

Eyes, Ears, and All My Senses

Activities for Teaching the Catechism

Introduction

“Show Me the coin,” Jesus said when the disciples of the Pharisees and Herodians asked Him whether they should pay taxes to Caesar (Matthew 22:19). Jesus sent them rooting in their purses to handle an everyday object. Then He challenged them to see that object in view of faith. Two thousand years later, Jesus’ lesson about the coin still amazes us: “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” Today we call this method of teaching “active learning,” using an activity to engage the learner and drive home your point.

As disciples of Jesus, our great hope is that the Holy Spirit will work faith in our students’ hearts through the truths we teach. *Eyes, Ears, and All My Senses: Activities for Teaching the Catechism* will help you teach the profound and lasting truths from Luther’s Small Catechism in an active and memorable way. Studies show that *students learn best by doing*. When a teacher adds seeing, touching, tasting, or smelling to a lesson, the students get the point! These activities will get your students out of their seats and into the learning process.

To help you quickly adapt each activity to your classroom, we have outlined it according to theme, materials needed, time required, and applications of the activity for teaching and living the Christian faith. Use these activities to open or close your catechism classes, to incorporate the catechism into Sunday school or day school learning, or as active devotions for youth events.

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The First Commandment

No other gods

Theme

At times we make gods out of people, possessions, or achievements. God challenges our rebellion, offers us full and complete forgiveness for Jesus' sake, and empowers us by the work of the Spirit to live according to the First Commandment.

Personal Inventory

Materials

Note cards, markers

Procedure (15 minutes)

Seat students in a circle. Distribute five note cards and a marker to each student. Say, **Think about what's most important in your life. Write one example of what's important to you on each**

of your five cards. Let students have time to think. Write some examples for yourself, including one card stating, *God's love*. Afterwards, say, **Now, suppose someone steals one of these important things from you. Give up one of your five cards.** Have the students place one of their five cards in a pile at the center. Invite students to share the impact of this loss. Continue, **Unfortunately, a natural disaster has occurred and you must give up another card.** Again, invite sharing. Do a third round with a fire and a fourth with an unforeseen accident. When finished, ask, **What do you have left in your life?**

Help students discover what is most important to each of them. Is it sports? Friends? Parents? Possessions? Talents? Ask, **Can even these be lost?** (Yes, through illness, accidents, death.) Like you, some students may have written *God's love*, which leads into the final discussion of the truth that only God's love lasts. Possessions, achievements, even people are not always available to us because they are not eternal like the true God.

Reflect on Romans 8:35–39. Ask, **What does this have to do with God's First Commandment?** Stress the awesomeness of God's promise: nothing will be able to separate us from God's love to us in Christ. His life, death, and resurrection provide a firm foundation for our life and priorities.

God above all

Theme

God designed humans and knows best how they "operate." When we foolishly ignore our Creator's commands, we damage ourselves. Such rebellion has eternal consequences, which God alone can repair through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Driver's Manual

Materials

Car owner's manual

Procedure (15 minutes)

Hold up the car manual and say, **Let's make a list of five rules that must be followed to avoid severely damaging a car.** You may do this in small groups or as a whole class. Write the rules down. For each rule, ask, **What happens to a car if you break this rule?** (Example: If you throw a car into reverse

while driving at 60 mph, you will damage the transmission.)

Now say, **Let's list five rules that you must follow to avoid severely damaging your soul.** Allow the students to ponder this suggestion. Write down the rules the students suggest. For each rule, ask, **What happens to a soul that breaks this rule?** Discuss the results of breaking rules.

Explain, **Just as a car owner's manual is a good and helpful tool for keeping a car running well, God's commandments are good and helpful for you. Jesus showed this by following God's commands in His life.** For each rule have the students suggest an example of how Jesus fulfilled God's commands. Conclude, **When sin shatters our lives, we can confess our sins to Jesus and receive His forgiveness through His death and resurrection. His Spirit will repair us through the Word.**

The First Article, Part A

I believe in God

Theme

The eternal nature of God is mysterious and beyond our understanding. However, God has revealed Himself to be one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

One in Three

Materials

Bible, ruler, note cards

Procedure (10 minutes)

Place a Bible on a table in another room or behind a curtain in the classroom. Prepare three note cards as follows:

(1) Measure how wide the book is and report the number to the class, saying, "I measured _____ inches (or centimeters)"; (2) Measure how long the book is and report it to the class, saying, "I measured _____ inches (or centimeters)"; and (3) Measure how deep the book is and report the number to the class, saying, "I measured _____ inches (or centimeters)." Tell the students not to reveal what they measured or how they measured it.

