

LUTHER'S CATECHISM

THE SMALL CATECHISM

of Dr. Martin Luther



ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION

Anniversary Edition

*Commemorating the 500th anniversary
of the posting of the Ninety-five Theses
and the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation*

NORTHWESTERN PUBLISHING HOUSE

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Interior Stained Glass Photographs: Robert Koester
Art Director: Karen Knutson
Design Team: Diane Cook, Pamela Dunn

Scripture taken from *ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®)*.
Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Quotations from the Lutheran Confessions, unless otherwise noted, are from *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, copyright © 2005, 2006, 2009 by Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The text of the enchiridion used in this catechism is the version adopted by WELS at the 1995 synod convention.

All rights reserved. This publication may not be copied, photocopied, reproduced, translated, or converted to any electronic or machine-readable form in whole or in part, except for brief quotations, without prior written approval from the publisher.

Northwestern Publishing House
1250 N. 113th St., Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284
www.nph.net
© 2017 Northwestern Publishing House
Published 2017

Printed in the United States of America
ISBN 978-0-8100-2813-5
ISBN 978-0-8100-2814-2 (e-book)

7701500

ISBN 978-0-8100-2813-5



9780810028135

CONTENTS

Preface	vii
---------------	-----

LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM

The Ten Commandments.....	1
The Creed.....	4
The Lord's Prayer	6
The Sacrament of Holy Baptism	9
The Office of the Keys and Confession.....	11
The Sacrament of Holy Communion	13
The Nicene Creed	15
Daily Prayers.....	16
Table of Duties.....	17

EXPOSITION OF LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM

Martin Luther, the Author of the Small Catechism	20
The Bible: The Truth About God and Us	26
God's Law	33
The Ten Commandments.....	39
The Ten Commandments.....	40
The First Commandment.....	46
The Second Commandment	53
The Third Commandment.....	59
The Fourth Commandment.....	68
The Fifth Commandment	75
The Sixth Commandment.....	81
The Seventh Commandment.....	91
The Eighth Commandment.....	97
The Ninth and Tenth Commandments.....	103
The Conclusion to the Commandments.....	109
The Difference Between the Law and the Gospel.....	117

The Apostles' Creed	123
The Apostles' Creed	124
The First Article.....	130
Creation	130
God Preserves His Creation.....	137
The Ruin of God's Creation	143
The Second Article	148
Christ's Person	148
Christ's Office	155
Christ's Work.....	163
Christ's Humiliation and Exaltation	170
We Belong to Christ.....	178
The Third Article.....	183
The Work of the Holy Spirit.....	183
Good Works and Gifts of the Holy Spirit.....	195
The Christian Church.....	203
The Forgiveness of Sins	213
The Resurrection	220
The New Self Against the Old Adam.....	227
 The Lord's Prayer	 235
Prayer	236
The Address.....	243
The First Petition	248
The Second Petition	254
The Third Petition	260
The Fourth Petition.....	267
The Fifth Petition	273
The Sixth Petition	279
The Seventh Petition	285
The Doxology.....	292
The Means of Grace	297

Baptism	303
The Institution of Baptism	304
The Blessings of Baptism.....	311
The Power of Baptism.....	315
The Meaning of Baptism for Our Daily Life.....	320
The Use of the Keys and Confession	327
The Keys	328
The Public Use of the Keys.....	333
Confession.....	342
The Lord's Supper	349
The Institution of the Lord's Supper	350
The Blessings of the Lord's Supper	356
The Power of the Lord's Supper.....	361
The Reception of the Lord's Supper	365
Christian Questions	371
Glossary	374
Pronouncing Vocabulary	387
Subject Index	389
Scripture Index	399

PREFACE

Luther's Small Catechism is a treasure that has graced the church ever since it was first published in 1529. Throughout the centuries since, the catechism, along with its exposition, has been the textbook used by hundreds of thousands of students to learn the truths of Scripture.

