

Lutheranism 101

ALL ABOUT JESUS

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Leader Guide

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Lutheranism 101: **ALL ABOUT JESUS**

Chapter 1

There's a Reason It's Called "CHRISTianity"

Study Questions

1. What is the most important message and purpose of Christianity?

To save human beings from eternal damnation in hell by proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world whose perfect life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection won salvation and life eternally for the entire world.

2. What is the Hebrew word for *Messiah*, and what does it mean? Why is it an appropriate name for Jesus?

Mashiach, which means "anointed One." Jesus was specifically sent and "anointed" to be the world's Savior, hence the title Christ is used with Jesus' name, Jesus Christ.

3. What is the purpose of church?

To be a hospital for sin-sick and dying people, giving them new life in Christ Jesus.

4. There is a big difference between knowing facts from Scripture and trusting in the truths they reveal. Is one more important than the other? Explain.

You can know facts but not believe them to be actually true for you. Knowledge is one thing, trusting in what you know for your very salvation is quite another. That's why we are given saving trust in Christ by the Holy Spirit.

5. How do you know what is acceptable to God and what is not?

God's Law, perfectly summarized in the Ten Commandments, reveals what is pleasing to God.

6. In the Early Church, people were admitted to the church only after two or three years of rigorous instruction and training. Why? To what extent is this practice continued today?

They were being prepared to live in a world around them that was hostile to the teachings of the Christian faith and life. Today, we carefully instruct people coming to the church for the same purpose, to show them the way, truth, and life that is found only in Jesus Christ.

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Discussion Questions

1. Why have so many Christian denominations walked away from their confidence in the trustworthiness of the Bible? What are the dangers in doing so?

Because they have been persuaded by nonbiblical worldviews that the Bible can no longer be trusted to be God's actual Word, revealing His truth to us. The further away a church drifts from the authority of the Holy Scripture, the further away it drifts from genuine Christianity.

2. How does the fact that you are made a child of God by grace through faith in Christ shape the way you live your life? What evidence is there that you are a child of God?

The Bible says we are made into "new creations." While we always will continue to struggle with sin and temptation, we are set on a path of freedom and forgiveness in Jesus. As a result, we strive to live according to His ways.

3. How can you respond to the claim that "God reveals Himself in many different ways, and all that really matters is whether you're a good person"?

No one can ever be "good enough" to deserve God's love and mercy. This is only made possible by the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. God is love, and in Jesus, that love is poured into our lives making us into the kind of "good" persons who are so only by the undeserved mercy of God in Christ.

4. The truths of Christ do not rest on the foundation of human feeling, emotion, or opinion. If that is the case, then why is it so easy for Christians to fall prey to their feelings, emotions, and opinions when it comes to their faith?

Christianity does not somehow magically remove all the temptations we feel. We struggle with them our whole lives and perhaps no better example is allowing ourselves to be guided by our human feelings and emotions. Instead, we look to the rock-certain promises of God's Word that are ours through Jesus Christ.

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Chapter 2

There Are Only Two Religions in the World

Study Questions

1. What are the dangers of the “coexist” movement? On the other hand, how are Christians to coexist with everyone around them?

Peacefully living where God places us in life is what God expects of us. That means we are tolerant of other points of views without agreeing with them. However, the “coexist” sticker reflects a widely held belief that does not simply advocate tolerance and peaceful coexistence; it advocates a belief that all religions are equally true and that one should not assume any particular religion is true while others are false.

2. Without knowing Jesus, what three conclusions do people ultimately believe about God?

(1) He must be angry at us to allow bad things to happen. (2) He must be far removed from us. (3) He must be entirely incapable of being known and His will toward us will remain forever a mystery.

3. As we come to know Jesus, what do we come to know about God?

God is love and cares so deeply for His creation that He sent His Son into our world to save and redeem us from sin, death, and hell.

4. What is the religion of man’s making? Why is it so popular?

The religion of man’s making is one in which human beings search for God, reach out to Him, try to maintain a relationship with Him, and seek to win His favor by their good works. A religion based on the belief that we are able to earn and win God’s love through our works, or that we can basically “buy” our way into God’s good graces, is the world’s most popular religion because it appeals to the human sense of what is “fair” and what “just makes sense.”

