

The Ten Commandments

13. What are the Ten Commandments?

The Ten Commandments are the Law of God.

Note: God gave them in this order but did not number them (Deut. 5:6-21; Ex. 20:1-17).

14. How did God give His Law?

When God created people, He wrote the Law on their hearts. Later he arranged the Law in Ten Commandments, wrote it on two tables of stone, and made it known through Moses.

40 **Rom. 2:14-15** Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

Bible narrative: God wrote His commandments directly for the Israelites (Ex. 19-20; 31:18). There are three kinds of laws in the Old Testament: the moral law, which tells all people their duty toward God and other people; the ceremonial law, which regulated the religious practices in the Old Testament; and the political law, which was the state law of the Israelites. Only the moral law was written into the human heart.

15. What is the summary of commandments 13 (First Table)?

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37; see Deut. 6:5).

16. What is the summary of commandments 4-10 (Second Table)?

"And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39; see Lev. 19:18).

17. What is the summary of all the commandments?

Love is the summary of all the commandments.

41 **Rom. 13:10** Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

18. Whom does God mean when in the Ten Commandments He says, "You shall"?

He means me and all other human beings.

42 **Matt. 5:19** Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

43 **Rom. 3:19** Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

Bible narrative: Jesus explained the meaning of these commandments for all people (Matthew 5).

The First Commandment [God]

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

19. Who is the only true God?

The only true God is the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons in one divine being (the Holy Trinity).

44 **Num. 6:24-26** The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.

45 **Deut. 6:4** Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

46 **Matt. 28:19** Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

47 **1 Cor. 8:4** There is no God but one.

48 **2 Cor. 13:14** May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Bible narrative: At His Baptism Jesus stood in the Jordan, the Father spoke from heaven, and the Spirit of God descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove (Matt. 3:16-17).

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20. What does God forbid in the First Commandment?

God forbids us to have other gods (idolatry).

49 **Is. 42:8** I am the Lord; that is My name! I will not give My glory to another or My praise to idols.

50 **Matt. 4:10** Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.

51 **1 Cor. 8:4** We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one.

52 **1 John 5:21** Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

21. When do people have other gods?

They have other gods

A. when they regard and worship any creature or thing as God;

53 **Ps. 115:4** Their idols are silver and gold.

54 **Phil. 3:19** Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.

55 **Rev.. 9:20** They did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood-idols that cannot see or hear or walk.

Bible narratives: Israel worshiped the golden calf (Exodus 32). The people worshiped Baal (1 Kings 18:18-29). The Philistines made Dagon their god (Judges 16:23-24).

B. when they believe in a god who is not the triune God (see the Apostles' Creed).

56 **Matt. 28:19** Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

57 **John 5:23** He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent Him.

Bible narrative: The Baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17).

C. when they fear, love, or trust in any person or thing as they should fear, love, and trust in God alone;

58 **Ps. 14:1** The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.

59 **Prov. 11:28** Whoever trusts in his riches will fall.

60 **Prov. 3:5** Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

61 **Matt. 10:28** Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

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- 62 **Matt. 10:37** Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.
- 63 **Eph. 5:5** No immoral, impure or greedy person-such a man is an idolater-has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Bible narratives: The rich man thought more of costly clothes and good eating than of God (Luke 16:19-31). The people building the Tower of Babel considered their achievement more important than God (Gen. 11:1-9). Goliath trusted in his size and physical strength (1 Samuel 17). Eli honored his sons more than God (1 Sam. 2:12-34). Peter feared punishment more than he loved God (Matt. 26:69-75).

D. when they join in the worship of one who is not the triune God.

- 64 **2 Cor. 6:14-15** Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?

22. What does God require of us in the First Commandment?

God requires that we fear, love, and trust in Him above all things.

A. We fear God above all things when we revere Him alone as the highest being, honor Him with our lives, and avoid what displeases Him.

65 **Gen. 17:1** I am God almighty; walk before Me and be blameless.

66 **Ps. 33:8** Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere Him.

67 **Ps. 96:4** Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; He is to be feared above all gods.

68 **Prov. 8:13** To fear the Lord is to hate evil.

69 **Matt. 10:28** Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Bible narrative: The three men in the fiery furnace feared God more than the king (Daniel 3).

B. We love God above all things when we cling to Him alone as our God and gladly devote our lives to His service.

70 **Ps. 73:25-26** Whom have I in heaven but You? And earth has nothing I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

71 **Matt. 22:37** Love the Lord, your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

Bible narrative: Abraham loved God more than his son (Genesis 22). Joseph resisted the temptation of Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39).