But Luther understood that the value of this treasure was not limited to young people. He used the catechism throughout his life, and he urged others to follow his example.

Those two factors have influenced the design and development of this Reformation Anniversary Edition of the Small Catechism.

Because of the catechism's enduring role as an instructional tool, this book contains a clear and orderly presentation of Bible doctrine. The Bible verses that follow the questions let Scripture speak for itself and encourage students to search the Scriptures to discover God's answers. Often, additional explanations are included to summarize Bible truths.

Because of the catechism's potential to serve as an ongoing source of encouragement and guidance, its contents have been designed to flow for a more natural read. The text and its indices will always permit Christians to search out a particular topic and the Bible verses that apply. However, introductions as well as transitional thoughts also promote the reading of the material as a unit. And transitional units promote the reading of the catechism as a book.

Two other features are noteworthy:

- As saint and sinner, each Christian faces an ongoing struggle with sin. The transitional units highlight the role of law and gospel in this new-self-versus-old-self struggle.
- To highlight even more the catechism's potential as an ongoing spiritual tool, each of the 51 units ends with a Connections section that could be the basis of an individual or joint family devotion. The participants are guided through a Bible history narrative and corresponding thought questions, which apply the truths learned in that unit. Those are followed by a related

quote from Luther or the Lutheran Confessions and a closing hymn. We hope that this section will also help the students grow in appreciation of their Lutheran heritage.

The Lutheran church is a catechetical church. We consider it a remarkable, though undeserved, privilege that we have been able to participate in the development of this book. We pray that you will use your catechism regularly, throughout your entire life, and that God will bless you through it.

Professor Stephen Geiger, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Professor Joel Otto, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Pastor John Braun, Northwestern Publishing House

Pastor Ray Schumacher, Northwestern Publishing House

LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

*As the head of the family should teach them
in the simplest way to those in his household.*

The First Commandment

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

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

The Second Commandment

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

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not use his name to curse, swear, lie, or deceive, or use witchcraft, but call upon God's name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

The Third Commandment

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his Word, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it.

The Fourth Commandment

Honor your father and mother, that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not dishonor or anger our parents and others in authority, but honor, serve, and obey them, and give them love and respect.

The Fifth Commandment

You shall not murder.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need.

The Sixth Commandment

You shall not commit adultery.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we lead a pure and decent life in words and actions, and that husband and wife love and honor each other.

The Seventh Commandment

You shall not steal.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not take our neighbor's money or property, or get it by dishonest dealing, but help him to improve and protect his property and means of income.

The Eighth Commandment

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, or give him a bad name, but defend him, speak well of him, and take his words and actions in the kindest possible way.

The Ninth Commandment

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or obtain it by a show of right, but do all we can to help him keep it.

The Tenth Commandment

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, workers, animals, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What does this mean?

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

The Conclusion

What does God say about all these commandments?

He says, "I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."

What does this mean?

God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. Therefore we should fear his anger and not disobey what he commands.

But he promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore we should love and trust in him and gladly obey what he commands.



TEN COMMANDMENTS

God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on two stone tablets at Mount Sinai.



COMMANDMENTS

The Ten Commandments*

The Ten Commandments are a summary of God's will for us in our lives. Many people think of the commandments as out-of-date rules that take away our freedom to do the things we want and should have the right to do. But the more we study the commandments, the more clearly we see that they are given to us to bless us. They remain important. We have every reason to want to learn what they mean, and we have every reason to obey them.

*Note: When God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, he did not assign numbers to individual commandments. Luther chose to keep the numbering used by the ancient church and the church of his day. Others have numbered the commandments in a different way, keeping the number at ten but changing the way they are numbered.

God's Will for Our Lives

20. To understand why the Ten Commandments are blessings for us, we first have to grasp the condition of our relationship with God.

At birth what is wrong in our natural relationship with God?

Genesis 2:16,17; 3:6 (When Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they brought sin and death into the world.)

