Use the following questions for class discussion: What do letting go and taking hold mean in terms of your own life? (The student book talks about a changed awareness and attitude, a new purpose.) If the old self is given the death sentence at the time of our Baptism, does that mean that we won't experience sorrow, pain, or trouble ever again? (See the last paragraph on page 171 and the first paragraph on page 172.) Luther uses the word daily when talking about Baptism. What does this mean? What part does the Holy Spirit play as we walk day by day in "newness of life"? (The last five paragraphs of Chapter 25 are helpful in answering these final questions.)



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory*. Memorize the questions and answers on Baptism from the Small Catechism that were covered in this session. With a partner review this and previous memory work on Baptism.
- 2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (repentance, daily living). Add these to the flash cards from Sessions 22-24. Make a game of reviewing these concepts. Divide the class into two teams. Have the teams race to provide an appropriate question to each flash card you show them. (For example, for the flash card answer "sacrament," a question might be "What is the combination of God's Word and an earthly element?") 3. Journal. Write about the last time you did or said something for which you were sorry. What did you feel like? Did you ask God's forgiveness for this act? Write about what it means for you to seek and to accept forgiveness from another and from God.
- 4. Baptism instruction. Find out what kind of preparation your congregation offers for people about to be baptized or for the parents and sponsors of children soon to be baptized. Talk with someone who has recently been through Baptism instruction to find out how it helped them understand the baptismal promises they made for themselves or on behalf of another.
- 5. Catchphrases. Come up with creative phrases that proclaim a truth you discovered during your study on Baptism. Use the phrase to create buttons, hats, T-shirts, or bumper stickers. Make these items available to members of the congregation.
- 6. "I Learned" statements. Divide a sheet of paper into four quadrants. In each quadrant share one thing that you learned in Sessions 22-25 by completing the following statements. Then compare your comments with others in the group.
- ▼ One thing I learned about God is _____.
- ▼ One thing I learned about me is ____.
- ▼ One thing I learned about Baptism is ____
- ▼ One thing I learned about faith is _____.

Things to come_

Have the students read Chapter 26, "More Than a Memory," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: What help does God provide for our living between the times? What is most important about the Sacrament of the Altar? Why is it called the Lord's Supper? What do Lutherans believe about the bread and wine in Communion?



26 MORE THAN A MEMORY



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction

We are God's between-the-times people: We are between Baptism, when God gave each of us our new you, and the new day, when God will dwell with us. It is in this between time that we have struggles.

But God gives us the Sacrament of the Altar, in which Christ himself comes to be present with us, to renew us in all the gifts of Baptism, to forgive us, and to promise to raise us from the dead. Over and over again God speaks to us through the Word, upholding and strengthening the new you, giving us hope and courage in the midst of our between-the-times struggles.

Of the various names by which Holy Communion is known, the *Lord's Supper* sums up its most important ingredients. It is the *Lord's* Supper. Christ instituted it as he ate and drank with his disciples, commanding them to do so in remembrance of him. Christ is also present with us during our Communion, giving himself to us with the bread and wine. It is the Lord's *Supper*. He gives a meal of bread and wine with his promise, to each of us individually, but in communion with others.

The Lutheran understanding of how Christ is present with us in his supper is emphasized in the words *is* and *given with* from Luther's explanation: "Holy Communion is the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ given with the bread and wine...." We believe that Christ is present and that the Lord's Supper is something Jesus does for us, not something we do for Jesus. We believe that the bread and wine don't change, that Christ's body and blood are given with them.

Note: The Greek word translated "covenant" in the words of institution in *Lutheran Book of Worship* has historically, particularly among Lutherans, been translated as "testament." The word *covenant* implies a contract, a two-way relationship in which the participation of both parties is required to make it valid. The word *testament*, as in "last will and testament," has been historically preferred among Lutherans because it is cleaner: A testament is valid because it is the intention of the one making it. So in the sacrament, we are the beneficiaries of a living will. Christ, the testator, through this testament is bestowing his gifts on his heirs.

Objectives.

This session will help students

w understand the purpose of Holy Communion;

- wexplore the Lutheran understanding of Christ's presence with us in Holy Communion;
- ▼ learn what participation in the Lord's Supper means for daily life in the between time.

Gathering activity -

The Lord's Supper is a special family meal. To introduce this idea, serve a light snack to the students. As they eat, encourage them to talk about special meals that they share in their families. What are the occasions? Who participates? What foods are served? What are the topics of conversation? Conclude by explaining that this session is about a very special family meal shared by the family of Christ—the church.

Worship

Use Acts 2:41-42 for the worship text for this session. These verses describe the Christian life in the first century and in the present. After reading the text, ask the students to name the aspects of Christian life mentioned in these verses (Baptism, listening to the Word, fellowship with other believers, Holy Communion, and prayer) and talk about their relationship to Christian life today. Then pray this prayer or one of your own.

Dear Lord, thank you for newness of life and the promise of the new day to come, for opportunities to hear and study your Word, for the witness of other believers, for your presence with us in Holy Communion, and for making yourself available to us in prayer. For these and all other gifts we give you thanks and praise. Amen.



More than a memory. In Baptism we were given a new life and the promise of a new day. In Holy Communion we are given gifts to sustain us as we await the final coming of God's new day. Ask the students to name examples of things, events, or opportunities that they are waiting for and how it feels to wait. Encourage the students to think of instances of hopeful waiting, fearful waiting, waiting with dread, and joy-filled waiting. Summarize the discussion by pointing out that waiting can be both wonderful and torturous. Then read aloud the paragraph on page 174 in the student book beginning with "That's the kind of situation we're in now as God's people." Invite the students to identify the help God provides for our living

between the times. (A summary of this can be found in the paragraph following the one just read.)