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C. We trust in God above all things when we commit our lives completely to His keeping and rely on Him for help in every need.

72 **Ps. 118:8** It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.

73 **Prov. 3:5** Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

Bible narrative: David trusted in the Lord when he fought against Goliath (I Sam. 17:37, 46-47). Abram left his country and relatives to go where the Lord sent him, trusting that the Lord would take care of him (Gen. 12:1-9). Daniel committed himself to the Lord's keeping (Daniel 6).

23. Who is able to keep this and the other commandments?

No person can keep any or all commandments perfectly, except Jesus Christ. All those who have faith in Him by the power of His Spirit willingly strive to keep these commandments.

74 **Eccl. 7:20** There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

75 **1 John 1:8** If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

76 **John 14:15** If you love me, you will obey what I command.

77 **Phil. 2:13** It is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.

The Second Commandment [God's Name]

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

24. Why do we say in this and in the following commandments, "We should fear and love God"?

The fulfillment of all commandments must flow from the fear and love of God.

78 **Ps. 111:10** The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts have good understanding. To Him belongs eternal praise.

79 **John 14:23** If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching.

Bible narrative: Jesus asked Peter whether he loved Him, then He told Peter to feed His sheep (John 21:15-17).

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25. What is God's name?

God, as He has revealed Himself to us, His essence and His attributes.

80 **Ex. 3:14** God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I Am." This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I Am has sent me to YOU."

81 **Is. 9:6** To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

82 **Jer. 23:6** This is the name by which He will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness.

83 **Matt. 1:21** You are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.

84 **Matt. 18:20** Where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them.

85 **Matt. 28:19** Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

86 **John 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Bible narrative: God revealed His name to Moses (Ex. 3:12-15).

26. What does God forbid in the Second Commandment?

In the Second Commandment God forbids us to misuse His name.

87 **Ex. 20:7** The Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name.

27. How is God's name misused? God's name is misused when people

A. speak God's name uselessly or carelessly (see Ex. 20:7);

B. curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name.

28. What is cursing by God's name?

Cursing by God's name is

A. blaspheming God by speaking evil of Him or mocking Him;

88 **Lev. 24:15** If anyone curses his God, he will be held responsible.

Bible narratives: They mocked Jesus when He was hanging on the cross (Matt. 27:39-43). The Assyrian field commander blasphemed the God of Israel (2 Kings 18:28-35; 19:21-22). Some Jews accused Jesus of being possessed by a demon (John 8:48-59).

B. calling down the anger and punishment of God upon oneself or any other person or thing.

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- 89 **James 3:9-10** With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

Bible narratives: The people at Jesus' trial cursed themselves and their children (Matt. 27:25). Peter cursed (Matt. 26:74). James and John asked Jesus if they should ask God to destroy a Samaritan village (Luke 9:51-55).

29. What is swearing by God's name?

Swearing by God's name is taking an oath in which we call on God to witness the truth of what we say or promise and to punish us if we lie or break our promise.

30. When are we permitted, and even required, to swear by God's name?

We are permitted, and even required, to take an oath by God's name when an oath is necessary for the glory of God or the welfare of our neighbor. Examples include the following: testimony in court, oath of office, wedding vows.

- 90 **Rom. 13:1** Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities.
- 91 **Num. 30:2** When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.
- 92 **Deut. 6:13** Fear the Lord your God, serve Him only and take your oaths in His name.
- 93 **Heb. 6:16** Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument.

Bible narratives: Jesus permitted Himself to be put under oath (Matt. 26:63-64). Abraham put his servant under oath (Gen. 24:3).

31. When is swearing forbidden?

Swearing is forbidden when it is done falsely, thoughtlessly, or in sinful, uncertain, or unimportant matters.

- 94 **Lev. 19:12** Do not swear falsely by My name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.
- 95 **Matt. 5:33-37** You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "Do not break your oath but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord." But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne, or by the earth, for it is His footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your "Yes" be "Yes" and your "No", "No"; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

Bible narratives: Peter swore falsely and thus committed perjury (Matt. 26:72). Certain Jews swore to commit murder (Acts 23:12). Herod swore in an unknown and unimportant matter (Matt. 14:6-9). Jephthah's thoughtless oath (Judges 11:30-40).

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32. What is using satanic arts by God's name?