5. What is the main difference between Christianity and the religion of works and the Law?

Christianity is all about God making the first move toward us and continuing always to be the chief actor, the one who pursues fallen humanity relentlessly, even to the point of sacrificing His own Son, Jesus Christ, to save the world.

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Discussion Questions

1. Why do so many people, including Christians, believe that Christianity is mostly about trying to do more good than bad—that it's a system of morals and ethics, behaviors and lifestyles, and personal choices? Where does that belief come from?

Because all human beings are born as sinners, there is within them an opinion that they are judged by a law-based system of earning both God's favor and other people's love and affection. Religion becomes chiefly for them a system of morals and ethics. Christians also fall into this trap when they lose sight of the fact that Christ Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

2. What do you think attracts people to religions other than Christianity such as Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism?

People look for meaning in a world that can be very confusing. These meanings can seem to be found either in a myriad of different gods; in a sense of the "divine" as in Hinduism; or in a remote, stern, judging, and demanding rule-giver as Islam regards their god, Allah.

3. What does it mean to be "in" the world but not "of" the world?

Obviously, we live and exist in this world and cannot try to escape it (nor would we want to). But if we are "of" the world in the sense of being totally absorbed by trying to seek only earthly riches, popularity, and acceptance, then we are neglecting the greater calling God has for us in Jesus Christ: to live lives marked by love toward God and love toward our neighbor, in grateful response to the salvation God gives us in Christ.

4. Why are Christians who claim that Jesus is the only way to heaven often ridiculed and mocked, even persecuted and killed? How prepared are you to defend your Christian faith in the face of persecution?

In our culture today, ironically not unlike that of the first Christians, you can basically believe just about anything you want, or nothing at all. But the one thing that is held in contempt, and often open hostility, is the claim that there is only one way to the Father, and that is through His Son, Jesus Christ. This "radical exclusiveness" runs entirely contrary to popular opinion throughout most "advanced" societies, which trumpet the virtues of inclusion to the point of excluding anyone who holds firmly to his or her Christian faith.

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Chapter 3

What's in a Name?

Study Questions

1. What is the Trinity? Why is the Trinity so central to Christianity?

The word Trinity means “Three in One.” It is how we describe how God has revealed Himself, one God in three persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We cherish God’s self-revelation, and it is at the center of the Christian faith.

2. In Old Testament times, what was the significance of being anointed with oil? How is this practice continued today?

When a person was set apart for a special purpose in the time of the Old Testament, he was anointed with oil by God’s prophet. Even to this day, in some churches, oil is applied to a newly baptized person or one ordained to the ministry of the Church.

3. Read Philippians 2:9–11. What is Paul really saying when He says “Jesus Christ is Lord”? Why would this have been shocking to the religious leaders with whom he was speaking?

Paul is affirming the reality that Jesus Christ is none other than the one true God revealed throughout the Scriptures and across the centuries. For religious leaders of his day, it would have been scandalous for anyone to claim to be God or to describe another person as God. But this is precisely who and what Jesus is!

4. List the various titles for Jesus you learned about in this chapter. How do these titles express the meaning of His life and work?

(1) Jesus Christ identifies Him as one set apart by God to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies of a Savior. (2) Redeemer identifies Him as the one who redeemed the world from sin, paying for our sins with His perfect life and innocent suffering and death. (3) Son of the Living God identifies Him as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. (4) Son of Man identifies Him as the ultimate firstborn of all creation. (5) The Word identifies Him as the ultimate and full revelation of who God is and what He means for us and does for us.

5. When you say, “I believe in Jesus Christ,” what are you really saying?

That I believe that the man, Jesus of Nazareth, is the Anointed One of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, my Savior.

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6. Draw the Chi-Rho, complete with the Greek letters that are often included with this symbol. Label each part and explain its meaning. As a whole, what is the significance of this symbol?

It is a beautiful reminder that Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One, the one appointed by His Father to be the world's Redeemer.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the meaning of your name? What importance does your name hold for you?

Answers will vary.

