

DYING TO LIVE

Second Edition

The Foundation, Focus, and Shape of the Christian Life

HAROLD L. SENKBEIL

A STUDY GUIDE

by John T. Pless



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Preface

Catechesis is the transmission of the Word of God from mouth to ear so that it lodges in the heart, bringing forth confession with the lips and forming lives that are lived under the cross of Jesus Christ. *Dying to Live* is a text for catechesis as the author works with the incarnational foundation, sacramental focus, and liturgical shape of the Christian life. The catechesis that Pastor Senkbeil provides is dependent on three books: the Holy Scriptures, the Small Catechism, and the hymnal. Doctrine is drawn from the sacred Scriptures, confessed in the Small Catechism, and expressed doxologically in the hymnal.

This study guide is intended to be something of a road map to the journey that Pastor Senkbeil proposes. It may be used to facilitate the discussion of *Dying to Live* in Bible study groups or as a guide for personal study. In whatever format it is used, it will have achieved its purpose if it is of assistance in helping the reader grow in the grace and knowledge of Him who is both the Son of God and Mary's Son.

This study guide was originally prepared for use at "Table Talk," a weekly Bible study at University Lutheran Chapel in Minneapolis during the 1992–93 academic year. The insights, reactions, and questions of the students who participated in these sessions sharpened and refined the study guide. We hope that it will be a worthy companion to *Dying to Live: The Foundation, Focus, and Shape of the Christian Life*.

John T. Pless
Thursday in the Week of Laetare 1994

Editor's Note

This edition was updated to coincide with the release of the second edition of *Dying to Live*. Page numbers reference the second edition.

CHAPTER 1

OUR DYING WORLD

- 1. Read Genesis 3:1–19. Trace the progress from Eve’s initial *doubt* of God’s Word of Life to God’s sentence of death. How did Eve exchange the truth of God for a lie? Note Luther’s comment from the Smalcald Articles: “All this is the old devil and serpent [Revelation 12:9], who also turned Adam and Eve into enthusiasts. He led them away from God’s outward Word to spiritualizing and self-pride [Genesis 3:2–5]. And yet, he did this through other outward words” (III VIII 5).

- 2. In Genesis 1, we note that God pronounces a benediction, “it was good,” over each part of His creation. Luther’s explanation of the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed is a robust and vibrant confession of the goodness of creation. God’s good creation is warped and twisted by sin, yet the created world in and of itself is not evil. Give examples of unbiblical views of sin that understand creation as something sinful or evil. Also see 1 Timothy 4:1–5.

- 3. Read Matthew 15:11, 17–19. Where does our Lord locate the problem of human sinfulness? How do the following passages help us to understand the force of our Lord’s words?

Genesis 6:5 _____

Jeremiah 17:9–10 _____

Psalm 51:5–6

The Augsburg Confession states, “Our churches teach that since the fall of Adam [Romans 5:12], all who are naturally born are born with sin [Psalm 51:5], that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with the inclination to sin” (II 1). In light of the Scripture passages we have just examined, how does the Augsburg Confession express the radical (i.e., “root”) nature of our sinfulness? Which comes first, sin or sins? See Romans 5:12.

4. How does the biblical doctrine of sin help the church in addressing the social crisis of our day without falling into the trap of “moralism”?
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5. In his explanation to the First Commandment in the Large Catechism, Luther writes, “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” (Part I, paragraph 2). If we are not “godless,” as Luther and Senkbeil contend, then what is the real problem?
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6. Read the story of the rich young ruler in Mark 10:17–27. How does the Lord use the First Commandment to unmask the false god that dominates this man’s life? Do you see any implications here for the way in which we approach evangelism?
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7. Senkbeil says that we “live in a ‘me-first’ era” (p. 24). Luther spoke of the posture of sin as “being curved in on oneself.” How does sin “bend us out of shape” both in our relationship to God and in our relationship to our neighbors?

8. Eugene Peterson says, “Ecclesiastes is a John the Baptist kind of book. It functions not as a meal but as a bath. It is not nourishment; it is cleansing. It is repentance. It is purging. The pastor reads Ecclesiastes to get scrubbed clean from illusion and sentiment, from ideas that are idolatrous and feelings that cloy” (*Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work* [Eerdmans, 1992], 155). How does Ecclesiastes 1:14; 2:10–11 function to purge us from the illusions of “our cyberspace toyland” (Senkbeil, p. 24)?

9. Recall our reading of Genesis 3:1–19. How does this text interpret our division from our fellow human beings (i.e., our loneliness)? our difficulty with work? our death?

10. Read Romans 1:18–32. How does God make His wrath against sin manifest?

11. God’s wrath spells death to the sinner. Yet in the midst of this dying world, the Lord of Life comes to give us life through His death and resurrection. Note how the apostle John describes our Lord’s life-giving presence and work:

John 1:1–3 _____

John 6:63 _____

John 10:10 _____

John 20:30–31 _____

1 John 1:1–4 _____

1 John 4:9–16 _____

1 John 5:4–12 _____

CHAPTER 2

OUR LIVING LORD

1. The Jewish philosopher Ernest Becker wrote a book entitled *The Denial of Death* (The Free Press, 1973) in which he describes human beings' futile attempts to escape death by denying its reality and finality. How do you see people attempting to avoid the reality that, as Senkbeil puts it, "all our lives are lived graveside" (p. 35)?