Using satanic arts by God's name is

- A. using God's name in order to perform or claim to perform supernatural things with the help of the devil, such as casting spells, calling up a spirit, fortunetelling, consulting the dead, or other occult practices;

- 96 **Deut. 18:10-12** Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord, and because of these detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you

Bible narratives: The Egyptian sorcerers performed supernatural things with the help of the devil (Exodus 7-8). The sons of Sceva used Jesus' name to cast out spirits, but they did not have faith (Acts 19:13-29).

- B. joining with or seeking the aid of people who practice these and similar satanic arts or worship Satan;

- 97 **Lev. 19:31** Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God.

Bible narrative: King Saul sought the help of the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28).

- C. depending on horoscopes or similar ways to foretell the future.

- 98 **Ecc. 7:14** When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.

33. What is lying and deceiving by God's name?

Lying and deceiving by God's name is

- A. teaching false doctrine and saying that it is God's Word or revelation;

- 99 **Deut. 12:32** See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.

- 100 **Jer. 23:31** Yes, declares the Lord, I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, "The Lord declares."

- 101 **Matt. 15:9** They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.

Bible narrative: The lie of a false prophet caused a prophet of God to be deceived and killed (1 Kings 13:11-30).

- B. covering up an unbelieving heart or a sinful life by pretending to be a Christian.

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102 **Matt. 7:21** Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.

103 **Matt. 15:8** These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.

Bible narratives: Many scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites (Matt. 23:13-33). Ananias and Sapphira were hypocrites (Acts 5:1-11).

34. What does God require of us in the Second Commandment?

We should call upon His name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

104 **Ps. 50:15** Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor Me.

105 **Ps. 103:1** Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name.

106 **Ps. 118:1** Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever.

107 **John 16:23** My Father will give you whatever you ask in My name.

108 **Eph. 5:20** Give thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Bible narratives: The 10 lepers called upon Jesus in their trouble (Luke 17:11-13). The grateful stranger thanked Jesus and glorified God for the healing (Luke 17:15-16). Hannah petitioned and thanked God for the gift of a son (I Samuel 1-2). Mary's Song (Magnificat, Luke 1:46-55). Zechariah's Song (Benedictus, Luke 1:68-79).

The Third Commandment [God's Word]

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

35. What is the Sabbath day?

In the Old Testament God set aside the seventh day (Saturday) as a required day of rest (Sabbath means "rest") and worship.

109 **Ex. 35:2** For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord.

110 **Lev. 23:3** There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a holy day, a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly.

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36. Does God require us to observe the Sabbath and other holy days of the Old Testament?

The Sabbath was a sign pointing to Jesus, who is our rest. Since Jesus has come as our Savior and Lord, God no longer requires us to observe the Sabbath day and other holy days of the Old Testament.

111 **Matt. 11:28** "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

112 **Matt. 12:8** "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

113 **Col.2:16-17** Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

114 **Heb. 4:9-10** There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His.

37. Does God require the church to worship together on any specific days?

A. God requires Christians to worship together.

115 **Acts2:42,46** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.... Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.

116 **Heb. 10:25** Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

B. He has not specified any particular day.

117 **Rom. 14:5-6** One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord.

118 **Gal. 4:10-11** You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that some how I have wasted my efforts on you.

C. The church worships together especially on Sunday because Christ rose from the dead on Sunday.

119 **Luke 24:1-2** On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb.

120 **Acts 20:7** On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.

Bible narrative: Jesus appeared to His disciples (John 20:19-31).

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38. When do we sin against the Third Commandment?

We sin against the Third Commandment when we despise preaching and the Word of God.

39. How is this done?

We despise preaching and the Word of God

- A. when we do not attend public worship;
- B. when we do not use the Word of God and the Sacraments;
- C. when we use the Word of God and the Sacraments negligently or carelessly.

121 **John 8:47** He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.

122 **Luke 10:16** He who listens to you listens to Me; he who rejects you rejects Me; but he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me.

Bible narratives: The scribes and the Pharisees despised Baptism (Luke 7:30). Saul rejected the Word of God (1 Sam. 15:10-23).

40. What does God require of us in the Third Commandment?

- A. We should hold preaching and the Word of God sacred.

123 **Is. 66:2** This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at My word.

124 **1 Thess. 2:13** When you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

- B. We should gladly hear it, learn it, and meditate on it.

125 **Joshua 1:8** Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.

126 **Ps. 26:8** I love the house where You live, O Lord, the place where Your glory dwells.

127 **Luke 11:28** Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.