Eating and drinking. The Sacrament of the Altar has several names. Have the students list them. (Lord's Supper, Eucharist, Holy Communion, Sacrament of the Altar.) Divide the class into four groups. Give a different name to each group and ask the groups to prepare to explain the significance and uniqueness of the name. (Helpful information can be found under "Eating and Drinking" on pages 174-175 in the student book.) Next have each group read a different one of the following Bible passages and write down what the passage tells them about Communion: Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. (Answers may include the following: It is a meal first served by Jesus the night before he died; it is a meal shared by those who follow Jesus; the meal consists of bread and wine—Jesus' body and blood; before serving the bread and wine, Jesus spoke of their significance; Jesus commanded his followers to continue to share this meal in remembrance of him; Christ is present with us in the meal; we receive forgiveness.) Allow time for each group to make a presentation on their particular name for the sacrament as well as the information they learned from the Bible passage they were assigned. Conclude by reading together the questions and answers from the Catechism found on page 173 in the student book. Invite student comments on why the Lord's Supper is the best name for the sacrament.

Christ's presence with us. Remind the students of the family meals they talked about during "Gathering Activity." Ask, "What is the very important thing that makes the Lord's Supper different from these meals? (Christ's presence with us during Communion, giving himself to us with the bread and wine.)" Because Christ's presence in the sacrament is key and very difficult to understand, take time as a group to read through pages 176-177 in the student book, beginning with "There are different ways of trying to understand how Christ is present..." and ending with "But Christ's body and blood are given with them..."

At the beginning of the session it was pointed out that we are between-the-times people. Conclude this section by asking, "What does it mean to be called God's between the-times people? (We live between Baptism, when God gave each of us our new you, and the new day, when God will dwell with us.) What struggles do we face in this between time? (Answers will vary.) How is the Lord's Supper helpful to us as we live between the times? (It reassures us of the promise, unites us as Christ's people, gives us a taste of what it will be like to live with God.) What is the relationship between Holy Communion and Holy Baptism? (Communion renews us in all the gifts of Baptism. In Baptism we were given new life. Holy Communion provides life-giving sustenance.)"



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory*. Memorize the Catechism questions and answers on Holy Communion covered in this session.
- 2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (Sacrament of the Altar, Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, Eucharist, between times). Divide the class into groups. Give a different flash card to each group and have them discuss the concept written on the card and then draw a picture to illustrate the concept.
- 3. Journal. Make a list of questions you still have about the Lord's Supper. Over the next two sessions you will continue to study the Lord's Supper. As you learn the answers to your questions, write them in your journal.
- 4. Communion practices. Visit churches of other denominations to learn about their understanding of Holy Communion and to observe how they celebrate the Lord's Supper. This provides opportunity to talk about theological differences, about various practices, such as intinction and the common cup, and about concerns regarding the age and preparation of communicants.
- 5. Interview. Come up with a list of interview questions about Holy Communion. They might include questions such as these: Do you think you understand everything about the Lord's Supper? What do you feel is the purpose of Communion? Why do you participate in Holy Communion? What impact do the words "This is my body, given for you" have on you? How do you feel after receiving Holy Communion? Have each student interview a member of the congregation about his or her understanding of and feelings about Communion.
- 6. Eucharist. This name for the Sacrament of the Altar comes from a Greek word meaning "thanksgiving." Observe members of the congregation as they return from Communion. What do they do? How do they act? What aspects of joy and thanksgiving are present when you and the members of your church congregation participate in Communion? What ideas do you have for increasing within your congregation the appreciation for and expression of the joy and thanksgiving aspects of Holy Communion? Share your observations and suggestions with your pastor and worship committee members.

Things to come_

Have the students read Chapter 27, "Opening the Future," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: What benefits do we receive in the Lord's Supper? Who gives these benefits? How do they become ours? How can guilt be a barrier? How does forgiveness break down barriers?



OPENING THE FUTURE



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction.

What benefits do we receive from Holy Communion? How can eating and drinking do all this? These are the two questions from the Catechism that are the basis of this chapter.

The benefits of Holy Communion are the joy and assurance of forgiveness. Forgiveness is powerful. On the one hand, it breaks down barriers between people and God and between and among people. On the other hand, it clears the air. It opens the future for life and salvation—life here and now—and builds relationships among people, as well as life everlasting with God. Forgiveness makes for a new beginning.

The old Adam or Eve is always picking up the slightest hint of a barrier and building it into a wall that separates. Thus, quarrels between people lead to breaks in their relationship; guilt and worry make our future with God seem closed. But as the Catechism notes, "Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation."

In the Lord's Supper, Christ says "given and shed for you," as we eat the bread and drink the wine. This is a promise; this is a gift. We can be certain. The Word is with the bread and wine. Over and over again in Communion, as Christ proclaims his words of forgiveness, he brings each of us back to our Baptism, renews us, gives us a fresh start, and opens the way to the new day. In Communion, Christ also breaks down the barriers between us and our neighbors.

Objectives.

This session will help students

- ▼ identify the benefits they receive from Holy Communion;
- w understand the power of forgiveness in terms of breaking down barriers and opening up the future;
- ▼ look at instances in their own lives that illustrate the power of forgiveness.

Gathering activity_

Invite students to write on six-inch long strips of paper the things about which they feel guilty. Encourage each student to make several strips. Tell them that you won't read what they write. Then gather as a group to talk about how guilt creates difficulties and builds barriers in our relationships with one another. While doing this, staple the strips of paper together to create a paper chain. This will help students see the sin that is part of our lives. Explain that this session focuses on the power of forgiveness, given to us in Holy Communion, to break down barriers between us and God and between us and others.

Worship

One of the most beautiful prayers in the Bible is from Psalm 51. This prayer, set to music and included in the worship service, is the prayer we often offer as we present our gifts and offerings to God. Say or sing this prayer together.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with your free Spirit" (LBW, p. 75).

Assure the students that God does forgive us and create new hearts within us. As a sign of God's forgiveness, destroy the paper chain of sins that you made earlier in the session.