2. How does God's "personal appearance in this dying world" (p. 36) clash with our view of reality? See 1 Corinthians 1:18–25.

3. Read 1 Kings 8:27–30, part of the liturgy of the dedication of the temple. How did God make His presence manifest in a visible, earthly way in the temple? How was the temple fulfilled in the incarnation of the Son of God? See John 1:14; 2:14–22.

4. Commenting on John 6:46, Luther writes:

Consequently, when Christ speaks thus of the Father, do not flutter about, do not run away, do not seek God in heaven while you ignore this Man Christ. Outside this Man Christ I must not search for God, and I will find no God. If I do find one, it will not be the true and the right God, but a wrathful one. Thus the Father draws us to the Son by His mouth, His doctrine, and His Word. The doctrine passes from the Father through the Son, and at the same time He thereby draws us to the Son. And when you have Him, you are grasping the very Son of God; and then you see and grasp God the Father Himself. The entire Holy Trinity is

known in the Person of Christ. If we come to the Son, we are at the same time with the Father. He who sees the Person born of the Virgin Mary also sees the Son of God, for the Father places the Son's Word and Person before you. This includes all, so that all comes to rest in that Person, lest anyone conceive of God otherwise. Whenever this Person speaks, whenever you hear the Son's Word and voice, it is God the Father's voice that speaks and proclaims that the Son was sent into the world for you, suffered and died, etc. With this message He delights your heart and leads you only to Christ. (*Luther's Works* 23:89)

The religious leaders of Jesus' day thought such talk to be sacrilege. This truth fares no better today. Why?

5. Read the Christmas accounts from Matthew 1:18–25 and Luke 2:1–20, noting that Matthew narrates the birth of our Lord with an eye on Joseph, while Luke tells the story with a focus on Mary. How do both evangelists accent the fact of the incarnation?

6. Hermann Sasse writes:

With the confession that Jesus is *kyrios* ["Lord"] the Christian faith is marked off from all surrounding religions. The confession that Jesus is the Christ just may have been possible among the Jews. . . . But the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord brought the irreparable separation of synagogue and church. (*We Confess: Jesus Christ*, 12)

What is being confessed when Jesus Christ is called "Lord"?

7. According to Colossians 2:9, how would you describe “the deepest mystery and most profound reality that ever occurred in this world of ours” (p. 41)? Note the explanation of this passage given in the Formula of Concord:

This is what we hold and teach, in conformity with the ancient orthodox Church, as it has explained this teaching from the Scriptures: the human nature in Christ has received this majesty through the personal union. This happened because the entire fullness of the divinity dwells in Christ [Colossians 2:9], not as in other holy men or angels, but bodily, as in its own body. The divinity shines forth with all its majesty, power, glory, and effectiveness in the received human nature. It does this voluntarily when and as Christ wills. (Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord, Article VIII, paragraph 64)

8. What does Jesus give for the life of the world? See John 6:47–51.

9. The prophet Isaiah writes, “Truly, You are a God who hides Himself, O God of Israel, the Savior” (45:15). How does God hide Himself in the flesh of Jesus? In this “hiddenness,” what does He reveal?

10. How is the word *mystery* used in Daniel 2:19? Paul often uses the word *mystery* in connection with the Gospel. For example, Paul uses this word four times in the epistle to the Colossians (1:26–27; 2:2; 4:3). What is the content of this mystery? How does God make it known?

11. What are the “mysteries of God” in 1 Corinthians 4:1? How are these mysteries “tangible links with eternity” (p. 46)?

12. How is Jesus’ Baptism in the Jordan connected with His death? See Matthew 3:13–17; 1 John 5:6–8; John 19:33–34. How does Exodus 14 shed light on Jesus’ Baptism? How do Zechariah 12:10–13:1 and Ezekiel 47:1–12 help us understand Jesus’ death?

CHAPTER 3

OUR DEATH/HIS CROSS

1. Compare Philippians 2:5–11 with the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed and its explanation in the Small Catechism. How do both the Philippians passage and the catechism emphasize that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh? How do both speak of Jesus' saving work?

2. Read Matthew 2:1–12. How is the kingship of Jesus made manifest in contrast to earthly monarchs like Herod? Also see John 18:33–37; 19:19.

3. In the Large Catechism, Martin Luther describes redemption in these words:

For when we had been created by God the Father and had received from Him all kinds of good, the devil came and led us into disobedience, sin, death, and all evil [Genesis 3]. So we fell under God's wrath and displeasure and were doomed to eternal damnation, just as we had merited and deserved. There was no counsel, help, or comfort until this only and eternal Son of God—in His immeasurable goodness—had compassion upon our misery and wretchedness. He came from heaven to help us [John 1:9]. So those tyrants and jailers are all expelled now. In their place has come Jesus Christ, Lord of life, righteousness, every blessing, and salvation. He has delivered us poor, lost people from hell's jaws, has won us, has made us free [Romans 8:1–2], and has brought us again into the Father's favor and grace. He has taken us as His own property under His shelter and protection [Psalm 61:3–4] so that He may govern us by His righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and blessedness. (Part II, paragraphs 28–30)

How is Jesus both victim and victor on the cross?