Give the three cards to three students and have them follow the directions. When all three students have reported their different measurements, ask the class, **What's going on? If they are measuring the same object, how did they come up with three different numbers?** Let the students offer explanations. Then reveal the Bible and say, **Because the volunteers measured three different faces of the one book, it sounded like they were describing three different books. In a similar way, some people are confused when the Bible talks about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They might assume that there are three different gods, when in fact there is only one God in three persons.**

The Father Almighty

The Apostles' Creed

Theme

On our own we cannot win God's favor, but God makes us winners through Christ.

Father May I?

Materials

Masking tape

Procedure (10 minutes)

Let every student play except the strongest person in the group. Begin by lining up the students parallel to a taped line on the floor that is about 5–6 yards away. Give the following directions:

- Take 1 giant step if you've never lied.
- Take 3 regular steps if you told someone "I love you" today.
- Take 1 baby step if you said please and thank you today.
- Go back to start if you said God's name in vain this week.
- Take 1 scissors step if you held your tongue instead of joining gossip or bad-mouthing today.
- Take 1 walking step if you said something kind to a teacher today.
- Return to start if you broke any of the Ten Commandments today.

Ask, **Why didn't any of you reach the finish line and win the game?** (Too hard.) Say, **Since none of you are winners, why did God pick you to be Christians?** Let students wrestle with this. Look at Jesus' words in John 15:16 to rule out any reliance on "deciding for Christ." Explain, **Because of our sin, none of us are winners in God's eyes. We can't earn His favor.** Now have the strongest person in the class carry one of the students piggy-back across the finish line. Explain, **This is what God has done for you. He makes you a winner through Christ!**

Introduction

Our true Father

Theme

When we lose perspective on the things of life, our heavenly Father knows how best to help us.

Father Over All

Materials

Paper, pencils or pens

Procedure (20 minutes)

Take the students outside with their paper and pencils/pens. Have them listen to and write down everything they hear. Compare the lists of things they have heard. Ask, **Did all of you hear the same things?** (There should be differences in the lists.) Say, **Each of us only picks up on a part of what is happening in the world around us. As a result, many things happen in our lives that we cannot fully understand. But God hears and sees, not just the things we have listed here, but everything in the entire universe from the most distant star to the electric impulses that make up your thoughts.** Ask the students how this makes them feel (safe? overwhelmed?). Say, **This is why we pray: we trust that God knows what's best for us and will help and guide us in our lives. God's gift of Jesus proves to us the extent of His love and care.**

Who art in heaven

Theme

Sometimes we mouth words in prayer, forgetting the One to whom we speak. By addressing God as "Our Father" in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus reminds us that we are intimately related to God.

Reading Between the Lines

Materials

Two bells (or clickers, buzzers, etc.)

Procedure (10 minutes)

Divide the class into two groups and have them set up two rows of chairs facing one another. Between the rows of chairs, put two bells on a table in the exact center. Address a question to the two team leaders. The leader who rings

his bell first has the opportunity to answer. If neither leader is sure of an answer, then the question automatically goes to one of the teams for a 30-second discussion (the next unanswered question should go to the second team; alternate the questions thereafter). Correct leader answers are worth two points. Correct team answers are worth one point. The goal is to state correctly the assumption behind each sentence. For example, the assumption behind "You're late" is that a specific time was set.

