

Jesus and His Ten Commandments: A Lenten Journey

By Rev. Ethan Harrison

Dedicated to Maren, Lisette, and Joelle

Introduction

Scripture says that we are blessed when we delight in meditating on the Law of the Lord (Psalm 1:1-2), but I imagine that spending a few minutes every day as a family thinking about the Ten Commandments sounds more like drudgery than delight. How do we learn to delight in the Law? I suggest that we will learn to delight in the Law when we think about it in relation to baptism, the Great Exchange, and Union with Jesus Christ. These three realities are the key to this devotional on the Ten Commandments, so let me introduce them to you.

Baptism

Baptism is the sacrament of entry into Jesus Christ. Paul says that in baptism we are buried with Christ, dying to sin, and we rise in Him to new life, now, and in the age to come (Romans 6:1-5). In baptism, we are united to Jesus Christ, brought into the family of God, and marked as God's own forever. We learn the Ten Commandments in the context of grace communicated in baptism: we've been saved so we can obey.

The Great Exchange

Baptism is how God communicates the reality of his saving work in Christ. In baptism, Jesus's death becomes our death, and his resurrection our resurrection. One way Church Fathers and Reformers talked about this is with the phrase The Great Exchange. In his death and resurrection, Jesus takes from us our sin, death, and injustice, and gives us his life, resurrection, and love for God and others. This is a deep and core reality to the life of the Christian. The heart of baptism is the great exchange: we die with Jesus as he takes our sin and we rise with Jesus as he gives us his life. We grow in the Ten commandments then by giving Jesus our sin and receiving his life.

Union with Christ

In faith and baptism, we are united to Christ through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives us the gift of Jesus's own life, death, and resurrection so that we can be secured in our relationship with God the Father, and grow in holiness in Jesus. In union with Christ we are given the double gift of justification and sanctification. Union with Christ is the relational space where we practice the Ten Commandments as a family. Because we are united to Christ we are totally forgiven of our sin and belong to God (Justification and Adoption), and we can grow in holiness as the Holy Spirit applies Jesus's death and resurrection to us (Sanctification). These three doctrines orient us to a proper appreciation and application of the Ten Commandments which avoid legalism or lawlessness.

The Ten Commandments and two False Gospels

Children are baptized with the expectation that parents, godparents, and the church will actively form, teach, and indoctrinate their children into the life of Jesus Christ. The baptismal liturgy explicitly says we do this by teaching them the Creeds, The Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments.

Now, this calling might seem like a difficult burden. But it doesn't have to be. We are simply saying we give away what we already have. We are united to Christ by faith and baptism, so we pass on this way of life in Jesus Christ by teaching, modeling, and practicing our faith. Because we are united to Christ, learning and obeying the Ten Commandments is not about following a legalistic set of arbitrary rules, it is about living the life Jesus gives us, the life he lived for us. When we think about the law of God with Jesus as the model and the source of our obedience, we avoid legalism and lawlessness in our teaching.

We as parents are tempted by both false gospels. On the one hand, we become terrible legalists when our children are disobeying. But on the other hand, we are afraid of legalism - we don't want to be those parents! - so we swing the other way and try to let our children lead and allow them to set their own boundaries, which in the long run also leads to frustration and discouragement. If we take the commandments as legalistic outward requirements, we will fall into the same mistake. But when we take the Commandments as Jesus's own way of life that he gives us, then we can start imagining them not as legalistic rules, but as the life Jesus gives us in the great Exchange in our intimate union with him.

The key to avoiding legalism or reacting to legalism with cheap grace is to remember our baptism. In baptism we are united to Jesus Christ - that is where we are, we are in the safe relational space of perfect love and obedience in Jesus, and The Holy Spirit is growing us into his likeness through the Great Exchange.

Overview of the Devotional

During Lent, we journey with Jesus to his Cross. We see him live the life of perfect love and obedience to his heavenly Father and give his life for us so that we can have life in him. In his life and death, Jesus perfectly obeyed the Ten Commandments for us so that we can live a life pleasing to God in Jesus Christ.

During the week of Ash Wednesday, I will introduce the Ten Commandments and contextualize them in our baptism in Jesus Christ. In Weeks 1-5 of Lent, we will meditate on two commandments a week. Each week, families will practice reciting the summary of the Ten commandments (BCP) and memorize short memory verses together. On Sundays, there will not be a devotional, but some suggested family activities that encourage families to put into practice the commandments they've learned that week. Each week you will learn to memorize the Commandments in the traditional language. I also provide a summary of each commandment that gets at the heart of each commandment. Throughout the devotional we will read questions and answers from *To be a Christian: An Anglican Catechism*.

I highly recommend that the daily reading and the memorization be done at the same time every day, and offered in the context of family prayer. The *ACNA Book of Common Prayer 2019* offers simple and short prayers for Family Prayer for Morning, Midday, Evening, or Bedtime (Pages 66-74). Lent is a wonderful time to start a new family habit, and these family prayers are easily memorizable by children and parents alike. Whatever time or times you choose, read the devotional and work on the memorization after the Scripture reading in the liturgy.

It might seem like an extra burden to add prayer to the devotional, but it is essential to the learning process. We are not trying to just get our kids, or ourselves, to know the commandments, we are trying to grow in Jesus Christ. Prayer makes us attentive to our need for Jesus and his presence with us. Christian learning occurs in the context of prayer to the Triune God who loves us.

I wrote this devotional in a way that the whole family will get something out of it. For the youngest children, it might just be the memorization of the commandments. For slightly older children, they will start understanding their baptism and experience the closeness of Jesus, and the great exchange, as they learn to obey. Old children could take the passages from Scripture suggested in the questions and answers, look them up and discuss what those passages tell us about the devotional that day. Parents will be reminded of the way of God in the Ten Commandments, the Gospel, and the obedience that Jesus gives us united to him. Everyone can learn something from the "I wonder questions" and family practices.

One assumption behind this devotional is the connection between catechesis and family discipleship. Below is a short introduction to these ideas. If you are not sure about teaching your children the Christian faith, this will offer some vision and encouragement.