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Adam and Eve sinned when they chose to disobey God. Their sin brought them guilt along with many other consequences, including death. Because "that which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6), their descendants have been born with that sin and, therefore, are guilty and subject to death. Psalm 51 makes it very clear that at the moment of conception in our mother's womb, we each became guilty of sin. The consequences of sin were devastating for Adam and Eve. The consequences we inherit from them by birth are devastating to us also.

21. What are the results of our inborn sin?

Ephesians 2:1,3 *You were dead in the trespasses and sins . . . and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

Romans 8:7 *The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.*

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

Isaiah 59:2 *Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.*

Because this guilt comes to us from our forefather Adam and so thoroughly corrupts our nature, we often refer to our natural sinful condition as our old Adam, sinful nature, inherited sin, or original sin. This sinful nature puts us under God's judgment, makes us enemies of God, and leads us to sins of thought, word, and deed, which separate us from our holy God.

22. How do we know that this description applies to us?

Romans 3:23 All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

1 John 1:8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

23. How do we come to the realization of our sin?

Romans 7:7 I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."

Romans 3:20 By works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since *through the law comes knowledge of sin.*

Some people try to avoid medical tests because they fear the results, but medical tests can uncover diseases that, without treatment, could kill us.

God's commandments uncover the truth about the evil thoughts and deeds that spring from our old Adam and earn death for us.

24. Why is the work of the law a blessing as it uncovers our sins?

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Luke 13:3 Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

God's law shows us that by ourselves we are lost because of our sins. It shows us that we are unable to save ourselves and that we need a Savior. It prepares our hearts so that we are ready to hear God's wonderful promise.

25. Who alone kept God's law?

Romans 3:12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; *no one does good*, not even one.

Hebrews 4:14,15 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, *but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

Hebrews 7:26 It was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, *holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners*, and exalted above the heavens.

26. Why is it important to us that Jesus kept the law for us?

Galatians 4:4,5 When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, *born under the law*, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that *in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

A CLOSER LOOK

Redeem: to pay a ransom; to buy back; to pay the price required to free someone from slavery or captivity

Vicarious: taking the place of another; substitutionary

Atonement: establishing peace between God and us by removing the guilt of sin through Christ's perfect life and death

Jesus kept God's law perfectly in our place—as our substitute. He also died as our substitute, paying for the guilt of our sins. We refer to this as *vicarious atonement*.

27. The result of Adam's sin is devastating for us. How has the result of Jesus' life and death turned our lives around?

Romans 5:17 If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood*, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.

Ephesians 2:1,3-5 You were dead in the trespasses and sins . . . and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But *God, being rich*

in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, *made us alive together with Christ*—by grace you have been saved.

1 John 1:7 The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

2 Corinthians 5:17,18 Therefore, *if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation*. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

Ephesians 4:22-24 *Put off your old self*, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and . . . *be renewed* in the spirit of your minds, and . . . put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Once we were controlled by the old Adam and were dead in sin and enemies of God. When we came to faith, a new person came to life within each of us, with a new attitude toward sin and righteousness. We often refer to this as the new person, the new self, the spiritual person (being).

28. Though the new self has come to life within us, the old Adam is still alive within us too. **What is the result of having both the old Adam and the new self within us?**

Galatians 5:17 The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, *for these are opposed to each other*, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Romans 7:18-23 I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For *I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out*. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that *when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand*. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

29. We so often give in to the old Adam and fall into sin. But God's promise of forgiveness in Jesus strengthens the new self within us. **How does the new self within us respond to the gift of forgiveness and eternal life that Jesus has earned for us?**

Romans 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to *present your bodies as a living sacrifice*, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

2 Corinthians 5:14,15 The love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and *he*

died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

30. Some people think of the commandments as rules that take all the fun out of life. In Genesis 3:1-6, we see how Satan deceived Eve into thinking that disobeying God would bring happiness. The results of Adam and Eve's disobedience, however, were misery, slavery to sin, and ultimately death. These things are always the results of sin. Obedience to God's commands, on the other hand, does bring blessings. **What blessings are ours as we obey his laws?**