2. The name God revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14 (I AM WHO I AM, transliterated as YHWH and articulated as *Yahweh*) was regarded as so holy that it could not be spoken by human beings. Yet, Jesus horrified the religious leaders listening to Him when He said of Himself, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58). Jesus specifically used the holy name of God, the great "I AM" and told them that He, Jesus of Nazareth, was the great Lord of lords and King of kings. What other things or teachings did Jesus say during His earthly ministry that would horrify people today, perhaps even including some Christian leaders?

Jesus made sweeping claims that only the one true God could possibly make, such as "I am the light of the world," "I am the bread of life," "I am the Good Shepherd," "I am the Resurrection and the Life," and "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

3. Read Exodus 20:1–7. What is the Second Commandment? Why do you think God made this commandment second only to "You shall have no other gods before Me"? (See *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* pp. 61–67 for an explanation of the Second Commandment.)

"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God." To misuse the name of God is to misuse the very person of God Himself. He is holy, and the name by which He reveals Himself to us is to be treated at all times with the great dignity and respect it deserves. To invoke that name in any effort to do harm to others or to use it lightly is a grave and most serious sin against God's holiness.

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Chapter 4

Prophet, Priest, and King: Jesus Is All Three

Study Questions

1. What is a prophet? Are there prophets among us today? Explain.

People often confuse “prophet” with “fortune-teller.” Prophets sent from God preached His Word to His people and told them what God wanted them to know and believe. Today, we have preachers sent to proclaim the great things God has done.

2. Jesus is the great High Priest. How does He differ from the Old Testament priests?

Unlike the Old Testament high priests, Jesus offered up the last, final, and ultimate sacrifice for the sins of the world: Himself.

3. What are three main differences between Jesus, our King, and earthly kings? Looking at your list of differences, why do you think people wanted to make Jesus an earthly king? (See, for example, John 6:1–2, 10–15.)

Earthly kings have only limited and time-bound authority; Christ has all authority for all eternity. Earthly kings are limited in what they can actually do; Jesus has all power to do everything He wants to do. Earthly kings have no ability to effect eternity; Jesus is the King who leads us into an eternity with God in heaven. The people in Jesus’ day often confused Jesus with an earthly ruler and wanted Him to keep giving them bread and to free them from Roman rule.

4. What was the purpose of the mercy seat?

It was the place where once a year the priest would bring the blood of a perfect lamb as a symbolic way of prefiguring the shed blood of the last and final sacrifice for all sins: Jesus.

5. What was placed underneath the mercy seat? Why?

The ark of the covenant, which contained a copy of the Ten Commandments and other sacred objects. It served as a visible reminder and symbol of God’s presence with His people.

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Discussion Questions

1. Read Exodus 25:1–9. Why were the Israelites told to build the Tabernacle? Today, what do Christians have instead of the Tabernacle?

God wanted His people to have among them a visible sign of His presence at all times. Today, the Church has the Word and Sacraments given as the very means by which God continues to be present among us to forgive and strengthen us.

2. Christ cautions anyone who thinks that following Him is a way to avoid trouble, hardship, or persecution. What type of hardships do you face as a Christian?

Ask participants to think about hardships that are specifically the result of people being aware they are a Christian.

3. Why is it imperative that Christian pastors and teachers faithfully preach the Word of God?

To do anything less is to be unfaithful to their calling and is a grave disservice to the people among whom God sends them to preach and teach His Word. The Word of God is the very power of salvation by which the Holy Spirit convicts people of their sin and shows them their Savior.

4. In Jesus' time, people wanted Him to be an earthly king, a powerful leader who had come to rescue them from oppressive leaders and corrupt and ineffective leadership. They often misunderstood His mission. Why is it important for Christians today to have a clear understanding of who Jesus is, especially when it comes to matters of church and state?

Some Christians confuse the difference between how God rules and governs the world and how He rules and governs in the Church. The Church has no mission to try to create a new "kingdom of God" on earth, but to proclaim the kingdom that is not of this world.

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Chapter 5

**The Greatest Mystery
and Miracle of the
Christian Faith:
The Two Natures
in Christ**

Study Questions

1. People often struggle in their attempt to explain the mysteries of the Christian faith, including the two natures in Christ. What comes to mind when you hear the phrase *mystery of the faith*?