Introduction to Catechesis and Family Discipleship

Catechesis

The Word *catechesis*, for many people, is either unfamiliar or associated with rote memorization or heads on sticks. Literally, it simply means instruction. It is a fundamental scriptural call to the church and families to instruct and form children and new believers in the faith in, hope for, and love of God. In the Old Testament, God through Moses communicates the Importance of the family in raising their children in the faith:

Deuteronomy 6:4-9: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (ESV)

Here God gives Israel the summary of the law and commands parents to instruct their children in the way of God thoroughly and daily. This does not change in the New Testament, but the task of teaching is expanded to the whole family of God, the Church:

Matthew 28: 19-20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (ESV)

When we baptize our children we are committing to raising them in the beliefs, desires, and habits of Jesus in the body of Christ, the church. Christians are called to inculcate, shape, and form their families in the way of Jesus. Either we will indoctrinate them with the life of Jesus, or they will be indoctrinated by someone and something else. The place this formation occurs is primarily in the family, with the loving support of the church body and clergy. The obvious reason for this is parents have more time to teach, form, and lead by example than instruction and formation at church can provide. One might object and say we ‘have no time!’ But that is when we need to reimagine what discipleship and catechesis look like as a family.

Family Discipleship

In his helpful book *Growing at Home* Winfield Bevins defines family discipleship this way: “Family Discipleship is not a program or ministry of the church. Family discipleship is when parents help their children become disciples of Jesus Christ in the home through reading the Bible, praying, worshiping, and doing missions together” (xvi).

Another way to put this is family discipleship is living the Christian life as a family. We have all been baptized into Jesus Christ, so we can all, at our different levels, learn, pray, and obey Jesus as a family. What this looks like in detail is beyond the scope of this introduction. But what I am encouraging in this

devotional is a crash course in family discipleship: Prayer, Scripture, instruction, memorization, and putting it into practice.

We've thought that the experts need to teach our kids the faith. And as one of those supposed experts, let me tell you the truth: as parents, we are implicitly teaching our kids the faith through how we live, what we prioritize, what we say and don't say. Family discipleship is simply aligning our implicit formation to be explicitly focused on and submitted to Jesus and the gospel. I'm here to equip, strengthen, model, and encourage parents in raising their children in Jesus; but I cannot do it for you.

Conclusion

As parents, we are tempted to parent perfectly and protect our children from sin. This breeds a level of anxiety, failure, and fear that is unmatched. Let me encourage you, family discipleship is not about either, it is about life in Jesus Christ. At the heart of family discipleship is the gospel, which we need to hear and live in as we share it with our children. Jesus takes your perfectionism, your fear, your anxiety, and gives you his love, his peace, and his purposes for you and your children. All we are doing in family discipleship is returning to the reality of the gospel as the Holy Spirit applies Jesus to our lives.

That is what the spiritual disciplines of family discipleship - prayer, learning, Scripture reading, and church - are all about: being with Jesus as he changes us together as a family.

If you've never prayed as a family, talked about your faith with your children, memorized scripture together; it may feel strange, difficult, and a bit boring. Trust the process and give it time. Jesus is right there with you, giving you the grace and strength you need to love and do what he commands.

There is no better way to disciple our children than to lead by example, especially when it comes to confessing that we haven't done it well. We can all start by confessing that we need to disciple our children and haven't. Jesus takes our lack of obedience and gives us his obedience. Depending on him for strength, let's journey with Jesus through Lent as he teaches us his Ten Commandments.

Beginning Lent: Week of Ash Wednesday

Summary of the First Week:

God loves you, so he saved and baptized you into Jesus Christ. You belong to him.

Memorization:

The Ten Commandments:

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods but me.
2. You shall not make for yourself any idol.
3. You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.

6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

Memory Verse: Galatians 2:20: *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Ash Wednesday: Journeying with Jesus in Lent

A note about Ash Wednesday

I want to encourage you to attend an Ash Wednesday service with your children. Families need to do the journey of Lent together, and it begins with the reminder of death in ashes and the reminder of Salvation in the cross. Be open to your children's questions about why we do Ash Wednesday. For a beautiful summary, see BCP 2019, 542-3.

Ask: What happened at the Ash Wednesday service today? I wonder what the ashes meant? I wonder why we were given ashes in the sign of a cross? (*The ashes remind us that we are sinners who deserve to die, and the cross reminds us that Jesus has saved us from sin and death.*)

Catechesis Question and answer:

Read 263. Why are you not able to do [keep the law] perfectly?

Sin has corrupted human nature, inclining me to resist God, to ignore his will, and to care more for myself than for my neighbors. However, God has begun and will continue his transforming work in me, and will fully conform me to Christ at the end of the age. (*Psalm 14; Jeremiah 17:1–13; Romans 3:9–23; 7:21–25; Philippians 1:3–11*)

Devotional:

Read: Do you know what a desert is? It's a dry, lonely place where little grows, and it's tough to find food and water. Imagine walking through a desert for forty days on foot or traveling with your whole church through a desert for three months. How would you feel? Lonely? Grumpy? Hungry?

We begin Lent and our journey through the Ten Commandments with Jesus in two Deserts:

1. The desert the Israelites walked through grumbling against God after he saved them from Egypt.
2. The desert Jesus walked through as Satan tempted him to disobey God.

The desert in both stories represents the temptation to sin and rebel against God. The desert reveals how much we like obeying ourselves instead of God and how angry, grumpy, and frustrated we get when things don't go our way.

But do you know how Jesus got through the desert? Instead of rebelling, he trusted God his Father through the temptation. Instead of obeying himself, he obeyed his Father through the desert.

As we journey through the desert of life on the way to the Promised Land, Jesus gives us his trust and his obedience. This means that as we journey with Jesus through Lent and learn his Ten Commandments, he isn't just telling us what to do; he is saying, "I've been on this path before, I know how to do it, walk with me and I'll give you my strength to obey."

Questions for reflection:

Ask and discuss these questions with your children. Let them offer their perspective but don't feel the need to correct anything they say that is wrong. This is one of the ways they learn by wondering and exploring through right and wrong answers.

I wonder why it is hard to obey God?

I wonder how Jesus felt when he was in the desert?

I wonder how it would feel to know that Jesus is with me when I'm tempted?

Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, that you walked through the desert of sin for us so we can have life with you. Amen.

Thursday: Joining the Journey: Baptized into Jesus

Catechesis Question and answer:

Read 259. When did God give his Law?

After delivering his people Israel from slavery in Egypt, God established a covenant with them by giving them his Law through Moses. (*Exodus 19:1–6; Deuteronomy 5:1–5; Nehemiah 9:13–14; Acts 7:35–3*)

Read 127. What is the inward and spiritual grace given in Baptism?