Opening the future. Any number of things, from quarrels to prejudice, can cause barriers between people, barriers that close off not only the present but also the future. Have two volunteers pretend to quarrel over an issue. Encourage them to be both vocal and persistent in sticking to their side of the argument. At the peak of the argument, stop the participants and have the rest of the group join them in discussing the following questions: Did you sense that things were getting better or worse between the two people as the quarrel continued? How do you think they feel about one another right now? What effect might these feelings have on how they get along with one another? Why do quarrels block out the present and the future? When did this last happen to you? Did you do anything to change the situation? How do you feel now about the person with whom you quarreled?

Clearing the way. Write the word forgiveness on the chalkboard or chart paper. Remind the students that earlier in the session you referred to the power of forgiveness to break down the barriers that block out the future. Use the following questions to help the students better understand how this works: If someone hurts you, what are

your options as to how you will respond? (You can retaliate and hurt the person back; you can put distance between the two of you and avoid being burt again; you can forgive the person.) What effect would each of these actions have on your future relationship with that person? (You will become enemies rather than friends; even though you aren't fighting, the old wounds will stand in the way of your being friends ever again; the barriers will be broken down and your relationship will know a new beginning.) Knowing all this, why is it so difficult for us to ask for forgiveness? (It means admitting we are at fault and that we need and want the other's friendship.) To offer forgiveness? (Again, it means admitting how very much we need and want the other's friendship. It also means letting go of the kind of power over another that the old self loves.)

What are some of the barriers that can come between God and us? (Guilt, shame, and worry.) What effect does God's forgiveness offered to us in the Lord's Supper have on barriers such as these? (It destroys our guilt and shame by accepting us as we are, without condition, and calms our worries with assurances of God's presence.) If it accomplishes all this, why is it so difficult for us to accept the forgiveness God offers? (Because it is the old self's death sentence.) What devices does the old self use to try to stay alive? (It insists that God isn't interested in our worries and cares; it tries to convince us that we must do something to earn God's forgiveness or to be worthy of God's gifts.)

Receiving the gift. By its very title, this section points out once again that forgiveness is a gift, God's gift. Read through the Catechism questions and answers printed on page 179 in the student book. Talk about why such a simple thing as Communion plays such an important part in the confidence with which we profess our faith in Christ Jesus.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory.* Memorize the Catechism questions and answers on Holy Communion that were covered in this session.
- 2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (forgiveness, guilt, shame). Use each word to create an acrostic that defines or says something about the word. To make the acrostic, write the word vertically, and then for each letter, write a comment (beginning with the letter) about the word.
- 3. Journal. Write about an instance in your life when someone forgave you for something you did. How did

you feel prior to being forgiven? Afterward? How was this act of forgiveness a gift to you? What barriers between the two of you did the forgiveness destroy? How can this experience help you better understand and appreciate what happens in Holy Communion? What impact does being forgiven have on your own willingness to forgive others?

4. Interview. Interview young people in your congregation, parents with young children, middle-aged members, and those who are nearing the end of their lives. Ask each if they spend more time thinking about the past, the present, or the future and why. Ask what part their faith in God's promises of forgiveness and presence play in their perception of the past, present, and future. Compare their responses. Then talk about what God is doing in the Lord's Supper about the past, the present, and the future.

5. Bible study. Read the following texts and discuss what they teach about forgiveness: Matthew 5:21-24; Matthew 18:21-22; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 23:32-43. You might also refer to Bible commentaries for help in understanding what these texts mean.

6. Worship. Session 28 is the final session on the Sacrament of the Altar. If possible, make arrangements to have your pastor serve Communion to the class as a way of bringing this study to a close. Then work together to plan a Communion service that will be especially meaningful to your group. You might choose music and Bible readings, write special prayers, and even create a worship area in your classroom or another part of the church in which to hold the service.

Things to come_

If possible, make plans to have a Communion service in the next session. See "Gathering Activity" on page 70 for a suggestion about making unleavened bread. The following recipe works well.

Communion bread

Mix together by hand or electric mixer: 4 cups whole wheat flour, ½ tsp. salt, 2 cups half-and-half, ⅓ cup honey. Dough will be stiff and sticky. Cover a jelly-roll pan or cookie sheet with foil and then spray with a nonvegetable cooking spray. Spread dough over the sheet, using a spatula that is dipped frequently in hot water. Bake at 375 degrees for 10 minutes and then at 350 degrees for 15 more minutes. Turn out on counter or breadboard while warm. Remove foil. Cut bread into pieces.

Have the students read Chapter 28, "Two Traps," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: When is a person prepared to receive Holy Communion? What are the two traps that the old self sets for us? How do we avoid the traps? Who is in charge of what happens in the Lord's Supper?



28 TWO TRAPS



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction _

This chapter considers the question "When is a person rightly prepared to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion?" Luther identifies belief as the most important preparation.

The old Adam or Eve sets out two traps this time to destroy all the joy and comfort of the Lord's Supper and to keep us from certainty about God's promise.

♥ One trap is the idea that we ourselves have to do something in order to make the promise work (law). Christ doesn't know how to give gifts but needs the old self's help. It makes God not only a liar, but incompetent, and Communion becomes a law.

 ▼ The other trap is the idea that the sacrament works regardless of what we do (magic). This implies that the sacrament somehow makes us immune from evil, like a vaccination, and that we need it only once in a while.

The Lord's Supper is Christ's gift to us; we do not earn it, nor do we need to prove ourselves worthy to receive it. We have never been promised immunity from evil temptations, but we have been given a way to call on God (the Second Commandment), a model prayer for deliverance from temptations (the Sixth Petition), and the gift of forgiveness that comes to us in the sacrament.

Objectives_

This session will help students

- ▼ identify the old self's subtle attacks on Communion;
- ▼ realize how they fall prey to the traps set by the old self:
- ▼ participate in the promise of Christ's presence and forgiveness in the Lord's Supper.