- 4. Read Matthew 3:13–17. Commenting on this passage in the Large Catechism, Luther writes, “Do you think it was a joke that, when Christ was baptized, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended visibly, and everything was divine glory and majesty”? (Part IV, paragraph 21). Senkbeil says that Jesus’ “Baptism was not His own. It was ours” (p. 55). How was Jesus’ Baptism our Baptism? Also see the hymn “To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord” (*Lutheran Service Book* 406).

- 5. The Lord, who teaches us to pray, “And lead us not into temptation,” was Himself tempted as we are tempted yet remained without sin (see Hebrews 4:15). Review the account of our Lord’s temptation in Matthew 4:1–11, contrasting it with the other great narrative of temptation, Genesis 3:1–19. In both cases, how does Satan attempt to “deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice” (explanation of the Sixth Petition)?

- 6. How does the devil call Jesus’ “destination into question” (p. 57) in the temptation scene in Matthew 4? How is the attack repeated in the following passages?

Matthew 16:21–23 _____

Matthew 26:36–46 _____

Matthew 27:39–43 _____

7. Senkbeil focuses on the word *shame* (pp. 58–59). The writer to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus “endured the cross, despising the shame” (12:2). What was the shame that Jesus carried by going to the cross? See Isaiah 52:13–53:12; 1 Corinthians 1:18–31; Galatians 3:10–14.

8. How did God remove the shame of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:21? How did Jesus remove our shame? See Mark 10:45; Galatians 3:26–29.

9. How do the words of the Apostles’ Creed, “crucified, died and was buried,” nail down the reality of the cross?

10. Read Luke 24:13–35. What are the means that the risen Lord uses to turn disappointment to joy for the disciples on the road to Emmaus? How does Jesus still do this for us in the Divine Service?

CHAPTER 4

HOLY BAPTISM: WATER OF LIFE

1. Study Martin Luther's Easter hymn "Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands"

(*Lutheran Service Book* 458), especially stanza 4:

It was a strange and dreadful strife
 When life and death contended;
 The victory remained with life,
 The reign of death was ended.
 Holy Scripture plainly saith
 That death is swallowed up by death,
 Its sting is lost forever. Alleluia!

How are we given life through Christ's death? How are the signs of Christ's death (i.e., the water and the blood in John 19:34) signs of life for us?

2. "When you looked at Jesus, you were actually looking at the back side of God," says Senkbeil (p. 66). Read John 14:7–9. Note the remarks of Luther on this text:

It is inherent in our nature that we want to deal with God on our own. And if I turn my eyes from Christ to myself, thoughts such as these will surely suggest themselves: "Oh, I am a poor sinner! Therefore God is my enemy and will condemn me." This inevitably frightens me and makes me dejected. Then the devil leads me farther along and teaches me how to atone for my sins. He deceives me in two ways. In the first place, he persuades me to believe that I must take recourse to myself; secondly, he prompts me to devise my own way of reconciling God. Then both the Word and Christ are lost. Instead, I should learn to dismiss both myself and my own notions of God, apart from the way offered by God, and take hold solely of this Word of Christ, which proclaims to me in the name of God: "Why do you give way to your own ideas? Why gape heavenward? Do you not hear what I say to you? 'He who has seen Me has seen the Father.' As I speak and deal with you, so the Father is speaking and dealing with you."

Therefore, let us take a firm hold of this text against all other poor ways and paths which our own religious fervor constructs and with which we propose to deal with God. (*Luther's Works* 24:62–63)

Senkbeil writes that “God backed into our world, so to speak, in order that we could face Him without being annihilated in our sin” (p. 66). How does the “backwardness” of the incarnation give us comfort? Also see 2 Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 2:14–15.

3. Read John 13:3–10. How is this text an illustration of the “backwardness” of God’s way of dealing with us in the death of His Son and in Holy Baptism?

4. The Proper Preface for Holy Week speaks of two trees as we give thanks to the everlasting God:

Jesus Christ, our Lord, . . . accomplished the salvation of mankind by the tree of the cross that, where death arose, there life also might rise again and that the serpent who overcame by the tree of the garden might likewise by the tree of the cross be overcome. (*Lutheran Service Book: Altar Book*, p. 151)

Read Genesis 2:16–17; 3:1–7. How did Satan overcome our first parents by a tree? Read Acts 5:30; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24. How did Jesus overcome Satan by a tree? Read Revelation 2:7; 22:1–5, 12–17. What promises does God connect to the tree of life? Also note “The Royal Banners Forward Go” (*Lutheran Service Book* 455) and “Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle” (*Lutheran Service Book* 454) for a hymnic exposition of God’s triumph in the tree of the cross.

5. Senkbeil sees a connection between the cross and Holy Baptism:

As it was at the cross, so it is in the baptismal font. In the cross, the wood that had destroyed humanity in Eden became our victory at Calvary. So also in Baptism: the very water that destroys brings new life. Drowning becomes rebirth. (p. 67)

How is this connection made explicit in 1 Peter 3:18–22 and Romans 6:1–12? In light of these two biblical texts, note Luther’s words in the Large Catechism:

So you see plainly that there is no work done here by us, but a treasure, which God gives us and faith grasps [Ephesians 2:8–9]. It is like the benefit of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, which is not a work, but a treasure included in the Word. It is offered to us and received by faith. . . . So a truly Christian life is nothing other than a daily Baptism, once begun and ever to be continued. For this must be done without ceasing, that we always keep purging away whatever belongs to the old Adam. Then what belongs to the new man may come forth. (Part IV, paragraphs 37, 65)

6. Read Matthew 28:16–20. The Small Catechism states that “Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God’s command and combined with God’s word” (Baptism, First Part). The Word of God referred to in the Small Catechism is the Lord’s baptismal command given in Matthew 28:19. The baptizing is done “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” What does this indicate? See Numbers 6:22–27.