Psalm 19:7,8,11 The law of the LORD is perfect, *reviving the soul*; the testimony of the LORD is sure, *making wise the simple*; the precepts of the LORD are right, *rejoicing the heart*; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Psalm 119:14,35,45 In the way of your testimonies *I delight* as much as in all riches. Lead me in the path of your commandments, for *I delight in it*. . . I shall walk in a wide place, for I have sought your precepts.

Matthew 5:3-10 (In this section of blessings, Jesus teaches that obedience to God's will is the way of true happiness.)

31. Why is God's law (the Ten Commandments) a blessing for us as we wish to show our gratitude to God for saving us?

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

CONNECTIONS



Sometimes unpleasant experiences are actually blessings. Even pain can be a good thing. Pain can be the signal that tells us something serious is happening inside of us so that we get help from the doctor. Pain can also cause us to pull away from something that is hot and could burn us and do permanent damage. God might also use pain to lead us to his Word for hope and comfort. The result is a stronger faith. The experience of looking into God's law is not always pleasant. Sometimes it is downright painful. God's law shows us that we fall short of what he wants us to be. It reveals the painful truth that we are sinners who deserve God's everlasting punishment. As unpleasant and painful as those truths are, they are blessings because they show us that we need a Savior. God shows us our sins and what we deserve because of them, but

then he graciously points us to the forgiveness we have in our Savior. Read the account of Jonah; see how God's law accomplished its purpose of bringing an entire city of people to realize their sins.

Jonah 1–3

Notice how God brought the city of Nineveh to repentance. He used the words of his prophet. How has God shown you your sin? How has he assured you of his love and forgiveness? What Bible truths or passages have been most comforting to you when you have felt the guilt of your sin?

Luther

If the Law accuses me of not having done this or that or being unjust and a sinner in God's record, I must confess that all these charges are true. . . . To be sure, according to the Law, which computes my guilt, I am a poor, damned sinner. However, I appeal from the Law to the Gospel; for, in addition to the Law, God has given us another message called the Gospel. This bestows on us His grace, the forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness and life. (*What Luther Says*, Ewald M. Plass, p. 743, par. 2300)

Salvation Unto Us Has Come (Stanzas 2-4)

What God does in his law demand
And none to him can render
Brings wrath and woe on ev'ry hand
For man, the vile offender.
Our flesh has not those pure desires
The spirit of the law requires,
And lost is our condition.

It is a false, misleading dream
That God his law has given
That sinners can themselves redeem
And by their works gain heaven.
The law is but a mirror bright
To bring the inbred sin to light
That lurks within our nature.

Yet as the law must be fulfilled
Or we must die despairing,
Christ came and has God's anger stilled,
Our human nature sharing.
He has for us the law obeyed
And thus the Father's vengeance stayed
Which over us impended.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

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



NO OTHER GODS

Honor God Above All Else

With the First Commandment, God plainly teaches us that we should have no gods other than him, the only true God. As Christians, we may think that it will be easy to keep this commandment. After all, we believe in the true God who tells us about himself in the Bible. But as we study this commandment, we will see that we often break this commandment by honoring other gods. We often place more importance on something or someone other than God, making that something or someone our god. We need God's strong reminder to fear, love, and trust the true God above all things.

32. The greatest blessing we have, our most prized treasure, is to know the true God. **Why is it so important for us to know the true God?**

John 17:3 *This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*

Acts 4:12 *There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*

1 Peter 3:12 The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

John 16:23 Truly, truly, I say to you, *whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.*

Psalms 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Psalms 67:1 May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us.

Psalm 145:15,16 The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you *satisfy the desire of every living thing*.

33. Who is the true God?

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

Isaiah 45:21 *There is no other god besides me*, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me.