The inward and spiritual grace is death to sin and new birth to righteousness, through union with Christ in his death and resurrection. I am born a sinner by nature, separated from God. But in baptism, through faith in Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, I am made a member of Christ's Body and adopted as God's child and heir. (*Psalms 51:1–2, 7–10; Ezekiel 36:25–26; John 3:3–5; Romans 6:1–11; Colossians 2:9–14*)

Devotional:

Ask: Do you know the story of God rescuing Israel from Egypt? (allow the children to summarize the story, help them hit the high points). How did God save Israel from the Pharaoh's army? (he took Israel through the Red sea, and the army drowned). (*Exodus 7-14*).

Read: Before God told Israel about the law and journeyed through the desert, God rescued them from slavery in Egypt by taking them through the Red Sea.

Before Jesus began his ministry, before he was tempted, he was baptized in water.

A common element connects these two events. Do you know what it is? (Water).

God uses water to save his people and mark them as his own in both stories. Jesus was baptized in water and his death to save all those who believe in him and make them a part of the family of God.

Yesterday, we saw that Jesus is with us. He gives us his obedience and takes our disobedience. He does this because we are united to Him in baptism. In baptism, God unites us to Jesus and fills us with the Holy Spirit so that all of our life is in Jesus. We don't live life alone; Jesus is always with us. He always takes what is disobedient, sinful, and grumpy in our lives and offers us his life.

It is tempting to think we have to be good little boys and girls for God to love us. Baptism in Jesus says the opposite: God loves you and saves you from sin so you can obey and love him.

Questions for reflection:

I wonder How Israel felt when God rescued them from the Egyptians?

I wonder How Jesus felt when he was baptized?

Tell your children about their baptism, talk about the prayers, the vows, and the water (see BCP, 2019, 161-170), remind them that they were baptized into Jesus, so Jesus is with them.

Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, that you love me, and I am united to you in baptism. Please give me the trust and obedience you have. Amen.

Friday: The way we Journey: Life in Jesus with his Ten Commandments

Catechesis Question and Answer:

Read 261. How did Jesus fulfill God's Law?

For our sake, Jesus fulfilled God's Law by teaching it perfectly, submitting to it wholly, and dying as an atoning sacrifice for our disobedience. (*Psalm 119:49-72; Isaiah 53:4-12; Matthew 5:17-20; Romans 8:1-4; Hebrews 10:1-18*)

Read 262. How can you obey God's Law?

As I trust in Jesus' fulfillment of the Law for me and live in the power of the Holy Spirit, God grants me grace to love and obey his Law. (*2 Kings 18:1-8; Proverbs 3:1-12; John 15:3-11; Romans 6:15-23; 1 John 5:2-5*)

Devotional:

Ask: Why do you think it is hard to obey?

Read: Did you know that Jesus had to learn to obey? Scripture says that Jesus had to learn obedience (Hebrews 5:9).

Now you might think it was easy for Jesus to learn to obey since he was God. But imagine living in a house made of candy, and I said that you couldn't eat any of it, and you lived there for 30 years. How hard would that be not to eat the candy?

That is what it was like for Jesus to learn obedience. I don't know about you, but I would've eaten some candy. But because Jesus loved his Father, he obeyed where we fail to obey.

But Jesus didn't just obey for himself; he obeyed for us. The obedience he learned he now gives to us through the Holy Spirit. This gift is what Pastors and Theologians in the church call the Great Exchange, and it is critical for our journey through the Ten Commandments with Jesus.

We will keep remembering the Great Exchange because it is that important. When we struggle to obey the Ten Commandments, we remember Jesus has already obeyed perfectly for us; he gives us his obedience, we can trust in him and learn to obey.

Jesus doesn't save us because we are good. He is Good, so he saves us by taking our sins and giving us his forgiveness, love, and obedience.

We all struggle to obey, but together we can look to Jesus and ask him to give us his obedience, and he will; he is right here with us.

Questions for reflection:

I wonder how children struggle to obey? I wonder how parents and adults struggle to obey?

I wonder why Jesus would go through so much struggle for us?

I wonder how I can remember the Great Exchange today?

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for taking me disobedience and giving me your obedience. When I am tempted to disobey, help me to ask for your obedience and do the next right thing with you. Amen.

Saturday: The end goal of the Journey: Life Forever with Jesus

Catechesis Question and answer:

Read 119. What do you know about the unending resurrected life of believers?

I know that it will be an eternal life of joyful fellowship with our triune God, together with all his saints and angels, singing his praises and serving him in the renewed creation. (*John 17:20–24; Revelation 7:9–17; 21:1–4; 21:22–22:5*)

Devotional:

Ask: What is the longest car or plane trip you've taken as a family? Where were you going? Were you excited about it or not? Did how you feel about your end goal make the trip feel short or long?

Read: Did you know that since your baptism, you've been on a journey? Since you died and rose with Christ, you've been walking with Christ and his church towards one end goal: eternal life, fellowship, and communion with God.

We are walking to the most beautiful, joyous, wonderful place imaginable: the City of God, where we will see Jesus face to face, the most beautiful, wonderful person imaginable.

How do we get ready to see Jesus? He has already saved us from sin, and he is giving us his daily trust and obedience, so we start to love, trust, and obey Him. The Ten Commandments show us how to love God and others as we walk this road to heaven with Jesus.

St. Augustine says Jesus is both the way we walk home and our end goal. It is hard to wrap our minds around that. It is kind of like if your favorite grandparent picked you up to take you to their home for a week. They are driving you there and will spend all their time with you once you get there. Jesus is driving us home and we will get to spend all our time with him when we get there. What could be more perfect?

Questions for reflection:

I wonder how you've experienced Jesus's love in the last week?

I wonder what eternal Life with God will be like?

I wonder how we can start living that kind of life now?

Prayer: *Thank you for walking with me to my true home. Help me love and follow you. Amen.*

Sunday:

Family Exercise:

Have a small bowl or cup of water by your front door. Every time somebody leaves, they dip their finger in the water, cross themselves, and say a prayer that confesses our union with Christ in baptism. Something like "Christ is with me, and I am with Christ," or "Jesus takes my (fill in the blank, sin, fear, anxiety, angry) and gives me you (forgiveness, love, peace, etc)."