Answers will vary. Some people will be uncomfortable with the thought of “mystery” in association with Christianity.

2. When the Bible was translated from Greek to Latin, the Greek word for *mystery* was rendered with the Latin word *sacramentum*. In the Roman world, what did this Latin word mean?

A solemn oath or promise, a mark or sign of a sacred action undertaken in service to a deity. Christians came to speak of God’s sacred actions toward us as sacramenta or mysteries. Hence the word Sacraments.

3. How does the meaning of this Latin word change the way you think about the phrase *mystery of the faith*?

Answers will vary.

4. What was Thomas’s reaction when he finally saw the risen Lord with his own eyes? Why was his response so shocking to the other Jews standing around him?

He blurted out, “My Lord and my God!”—one of the most poignant and clear confessions of faith that Jesus is not simply a “miracle-working man” but very God of very God, as we say in one of our creeds.

5. Jesus is both true God and true Man. Fill out the chart using what you’ve learned in this chapter.

Qualities & Characteristics of God	Things Only God Can Do	Jesus’ Human Qualities
<i>eternal</i>	<i>perform miracles</i>	<i>hungered</i>
<i>unchanging</i>	<i>forgive sins</i>	<i>wept</i>
<i>all-powerful (omnipotent)</i>	<i>create</i>	<i>thirsted</i>
<i>all-knowing (omniscient)</i>	<i>judge</i>	<i>suffered</i>
<i>present everywhere (omnipresent)</i>	<i>receive honor and glory</i>	<i>died</i>
		<i>was tempted</i>

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Discussion Questions

1. What does the word *blasphemy* mean? What are some examples of blasphemy that are common in our culture today?

The word comes to us from the Greek word blasphemia, which indicates a slander or lie. Therefore, to blaspheme is to use the name of God in a way it should never be used, and thus, to lie about the person and nature of God. To use His name in a profane manner is to misuse the holy name.

2. Upon meeting the woman at the well, Jesus instantly diagnosed her spiritual condition (John 4:17–18). If Jesus were to meet you at the well, what do you think He would say?

Lead the conversation to a personal application of Law and Gospel. Students may well be reticent to articulate what specific sins trouble them the most, but underscore that the Lord knows of these sins, even as He knew the sin of the woman at the well. Encourage them to be honest with themselves and then to rejoice in the “living water” of life Jesus gives through the Gospel.

3. If only God has the power to forgive sins, then what are you doing when you forgive others?

When we speak the forgiving word of the Goods News of Jesus, we are not simply offering an assurance of our own opinion or personal feelings about forgiveness, we are delivering the actual life-giving, life-changing, and sin-forgiving proclamation of God’s mercy in Christ. The Gospel is always a forgiving word of Good News.

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Chapter 6

**The Essential Nature
of Jesus' Two Natures**

Study Questions

1. Why is it absolutely necessary that Jesus is both true God *and* true man?

Only God was able to provide a perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. Only a man would be able to identify in every way with us and take on the sins of the world in human flesh. Only God united to human flesh is able to offer a propitiating offering acceptable and pleasing to a holy and righteous God.

2. Lambs are infamously known to be helpless creatures. But Jesus is often called the “Lamb of God.” Why is this an appropriate name for the all-knowing, all-powerful Savior of the world?

In the Old Testament, once a year, on the Day of Atonement, a perfect lamb was offered as a sacrifice before God for the sins of the people. This foreshadowed the perfect offering of the innocent Son of God, the one and final sacrifice, to which all Old Testament sacrifices pointed.

3. Read 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 and dwell on the word *price*. What is Paul making sure you understand? What does it mean to “glorify God in your body”?

We were purchased at great cost, nothing less than the perfect life and innocent suffering and death of the Son of God who poured out His life-blood as a ransom for us. We therefore honor, thank, and praise God, who sacrificed His own dear Son, by using our flesh in such a way that we bring glory to God.

4. The Bible doesn’t necessarily offer answers to every question you have. Why is that okay? What happens when you make speculations that aren’t necessarily based on God’s Word?