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

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

34. People break this commandment in many ways. **What are some ways people dishonor the true God?**

Psalm 14:1 The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”

Psalm 115:4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands.

Isaiah 44:12-19 (The prophet speaks of the foolishness of people who bow down to idols. He talks about the blacksmith who creates an image of metal that can’t satisfy his hunger. He describes a craftsman who takes a block of wood, using half of it for fuel to cook his food and the other half to create an image that can do nothing.)

A CLOSER LOOK

Some people believe that there is no God. They are called atheists. They want to believe that they are masters of their own destinies and that they aren’t responsible to anyone else. Other people acknowledge that there may be a god, but they say we can’t know for sure. They are called agnostics. Neither atheists nor agnostics believe what the Bible tells us. They don’t believe in the true God. It is worth noting the demons described in James 2:19. Though these demons believed there is one God, they had reason to shudder in fear.

35. We understand what the words *love* and *trust* mean. However, when we speak of loving and trusting God, those words take on special significance. To love God means to treasure him and his Word above everything else. To trust him is to be confident that his Word is true and that he always provides everything we need, keeps us safe, and gives us everything he has promised. Unfortunately, our actions often reveal that the sinful nature lives within us and leads us to love and

trust in other gods instead of in the true God. **What are some of the ways that we may be guilty of sinning against God by breaking this commandment?**

Matthew 6:24 No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot *serve God and money*.

Psalms 62:10 If riches increase, *set not your heart on them*.

Proverbs 11:28 *Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.*

1 John 2:15 *Do not love the world or the things in the world.* If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Matthew 10:37 *Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

Our material possessions, our families, and our friends are all blessings from God. We thank him for them. But when they become too important to us, they begin to take God's place in our hearts; they become our idols. We love them more than we love God.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and *do not lean on your own understanding*.

Jeremiah 17:5 Thus says the LORD: *“Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD.”*

God has blessed us so we can learn many things. We know more about this complex world than previous generations did. We develop medicines and invent technology that can do amazing things. But if we trust our human knowledge so much that we believe we do not need God's care, love, and forgiveness, we make gods of our understanding, knowledge, and technology.

John 5:23 Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

1 John 2:22,23 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. *No one who denies the Son has the Father.* Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

Many people claim to believe in the God of the Bible but don't believe that Jesus is true God. They really believe in a god created by human imagination. In reality, they are following an idol.

36. In his explanation of the First Commandment, Luther says that we are to love and trust God above all things. If we love and trust other

things more than God, we are making them into false gods. **In the explanation, he also tells us to fear God above all things. What does that mean?**

Matthew 10:28 Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather *fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Ephesians 3:20,21 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

1 Samuel 12:24 *Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully* with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you.

Daniel 6:1-23 (Daniel feared God more than the king's decree. He was willing to die rather than bow down to the king.)

To fear God doesn't mean simply to be afraid of him. To fear God means to recognize his power and authority and be filled with great awe and respect. When our sinful flesh leads us to sin, God wants us to fear the punishment that we deserve because of our sin. But we do not receive punishment; we receive forgiveness. As we rejoice in the forgiveness of our sins, our fear of God includes appreciation that his power and authority gave us a Savior.

37. All of us struggle with this commandment. We don't always fear, love, and trust in God more than anything or anyone else. **How can we then hope that God will love us as his children, that he will listen to our prayers, and that he will someday take us to heaven?**

Matthew 4:1-10 (Jesus was tempted to put himself first, but he didn't. He put God first.)

Romans 5:19 As by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so *by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.*

We are sinners who have heard the wonderful message that Jesus kept God's commandments in our place. Out of thanks to Jesus for saving us, we turn away from our sins and want to obey God.