128 **Acts 2:42** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

129 **Col. 3:16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

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Bible narratives: Jesus gladly heard and learned the Word of God (Luke 2:41-52). Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and learned His Word (Luke 10:39). Mary kept and pondered the Word of God in her heart (Luke 2:19). The Bereans searched the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11).

C. We should honor and support the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

130 **Gal. 6:6-7** Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

Bible narrative: The poor widow gave money for the upkeep of the temple and for the support of the priests (Mark 12:41-44).

Note: See also "What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors" under the Table of Duties.

D. We should diligently spread the Word of God.

131 **Mark 16:15** He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

41. What do the first three commandments (the First Table) show us about ourselves?

That we have sinned and deserve God's condemnation.

132 **Rom. 3:22-23** There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

42. Who alone has kept the Law of God perfectly?

Only Jesus Christ, the God-man.

133 **John 8:46** "Can any of you prove Me guilty of sin?"

134 **Heb. 4:15** We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are yet without sin.

43. How does Christ's perfect keeping of the Law benefit us?

Since Christ was our substitute before God, our Savior's perfect keeping of the Law is part of His saving work for us, and because of Him we are considered righteous before God.

135 **Gal. 4:4-5** When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

44. Besides showing us our sin, what else does God's Law do for us?

In the Ten Commandments God shows us what His will is. Christians, by the power of the Holy Spirit, are eager to do God's will.

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136 **1 Thess. 4:3** It is God's will that you should be sanctified.

45. What is the summary of commandments 4-10 (Second Table)?

"Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39).

46. Who is our neighbor?

All people are our neighbors.

137 **Gal. 6:10** As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

138 **Matt. 5:44** Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Bible narrative: The good Samaritan showed mercy to his neighbor (Luke 10:25-37).

47. How should we love our neighbor?

We should love our neighbor as ourselves and show this love by keeping the commandments of the Second Table.

139 **Matt. 7:12** In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

The Fourth Commandment [God's Representatives]

Honor your father and your mother.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

48. Who are parents and other authorities?

Parents are fathers, mothers, and guardians; other authorities are all those whom God has placed over us at home, in government, at school, at the place where we work, and in the church.

Note: Regarding spiritual authority, see the Table of Duties, "What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors" and also "The Office of the Keys" under Confession.

49. What does God forbid in the Fourth Commandment?

God forbids us to despise our parents and other authorities by not respecting them or angering them by our disobedience or by any other kind of sin.

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140 **Prov. 23:22** Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

141 **Rom. 13:2** He who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

Note: See "To Workers of All Kinds" under the Table of Duties.

Bible narratives: The sons of Eli grieved their father by their wickedness (1 Sam. 2:12, 23, 25). Absalom rebelled against his father and king (2 Samuel 15).

50. What does God require of us in the Fourth Commandment?

God requires us

A. to honor our parents and other authorities by regarding them as God's representatives;

142 **Eph. 6:2-3** "Honor your father and mother!"--which is the first commandment with a promise--"that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Note: See "To Parents" and "To Children" under the Table of Duties.

Bible narratives: Joseph honored his father (Gen. 46:29). King Solomon honored his mother U Kings 2:19). Elisha honored his teacher (2 Kings 2:12).

B. to serve our parents and other authorities by gladly providing what they need or require;

143 **1 Tim. 5:4** If a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.

144 **Rom. 13:7** Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Bible narratives: Joseph provided for his father (Gen. 47:11-12). Jesus provided for His mother (John 19:26).

C. to obey our parents and other authorities in everything in which God has placed them over us;

145 **Col. 3:20** Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

146 **Titus 3:1** Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good.

147 **Acts 5:29** We must obey God rather than men!

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Note: See "To Workers of All Kinds," "To Employers and Supervisors," and "Of Citizens" in the Table of Duties.

Bible narratives: Jesus was subject to Mary and Joseph (Luke 2:51). Jonathan disobeyed his father in order to spare David's life and thus obeyed God rather than man (1 Sam. 20:31-33).

D. to love and cherish our parents and other authorities as precious gifts of God;

148 **Prov. 23:22** Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

Bible narrative: Ruth loved and cherished her mother-in-law, Naomi (Ruth).

E. to show respect to the aged.

149 **Lev. 19:32** Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God.

51. What promise does God attach to this commandment?

... that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth. Eph. 6:3

The Fifth Commandment [God's Gift of Life]

You shall not murder. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.