Gathering activity_

Involve the students in making unleavened bread. If you plan to celebrate the Lord's Supper at the close of the session, use the bread then. If not, make arrangements to have it used the next time the Lord's Supper is celebrated in your congregation. A simple recipe for bread that freezes very well is included in the Session 27 "Things to Come," on page 69.

Worship -

Since this is the final session on the Lord's Supper, it would be both appropriate and meaningful to celebrate

Communion together. Consider ending rather than beginning the session with Communion. Work with your pastor to make the necessary arrangements. Further suggestions for student involvement are included in item 6 under the Session 27 "Possibilities and Projects" on page 69 in this guide.



Two traps. This session focuses on the Catechism's final question about Holy Communion: "When is a person rightly prepared to receive this sacrament?" To begin the process of answering this question, take the following survey. Work together to answer the first two questions. Then have students work individually on the last three. Afterward, take turns sharing responses with one another. (If confirmation students do not commune in your congregation, just use the first two questions.)

- 1. When is the Lord's Supper served in your congregation? 2. Are there any restrictions on who is welcome to participate in Holy Communion in your congregation? What are they? What is their purpose?
- 3. Have you ever come to church and been surprised to discover that it was "Communion Sunday"? Did it bother you that you hadn't remembered? Why or why not?
- 4. Have you ever passed up an opportunity to take part in the Lord's Supper when it was available to you? Why? 5. What do you think about as you go forward to receive the Lord's Supper?

Read aloud the Catechism question and answer printed on page 185 in the student book. Discuss the relationship between this question and answer and those in the survey you just completed. Then ask the students to speculate as to why Luther thought it necessary to include this final section on Holy Communion. Use questions such as these to encourage discussion: Might this be a question Luther himself was asked by one of his parishioners? What practice common in the Middle Ages does Luther address in his response? (This might be a good time to talk about fasting, as not all students will be familiar with this practice.) Why might a parishioner ask his or her pastor about being properly prepared to receive the Lord's Supper? Remind the students of the old self. What might be its intention in asking this question? (The old self's intent is the same as always: to undermine God's promise.)

Who's in charge here? Draw a picture of a gavel and a magic wand on the chalkboard or chart paper. Explain

that these are symbols for traps the old self sets for us around the Lord's Supper. Ask volunteers to name and explain the traps. (The law trap is the idea that we have to do something in order to make the sacrament work. The magic trap is the idea that the sacrament works no matter what we do.)

Divide the class into two groups to further explore how these traps work. Ask one group to read and discuss the information about the law trap, beginning at the top of page 187 in the student book. Have them find answers to these questions: What are three ploys that the law trap uses with regard to the sacrament? What danger does this trap hold? If successful what is this trap's effect on Christ? On the Lord's Supper? On us?

Ask the other group to read and discuss the information about the magic trap under "The Second Trap" on page 188 in the student book. Have them find answers to these questions: What are two ploys that the magic trap uses with regard to the sacrament? What danger does this trap hold? What does it mean to say that the old self makes the Lord's Supper into a license? Have the groups share what they learn with one another.

The second trap. This section has to do with how we can avoid falling prey to the traps the old self sets for us. One way is to remember who really is in charge in the sacrament. Get at this point by asking the following questions: Who instituted Holy Communion? Whose body and blood do we share? Whose words do we hear each time we partake in the Lord's Supper? In spite of the old self's attempts to have us believe that it is what we do in the sacrament and not what God does that really matters, who really is in charge here?

Another way to avoid the traps is to recognize the Lord's Supper for what it is: Christ's gift to us. Ask the students to recall the last special gift they received. What was it? From whom did it come? Did you do anything to deserve it? What was your response? Why did you respond in this way? Apply this scenario to how we await and respond to God's gift of the Lord's Supper. Review the first two paragraphs on page 191 in the student book.

Conclude this portion of the session by looking once more at the questions and responses to the survey taken earlier under "Two Traps." Ask the students what new understandings they have with regard to the Lord's Supper that can be helpful in dealing with questions such as these.

POSSIBILITIES AND PROJECTS

The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session

1. Memory. Memorize the Catechism question and answer on Holy Communion that was covered in this session.

- 2. Key concepts. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (worthiness, remission, forgiveness, traps). Have students work in small groups to write a short paragraph about Communion that uses all of the key concepts from Sessions 26-28.
- 3. Journal. Look back to your journal entry from Session 26. Reflect on what you have learned about Communion. Write in the answers to the questions you listed earlier. Think about one thing you learned that stands out from everything else. Write about it in your journal.
- 4. Altar guild. Make arrangements to meet with members of your congregation's altar guild to learn about the preparation involved in sharing the Lord's Supper. Volunteer to assist in the preparation and serving of Communion. 5. Fasting. Use Bible dictionaries and other resources to learn more about the practice of religious fasting. If possible, invite someone whose devotional life includes fasting to talk about why he or she fasts and how it is helpful spiritually. Brainstorm other kinds of activities that "serve a good purpose" with regard to growth in faith, and encourage the students to consider including such activity as part of their devotional life.
- 6. Gift. Create a small gift-wrapped package as a reminder of the gifts that are ours in the Lord's Supper. Use a small box with a lid. Wrap the top and the bottom of the box separately so the box can be opened without removing the gift wrap. Inside the box, place a slip of paper containing the words of institution ("In the night in which he was betrayed...). Tie a ribbon around the box and include a gift tag that says "To (your name); Love, Jesus."

Things to come

Have the students read Chapter 29, "Key to the Kingdom," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: What is the Office of the Keys? What is the "key" to the kingdom? What is private confession? What is the value of private confession?



29 KEY TO

KEY TO THE KINGDOM

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction.