7. How does Paul relate the defeat of the pharaoh in the Red Sea with Baptism in 1 Corinthians 10:1–2? Also see Exodus 14:10–15:1. The Red Sea/Baptism connection is picked up in one of the collects for Easter Vigil:

O God, You once delivered Your people Israel from bondage under Pharaoh and led them by a pillar of cloud and fire through the sea to safety. Grant that we may so follow Christ that through the waters of Baptism we may daily die and rise with Him and walk in safety through the wilderness of this life until we see Your salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. (*Lutheran Service Book: Propers of the Day*, p. 443)

How is the Red Sea a picture of our Baptism?

8. Recall that Baptism “indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever” (Small Catechism, Baptism, Fourth Part). What is the outcome of our being baptized into Christ’s death? Also see Galatians 3:27; 2 Corinthians 5:17.

9. The Word of God makes Holy Baptism “a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit” (Small Catechism, Baptism, Third Part). How is this demonstrated in Titus 3:4–7?

10. The power of Holy Baptism is the power of Jesus Christ. Baptism gives us what Christ has won for us in His death and resurrection. Therefore Baptism “works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare” (Small Catechism, Baptism, Second Part). How is the power of Baptism described in these passages?

Galatians 2:20 _____

John 15:5 _____

John 3:5–6 _____

11. Peter sees Holy Baptism prefigured in Noah’s flood (see 1 Peter 3:20–21). Luther alludes to this in a prayer he wrote for an order of Baptism, a prayer still used at Baptisms today. Read the account of the flood in Genesis 6–8 and then read the following “flood prayer,” making note of how both the flood and Baptism destroy the old in order to give birth to a new creation:

Almighty and eternal God, according to Your strict judgment You condemned the unbelieving world through the flood, yet according to Your great mercy You preserved believing Noah and his family, eight souls in all. You drowned hard-hearted Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea, yet led Your people Israel through the water on dry ground, foreshadowing this washing of Your Holy Baptism. Through the Baptism in the Jordan of Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, You sanctified and instituted all waters to be a blessed flood and a lavish washing away of sin. We pray that You would behold [this child] according to Your boundless mercy and bless [them] with true faith by the Holy Spirit, that through this saving flood all sin in [them], which has been inherited from Adam and which [they themselves have] committed since, would be drowned and die. Grant that [they] be kept safe and secure in the holy ark of the Christian Church, being separated from the multitude of unbelievers and serving Your name at all times with a fervent spirit and a joyful hope, so that, with all believers in Your promise, [they] would be declared worthy of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. (*Lutheran Service Book*, pp. 268–69)

12. In the Old Testament, circumcision was the physical mark of the new creation (see Genesis 17:12–13). Baptism is far greater than circumcision. Senkbeil calls Baptism “radical surgery” (p. 77). Circumcision removed only skin. What does Baptism remove according to Colossians 2:11–12?

13. In Genesis 2:21–25, God creates Eve out of Adam’s side. Eve is given to Adam as his bride. Read Ephesians 5:22–33. Here Paul says that the church is the Bride of Christ. How did God create the church out of the side of Christ, the Second Adam? See John 19:34.

14. In the baptismal liturgy, the pastor says, “Receive the sign of the holy cross both upon your forehead and upon your heart to mark you as one redeemed by Christ the crucified” (*Lutheran Service Book*, p. 268). What does the sign of the cross indicate? See these passages:

Ezekiel 9:4 _____

Revelation 9:4 _____

Ephesians 1:13–14 _____

15. In the Small Catechism, Luther suggests that we trace the sign of the cross upon ourselves as we repeat the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit at the beginning and end of each day. Why is this a helpful devotional practice?

16. What is the reality hidden in Holy Baptism? See Luther’s baptismal hymn “To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord,” especially stanza 7 (*Lutheran Service Book* 406), and note the Large Catechism:

Therefore, every Christian has enough in Baptism to learn and to do all his life. For he has always enough to do by believing firmly what Baptism promises and brings: victory over death and the devil [Romans 6:3–6], forgiveness of sin [Acts 2:38], God’s grace [Titus 3:5–6], the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with His gifts [1 Corinthians 6:11]. (Part IV, paragraph 41)

CHAPTER 5

HOLY ABSOLUTION: WORD OF LIFE

1. How does the cross of Christ cut “two ways” (p. 83)? See Matthew 16:24–25; Colossians 3:4–5.

2. Read Matthew 15:1–20. Where did the scribes and Pharisees locate sin? Where does our Lord place the location of sin?

3. How inclusive is this sin according to 1 Corinthians 15:22 and Ephesians 2:3?

4. In Holy Baptism, God does a work that parallels creation itself. Here God is not just repairing the old Adam but actually putting him to death in order to create a new man. How does Paul describe this baptismal identity in 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Romans 6:1–11?