52. What does God forbid in the Fifth Commandment?

A. God forbids us to take the life of another person (murder, abortion, euthanasia) or our own life (suicide).

150 **Gen. 9:6** Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.

151 **Matt. 26:52** All who draw the sword will die by the sword.

Bible narratives: Cain murdered his brother Abel (Gen. 4:8). David murdered Uriah through others (2 Sam. 11:15). Killing through carelessness (Ex. 21:29 and Deut. 22:8). Judas killed himself (Matt. 27:5).

ABORTION

The living but unborn are persons in the sight of God from the time of conception. Since abortion takes a human life, it is not a moral option except to prevent the death of another person, the mother.

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

- 152 **Jer. 1:5** Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart.
- 153 **Ps. 139:16** Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be.

Bible narrative: John the Baptist leaped for joy while still in his mother's womb. In doing so, John the Baptist and Elizabeth, by the Holy Spirit, acknowledged the unborn Jesus as Lord (Luke 1:41-44).

EUTHANASIA

The severely handicapped, infirm, helpless, and aged are persons in the sight of God with life given by Him and to be ended only by Him.

- 154 **Prov. 6:16-17** There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood.
- 155 **Prov. 31:8** Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.
- 156 **Acts 17:25** He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.

SUICIDE

My own life is a gift of God to be ended only by Him.

- 157 **Jer. 31:3** The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness."
- 158 **Luke 12:22** Jesus said to His disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear."

B. God forbids us to hurt or harm our neighbor physically, that is, to do or say anything which may destroy, shorten, or make his or her life bitter.

- 159 **Deut. 32:39** See now that I Myself am He! There is no god besides Me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of My hand.
- 160 **Rom. 12:19** Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is Mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

Bible narratives: Joseph's brothers harmed Joseph and made the life of their father bitter by their wickedness (Gen. 37:23-35). The Egyptians made the lives of the children of Israel bitter by hard labor (Exodus 1).

C. God forbids us to keep anger and hatred in our hearts against our neighbor.

- 161 **Matt. 5:22** I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.
- 162 **1 John 3:15** Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

163 **Matt. 15:19** Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.

164 **Eph. 4:26** In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.

Bible narratives: The Jews showed their anger against Stephen (Acts 7:54). God warned Cain against anger (Gen. 4:5-7).

53. Does anyone have authority to take an other person's life?

Yes, lawful government, as God's servant, may execute criminals and fight just wars.

165 **Rom. 13:4** He is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

54. What does God require of us in the Fifth Commandment?

A. We should help and support our neighbor in every bodily need.

166 **Rom. 12:20** If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.

Bible narratives: Abraham rescued Lot from his enemies (Gen. 14:12-16). David protected the life of Saul U Sam. 26:1-12). The good Samaritan helped the man who had fallen among thieves (Luke 10:33-35).

B. We should be merciful, kind, and forgiving towards our neighbor.

167 **Matt. 5:5,7,9** Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.... Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.... Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

168 **Matt. 6:15** If you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

169 **Eph. 4:32** Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Bible narratives: Jesus showed mercy to the 10 lepers (Luke 17:11-19). The centurion was kind to his sick servant (Matt. 8:5-13). Joseph was forgiving toward his brothers (Gen. 45:1-16).

C. We should avoid and assist our neighbor in avoiding the abuse of drugs and the use of any substance that harms the body and the mind.

170 **2 Cor. 7:1** Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit.

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

The Sixth Commandment [God's Gift of Marriage]

You shall not commit adultery.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do, and husband and wife love and honor each other.

55. How do we lead a sexually pure and decent life?

We lead a sexually pure and decent life when we

A. consider sexuality to be a good gift of God;

171 **Gen. 1:27, 31** God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. . . . God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.

B. honor marriage as God's institution, the lifelong union of one man and one woman;

172 **Gen. 2:24-25** For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be~ united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

173 **Mark 10:6-9** At the beginning of creation God "made them male and female." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.

C. reserve sexual intercourse for the marriage partner alone;

174 **Heb. 13:4** Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

D. control sexual urges in a God-pleasing way.

175 **Titus 2:11-12** The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

Note: See also I Thess. 4:1-7.

56. What does God forbid in the Sixth Commandment?

A. God forbids divorce except for marital unfaithfulness (adultery or desertion).

176 **Matt. 19:6** They are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

177 **Matt. 19:9** Anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.

178 **1 Cor. 7:15** If the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances.

Bible narratives: David committed adultery with the wife of Uriah (2 Samuel 11). Herod took his brother's wife (Mark 6:18).