Keys. The Office of the Keys is the authority given by Christ to Christians to forgive sins of the person who repents and to declare that without repentance, one's sins are not forgiven. This "office" may or may not be familiar to your students, although it is exercised in worship when the pastor, by Christ's authority, speaks these words of absolution to the congregation: "Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins" (LBW, p. 56).

Forgiveness is the key to the kingdom—the barrier-breaking, future-opening gift given by Christ to his disciples and to us. When Christ gave the key (forgiveness) to his disciples, he also appointed them caretakers of the key, that it might be used properly. Through the disciples, he gave the key to the whole church. The words of forgiveness are spoken by the authority of Christ.

Confession. Although confession is not required practice among Lutherans, it is included here, along with the Word and sacraments, as a gift of grace that God uses to give us certainty of faith as we look forward to the new day.

Confession, in private with the pastor, can be comforting and powerful, especially when the words of absolution spoken during the worship service don't seem to apply to us personally. Something happens when we hear words of absolution spoken directly and personally to us by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Objectives

This session will help students

- ▼ learn the relationship between the Office of the Keys and forgiveness of sins;
- ▼ understand the nature of private confession;
- wappreciate the ministry of the church.

Gathering activity

Use the following activity to establish the focus for the session. Write the word *forgiveness* on a piece of paper and place it inside a box or suitcase. Close the box or suitcase and lock it. Place a large selection of similarly sized keys next to it. Then invite the students to take turns choosing a key to try and unlock the box or suitcase. If they are successful, have them open it to discover what is inside. Invite students' comments as to the purpose of this exercise.

Worship.

Use the Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness from *Lutheran Book of Worship* (p. 56) or another such order of service.



Key to the kingdom. Divide the class into four groups. Assign each group one of the following questions. (If you have a small class, make two groups and give each group two questions.)

- What is the Office of the Keys?
- What is the key to the kingdom?
- What is private confession?
- What is the value of private confession?

Have the members of each group work together to answer the question. They should not use the student book to answer the question but should do so on the basis of the reading they did prior to class. If a group is not able to answer a question at this time, encourage them to listen for the answer as the session progresses. Do not have the groups share their answers yet. They will have opportunity to do so at the close of the session.

The keys. Read the Office of the Keys on page 193 in the student book. Use the following questions to discuss this section: In 10 words or fewer, what is the Office of the Keys? (The authority Christ gave to the church to forgive sins.) How did this office get its name? (See Matthew 16:19. You may wish to mention that the symbol for St. Peter is a set of keys.) What is the key to the kingdom? (Forgiveness.) Why did Jesus give his disciples authority to forgive sins? (To be sure that this very important key to the kingdom is used and used properly; to make certain that God's word of forgiveness is declared to all; to assure us that Christ is destroying our guilt, shame, and worries and opening up the future for us.) When is the Office of the Keys practiced? (In the absolution of sins. Look again at the order of service you used for worship earlier in the session and have the students find the words of absolution.) What is God's part in the absolution? (God forgives our sins.) What is the pastor's part? (The pastor announces God's forgiveness.)

Have the students look again at the order of service. What precedes the absolution? (Confession.) Explain that confession, specifically private confession, is the second focus of the session.

Confession. Ask the students to share images that come to mind when they hear the word confession. Talk about what generally happens to someone who confesses to breaking the law of the state. Compare this to the way God deals with us when we confess to breaking God's laws.

Introduce the terms public confession and private confession and ask volunteers to define them. Point out that the order of service used at the beginning of the session is an example of public confession. Explain that private confession, when a person confesses to pastor or priest, was once a requirement to receiving the Lord's Supper. The student book lists both a benefit and a detriment of private confession. What are they? (Benefit: It is an opportunity to unburden oneself of guilt by talking it over with someone you trust and to receive personal absolution. Detriment: When private confession is required and not something we choose to do, there is risk of making forgiveness something we earn rather than a gift God gives. The result is that we can never be sure if we have confessed everything to be certain that we are forgiven.)

Point out that Luther recognized both the benefits and the detriments of private confession. Because of its detriments and because there is no command for private confession in the Bible, Lutherans, unlike Roman Catholics, do not recognize confession as a sacrament. (It may be helpful here to review the Lutheran understanding of sacrament.) Nevertheless, confession is considered by Lutherans to be a gift of grace that God uses to give us certainty of faith as we look forward to the new day. This is why Luther included confession in the Catechism. Have the students turn to pages 194-195 in the student book and together read through Luther's teachings on confession.

Conclude this portion of the session by having each of the four groups answer the question it was assigned earlier in the session (see "Key to the Kingdom" under "Check Out the Student Book"). These questions and answers provide a quick overview of the materials covered in the session.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. *Memory*. Given the length of the Office of the Keys and Confession in the Catechism, rather than memorizing the questions and answers, together write a summary explanation and memorize this instead.
- 2. *Key concepts*. Make flash cards for key concepts covered in this session (confession, Office of the Keys, absolution, authority). Work with a partner to review these concepts and others from previous sessions.

- 3. *Journal*. God offers forgiveness both for things we do (sins of commission) and things we fail to do (sins of omission). List examples of sins of commission and sins of omission. Is one more harmful than the other? Why or why not? Which do you think you are more often guilty of committing? Write a prayer asking God to forgive the things you have done and the things you have left undone. Pray this prayer daily.
- 4. Confession. Think about things you have done or things that you have failed to do that you would like to have forgiven. Record a confession of these sins on tape. Listen to it. Then think about God's promise to forgive those who confess their sins and believe in God. Erase the tape. Offer a prayer of thanks for God's incredible gift of forgiveness.
- 5. *Bible study*. Read the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-24. Discuss the role forgiveness plays in the story. Identify confession and absolution as it appears in the story. Discuss the significance of this story for you. As an added activity, work up a short skit and brief Bible study on the story to present to another class or members of the congregation.
- 6. *Guest.* Invite your pastor to talk about his or her role in private confession. Stress the confidential nature of this and have him or her explain why some people are not satisfied with public confession during worship and desire personal discussion with the pastor.