5. We get our baptismal identity from God’s name (see Matthew 28:19). That name marks us with the Lord’s cross and sets us in opposition to the devil. We are plunged into a life of struggle against Satan. “The entire Christian life in this world is lived on a battlefield,” Senkbeil writes (p. 83). For a description of this battle, read Romans 7:18–25. When will the battle end? Where is the victory?

6. Discuss this statement: “The forgiveness of sins is essentially a repeat performance of the mighty drama God unfolded once for all in the death and resurrection of His Son and then personally and individually for every believer in Baptism” (p. 87).

7. How would you respond to the question “Are you baptized?”

I was baptized on a particular day and at a particular place.

I am baptized.

8. Can the advice “remember your Baptism” (see pp. 87–88) be deceptive? Take another look at these passages, noting the present tense reality of Baptism: Romans 6:1–11; Galatians 2:20; 3:27. Also see the Small Catechism section on Baptism, in particular the question “What does such baptizing with water indicate?”

9. Senkbeil identifies five “hidden realities” (p. 89) in Holy Baptism. How are these baptismal realities described in the following texts?

Ephesians 4:17–24 _____

Colossians 2:1–12 _____

Titus 3:3–7 _____

Romans 6:4 _____

Galatians 3:27 _____

10. In light of the above texts, how is “the new life we live as Christians . . . nothing more than applied Baptism” (p. 90)?

11. Holy Baptism is radical, that is, it gets to the root (radix) of the problem, the old Adam. Attempts to reform, educate, or discipline the old Adam are behind the misunderstanding of sanctification in much of American Christianity. What does God do with the old Adam in Baptism? Why does Senkbeil call Baptism “the authentic formula for Christian living” (p. 90)?

12. Baptism permeates the Christian life. In his Large Catechism, Luther writes,

So a truly Christian life is nothing other than a daily Baptism, once begun and ever to be continued. For this must be done without ceasing, that we always keep purging away whatever belongs to the old Adam. Then what belongs to the new man may come forth. . . . Repentance, therefore, is nothing other than a return and approach to Baptism. We repeat and do what we began before, but abandoned. (Part IV, paragraphs 65, 79)

How do we make use of our Baptism?

13. The Word of God does not merely describe the forgiveness of sins but actually forgives sin. On the basis of John 6:63, how are we to understand the power of the Lord’s Word?

14. Read John 20:19–23. What is the connection between Jesus’ words and His breath? How is this scene a repeat of creation? See Psalm 33:6.

15. On Easter evening, the risen Lord ordains His disciples as apostles, His “sent ones,” called to represent Him. What are the apostles sent to do? Also see Matthew 10:40; Jeremiah 1:9–10.

16. In the section of the Small Catechism on Confession, review the question “What is the Office of the Keys?” What do we believe on the basis of John 20:19–23 about the Office of the Holy Ministry?

17. What is the difference between counseling and confession?

18. Read through the order for “Individual Confession and Absolution” in *Lutheran Service Book* (pp. 292–93). How does the order for confession and absolution get to the truth of our sin? How does the order serve the truth of the Gospel?

19. David sang Psalms 32 and 51 in response to God’s gracious absolution spoken by the pastor, the prophet Nathan. Read 2 Samuel 11:1–12:13. How did Nathan confront David with the ugly reality of his sin? How did Nathan’s words actually deliver David from his sin?

20. God does not leave us alone with our sins. In the Smalcald Articles, Luther notes the various forms in which God offers counsel and help against sin in the Gospel, including “the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren” (Part III, Article IV). How does this take place according to Galatians 6:2?

CHAPTER 6

THE HOLY SUPPER: FEAST OF LIFE

1. Read Luke 19:1–10. Although Jesus goes to Zacchaeus’s house as a guest, how does Jesus become the host? Why do the people murmur at the Lord’s action? See Luke 5:27–32. How does the Lord’s Supper help us understand the story of Zacchaeus? Also see Luke 22:26–27.

2. Luther says that the Sacrament of the Altar is the Lord’s Supper, not the Christian’s supper. We know what the Lord’s Supper is from Jesus’ words. See 1 Corinthians 11:23–25 and “What is the Sacrament of the Altar?” in the Small Catechism. From the words of Jesus we move back to the “Old Testament supper of ancient Israel: the Passover, or Pascha,” Senkbeil says (p. 107). Read Exodus 12 for the story of the Passover. How is the Passover meal like the Lord’s Supper? How are they different?

3. Senkbeil says that “this is no mere exercise in memory recall” (p. 110). What is the “remembrance” that takes place in the Lord’s Supper? See Psalm 111.

4. Read 1 Corinthians 11:26. What is the “powerful sermon” (p. 111) that Jesus preaches to us in this Sacrament?

5. Our Lord tells us that the consecrated wine “is the new covenant in My blood” (Luke 22:20). According to Leviticus 17:11, what is in the blood? What does the blood of Christ do according to Hebrews 9:13–15?

6. Martin Luther writes:

Wherever in Scripture God’s testament is referred to by the prophets, in that very word the prophets are taught that God would become man and die and rise again, in order that his word, in which he promises such a testament, might be fulfilled and confirmed. For if God is to make a testament, as he promises, then he must die; and if he is to die, then he must be a man. And so that little word “testament” is a short summary of all God’s wonders and grace, fulfilled in Christ. (*Luther’s Works* 35:84)

Read Hebrews 9:16–22. How is the Lord’s Supper Jesus’ last will and testament to us?