38. How does God's Word serve as a guide for those of us who want to keep the First Commandment?

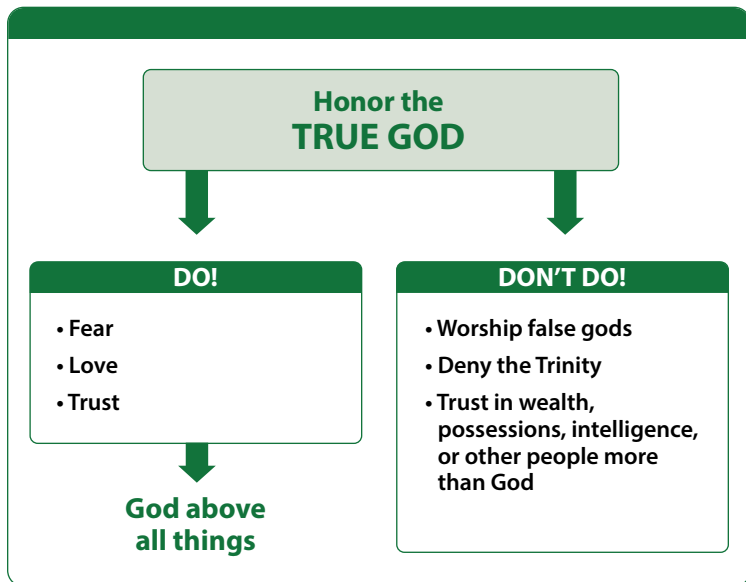
Matthew 22:37 He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

Psalms 73:25,26 Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Genesis 22:1-19 (Abraham so feared, loved, and trusted God that he was willing to offer his son.)

1 Samuel 17 (David trusted that God would give him victory against Goliath.)

1 Peter 5:6,7 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.



CONNECTIONS



Fear. Love. Trust. Those three words summarize Luther's explanation of the First Commandment. We fear God above all things when we are afraid of his punishment because of our sins and when we are filled with such awe and respect that we don't want to sin. We love him above all things when his promise of salvation through Jesus is our most valuable treasure and the focus of our hearts. We trust him above all things when we bring all of our challenges and needs to him in prayer, believing he can help us. We demonstrate that trust especially when we look to him to help us with our greatest problem—our sin—and believe his promise that he has forgiven us through Jesus. In the Bible we can find many examples of people for whom the promises of God were more valuable than even life itself. In the book of Daniel, read about

how three men feared, loved, and trusted God to the point that they were ready to die rather than worship a false god.

Daniel 3:1-18

God miraculously rescued these three men from the fire. But before the men were thrown into the flames, they did not know what God would do. They were willing to risk their lives because they believed God was more important than life. Describe a time when putting God first means you might lose something. What Bible truths can help you when you are in such a situation?

Luther

You shall have me alone as your God. What is the meaning of this? . . . Answer: A god means that from which we are to expect all good and in which we are to take refuge in all distress. So, to have a god is nothing other than trusting and believing him with the heart. I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust is right, then your God is also true. On the other hand, if your trust is false and wrong, then you do not have the true God. For these two belong together, faith and God [Hebrews 11:6]. Now, I say that whatever you set your heart on and put your trust in is truly your god. (Large Catechism, I, par. 1,2)

The Ten Commandments Are the Law (Stanzas 2,11,12)

"I am your Lord and God alone!
No other god but me enthroned!
Put your whole confidence in me;
Give me your heart totally."
Have mercy, Lord!

God gave these laws to show therein,
O child of man, your life of sin,
And help you rightly to perceive
How unto God you should live.
Have mercy, Lord!

Our works cannot salvation gain;
They merit only endless pain.
Forgive us, Lord! To Christ we fly,
Our mediator on high.
Have mercy, Lord!

I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus (Stanzas 1,4,6)

I am trusting you, Lord Jesus,
Trusting only you,
Trusting you for full salvation,
Free and true.

I am trusting you to guide me;
You alone shall lead,
Ev'ry day and hour supplying
All my need.

I am trusting you, Lord Jesus;
Never let me fall.
I am trusting you forever
And for all.