Things to come –

Have the students read Chapter 30, "Conversation and Consolation," before the next class session. Have them look for answers to these questions as they read: What is meant by "mutual conversation and consolation"? What are the things that the pastor of your congregation does as a pastor that are different from what you do in your ministry? For what purpose does God give us gifts?

You might want to make plans to use the review of the means of grace that is on page 79 of this guide.



30

O CONVERSATION AND CONSOLATION



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction.

"Mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren" is so common and natural that it is often overlooked as a way God brings God's grace to us. It has to do with the fellowship or friendship that we have as we visit and share our gifts back and forth with others in our congregations. This congregational fellowship is a means God uses to keep us in God's grace.

From the Third Article of the Creed, we learned about the work of the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit goes about the work of gathering and sanctifying, the Spirit calls out the new you in Baptism so that we can (among other things) speak the Word with other people the Spirit has gathered along with us. We are to comfort and help each other along the way during our between times. Thus the Spirit makes each one of us a pastor or priest. We are part of the communion of saints and the priesthood of believers.

Each of us has been given gifts to complement one another's weaknesses, both in the church and out, and to carry out the purpose of the church. We are to speak the Word to all who have ears and share our gifts with whoever needs them. Note the significance of seemingly common ordinary gifts, such as a warm smile or the willingness to share some food or listen to a story—easily gifts of joy and encouragement.

The old Adam or Eve? Of course it's right in there! It sees nothing special or significant about congregational fellowship or about anyone's common and natural talents. The old self would have us think that we need them to take care of ourselves only.

There is no such thing as just a common ordinary gift once the Spirit of God takes hold!

Objectives

This session will help students

- ▼ understand the concept of the priesthood of all believers;
- ▼ recognize the variety and wealth of gifts God gives to strengthen and further the ministry of the church;

Gathering activity

It's possible with a few folds and cuts to turn ordinary sheets of scrap paper into decorative and useful items.

Let the students explore various possibilities by making sheets of scrap paper and books on paper folding available to them. Use the results to introduce the idea that through the work of the Holy Spirit, our ordinary gifts become ways of supporting and encouraging the faith of others.

Worship

Use Paul's familiar text of the body of Christ, found in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, as a focus for worship. After the text is read, discuss Paul's point that just as all the parts of the body are important and must work together, so are all members of the body of Christ, the church, important to one another. End the worship time by tying strings around one another's wrists as reminders that all are a part of the body of Christ.



Conversation and consolation. Invite the students to share examples of friendships and fellowships they share with other Christians. How important are these relationships to them? What do they gain from them? If they had a problem would they feel comfortable talking it over with one or more of these people? Why or why not? Share with the students the fact that Christian friendships and fellowships are powerful ways that God shares God's grace with us. They are another means God uses to keep us in his grace.

Your priesthood. Explain that through the means of grace, the Holy Spirit is giving us the certainty and confidence that God's decision to be our God and God's promise of forgiveness and salvation are meant for us. One of the ways the Spirit accomplishes this is by bringing us together with other members of the body of Christ who share God's Word and promise with us.

Remind the students that we use a number of different names in explaining what the church is. One is the body of Christ. What are others? (Communion of saints and fellowship of believers.) Introduce another term, priest-bood of believers. Invite students' comments as to what this means. Use questions such as these to help them better understand priesthood of believers: When did you become a priest? What are the things that an ordained pastor or priest does that are different from what we do as pastors or priests? Explain that our ministry to one another is called "mutual conversation and consolation."

What clues does this name give as to how we minister to one another?

Your gifts. This section points out that the church is made up of people with a variety of gifts. Look at Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 to identify some of these gifts. Ask the students for examples of people they know who have the gift of teaching, healing, and so forth. How do they use these gifts for the benefit of others? Read Acts 2:43-47. Talk about how fellowship and mutual sharing of goods and talents strengthened the early church and enabled the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church. Work together to identify one another's gifts and talk about how you can share these gifts with your church. Include the stewardship of time, talents, and money in your discussion to emphasize the importance of the presence and participation of all believers in the life of the church.

When used together for the good of all and the proclamation of the gospel, the variety of gifts is the church's strength. However, these gifts when selfishly withheld or when used for our own purposes can cause hurt and dissension in the church. Talk about why and how this happens (see page 204 in the student book, beginning with "The purpose of our gifts isn't to serve ourselves..."). What is the result? (Consider the following: The church opens itself up to accusations of hypocrisy; the church becomes a "country club" church or an ivory tower; members assume the attitude that their talents are too special to be wasted in the church, or they assume they are indispensable and consequently get caught up in power struggles.) Develop a list of behaviors that are appropriate for the priesthood of believers. Discuss the difficulties of acting as we should and how we can encourage one another.



The following activities and discussion suggestions may be used as homework assignments or as additional session activities.

- 1. Memory. The excerpt from the Smalcald Articles printed on page 201 in the student book identifies the various means by which God gives us gifts and shows us that God's promises are for us. Rather than have the students memorize this section, have them identify and summarize the various means of grace. If needed, set aside time to complete memory work assignments from previous sessions.
- 2. *Key concepts*. Make flash cards and review key concepts covered in this session (priesthood, ministry, mutual conversation and consolation). Using as many flash cards from Sessions 1-30 as time allows, review concepts covered throughout the course.