The First Week of Lent: The First and Second Commandments

Summary of the First and Second Commandment

God loves you, so love and obey God above all.

Love and obey God by worshiping God.

Memorization:

The Ten Commandments

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods but me.
2. You shall not make for yourself any idol.
3. You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.

5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

Memory Verse:

Matthew 22:36-40. *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*

Monday: The First Commandment

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 269. What does it mean that the Lord is your God?

It means that I have faith that the God of the Bible is the only true God and that I entrust myself to him wholly. (*Exodus 3:1–15; Deuteronomy 6:4–5; Psalm 86:8–13; Mark 12:29–34; Revelation 15:3–4*)

Read 270. What does it mean to have no other gods?

It means that there should be nothing in my life more important than God and obeying his will. I should worship him only and love, revere, and trust him above all else. (*Psalm 95; Jeremiah 10:6–10; Luke 16:10–15; 1 John 2:15–17*)

Devotional:

Ask: Who loves you the most in your life? How do you know they love you? What do you love the most? How do you express your love?

Read Exodus 20:1-3: And God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” “You shall have no other gods before me.”

How did Israel know that God loved them? He saved them from slavery.

Like the good shepherd rescuing his lost sheep, God saved Israel from slavery. Imagine what that must have felt like? Living your whole life doing someone else’s work, being told what to do, being beaten up and not fed enough, and all of a sudden, you are free. They must have felt indescribably happy!

There was a problem: they were free from slavery in Egypt, but the slavery of sin still rule their hearts. So they rebelled against God and didn’t love him with their whole hearts.

God knew that they were still slaves to sin, and he loved them so much that he gave them the first commandment: “you shall have no other gods before me.” It means you shall love God first and before

all. How do we love God? Our catechism tells us that we believe, trust, worship, and obey him with our whole lives.

But we don't. When God tells us to do something, we do the opposite. When we are at church we don't feel like worshipping. When we are struggling to obey we obey what we want instead of God.

Why do we love God? Because he loved us and saved us from sin.

How will we love God when we don't want to? Jesus gives us his love!

Questions for reflection

I wonder what it felt like for the Israelites to be saved from Egypt?

I wonder why we struggle to trust and obey God?

I wonder how we will learn to love God above all else?

Pray: *Thank you, Jesus, for the First Commandment to love God above all. Amen.*

Tuesday: Jesus and the First Commandment:

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 273. Can you worship and serve God perfectly?

No. Only our Lord Jesus Christ worshiped and served God perfectly; but I can seek to imitate Christ, knowing that my worship and service are acceptable to God through him. (*1 Kings 15:9–14; Psalm 53:1–3; Luke 4:1–13; Ephesians 5:1–2; Hebrews 7:23–28*)

Devotional:

Read Matthew 4:1-2, 8-10 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ““You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.””

Imagine what it was like for Jesus to fast and walk in the wilderness for 40 days. How do you think he felt?

How do you feel when you are hungry, tired, sweaty and smelly? I know I get easily irritated! And we've never fasted for forty days!

When Jesus was at his weakest, Satan came and tempted him.

Satan tempts Jesus by offering him food, and escape from death and suffering. Who doesn't want to escape death, suffering, and hunger?

How does Jesus respond? He resists temptation and obeys God. He told Satan, I will only worship, love, and serve God my Father.

Why did Jesus resist temptation? Because he loved his Father. Jesus loved the Father with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, so he obeyed deeply and fully, all the way to the cross.

Where we would give in to temptation, Jesus resisted because he loved and served God his Father. Where we disobey, Jesus obeyed, where we rebel, Jesus submitted. And Jesus gives us his love and obedience. When Satan tempts us, we can slow down, remember that we are united to Jesus. Then we ask him for his obedience, and he gives it to us.

Questions for reflection

I wonder how we can remember that Jesus gives us his obedience?

Note: Children and adults need to develop a mindful awareness of when, why, and how they are tempted. I am more tempted when I am Hungry, Angry, Lonely, and Tired (HALT). Help your children to identify when they feel tempted, think about, and discuss when you feel tempted. When we are tempted, notice the temptation, slow down, remember that you are with Jesus, and ask him for his obedience.

Pray: *Thank you, Jesus, that when we sin, you take our sin and give us your obedience. Amen.*

Wednesday: Obeying the First Commandment in Christ

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 273. Can you worship and serve God perfectly?

No. Only our Lord Jesus Christ worshiped and served God perfectly; but I can seek to imitate Christ, knowing that my worship and service are acceptable to God through him. (*1 Kings 15:9–14; Psalm 53:1–3; Luke 4:1–13; Ephesians 5:1–2; Hebrews 7:23–28*)

Devotional:

Read: How do we love and obey God above all else? By ourselves, we can't. But since we are united to Jesus in baptism, we turn to him when we are tempted, and he gives us his love and obedience.

This is the key to the commandment: Jesus gives us his love for God so that we can love and obey God every day.

We love and obey God in Jesus by asking for his help when struggling to obey. Do you know it makes Jesus happy to give you his love and obedience when you struggle to obey? It warms his heart to share his obedience with you.

We love and obey God in Jesus by worshiping in Church. Did you know that Jesus is there helping us pray, sing, listen, and receive? He loves worshiping his Father, and he loves bringing us along to worship our Father. When you feel bored and distracted in worship (don't worry, I do too sometimes), Jesus is there to give us the love and joy he has for our Father. We can ask Jesus for his love and joy together.

We love and obey God in Jesus when we love, serve, and care for others. As a family, we do this in all sorts of ways. Did you know that Jesus is a Servant? He loved serving his disciples, he washed their feet. He loved helping sinners and broken people, and he loves serving us. He gives us His love so we can serve and love others.

Questions for reflection

I wonder how Jesus feels about us?

I wonder how Jesus feels when we join him in worship?

I wonder how Jesus feels when we join him in service?

Pray: *Thank you, Jesus, that you give me your love and obedience so I can worship, love, and serve others in you. Amen.*

Thursday: The Second Commandment

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 275. What does the second commandment mean?

God's people are neither to worship man-made images of God or of other gods nor to make such images for the purpose of worshiping them. (*Exodus 20:23; 34:17; Leviticus 26:1; Deuteronomy 4:15–20; 27:15; Psalm 97:6–9; Acts 17:22–29; 2 Corinthians 6:16–18*)

Read 279. Are idols always images?

