

What Does This Mean? The Continuing Importance of Luther's Small Catechism



Lesson 2. The Ten Commandments What Does the Catechism Mean for Christian Morality in Today's World?

Prayer and Introduction.

Deuteronomy 4:13 clearly tells us, "He declared to you his covenant, the **Ten Commandments**, (Words) which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets."

1. Identify the Ten Commandments. Place a number from 1 to 10 in the text to identify the Ten Commandments.

And God spoke all these words:

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents 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. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and

do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

2. Why do you think there are different numbering systems?

4. Compare and contrast the three different styles of church architecture below.

	Similarities	Differences
Roman Catholic		
Reformed		
Lutheran		



**St. John's Lutheran Church,
Jefferson, Wisconsin**



**St. John Cantius Catholic Church
Detroit, Michigan**



**First Baptist Church
Asheville, North Carolina**

3. Identify which of the following are forbidden by God's Commandments and explain why or why not?

Statues

Art work that portrays a naked human body

Worship on Sunday

Football or sporting events on Sunday or religious holidays

A Day of Rest on Saturday

Eating Pork

Eating Fish

Corpus Christi Festival

Reformation Festival

5. God gave the Commandments for the benefit of all people. Identify one or two benefits we receive from obedience to each commandment.

Commandment	Benefit for You and Society
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10	

5. Explain how each of the Commandments serves as a Guide for our Christian behavior and a Curb or check on sinful behavior. Be Specific.

Curb	Guide
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

6. What should motivate Christians to obey God?

- a. Is it important for Christians to fear God as part of the motivation for keeping his commandments? Explain your answer.**
- b. Is it important for Christians to love God as part of the motivation for keeping his commandments? Explain your answer.**

7. Luther's approach to the Ten Commandments was revolutionary by comparison to how the Commandments were taught in his day and still are today. How does each of these quotations help us understand how different the approach of Luther and Lutherans is?

"So apart from the Ten Commandments no work or thing can be good or pleasing to God, no matter how great or precious it is in the world's eyes." (LC 311)

This Commandment (10th) will remain like all the rest, one that will constantly accuse us and how godly we are in God's sight...no person can go far enough to keep one of the Ten Commandments as it should be kept (LC 1, 310, 316)

God demands that all our works proceed from a heart that fears and regards God alone. From such fear the heart avoids everything that is contrary to his will, lest it should move him to wrath. And, on the other hand, the heart also trusts in him alone and from love for him does all he wants. For he speaks to us as friendly as a father and offers us all grace and every good (LC 1, 323)

9. Taking it Home: Consider the news this week and identify stories that show how the commandments are kept or disobeyed today in our society.

Additional Question: If God is serious about these Commandments and gives them to us for the good of all, why does he not destroy those who bring chaos and pain into our world?

Additional Reading: "Treatise on Good Works", *Luther's Works Vol 44*, pp 21-114