The Bible is not, as some people think, an “answer book” for every possible question we may have. To view it that way is to turn it into a sort of “magical book” of answers. It is, however, the revelation of God’s great love for humanity in the person of His Son. It provides guidance and direction for our lives and points us always to consider all actions in light of what will be the best way to thank and praise, serve and obey God. When we merely speculate on what has not clearly been revealed, we can run off the road into a ditch.

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5. What was the most significant heresy in the Early Church concerning Christ? What did those who held this view believe? Why is it false? (p. 85)

Arianism led many astray and caused them to think that Jesus was somehow a "lesser" God than the Father and that there was a time when the Second Person of the Trinity did not exist. The Bible, however, makes it clear that the three persons of the Trinity have always existed in perfect harmony, interrelating to one another in a deep bond of love and affection.

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Discussion Questions

1. In the Middle Ages, Luther disagreed with many teachings of the Roman Church, and so he posted his Ninety-Five Theses on the front doors of the local church—a common practice in Luther’s time to start a discussion. Today, how can you respectfully disagree with teachings contrary to Scripture? What forums are available to you that are most conducive to healthy debate and discourse? Then, consider this: how prepared are you to defend your beliefs?

In our social-media saturated culture, where it seems that rude, obnoxious, and mean-spirited behaviors are the norm, we Christians must recall the Bible’s direction that we are to speak the truth in love (see Ephesians 4:15). This does not mean that we are to remain silent, but it does mean that when we do speak, we should do so out of love and concern for those who are in error or are confused. We remember that the “anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (James 1:20), and so we are to watch carefully that our motivation when we speak the truth is not simply to score debating points out of anger.

2. Think about the temptations Jesus faced during His life on earth. He went without food for several weeks when He easily could have turned a stone into bread. He was beaten, spat on, and crucified. He could have rejected those men, refused to love them. But He didn’t. Rather, He asked His father to forgive them. Jesus displayed perfect obedience. Think about your greatest temptations. How quickly do you succumb to them? On the other hand, how do you resist the devil’s schemes and temptations?

Participants may wish to share specific temptations or speak in generalities about them. It is better to focus on how to resist such temptations rather than dwelling on failures to resist temptations. Guide the discussion into remaining close to Christ through His Means of Grace and asking for strength through prayer. Ignoring temptations does not mean they will simply “disappear.”

3. Read Matthew 24:5. What warning does Jesus give to His disciples? How is this warning relevant to Christians today?

Then and now there were imposters who came, sounding like they were properly teaching about Jesus, sometimes even claiming to be Christ. But in the end, their message went contrary to the apostolic Scriptures of the New Testament. As Paul warns in Galatians 1, we are to carefully watch that we are not misled by false teachers preaching a perverted “Gospel” that actually is no Gospel.

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4. Why is it important for you to understand the foundational teachings of Scripture instead of leaving such discussions and study to the theologians?

While we thank God for faithful pastors and learned theologians who help us understand the Bible more clearly, we must never think for a single moment that such learning and understanding is simply left to the "professionals." Each Christian is obligated faithfully to learn the "basics" and then remain faithful to them. That is why the Small Catechism is such a foundationally important resource for every Christian.

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Chapter 7

The State of Humiliation

Study Questions

1. What are the six ladder-like components of Christ's humiliation?

(1) Conceived by the Holy Spirit, (2) born of the Virgin Mary, (3) suffered under Pontius Pilate, (4) was crucified, (5) died, (6) and was buried.

2. When thinking about Christ's humiliation, why is it important to separate His conception from His birth?

This one-of-a-kind birth signaled the fact that this child was no mere "super human" but God with us, Immanuel, for our salvation.

3. John 19:1 says, "Pilate took Jesus and flogged Him." Why did Pilate do this, if, earlier, he said, "I find no guilt in Him" (18:38)?

Pilate was trying to appease the angry Jewish mob that was being whipped into a frenzy by the Jewish religious leaders who rejected Christ's claim to be the Son of God.

4. Read Matthew 27:46. Did God truly forsake Jesus? Why or why not? Does God ever forsake you? Explain.

The human nature of Christ experienced a deep forsakenness by God, so, according to His human nature, yes, He was forsaken by God as He bore the enormity of the world's sin while hanging and suffering on the cross. Because of this act of sacrifice, now God will never leave us nor forsake us.