1. "Let's go." (There are at least two people going somewhere and one wants to go now.)
2. "Why don't you try this?" (The other person's attempts aren't working or someone has a new idea.)
3. "This is my friend John." (Someone is introducing John to a stranger or John is a friend rather than a brother, husband, or father.)
4. "That one is yours." (Something does not belong to the speaker.)
5. "Will you please help?" (The speaker can't do something or the speaker thinks the other's help will make a difference or the speaker is not in a position to order the other person.)
6. "Maybe later." (The speaker will not grant a request now or the speaker is indecisive.)
7. "Our Father." (This Father is connected/related to me and one or more persons.)
8. "Our Father who art in heaven." (Christians related to God by blood/adoption are addressing Him. The word "art" indicates an address rather than a sentence about God.)

Award treats to the team with the most points. Then begin your lesson from Luther's explanation.

The
Lord's
Prayer

Part A

Baptism is not just plain water

Theme

Because Baptism appears to be nothing but water and a few words, many see Baptism as mere symbolism. In contrast, God's Word teaches that the simple act of Baptism does the impossible—it provides God's grace for our forgiveness and salvation.

Mysteries

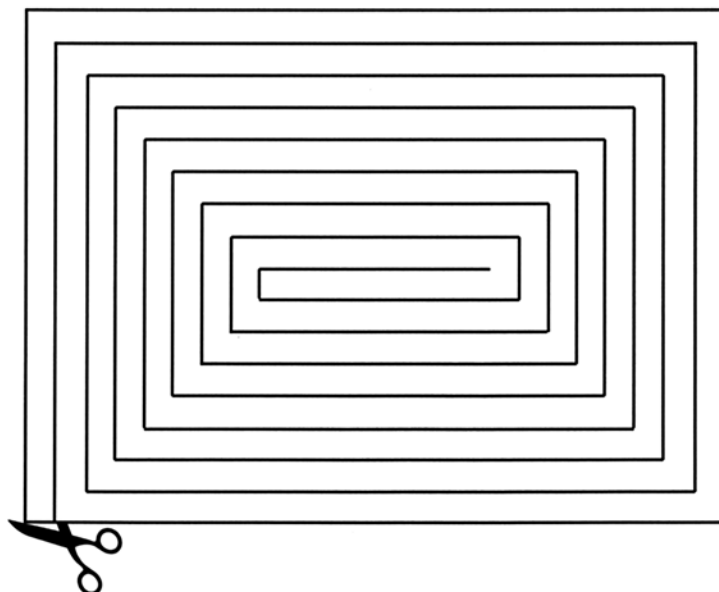
Materials

Squares of paper, scissors

Procedure (10 minutes)

Hold up a sheet of paper, curl it into a circle, and challenge the students, saying, **Is it possible for any of you to make this sheet of paper fit around your waist? How about fitting it**

around every member of the group? Give the students a moment to consider the problem. If none of them figure out the answer, hand out sheets of paper and scissors. Say, **Starting close to the edge of the paper, cut a square that ends in the center of the paper** (see diagram). If cut correctly, the line of paper should easily wrap around a small group of people. When finished, say, **At first this task seemed impossible. In Baptism God also does the impossible: He grants us His grace, forgives our sins, and pours out the Holy Spirit upon those who are being baptized, including infants. While it may seem impossible that God could do all that through simple water and words, nothing is impossible for God!**



Daily contrition

Theme

As time slips by in our busy lives, we may forget the blessings that God promised to us in our Baptism. Our heavenly Father invites us to remember our Baptism daily and receive its benefits.

I Believe

Materials

Baptism certificates, letter paper, stamped envelopes

Procedure (25 minutes)

Ahead of class, send home a note requesting that students bring in their Baptism certificates along with the names and addresses of their sponsors or witnesses.

During class have the students find the names of the witnesses on their Baptism certificates. Ask, **Why do we have witnesses at a Baptism?** (So we can be certain we were baptized because there were eyewitnesses. So that those who sponsor us can encourage us in the Christian faith.) **Do you know whether your sponsors pray for you? Have they helped you grow in faith?** Some may have received religious gifts. Perhaps others have had letters. Some may have no contact at all with their witnesses or sponsors.

Pass out letter paper. Separate the students so each one can write a letter to a baptismal sponsor or witness. Suggest that they conclude their letters by requesting prayer for a lasting faith and personal needs. Allow volunteers to share their words. Seal the envelopes and mail them from the church office.

Holy
Baptism