B. God forbids sexual intercourse between unmarried persons.

179 **1 Cor. 6:18** Flee from sexual immorality.

180 **1 Cor. 6:9-10** Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ... will enter the kingdom of God.

C. God forbids sexual sins such as rape, homosexual activity, incest, sexual child abuse, obscenity, and the use of pornographic materials.

181 **Rom. 1:24, 26-27** Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.... Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

182 **1 Cor. 6:9-10** Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

D. God forbids sexually impure thoughts and

183 **Matt. 5:28** I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

184 **Matt. 15:19** Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.

57. What does God require of us in the Sixth Commandment?

A. God requires us to avoid all temptations to sexual sin.

185 **Gen. 39:9** How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?

186 **1 Cor. 6:18** Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.

B. God requires us to be clean in what we think and say.

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

187 **Eph. 5:3-4** Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

188 **Phil. 4:8** Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praise-worthy-think about such things.

C. God requires us to use our sexuality in ways pleasing to Him.

189 **1 Cor. 6:19-20** Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

58. What does God require especially of married people?

God requires married people to love, honor, and respect each other. The wife is the husband's God-given helper, and the husband is the wife's God-given head.

190 **Gen. 2:18** The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

191 **1 Cor. 7:4** The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.

192 **Eph. 4:32** Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

193 **Eph. 5:21-23, 25** Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior.... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

Note: See "To Husbands" and "To Wives" under the Table of Duties.

The Seventh Commandment [God's Gift of Possessions]

You shall not steal.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income.

59. What does God forbid in the Seventh Commandment?

God forbids every kind of robbery, theft, and dishonest way of getting things.

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

- 194 **Lev. 19:35** Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity.
- 195 **Ps. 37:21** The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously.
- 196 **Eph. 4:28** He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.
- 197 **2 Thess. 3:10** If a man will not work, he shall not eat.

Bible narratives: Achan stole when he secretly took a garment and silver and gold (Joshua 7:20-22). Judas was a thief (John 12:6). Gehazi obtained a present by lying and trickery (2 Kings 5:20-24).

60. What does God require of us in the Seventh Commandment?

- A. We should help our neighbor to improve and protect that person's possessions and income.

- 198 **Matt. 7:12** In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.
- 199 **Phil. 2:4** Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Bible narratives: Abraham gave Lot the choice of the land (Gen. 13:9). Abraham rescued Lot from the enemy and recovered Lot's property (Gen. 14:12-16).

- B. We should help our neighbor in every need.

- 200 **Matt. 5:42** Give to one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.
- 201 **Heb. 13:16** Do not forget to do good, and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.
- 202 **1 John 3:17** If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

Bible narratives: Zacchaeus promised to give back four times what he had taken dishonestly and to give half of his goods to the poor (Luke 19:8). The good Samaritan helped his neighbor but the priest and Levite did not (Luke 10:29-37).

The Eighth Commandment [God's Gift of a Good Reputation]

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

61. What does God forbid in the Eighth Commandment?

- A. God forbids us to tell lies about our neighbor in a court of law or elsewhere, that is, to lie about, lie to, or withhold the truth from our neighbor.

203 **Prov. 19:5** A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours out lies will not go free.

204 **Eph. 4:25** Each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

Bible narratives: False witnesses testified against Jesus (Matt. 26:59-61). False witnesses testified against Naboth (1 Kings 21:13). Gehazi lied about Elisha and then lied to him (2 Kings 5:22-25).

- B. God forbids us to betray our neighbor, that is, to reveal our neighbor's secrets.

205 **Prov. 11:13** A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trust worthy man keeps a secret.

Bible narratives: Doeg betrayed Ahimelech (2 Sam. 22:6-19). Judas betrayed Jesus (Matt. 26:14-16).

- C. God forbids us to slander our neighbor or hurt our neighbor's reputation.

206 **Matt. 18:15** If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you.

207 **Luke 6:37** Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.

208 **James 4:11** Brothers, do not slander one another.

Bible narrative: Absalom slandered his father (2 Sam. 15:1-6).

62. What does God require of us in the Eighth Commandment?

- A. We should defend our neighbor, that is, we should speak up for and protect our neighbor from false accusations.

209 **Prov. 31:8-9** Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

- B. We should speak well of our neighbor, that is, we should praise our neighbor's good actions and qualities.