7. In the wilderness, God sustained His people with food for their journey (see Exodus 16:13–15). We are also on a journey through this world. How does the Lord’s Supper sustain us in our pilgrimage? Note Luther’s advice:

If now I seek the forgiveness of sins, I do not run to the cross, for I will not find it there. Nor must I hold to the suffering of Christ . . . in knowledge or remembrance, for I will not find it there either. But I will find in the sacrament or gospel the word which distributes, presents, offers, and gives to me that forgiveness which was won on the cross. (*Luther’s Works* 40:214)

8. Read John 6:1–14, 22–59. Then answer the following questions:

When and where did this miraculous meal take place? _____

Who does Jesus say that He is in this discourse? _____

What does Jesus tell us about His death? What does His death give? _____

How does this passage teach us to receive the Lord’s body and blood? _____

9. Read Luke 22:15–18. Jesus speaks these words just before He institutes the Sacrament of His body and blood. How are these words fulfilled in Luke 24:28–35?

10. Read Exodus 24:1–11. What is done with the sacrificial blood? What does the blood accomplish? How is God’s real presence expressed to the children of Israel? How is this event like the Lord’s Supper?

11. In the book of Revelation, heaven is pictured as the marriage feast of the Lamb. See Revelation 19:7–9; 21:2–4. Hermann Sasse writes:

In the sacraments God is already now at this time doing something with us which He plans to do at the end of all things. In the sacrament the future becomes a present reality; it is eternity that has become time. . . . So in Holy Communion we are given the fellowship of the body and blood of Christ, which will not come to consummation until the end of all things. (*We Confess: The Church*, pp. 133–34)

Which portions of the Divine Service especially reflect the way in which heaven and earth intersect in the Lord's Supper?

CHAPTER 7

DIVINE SERVICE: LITURGICAL LIFE TOGETHER

1. Senkbeil notes that the Christian life has not only a foundation and a focus but also a shape (see p. 127–28). The shape of the Christian life is liturgical, that is to say, the Christian life is shaped by God’s liturgy (or divine service) to us. In fact, the epistle to the Hebrews refers to our Lord as the “minister” (8:2) who serves His people with the gifts of the New Testament. We see our “Liturgist” at work in Luke 22:24–27. How did Jesus render divine service to His disciples? How is He still among us “as the one who serves” (v. 27)?

2. Read Deuteronomy 32:39. With this text in mind, skim through one of the settings of the Divine Service in *Lutheran Service Book*. How is God at work killing and making alive in the service?

3. The Swedish Lutheran Bishop Olof Herrlin has commented that “the liturgy of the church, like its preaching, is the assertion of Scripture as God’s Word” (*Divine Service: Liturgy in Perspective* [Fortress Press, 1966], 3). The liturgy is drawn from Scripture and subjects human words and emotions to the authority of Scripture. Because it carries God’s Word in its oral forms (scriptural hymns, versicles and responses, the readings from the prophets, apostles, and evangelists, and the sermon) and visible forms (Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar), the liturgy is full of life—God’s own life. How does John 6:63 teach us to value liturgy?

4. Read Acts 2:41–42. This passage is not merely descriptive of life in the early church but of the life of God’s church gathered around Word and Sacrament in every time and place. Hermann Sasse writes:

We are not born into the church, nor can we join it. These are two very serious misunderstandings. “Those who received his word”—the words of Peter’s Pentecost sermon having gone into them working faith—“were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls” [Acts 2:41]. They “were baptized”—passive voice. They “were added”—passive voice. The One who added them was the One who called them by the Gospel and kindled the light of faith in their hearts. (*We Confess: The Church*, p. 133; brackets in original)

How is Acts 2:41–42 a fulfillment of Matthew 18:20?

5. There is a clear pattern in Acts 2:41–42 that moves from evangelization to worship. Holy Baptism is the point of entry. Those who are baptized are devoted to—“they persisted obstinately,” says Senkbeil (p. 131)—the apostles’ teaching, the fellowship that is based on a common confession of that doctrine, and the breaking of the bread (a New Testament way of speaking about the Lord’s Supper). Those who have received the Lord’s gifts in His Word and from His Table respond with “the prayers.” That is the way of the liturgy: God speaks and we speak back to Him with the words He has given us. How is this pattern manifested in the church today?

6. Note the imagery of breath in the following passages:

Psalm 33:6 _____

Genesis 2:7 _____

John 20:19–23

What does God’s breath do for us? As we inhale God’s breath, we also exhale. What do we exhale? See Psalm 51:15.

7. Read John 4:6–26. What is the “liturgical question” that the Samaritan woman puts to Jesus? How does Jesus cut through her question to get to the heart of the liturgy? How does Jesus “relocate” worship?
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8. What is the purpose of the convocation that God calls in Exodus 19:3–6? How is this same theme reflected in the New Testament? See Hebrews 10:25.
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9. The Divine Service begins “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Read Exodus 20:24. What does God do for us with His name? Also see Numbers 6:22–27.
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10. In Exodus 3:4–5, God called Moses to take off his sandals, for the place where he was standing was “holy ground.” What made that ground holy? What makes the liturgy “holy ground”? How does this understanding of the liturgy shape the way we speak and act in church?