No. Anything can become an idol if I look to it for salvation from my sin or comfort amid my circumstances. If I place my ultimate hope in anything but God, it is an idol. (*1 Samuel 15:23; Ezekiel 14:3–5; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5*)

Devotional:

Read: Do you know what Israel did after God saved them from Egypt? They worshipped a Golden Statue! Imagine if I saved you from getting hit by a car and you turned around and said “Thank you” to your favorite stuffed animal or TV show?

How do you think that would make me feel? How do you think It made God feel?

Scripture says God is jealous. Because he made and saved us to love him, he wants us to love him exclusively. God is jealous for us. He loves us so much he doesn't want anything else to get in the way of loving and being loved by him.

Idolatry is loving anything before or beside God.

Why is God so concerned about loving him more than anything else? Because he created and saved us to be fully satisfied and happy in him.

Try to think of the happiest moment of your life. God wants us to be even happier than that! But the only way we can be is by loving God. That is how we will be happiest.

Idolatry happens when we look to other stuff to make us happy instead of God.

An idol can be anything we love or desire to make us feel better, save us from trouble, or provide for us. Adults struggle a lot with idolatry. We look to money, jobs, politics, and even food to save and comfort us.

What do you go to for comfort when you are angry, hurt, or sad? When I ask you to obey, do you want to do it your way or the way I told you? If we go our own way in these situations, we are making idols.

The sad thing is we make idols all the time. We look to TV, toys, food, the internet, and ourselves, to make us feel better, to save us.

This commandment tells us that only God can make us happy, and we look everywhere but God for happiness.

Questions for reflection

I wonder why it is so hard to love God?

I wonder how it would feel to love someone and have them not love you back?

I wonder what idols I have that I need to give up this Lent?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for the Second Commandment, and for loving me perfectly. Amen.

Friday: Jesus and the Second Commandment

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 281. How was Jesus tempted to break the first two commandments?

Satan tempted Jesus to bow down and worship him, promising him an earthly kingdom without the pain of the Cross. Instead, Jesus served and worshiped God faithfully and perfectly all his life, and calls us to do the same. (*Matthew 4:1–11; 16:24; Luke 22:41–44; Philippians 2:8*)

Devotional:

Read: What if you found the toy that you've been dreaming about all year long, but you didn't have any money to buy it? Would you be willing to sell all the toys that you have in a garage sale to get that toy? Jesus once told the story of a man who found the most beautiful pearl in the world, and he sold everything he owned to get that one pearl!

Obedying this command is like selling everything we have to get the most beautiful pearl or the best toy. We are saying no to everything else, so we can have the one thing that will make us happy, which isn't a pearl or a toy, but Jesus himself.

But how do we obey this command?

Because we are used to finding our happiness in everything but God. We can never have enough toys, money, and power, and they leave us hungry for more! So God, in His great love, sent his only Son to save us from our idolatry and give us himself.

How do we stop idolizing things and people? Only in Jesus. Throughout his life, Jesus loved and worshipped God alone so that we could love and worship God above all.

Jesus takes our idol-making hearts and gives us his Father-loving heart. In Jesus, we let go of everything and seek God. In Jesus, we surrender our idols and love Jesus the Pearl of Great Price.

Questions for reflection

I wonder why Jesus wants to give us his heart?

I wonder how it felt for Jesus to resist the temptation to save himself?

I wonder how Jesus gives us his heart?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus for taking my idol-making heart and giving me your Father-loving heart. Amen.

Saturday: Obeying the Second Commandment in Christ

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 280. What does the second commandment teach you about hope?

It teaches me that my ultimate hope is in God alone, for he alone is God and he made me. I must not look for salvation and fulfillment in myself, another person, my wealth or occupation or status, or any created thing. Only in God will I find perfect love and fulfillment. (Psalm 62; Isaiah 45:20–25; Matthew 6:19–24; 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10)

Devotional

Read: God created us to worship him, and in Jesus, we can surrender our idols and worship God with our whole hearts.

First, we remember we belong to God. the Heidelberg Catechism asks this question: “What is our only comfort in life and death?” the answer begins this way: That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death am not my own but belong to my faithful savior Jesus Christ.”

Second, when we are tempted to look to other people or things for happiness or comfort, we can ask Jesus to give us himself. Jesus takes our idolatry and gives us his happiness. Jesus takes our desire to find comfort in others and comforts us himself.

Third, we practice. I (the adult) still struggle with idolatry every day. So, we practice surrendering our idols by worshiping God regularly. The opposite of Idolatry is worshiping and loving God above all else. We might not always feel like worshiping, we might want to do other things, but when we worship, even when we don’t feel like it, we surrender our idols to God. When we worship God, we confess our idols and ask Jesus to give us his love and joy in the Father.

The First and Second Commandments tell us that we are to love God above all. United to Jesus in baptism, we learn to surrender our disobedience and idolatry and receive Jesus’s obedience, love, worship, and happiness.

Questions for reflection

I wonder what it will feel like to be in heaven?

I wonder how we can grow in our desire for Jesus?

I wonder how it would feel to ask Jesus for his obedience and comfort when we are struggling?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, that I belong to you. Please give me your love, worship, and happiness. Amen.

Sunday:

Family Exercises

Worship together as a family with the Daily Devotionals with the next set of Commandments if you didn’t do it the first week.

Make a Sunday Worship music mix with songs you can all learn to sing together. Invite each family member to make a contribution and talk about why we love the song(s) we choose.

Second Week of Lent: Third and Fourth Commandment

Summary of the Third and Fourth Commandment

Love and honor God with your thoughts, words, and actions.

Love and honor God with all your time.

Memorization:

The Ten Commandments:

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods but me.
2. You shall not make for yourself any idol.
3. You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

Memory Verse:

Matthew 22:36-40. *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*

Monday: The Third Commandment

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 284. Why is God's Name sacred?

God's Name reveals who he is—his nature, his character, his power, and his purposes. All forms of God's Name are holy. (*Exodus 3:1–15; 34:5–7; Psalms 8; 54:1; 79:9; Isaiah 57:15; Luke 1:46–49*)

Read 285. What does it mean to take God's Name “in vain”?

“Vain” means empty, meaningless, and of no account. To take God's Name in vain is to treat it as such. (*Leviticus 24:10–16; Romans 2:23–24*)

Devotional

Ask: have you ever thrown a toy away? Why did you throw it away? When you finish a juice box, what do you do with it? Why?