Bible narratives: Jonathan spoke well of David (1 Sam. 19:4). The people of Capernaum spoke well of the centurion (Luke 7:4-5). Jesus spoke well of the woman who anointed Him (Mark 14:3-9).

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

C. We should put the best meaning on everything, that is, we should explain our neighbor's actions in the best possible way.

210 **1 Cor. 13:7** [Love] always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

211 **1 Peter 4:8** Love covers over a multitude of sins.

The Ninth Commandment [God's Gift of Contentment]

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or get it in a way which only appears right, but help and be of service to him in keeping it.

63. What is coveting?

Coveting is having a sinful desire for anyone or anything that belongs to our neighbor.

212 **Rom. 7:8** Sin ... produced in me every kind of covetous desire.

213 **Matt. 15:19** Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.

64. What coveting does God forbid in the Ninth Commandment?

God forbids every sinful desire to get our neighbor's possessions openly or by trickery.

214 **Micah 2:1-2** Woe to those who plan iniquity.... They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance.

215 **1 Tim. 6:8-10** If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Bible narrative: Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard and got it in a way which only seemed right (1 Kings 2:11-16).

65. What does God require of us in the Ninth Commandment?

We should be content with what God has given us and assist our neighbor in keeping what God has given that person.

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

216 **Phil. 4:11** I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

217 **1 Tim. 6:6** Godliness with contentment is great gain.

218 **Heb. 13:5** Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Bible narrative: Paul overcame coveting (Acts 20:32-35).

The Tenth Commandment [God's Gift of Contentment]

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not entice or force away our neighbor's wife, workers, or animals, or turn them against him, but urge them to stay and do their duty.

66. What coveting does God forbid in the Tenth Commandment?

God forbids every sinful desire to take from our neighbor that person's spouse or workers.

219 **Luke 12:15** He said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

220 **Col. 3:5** Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Bible narratives: David coveted Uriah's wife and took her (2 Sam. 11:2-4). Absalom estranged the hearts of the people from David (2 Sam. 15:1-6).

67. What does God require of us in the Tenth Commandment?

We should be content with the helpers God has given us and encourage our neighbor's helpers to be faithful to our neighbor.

221 **Phil. 2:4** Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Bible narrative: Paul returned a runaway slave to his master Philemon (Philemon).

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

68. What does God particularly impress upon us in the last two commandments?

A. In God's sight evil desire, coveting, is indeed sin and deserves condemnation.

222 **Gen. 3:6** When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

223 **James 1:14-15** Each one is tempted when by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

B. God wants us to love Him and to have holy desires.

224 **Ps. 37:4** Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.

225 **Ps. 119:35-36** Direct me in the path of Your commands, for there I find delight. Turn my heart toward Your statutes and not toward selfish gain.

226 **Phil. 4:8** Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things.

The Close of the Commandments

What does God say about all these commandments? He says: 1, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments." [Ex. 20:5-6]

What does this mean?

God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should also love and trust in Him and gladly do what He commands.

69. Why does God call Himself a jealous God?

Because God is holy

A. He hates sin and insists on strict and perfect obedience;

B. He will not share with idols the love and honor we owe Him;

C. He will punish those who hate Him.

227 **Ps. 5:4-5** You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with You the wicked cannot dwell. The arrogant cannot stand in Your presence; You hate all who do wrong.

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

228 **Is. 42:8** I am the Lord; that is My name! I will not give My glory to another or My praise to idols.

229 **Ezek. 6:9** I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts, which have turned away from Me, and by their eyes, which have lusted after their idols.

230 **James 4:12** There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy.

70. What does God threaten to do to all who hate Him and break His commandments?

God threatens earthly punishment, physical death, and eternal damnation.

231 **Lev. 26:18** If after all this you will not listen to Me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over.

232 **Rom. 6:23** The wages of sin is death.

233 **Gal. 3:10** Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.

71. What does God mean when He threatens to punish the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him?

If the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren also hate God and follow in the evil ways of their parents, then God will during their earthly lives punish them for the sins of their ancestors.

234 **Ezek. 18:20** The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.

Bible narratives: The family of wicked Ahab and Jezebel were destroyed (2 Kings 9:7-8; 10:11). Israel was led into captivity for its disobedience and wickedness (2 Chron. 36:17-21).

72. Why does God threaten such punishment?

God threatens such punishment to make us fear His anger, so that we do not act against His commandments.

235 **Ecc. 12:13-14** Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

236 **Matt. 10:28** Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

73. How does God bless those who love Him and keep His commandments?

He showers those who believe in Him and their God-fearing descendants with His constant love and good gifts.