11. Read Isaiah 6:1–7. Why did the liturgy seem foreign to Isaiah? Why will it seem foreign to us?

12. How does the epistle to the Hebrews draw a contrast between the convocation of God’s people at Sinai and the worship of the New Testament? See Hebrews 12:18–19, 22–24.

13. What was the purpose of the Sabbath according to Exodus 16:29? How is the Sabbath fulfilled in Jesus? See Matthew 11:28–29; Colossians 2:16–17. Where are we given “sabbath”? Note these words of the Luther scholar Vilmos Vajta:

Luther’s picture of the Sabbath is marked by the passivity of man and the activity of God. And it applies not only to certain holy days of the calendar, but to the Christian life in its entirety, testifying to man’s existence as a creature of God who waits by faith for the life to come. Through God’s activity in Christ, man is drawn into the death and resurrection of the Redeemer and so recreated a new man in Christ. The Third Commandment lays on us no obligation for specific works of any sort (not even spiritual or cultic works) but rather directs us to the work of God. And we do not come into contact with the latter except in the

service, where Christ meets us in the means of grace. (*Luther on Worship* [Muhlenburg Press, 1958], 132)

14. How does the liturgy help us sing the songs of Zion in a foreign land, as Senkbeil puts it (p. 141)? What does the liturgy anticipate? See Revelation 5:12–13.

15. According to Senkbeil, what is the essence of our liturgical life? See Colossians 3:16.

CHAPTER 8

PRIVATE PRAYER: LITURGICAL LIFE ALONE

1. Prayer begins in the presence of the living God, yet our sin would drive us out of God’s holy presence. According to Psalm 24:3–4, what is the qualification for coming before the presence of God? Who meets the demands of this psalm?

2. We have already examined Galatians 3:26–28 in our study of Holy Baptism. Read this text again, this time looking for the connection between Baptism and prayer. How is Baptism our “spiritual ID,” giving us access to the very presence of God?

3. Read Psalm 51:15. How does this text determine both “the public liturgy of the worshipping congregation” and “the private liturgy of our personal prayer and devotion” (Senkbeil, p. 153)?

4. How does the trinitarian shape of the liturgy govern all our prayer and praises (see Senkbeil, p. 153)? How do you see this “trinitarian shape of the liturgy” in John 4:20–26 and Ephesians 2:17–18? How is this expressed in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds?

5. Read the explanation of the introduction of the Lord’s Prayer in the Small Catechism. What does the Father invite us to believe and do according to these words? How does Hebrews 10:19–22 anchor this confidence in Holy Baptism?

6. How does Colossians 3:16–17 chart the path of our liturgical life?

7. Why does prayer not come naturally to the human heart? How do we learn how to pray? See Matthew 6:9–13; Galatians 4:6.

8. What is the significance of the plural pronouns in the Lord’s Prayer? See Ephesians 3:14–19.

9. God does not leave us alone in our praying. Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, “The richness of the Word of God ought to determine our prayer, not the poverty of our heart” (*Psalms: The Prayerbook of the Bible* [Augsburg, 1970], 15). How does God’s Word shape and give content to our words in prayer?

10. “God has provided us with a ready-made prayer book” in the Psalms, says Senkbeil (p. 162). Eugene Peterson comments:

Left to ourselves, we are never more selfish than when we pray. With God as the Great Sympathizer, the Great Giver, the Great Promiser we go to our knees and indulge every impulse for gratification. But the Psalms that teach us to pray never leave us to ourselves; they embed all our prayers in liturgy. Liturgy defends us against the commonest diseases of prayer: the tyranny of our emotions, the isolationism of our pride. (*Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer* [Harper Collins, 1991], 91)

How do the Psalms teach us to pray? See Psalm 138:2–3.

11. Senkbeil suggests the use of a lectionary (a prescribed table of Scripture readings) as part of individual prayer life (p. 162). Such a lectionary is found on pages 299–304 of *Lutheran Service Book*. What are the advantages of using such a lectionary?

12. The liturgical year, or church year, is outlined on page x of *Lutheran Service Book*. How is the liturgical year “an excellent road map” for the Christian pilgrimage, as Senkbeil says (p. 164)?

13. Senkbeil writes:

Tying our prayers to the Word of God, we learn to relinquish control of our lives to the One who knows us best. After all, He created us to be His own, redeemed us with the blood of His Son, and sanctified us as His dwelling place. The Word He speaks to us in the Psalms we pray back to Him. Thus all of life is consecrated by the Word of God and by prayer. We discover that our Father in heaven

designed our daily routine to be a cycle; we are the ones who've made it a rat race. (p. 165)

In the biblical understanding of time, the day begins with the evening (see Genesis 1:5). The day begins with rest—our rest in God—and moves to our life of worship. How is this rhythm expressed in Psalm 4:8 and 5:3? Also see “Daily Prayers” in the Small Catechism.

14. Senkbeil describes the psalms as “someone else’s prayers” (p. 167). The Psalms are the prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ. See Luke 24:44. How does this fact give us confidence in our praying of the Psalms? See Hebrews 7:24–25.