Read: While we might throw out useless toys and empty juice boxes, we would never throw our names away. Names tell us who we are and who we belong to. It would be unloving and unkind to say to your parents, “I don't want the name you gave me.” You would be treating your name as trash, meaningless and useless.

God tells us his name in Scripture: YHWH, or “I am who I am.” He says that he is “Yahweh, Gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in loyal love, yet he by no means clears the guilty.” (*Exodus 34:6–7*). God's name reveals what and who he is, and he is everywhere, all-powerful, all-loving, and Holy. He is perfect, good, and right all the time.

“Taking the Lord's name” means bearing or carrying it, and it is like carrying a backpack, your favorite cuddle buddy, or your most prized possession.

We take the Lord's name in vain. We treat it like a broken toy we throw away or the finished juice box that's empty. We are treating the family name of God, our most prized possession, as worthless and useless.

Anytime we do not love, obey, honor God or love, obey and honor others, we treat God's name as worthless. Every time we act in a way that doesn't honor or love God, we are saying to God: “I don't want to be a part of this family.”

This commandment is impossible to keep in our own strength. We all sin, so we all take God's name in vain. But there is one who treats God's name as holy, good, and righteous: Jesus.

Reflection questions

I wonder what it would feel like to reject my name?

I wonder how my parents would feel If I rejected my name?

I wonder how God feels when I sin against him?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, that I am in your family. Amen.

Tuesday: Jesus and The Third Commandment

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 286. How can you avoid taking God's Name in vain?

Because I love him, I should use God's Name with reverence, not carelessly or profanely. (*Deuteronomy 28:58–59; Psalms 86:11–12; 99:1–5; Revelation 15:2–4*)

Devotional

Read: Once upon a time, there was a Father and his son. The son rejected his family name, demanded money from his father, and left and spent it all on worthless things. He treated his family and father as worthless. When he ran out of money, he realized how sinful he had been. He decided he'd go back home and live as a servant to the Father he had treated worthlessly.

When he was still far off, the Father came running to him. You might not think that is strange, but in those days, old men running was pretty shameful. The Father became worthless to show his son how much he loved and wanted him.

What do you think the Father did after running up to his Son? He embraced him, gave him new clothes, and threw a party for him (See Luke 15:11-32).

Taking God's name in vain is treating God as worthless, throwing him out, and saying, "I'm good without you."

So what does God do? God came running to humanity by sending his Son Jesus Christ to save us from treating God as worthless.

He came and carried the precious possession of loving communion with the Father and treated it as precious. He was tempted to treat his Father as worthless, every day just like we are but he didn't. He loved God, he obeyed God, and he glorified God.

Then Jesus took all the ways we've thrown God's name in the garbage, and he became worthless for us on the cross. Jesus became worthless for us so that we can receive his name and glorify God.

Jesus clothes us in his robes and brings us home. Jesus forgives us for treating God's name as worthless and gives us his life so we can honor and love God as he did.

Reflection questions

I wonder why that son treated his Father as worthless?

I wonder how the Father felt when he left?

I wonder why the Father came running?

I wonder how it would feel to be loved so much that someone would sacrifice the most precious thing they have in life for me?

Thank you, Jesus, for rescuing me so I can honor God's name. Amen.

Wednesday: Obeying the Third Commandment in Christ

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 289. How can you honor and love God's Name?

I honor and love God's Name, in which I was baptized, by keeping my vows and promises, by worshiping him in truth and holiness, and by invoking his Name reverently and responsibly.

(Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 10:20–22; Psalm 105:1–5; Matthew 15:10–20; James 5:12)

Devotional

Read: When Jesus was baptized the Father said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” When we are baptized Jesus's name becomes our name. We are in his family. We belong to him.

United to Jesus, we can love and honor God. Oftentimes we have to start doing this by admitting where we don't. We all break this commandment.

I have to confess the ways I treat God's name as worthless every day. But Jesus is greater than our sin, and we can trust that he is healing us as we continue to learn to receive his obedience and give him our waywardness. When we treat God's name as worthless, Jesus takes our sin, forgives us, and tells us who we are: We are beloved children of the Father.

After confessing the ways we dishonor God's name, we can receive Jesus's life afresh to grow in his way of honoring and loving God. In Jesus, we honor and love God's name by worshiping him with love and wonder. We honor God's name by loving and serving others. We honor God's name by growing in honesty and humility.

As we grow in obeying this command we will learn to enjoy the gift of bearing God's name. We learn to value the greatest gift of all: Eternal Communion with God.

Reflection questions

I wonder how Jesus felt when he was baptized and heard the voice of his Father?

I wonder what the Holy Spirit is convicting us of ways we've thrown God's name out like garbage?

(Suggestion: confess sin to one another, and remind one another: Jesus takes our worthlessness and gives us his worth, or Jesus takes our disobedience and gives us his obedience).

I wonder what ways we can display God's love for each other and others?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for forgiving us when we break this commandment, give us your Spirit so we can honor God's name. Amen.

Thursday: The Fourth Commandment

A note to Parents: The proper application of this commandment in Christian circles is a source of vigorous fellowship throughout Church history. I will not be taking a strict interpretation of this commandment in the sense that we must take a particular day off, Saturday, or Sunday and do no work. However, because we live in a frantic world, where busyness is a virtue and getting ahead a necessity to survival, I will challenge us to think about how God's commandment of rest can shape our lives.

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 291. What does it mean to keep the Sabbath day holy?

“Sabbath” is from the Hebrew *shabbath*, which means “rest.” “Holy” means “set apart” for God’s purposes. God commanded Israel to set apart each seventh day, following six days of work, for rest and worship. (*Genesis 2:2; Exodus 31:12–17; Psalm 23:1–3; Mark 1:21–22*)

Devotional:

Ask: What is the best vacation we’ve been on together? What is your favorite way to spend time together as a family? How do we feel when we go to church? More tired? Rested? Refreshed? Why?

Read: Imagine that every day of your life, from sunup to sundown, you worked making bricks, hauling bricks, stacking bricks, seven days a week, without any rest, break, or vacation. How would that feel?

That was the life Israel lived as a nation for 400 years. But then God freed them from slavery and rescued them from working all day and every day. He told them that it isn’t good to work every day. He didn’t create you this way. You need a day to rest with me by worshiping and spending time with one another in love and joy. After only knowing work and slavery, a day of rest would be a welcome gift!