237 **1 Tim. 4:8** Godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

Bible narrative: God blessed Job for his faithfulness (Job 42:10-17).

The Fulfillment of the Law

74. How carefully does God want us to keep His commandments?

God wants us to keep His commandments perfectly in thoughts, desires, words, and deeds.

238 **Lev. 19:2** Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.

239 **James 2:10** Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

75. What prevents us from keeping God's commandments perfectly?

Our sinful nature makes it impossible.

240 **Ps. 14:3** All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

241 **Eccl. 7:20** There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

242 **Is. 64:6** All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.

243 **1 John 1:8** If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Bible narrative: The apostle Paul grieved over his failure to keep the Law (Rom. 7:15-20).

76. Can anyone, then, be saved by the Law?

No; the Law condemns everyone.

244 **Gal. 3:10-11** All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Clearly no one is justified before God by the law.

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

The Purposes of the Law

77. What purposes does the Law then serve?

A. First, the Law helps to control violent outbursts of sin and keeps order in the world (a curb).

245 **1 Tim. 1:9** We also know that law is made not for the righteous [good people] but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers.

246 **Rom. 2:14-15** Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

B. Second, the Law accuses us and shows us our sin (a mirror).

247 **Rom 3:20** Through the law we become conscious of sin.

248 **Rom. 7:7** I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."

C. Third, the Law teaches us Christians what we should and should not do to lead a God-pleasing life (a guide). The power to live according to the Law comes from the Gospel.

249 **Ps. 119:9** How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your word.

250 **Ps. 119:105** Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

251 **1 John 4:9, 11** This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him.... Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Note: See Luke 10:27.

Sin

78. What is sin?

Sin is every thought, desire, word, and deed which is contrary to God's Law.

252 **1 John 3:4** Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

Note: Other names for sin are disobedience (Rom. 5:19); debts (Matt. 6:12); wickedness, rebellion, (Ex. 34:7); fault (Matt. 18:15); trespass (Rom. 5:17); wickedness (Rom. 6:13); and wrong (Col. 3:25).

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

79. Who brought sin into the world?

The devil brought sin into the world by tempting Adam and Eve, who of their own free will yielded to the temptation.

253 **1 John 3:8** He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning.

254 **Rom. 5:12** Sin entered the world through one man.

Bible narrative: The fall of humanity (Gen. 3:1-7).

80. How many kinds of sin are there?

There are two kinds of sin: original sin and actual

81. What is original sin?

Original sin is that total corruption of our whole human nature which we have inherited from Adam through our parents.

255 **Ps. 51:5** I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

256 **John 3:6** Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

257 **Rom. 5:12** Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.

258 **Eph. 4:22** Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts (NKJV).

82. What has original sin done to human nature?

A. Original sin has brought guilt and condemnation to all people;

259 **Rom. 5:19** Through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners.

260 **Eph. 2:3** Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

B. has left everyone without true fear and love of God, that is, spiritually blind, dead, and enemies of God;

261 **Gen. 8:21** Every inclination of his [man's] heart is evil from childhood.

262 **1 Cor. 2:14** The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

263 **Eph. 2:1** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

264 **Rom. 8:7** The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

C. causes everyone to commit all kinds of actual sins.

265 **Matt. 7:17** Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

266 **Gal. 5:19** The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

83. What is actual sin?

Actual sin is every act against a commandment of God in thoughts, desires, words, or deeds.

267 **Matt. 15:19** Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.

268 **James 1:15** After desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin. (Sins of commission)

269 **James 4:17** Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins. (Sins of omission)

Law and Gospel

84. Where alone does God offer the forgiveness of sins?

God offers the forgiveness of sins only in the Gospel, the good news that we are freed from the guilt, the punishment, and the power of sin, and are saved eternally because of Christ's keeping the Law and His suffering and death for us.

270 **John 3:16** God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

271 **Rom. 1:16** I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

272 **Rom. 10:4** Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

273 **Gal. 3:13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

274 **Col. 1:13-14** He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

85. What is the difference between the Law and the Gospel?

A. The Law teaches what we are to do and not to do; the Gospel teaches what God has done, and still does, for our salvation.

An Explanation of The Small Catechism

- B. The Law shows us our sin and the wrath of God; the Gospel shows us our Savior and the grace of God.
- C. The Law must be proclaimed to all people, but especially to impenitent sinners; the Gospel must be proclaimed to sinners who are troubled in their minds because of their sins.