- 3. *Journal*. Take time to read through your previous journal entries and reflect on what you have experienced and learned in the course of your journey through Luther's Catechism. Write about what you have gained from your study both in terms of knowledge and growth in faith. What have you gained from being part of the church? What have you given?
- 4. Visitation. Get a list of the names of people in your congregation who, due to age or poor health, are unable to attend worship or other forms of fellowship. Make arrangements for every member of the class, including yourself, to visit one of these people sometime in the next two weeks. To inspire confidence, have the students go with a classmate, friend, or member of their family. You may also want to help prepare the students for the visits by discussing possible topics for conversation. Since this is the final session, there will not be opportunity to report back on how the visits went. However, you might still encourage the students to continue to visit these people on a regular basis.
- 5. Panel discussion. God uses ordinary people doing ordinary things to do God's work. Invite several people of different ages, with a variety of backgrounds, engaged in different lines of work, to talk about what ministry in daily life means to them. Also encourage them to talk about how the ministry of others strengthens them in their own ministry.
- 6. Checkpoint. Since this is the end of this course of study, it's important to take a few minutes to reflect on how far you have come and where you are going. The following questions will be helpful in accomplishing this task.
- What does "Free to Be" mean to you now?
- Which unit—the Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, or the Means of Grace—meant most to you? Why?
- What new understandings do you have of God's presence and action in your life?
- What's next for you in terms of learning more about your faith?
- Who are some people you might thank for helping you understand more about your relationship with God?

Things to come –

Congratulations! You have now completed *Free to Be*, a course on Luther's Small Catechism. It is hoped this has been a rewarding experience for you that has prepared you for more good "things to come."



REVIEW: THE COMMANDMENTS

Part 1. Match the number of the commandment to th fa

war a war rizhandio	vise received of tise continuous continuent
be phrase that	ut describes it. Use the words in bold-
ace for your	
	E TEN COMMANDMENTS
	shall have no other gods.
	ou shall not take the name of the
	r God in vain.
	nember the Sabbath day, to keep it
holy.	
	onor your father and your mother.
	shall not kill.
	shall not commit adultery.
	ou shall not steal.
	u shall not bear false witness against
your neig	
	shall not covet your neighbor's
house.	
	shall not covet your neighbor's
	nis manservant, or his maidservant,
	ttle, or anything that is your neigh-
bor's.	
	1. Respect those whom God has
	given to protect you.
	2. Help neighbors keep what is
	theirs; don't scheme to get their
	possessions.
*	3. Set time aside to rest and hear
	God's word.
	4. Sexual conduct should be pure
	and honorable.
	5 1 0 -1 -1 11 -1
***************************************	5. Love God above all else.
	6. Protect property; do not take or
	use it dishonestly.
	7. Help, rather than hurt, your
	neighbor.
	8. Do not set your heart on people
	and animals who belong to some

one else.

9. God's name is to be used to talk to, praise, and thank God.

_ 10. Protect the good names of others.

below to indicate whether that statement is true or false. ____1. Hope centered on possessions is counterfeit hope. _ 2. As long as no one is hurt, your sexual conduct is your own business. . 3. God gave us God's name so that we could make sacrifices to God. 4. When we protect the property of others, we protect ourselves. __ 5. God intends for parents to protect and honor their children. ____ 6. A good name offers freedom. ____7. Wealth is an indication of how much God loves you. __ 8. Anger, insults, and name-calling are not as bad as killing. _9. If you keep all the Commandments, then God will love and save you. Part 3. On the back, write a paragraph or more on which of the commandments you found to be most helpful, most meaningful, or most surprising. Tell how your understanding of that commandment makes a difference in how you will choose to live your life or view the world.

Part 2. Write either a T or an F on each blank



REVIEW: THE CREED

Part 1. Complete the Apostles' Creed by filling in the missing words and phrases.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in	,
, cre	eator
*	
I believe in	, his only Son,
	He was conceived by the
	and born
	Не
	Pontius
Pilate, was	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,
	He
www.	On the
third day	
ascended	, and is seated at
the	,
He will come again _	and the second s

The Property of	.1 l 1
	the holy
	, the communion
	e
	of the
body, and	. Amen.

Part 2. Each of the articles of the Apostles' Creed focuses on either God the Father, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit. Write either a G, a JC, or an HS on each blank below to indicate whom each phrase describes.

1. Created me and the whole world.
2. Calls me through the gospel.
3. Is risen from the dead.
4. Provides for me.
5. Saved me from sin and death.
6. Gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies.
7. True man.
8. Thank, praise, serve, and obey.

Part 3. Choose one of the statements listed here and write a brief reflection on it on the back of this sheet. Your reflection should indicate your own understanding and thoughts, not necessarily what you feel is the "correct" answer.

▼ Jesus' death isn't a sacrifice to God; it is God's sacrifice for us.

▼ I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus.

▼ The church is the Spirit's workshop.

To hear Christ's word and know God's name is to experience change in myself and others.

Who, not how or why, is the important question of creation.

Permission is granted for congregations to reproduce this review provided copies are for local use only and the following credit appears on all copies: From Free to Be, Teacher Guide, copyright © 1993 Augsburg Fortress.



REVIEW: THE LORD'S PRAYER

Part 1. Match the part of the petition to the phrase that describes it or relates to it. Use the words in	2. We can pray because God has promised to be our God.
boldface for your answers. THE LORD'S PRAYER Introduction: Our Father in heaven.	— 3. You don't have to prove yourself to God.
First Petition: Hallowed be your name. Second Petition: Your kingdom come.	4. The old self has respect for God's name.
Third Petition: Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.Fourth Petition: Give us today our daily	5. God's kingdom is wherever God rules or reigns.
bread.	6. God's kingdom has finally arrived.
Fifth Petition: Forgive us our sins as we	7. False belief is harmless.
forgive those who sin against us. Sixth Petition: Save us from the time of trial.	8. God's will is done without our prayer.
Seventh Petition: And deliver us from evil. Doxology: For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.	9. The sinful self, the devil, and the world are God's opponents.
1. Praying that God would protect us from the sinful self, the rebellious world,	10. God encourages us in our faith through the Spirit, who works in the Word and in the sacraments.
and the devil.	11. It is significant that Jesus is the one who teaches us the Lord's Prayer.
2. Praying for the new you and the new day to come.	12. At Baptism, the Spirit begins God's work.
3. Praying that this may be done among us.	13. In the Lord's Prayer, we pray <i>for</i> God as well as <i>to</i> God.
4. Asking for all that is needed for life.	14. God's Word is God's power.
5. Expressing praise and saying, "Yes, it shall be so."	15. In the Word and sacraments, God assures you that Christ is yours and you are Christ's.
God with complete confidence, like children can	16. God makes us immune from temptations.
speak to loving parents.	17. We can say "Amen" because we know everything in the Lord's Prayer will be
7. Asking that God keep us in the promise in the midst of the trouble we know.	as God says. 18. A doxology expresses thanks and
8. A way of asking to keep	praise to God.
God's name holy.	19. God commands us to pray and promises to hear our prayers.
9. Praying for God's gift of grace in our lives.	20. God intends that his forgiveness of us goes through us to our neighbors.
Part 2. Some of the following statements are correct; others are not. For those to which you can say yes, write Amen in the blank. If you cannot say yes, put nothing in the blank.	Part 3. On the back, write a paragraph or two on the petition of the Lord's Prayer that has given you new insight about God.