15. Why does Senkbeil suggest that “private prayer works best when it is oral speech” (p. 169)?

16. List the various forms of body language associated with prayer (see Senkbeil, pp. 170–71). How do such physical movements and postures enhance the practice of prayer?

17. What place does music have in the public and private aspects of prayer? See Ephesians 5:19–20.

18. What advice does Senkbeil give to those who don't feel like praying (see pp. 172–73)? How can the hymnal and catechism help in such times of spiritual dryness?

19. God's people have always set aside specific times for prayer. See Psalm 119:164 and Acts 3:1 for examples. The services associated with these particular times of the day have been called the prayer offices. Senkbeil notes:

When we want to do business, we go to an office, a place set apart for a special purpose. So also the prayer offices. When we go to our prayers we go with a purpose in our mind and on our heart. We mean business. . . . This is God's business, the business of prayer. (p. 174)

We find the prayer offices well-furnished with God's own furniture: His name and His Word along with biblical psalms and canticles that provide us a vehicle for the transaction of prayer and praise. *Lutheran Service Book* contains several prayer offices: Matins, Vespers, Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Compline. How might you use these prayer offices in your private or family devotions to redeem the time, as Senkbeil puts it (p. 175)?

CHAPTER 9

VOCATION: LITURGICAL LIFE IN THE WORLD

1. Read Colossians 3:17. How does this passage demonstrate that “Christian vocation is not the end goal of the Christian faith” but “an extension of the Christian faith” (p. 177)?

2. According to 1 John 4:19 and Galatians 2:20, how is the love of Christ “extended” in the lives of His people (see Senkbeil, p. 178)?

3. Senkbeil writes, “I discovered over and over again that a thankful heart wasn’t enough to get me to lead a holy life” (p. 178). In light of Romans 7:19, what is the problem with making “the thankful heart” the source of holy living?

4. The Swedish Lutheran scholar Einar Billing writes, “Life organized around the forgiveness of sins: that is Luther’s idea of the call” (*Our Calling* [Fortress Press, 1964], 8). How does Senkbeil describe the forgiveness of sins as “the solution for Christian living” (p. 178)?

5. We live in an age when many people see Christianity as a set of how-tos. In contrast to those who look for recipes for Christian living, what does the New Testament give us? See 1 Corinthians 1:30. How does the Small Catechism follow the New Testament pattern?

6. Senkbeil writes:

All our works of service, all our prayers, and all our praises have a common source and goal in the Holy Trinity. They all flow from the Father through the Son in the power of the Spirit and then back again in the Spirit through the Son to the Father. And so all of life becomes liturgical living. (p. 181)

Read Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:12–13; Galatians 2:20. How does Paul demonstrate that “Jesus Christ Himself is the active agent in all our works of Christian service” (Senkbeil, p. 181)?

7. Read Romans 12:1–2. In the ancient world, the word *sacrifice* would automatically bring to mind images of death. Here Paul connects *sacrifice* with living. Paul calls us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice because a death has already taken place. Read Romans 6:1–11. Where did this death happen? How does this death make our daily life in the world “a liturgical life”?

8. What did God call Adam to do in Genesis 2:15? What was the impact of the fall into sin on that calling according to Genesis 3:17–18?

9. “Every baptized child of God therefore has a double calling: called into the Holy Christian church and into a daily calling—a vocation—where he or she labors as a coworker with God in the care of His creation,” notes Senkbeil (p. 185). Read 1 Corinthians 1:2. What are we called to be? How does this calling transform our earthly work into holy work? See 1 Samuel 10:7.

10. How is Christian vocation the arena for the death of the old Adam and the life of the new creature in Christ?

11. The old Adam, “a seasoned do-it-yourselfer,” delights in confusing Law and Gospel. How does the old Adam perpetuate this confusion in our thinking about vocation? How does Senkbeil distinguish the Law from the Gospel in his discussion of Matthew 22:39 (p. 188)?

12. Drawing on Luther, Senkbeil speaks about the masks behind which God hides Himself in this world in order to give us our daily bread (see pp. 190–92). Review the First Article of the Creed and the Fourth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer in the Small Catechism. How does God use us to provide the neighbor with the gifts described in the explanations of the First Article and the Fourth Petition?

13. Read Matthew 25:31–40. How does this parable put “a whole new twist on Christian vocation” (Senkbeil, p. 192)? Who is both the source and recipient of our good works?

14. Sometimes people speak of their quest after “the will of God” as though God’s will is a secret we must discover and then accomplish in our lives. How does Senkbeil define God’s will in light of the Gospel (see pp. 192–93)?

15. In what sense is the Christian life both passive and active? See John 15:12.

16. Read Romans 7:18–25. We are at the same time sinner and saint. How does this dynamic tension express itself in our Christian vocation in the world? Where is the location of our hope?

17. At the conclusion of the Divine Service, we give thanks for the refreshing food and drink of Jesus' body and blood, saying to the Father, "We implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in *faith toward You* and in *fervent love toward one another*" (*Lutheran Service Book*, p. 166; emphases added). This prayer from the pen of Luther echoes his words in the tract "On the Freedom of the Christian," where he writes,

We conclude, therefore, that a Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. . . . He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into the neighbor. (*Luther's Works* 31:371)

How do Luther's words effectively summarize the biblical picture of Christian vocation?