How would Israel respond to such a gift? Maybe they would struggle to slow down and stop working. Perhaps they would be afraid that if they didn’t work all the time, they wouldn’t have enough. Maybe they thought, “finally, a day off, I can do what I want now.”

God created humanity to work and to rest. We are called to glorify God by spreading his goodness and glory throughout the world in our work. In our rest, we are called to enjoy God and love one another. This rhythm of work and rest is a gift. Israel was so used to working all the time they needed a new habit to help them see the good of rest and of work.

But because of sin, we turn both our work and rest into idols. We make an idol out of our work when we look to it for security or comfort. We make rest an idol when we use it to escape or distract us from God and the needs of others.

God gave Israel one day a week to rest from everything and spend time with God in worship, prayer, and family fellowship. As Christians, we are invited to enjoy this gift of rest in a special way, in Jesus.

Reflection questions

I wonder how Israel felt when they were given the gift of a sabbath rest?

I wonder how worshipping God on Sundays and throughout the week could feel restful?

I wonder what our rest and work tell us about our desires as a family?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for the gift of rest and work. Amen.

Friday: Jesus and the Fourth Commandment

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 293. How did Jesus teach us to keep the Sabbath?

As Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus taught us to keep it not merely as a duty, but as a gift of God to be received with joy and extended to others through acts of love and hospitality. (*Mark 2:23–3:6; Luke 13:10–16*).

Devotional

Read: One Sabbath, Jesus taught about God in the local synagogue. A man walked in with a withered, broken, useless hand.

Back in those days, some religious leaders were very concerned about keeping the Sabbath. They thought that if they kept the Sabbath perfectly, God would save and rescue them. So they were particularly picky about what you could and couldn't do; this included any work and - even as crazy as it sounds - healing someone.

But Jesus gave the gift of Sabbath on Mount Sinai, and he knew its true purpose: to bring healing and communion with God. So, when Jesus saw the man, he got up and said, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" The religious leaders didn't say anything, so Jesus simply said to the man, "stretch out your hand," and healed him.

The religious leaders were not happy. They had taken a good gift and twisted it. Like we might take rest and turn it into a time to zone out or be mindless, they took rest and turned it into a rigid duty. They had forgotten it was a gift. Sin had twisted the good gift of rest.

Jesus shows us how to live the Sabbath. We use our time to rest in God by worshiping and enjoying him and serving others. In his death and resurrection, Jesus takes our sin and gives us his rest and service. In Jesus, we can truly rest and work. In Jesus, we can love and honor God with all our time.

We cannot obey the fourth commandment on our own, but in Jesus, we can.

Reflection questions

I wonder how the man felt when Jesus healed him?

I wonder how the religious leaders felt when Jesus healed the man?

I wonder how Jesus felt for the man, for the religious leaders?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for rescuing us from sin to rest in you. Amen.

Saturday: Obeying the Fourth Commandment in Christ

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 295. How do you keep the Sabbath?

I cease from all unnecessary work; rest physically, mentally, and spiritually; and join with my family and church in worship, fellowship, and works of love. (*Psalm 92; Isaiah 58:13–14; Matthew 12:12; Colossians 2:16–23*)

Read 299. How does keeping the Sabbath help you to grow in Christ?

As I keep a weekly day of rest and worship, my faith in God my Creator is strengthened, my hope in God my Provider is renewed, and my love for God my Redeemer is deepened. (*Exodus 16:1–30; Psalm 127:1–2; Hebrews 10:19–25*)

Devotional

Read: The gift of the fourth commandment is simply taking time to enjoy God. Jesus loves to worship, rest in and glorify his Father. In Jesus, we get to worship, rest, and glorify our Father. That is how we obey the fourth commandment. And like the beautiful rays of the Sun bring light and life to the world, rest in God, colors, nourishes, and changes our whole lives.

Sabbath Rest for Christians begins on Sundays, where we join the body of Christ in worship, praise, and thanksgiving. We learn to rest in God by participating in the prayers, singing, listening to the sermon, and receiving holy communion. All of this is nourishment and refreshment for our souls, and it is rest because it nourishes who we are: beloved children of God in Christ.

The rest of worshipping God on Sunday extends into the week. We enjoy God by resting in him in daily prayer and working in his presence to his glory. Daily prayer is like a mini-Sunday Rest every day. Did you know that Jesus regularly went away and prayed? It is more than likely that he had daily prayers he prayed to our Father, like the Lord's Prayer. Daily prayer and Scripture reading is a mini-Sabbath that helps us love God so we can love others.

There are plenty of days when worship feels boring, daily prayers feel tedious, and work and serving others feel pointless. It is tempting to stop doing these things until we feel like it again. But that would be a mistake.

Instead, we return to our baptism: we are united to Christ, so he takes our disobedience and gives us his obedience. Jesus takes our restless boredom and gives us his rest and love for the Father.

Reflection questions

I wonder how Jesus felt when he was worshipping, resting, and serving others?

I wonder how we can remember that Jesus gives us his worship, rest, and service when we don't feel like it?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for giving us your rest, worship, and service. Amen.

Sunday

Family Exercise:

These exercises can help us grow in the virtues of Jesus in our union with him.

Commit to Sundays as a day of rest for your family.

- Encourage one another to remember that Sunday worship is a way we Enjoy and Rest with God.
- Practice honoring God's name in worship by being attentive and active in singing, listening, and praying.
- Have special family games, activities, or books you do only on Sundays.
- Once a month, find a service activity you can do as a family in the community.
- Work hard on Saturday to make Sunday a day of Rest.

Explore rhythms of rest:

- Daily Prayer and Scripture reading
- Weekly Days off as a family
- Monthly special activities as a family that include service and Hospitality
- Invest in following the church Calendar as a rhythm of fasting and feasting.

Evaluate your use of time

- Take an honest look at work, family, and extracurricular activities. Are these keeping us so busy that we cannot spend Good time with God, family, and friends?

Third Week of Lent: The Fifth and Sixth Commandments

Summary of the Fifth and Sixth Commandment:

Love and honor God by honoring your parents.

Love and honor God by valuing others.

Memorization:

The Ten Commandments:

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods but me.