Permission is granted for congregations to reproduce this review provided copies are for local use only and the following credit appears on all copies: From Free to Be, Teacher Guide, copyright © 1993 Augsburg Fortress.

gifts.

__ 1. All that God gives us, God gives as



REVIEW: THE MEANS OF GRACE

Part 1. The following statements relate to either the Sacrament of Holy Baptism or the Sacrament of Holy Communion or both. For each one, decide which sacrament applies and write the word Baptism, Communion, or Both in front of the statement.

	1. Water used with God's command.
	2. Bread and wine to eat and drink.
-	3. In this sacrament, God forgives sin.
	4. Gives new birth through the Holy Spirit.
	5. Uses earthly elements with God's Word.
	6. Drowns our sinful self.
	7. The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.
	8. Gives the benefit of everlasting salvation.
	9. Commanded by Christ with the words "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them"
	10. Instituted by Christ with the words "This is my body" and "This cup is the new covenant in my blood"

Part 2. Circle the letter of the best response for each of the following questions or statements.

- 1. How do you know that God's decision and promise are for you?
 - a. Through the Word.
 - b. Through Holy Baptism.
 - c. Through Holy Communion.
 - d. All of the above.
- 2. Which of these are part of the means of grace? a. Bread and wine.
 - b. Words.
 - c. Water.
 - d. All of the above.

- 3. How does God's Word come to us?
 - a. As Jesus Christ.
 - b. Through the Bible.
 - c. In the living witness of people who bear witness to Christ.
 - d. All of the above.
- 4. Which of the following is part of the definition of Baptism?
 - a. God chooses us.
 - b. Baptism is only for children.
 - c. Baptism requires belief.
- 5. Baptism is something that
 - a. we do for God.
 - b. God does for us.
 - c. our parents or sponsors do for us.
- 6. Repentance is important because
 - a. we need to impress Jesus.
 - b. it helps us accept God's good news.
 - c. it makes us look good.
- 7. In Holy Communion,
 - a. Christ is present with us.
 - b. Christ is only present in our memories.
 - c. Christ changes the bread and wine into his actual body and blood.
- 8. Holy Communion requires
 - a. fasting.
 - b. magic.
 - c. confession.
 - d. none of the above.
- 9. Absolution is
 - a. a declaration of forgiveness.
 - b. giving thanks to God.
 - c. confessing our sins.
- 10. The priesthood of all believers includes
 - a. you.
 - b. pastors.
 - c. members of your congregation.
 - d. all of the above.

Part 3. On the back, write a response to these two questions.

What do you most appreciate about Baptism? Choose one of these two names for the Sacrament of Holy Communion—either the Lord's Supper or Eucharist. Why is the name appropriate?

Permission is granted for congregations to reproduce this review provided copies are for local use only and the following credit appears on all copies: From Free to Be, Teacher Guide, copyright © 1993 Augsburg Fortress.

REVIEWS: ANSWERS

The Commandments

Part 1. 1. Fourth; 2. Ninth; 3. Third; 4. Sixth; 5. First; 6. Seventh; 7. Fifth; 8. Tenth; 9. Second; 10. Eighth.

Part 2. 1. T; 2. F; 3. F; 4. T; 5. T; 6. T; 7. F; 8. F; 9. F.

Part 3. There are no correct answers to the essay; rather, the students' writing should reflect their personal feelings and insights.

The Creed

Part 1. I believe in <u>God</u>, <u>the Father almighty</u>, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the *Holy Spirit*, the holy *catholic Church*, the communion *of saints*, the *forgiveness of sins*, the *resurrection* of the body, and *the life everlasting*. Amen.

Part 2. 1. G; 2. HS; 3. JC; 4. G; 5. JC; 6. HS; 7. JC; 8. G.

Part 3. Students' answers should reflect their personal feelings and understandings. If a student's answer shows a complete misunderstanding of a concept, you may want to talk with that student about why he or she has that understanding. When doing so, avoid judgmental or preaching attitudes. Rather, encourage open discussion and inquisitiveness.

The Lord's Prayer

Part 1. 1. Sixth Petition; 2. Second Petition; 3. Third Petition; 4. Fourth Petition; 5. Doxology; 6. Introduction; 7. Seventh Petition; 8. First Petition; 9. Fifth Petition.

Part 2. Amen can be listed next to all but 4, 6, 7, and 16.

Part 3. Answers will vary. Since students are sharing feelings and personal thoughts, be sure to thank them for being willing to share. Students might help you understand something new as well!

The Means of Grace

Part 1. 1. Baptism; 2. Communion; 3. Both; 4. Baptism; 5. Both; 6. Baptism; 7. Communion; 8. Both; 9. Baptism; 10. Communion.

Part 2. 1.d; 2.d; 3.d; 4.a; 5.b; 6.b; 7.a; 8.d; 9.a; 10.d.

Part 3. Answers will vary.