5. What is the significance of John 19:30, "He bowed His head and gave up His spirit"?

There was a real human death involved in the sacrifice that Christ offered of Himself on the cross; it was not "imaginary" nor "only seemed like He died." No, indeed, according to His human nature, Christ did die.

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Discussion Questions

1. What kind of relationship do you think Mary and Jesus had? Read John 19:25–27. What do Jesus' actions say about His feelings toward His mother?

Jesus demonstrated great care and concern for His mother, who truly is the mother of God in the person of Christ according to His human nature. Jesus held her in high regard and deeply loved and cared for her. So also the Church continues to honor and respect Mary, and most important, does what Mary told people in Jesus' time: "Whatever He tells you, do!"

2. Liberal Christianity has embraced a rationalistic and naturalist view of all things, deeming anything in conflict with such views to be impossible, myth, or mere fantasy. What is the danger in adopting these liberal points of view?

Picking and choosing from the Bible what "makes sense" and assuming one can reject the miraculous while retaining genuine Christian faith and belief is foolhardy and removes a person further and further away from who Christ actually is and what He has actually done.

3. Read John 19:1–3. God permitted His Son, according to His human nature, to take on the punishment of every sin of every human being, including you. Read John 19:1–3 again; this time, put yourself among those who crucified Jesus: "I took Jesus and flogged Him. And I twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head and arrayed Him in a purple robe. I went up to Him, saying, 'Hail, king of the Jews!' and struck Him with my hands." How does rereading the verse in this way impact your understanding of God's immense love for you?

We sometimes hear people say, "But I did not crucify Jesus!" While it is true in a certain sense, that you, personally, physically did not pound in the nails that held Him on the cross, the fact is that your sins were responsible for His death, and in fact, we can think vividly of those sins contributing to every aspect of Christ's suffering and death. Our sins damn us, and our sins were the reason Christ went through everything He did. Consider, then, the enormity of the love and mercy that causes Him to take pity on us and the whole world.

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Chapter 8

Christ's Work of Redemption and Atonement

Study Questions

1. Read Exodus 12:7–13; 24:5–8; Matthew 26:26–29. What is the significance of blood in these passages?

The event of the first Passover symbolized that only through blood would come salvation, and in Christ this prophetic action was fulfilled as the God-man poured out His blood for the world's redemption and as payment for its sins.

2. What does it mean to be a slave to sin? See Romans 6:20. What hope do you have of being freed from your sin?

According to the old human nature that we are stuck with until the day we die, we are slaves to sin, and were it not for being forgiven and made free in Christ, that slavery would result in our eternal death and damnation in hell. But in Christ we are called to be, and are made, new creations, set free from the power of sin.

3. What happens in Holy Baptism?

We are promised by God that what Jesus did for us on the cross is ours personally. We are baptized into His death and raised to new life in Him, even as He Himself was raised to live from the grave. God puts His name on us and we are made part of His family—forgiven, redeemed, sanctified, and empowered to live for Him, now and forever in heaven.

4. How do you receive the benefits of Christ's saving work in His death and resurrection?

We refer to how God works through His Word and the visible elements of water, bread, and wine in the Sacraments as "Means of Grace." That is, through these means, God is applying personally to you what Christ did in your place: He lived a perfect life in obedience to God's Holy Law, offered up Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins, and then was raised victorious over death, so we, too, have a share in that resurrection victory.

5. What is the purpose of Lent?

Lent is an ancient period of forty days that the Church sets aside as a time of focus and preparation for the observance of Holy Week, the highest and holiest time in the year, in which the Church observes and remembers the last events in the earthly life of Christ. Lent invites us to consider why our Lord suffered and died for us, and it is often marked by fasting, self-denial, the giving of money to the poor, and other acts of additional prayer and meditation on God's Word.

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Discussion Questions

1. What consequences of sin do you see in the world and in your own life? What consequences of Christ's payment for your sin do you see in the world and in your own life?

Participants may or may not be willing to be specific, but should be guided to think intentionally, perhaps silently, and then be invited to reflect aloud on how the forgiveness of sins shapes their view of themselves, their Lord, and the world around them.

2. Dwell on this fact: You are the reason God's Son, Jesus Christ, humbled Himself and became man. Why did He do this? What does the truth of that statement mean to you?

At this point, it would be appropriate to use a suitable hymn to ponder and meditate on that brings keen focus on the suffering and death of Christ. Invite students to share their reactions and feelings about the death of Jesus.

3. Many Christians believe their Baptism is an act they make either for Jesus or as a profession of their faith. How does the Lutheran understanding of Baptism differ? How is Christ's death and resurrection linked to Holy Baptism?

Conversation should be guided to a discussion of the objective nature of God's work through the Means of Grace, which frees us from thinking that God's grace is contingent upon how we may, or may not, feel at any given day or time in our life. Turn to Romans 6 and read how Paul describes our resurrection as being buried with Christ and then raised with Him.

4. As a Christian, you have received the most precious treasure on earth: the Gospel of forgiveness. If you have received such a wonderful gift, why is it so hard to share it with others? Think of a time when you felt you could never forgive someone.

Encourage students to consider what causes them to remain silent when they could speak about their faith and to consider the challenges they need to overcome within themselves when it comes to telling others about Jesus. Similarly, invite participants to consider those times when they find it difficult to forgive and then to reflect on how God forgives them.

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Lutheranism 101: **ALL ABOUT JESUS**

Chapter 9

The State of Exaltation

Study Questions

1. Why is Jesus' resurrection key to the entire Christian faith?

Without the resurrection of Christ, His death would simply have been a death, but because He left the tomb alive, in all glory, Christ's resurrection is the public certification that all that was done on the cross was accepted by God. In effect, the resurrection is God's proclamation of absolution of the sins of the world.

2. What four things does the resurrection prove?

A. That Christ is the Son of God (Romans 1:4).

B. That Jesus' teachings are all true (John 8:28).

C. That the Father accepted His Son's sacrifice (Romans 4:25).

D. That all believers will be raised on the last day to eternal life (John 14:19).

3. Why are these four things important to know and understand?

These four points are the very heart of what Christianity is all about. Without these realities, Christianity would be simply another choice of many ways to live a good life here on earth, but it would provide no solution to the problem of sin and evil in our lives and in the world around us.

4. Why did God the Father send the Holy Spirit to His people? What unique work does this third member of the Trinity do?

The Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity responsible for transmitting to each of us the realities of what Christ has won for us. He creates and sustains faith in us and keeps us steadfast in the true faith, through the Means of Grace by which He operates.

5. What does God tell us to expect before the return of Christ? See Matthew 24.

We can expect times of particularly acute persecution of the Church as well as unique signs in nature of Christ's immanent return. While the world will react in terror, we should remain vigilant and watchful, praying for strength to endure these times.

6. If such events are not new to us today, what is their purpose?

All such events should make us realize that this world and everything in it is passing away, so that we do not allow the cares and troubles of life to so weigh us down that we take our eyes off of the great salvation that is ours in Christ.

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Discussion Questions

1. Read Acts 1:6–11. Pretend you are Luke on the day of Jesus' ascension into heaven. What thoughts would be circling inside of your head?

Doubt. Fear. Uncertainty. Excitement. Terror. Worry. Confusion. Joy. Hope. Peace.

2. What does Jesus warn His followers about in John 16:1–4? How can we take comfort in the face of trouble and hardship that come our way because of our faith?

Jesus is very clear that being a Christian is not a way to assure yourself of a trouble-free life. In fact, precisely because we are Christians, we can expect there to be persecution in various forms. But we can remain confident and secure knowing that God will provide strength to see us through any circumstance we encounter as Christ's followers.

3. Non-Christians and even some Christians do not believe in hell or in a God who claims to be loving but also allows people to go to hell. How do we reconcile a loving God with the reality of hell?

God is a God of pure holiness, righteousness, and justice, not some sort of doting old man who merely chuckles over His children's mistakes. As much as we must always emphasize the love and mercy of God, we dare not neglect to preach God's utter and complete holiness and perfection and His demands for perfection and holiness. We should be thankful that rather than receiving what we each deserve, rightly so, God has chosen to forgive us through His Son, Jesus Christ.

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