2. You shall not make for yourself any idol.
3. You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

Memory Verse:

*Psalm 19:7-9 The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure,
making wise the simple;
the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes
the fear of the Lord is clean,
enduring forever;
the rules of the Lord are true,
and righteous altogether.*

Monday: The Fifth Commandment

A note to parents: It is tempting to treat this commandment as a tool to get our children to obey us. The original intent of this commandment is focused first on adults honoring their adult parents. So in teaching this commandment there is a strong call to actively exemplify it, which will require our own repentance, trust in God, and response to God's call.

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 301. What does it mean to honor your father and mother?

I should love, serve, respect, and care for my parents all their lives, and should obey them in all things that are reasonable and conform to God's Law. (*Genesis 45:7-13; Proverbs 6:20-22; 20:20; 23:22; Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20*)

Devotional

Read: Who is your favorite person in history? What would you do if you could meet them? You'd probably tell them how much you admire and love them. Maybe you'd invite them over for tea and

respectfully ask them all the questions you could think to ask. You would then carefully listen to what they have to say.

It is this kind of attitude that gets at how we honor others.

As Christians, we learn to honor someone by first honoring God; we praise, serve, listen, trust, and obey our heavenly Father in Jesus Christ. We learn to honor God together as a family. God commands us to honor our parents as a way to honor and love him.

God created us to have parents, and it is a gift from God to have a mom and a dad. But we also are sinners who cannot love perfectly, so honoring our parents and keeping this commandment is hard.

You might think this commandment is all about you honoring, obeying, and loving me and your mom (*dad*, depending on who is reading). And it is - God is telling you that one way you love and honor God is by obeying, listening, and trusting us. But it also is a command for your parents to honor your grandparents. We must listen to, serve, care for, and love them.

We all struggle to obey this commandment. You struggle to listen, obey and trust us. We struggle to listen to love and respect our parents. But there is one person who honored his parents perfectly: Jesus Christ.

Reflection questions

I wonder what ways we struggle to honor our parents? (confess, as appropriate, ways you struggle to honor your parents, it is good for your children to see that this commandment isn't something you wield but something you mutually submit to with them).

I wonder how we can honor and love my heavenly Father?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for my parents. Amen.

Tuesday: Jesus and the Fifth Commandment

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 303. How did Jesus keep the fifth commandment?

As a child, Jesus obeyed Joseph and Mary; on the Cross, he provided for his mother by entrusting her to his disciple's care; in his life, he obeyed the lawful requirements of the civil and religious authorities; and in all things he sought to do his Father's will. (*Luke 2:39–52; John 10:22–39; 19:25–27*)

Devotional

Read: How do you think we'd feel if you ran off in a busy crowd without telling us where you went? We'd be scared and worried and try to find you as quickly as possible. Imagine how Mary and Joseph felt when Jesus disappeared!

When they finally found him, they were shocked that he'd been hanging out talking to religious leaders in the temple. Jesus said that he had been in his Father's house. Mary and Joseph were perplexed. But then the Bible says that after this, he went home with Mary and Joseph and was obedient to them.

Who did Jesus have to obey? (his Heavenly Father and his parents) How did he obey his heavenly Father? (by obeying his parents).

We learned yesterday that no one obeys this commandment perfectly. Do you remember some of the ways we confessed to one another that we don't honor our parents?

But Jesus honored, served, cared for, and obeyed his parents perfectly, all because he loved his heavenly Father perfectly. While we disobey our parents, Jesus perfectly loved and obeyed his parents because he loved his heavenly Father.

Did you know that even as Jesus was dying on the cross, he honored his parents? He asked his disciple John to care for Mary, his mother. Imagine honoring your parents that much?

Jesus obeyed because he loved his Father. Jesus said that everything he did was the 'work of his Father' (John 10:38). Jesus delights in doing what his Father said.

Jesus obeyed because he loved his parents and us. Jesus knows that we struggle to obey, honor, serve, listen, respect, care for, and trust our parents, so he obeyed to give us his perfect obedience.

Reflection questions

I wonder what it felt like for Jesus to delight in obeying his parents and the Father?

I wonder how Jesus learned to obey his parents?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, For honoring your parents and our Father perfectly. Amen.

Wednesday: Obeying the Fifth Commandment in Christ

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 305. What blessings result from obeying the fifth commandment?

Submission to God's appointed earthly authorities helps me to resist pride and grow in humility, and promotes the justice and peace (*shalom*) of society in which human life flourishes. (*Exodus 20:12; 1 Chronicles 29:23; Proverbs 10:17; Romans 13:1–4; Hebrews 13:17*)

Devotional

Read: Jesus loved, honored, and obeyed his parents and heavenly father perfectly. I (the parent) have to be the first to admit that I have not and do not honor my parents perfectly.

I want to honor my parents, and I want you to honor and obey me, but I don't, and you don't. How can we grow in honoring our parents?

Jesus didn't just obey his parents to show us that we need to. He obeyed so that we can obey; he served so we can serve; he loved so we can love.

When we struggle to obey, honor, or serve our parents, we turn our hearts to Jesus and ask for his obedience, service, and love. And he will give us his obedience, service, and love. He loves sharing his life with us. That is just the kind of Good God and King we serve, love, and obey.

Reflective exercise:

Use this imaginative exercise to help you or your child practice the great exchange. You can allow your child to respond to the questions or simply let them think about it (this might depend on the age or maturity of your child). Give 8-10 seconds after each question for reflection and response. This exercise is not meant to bring shame or guilt on your child or you. I would recommend participating in this exercise with your child.

Pray: Come, Holy Spirit. Take 10 seconds to breathe quietly together.

Remember with me, one time you struggled to obey, love, or serve your parents.

Think about how you felt when you wanted to disobey? Do you remember why? Close your hands tight in a fist, that represents your desire to disobey.

Now Imagine, that Jesus is right there with you when you are struggling to obey.

Imagine him sitting beside you. He knows how hard it is to obey.

What would you want to say to him?

Now Imagine that as you struggle to obey, he wraps his arms around you, and gives you a huge hug. He tells you that he loves you, and he has a gift for you.

You look down at your hands. They are closed tight, because of how frustrated you feel, because you don't want to obey.

Jesus takes your hand, and he slowly, lovingly, and gently opens it. As he does, he ask you a favor. He says, "I know you want to disobey right now, I know that feeling too, but instead, could I have your disobedience? I want to take your disobedience and give you my obedience to my parents and my heavenly Father."

He puts in your hand his obedience, his love, and his delight in his parents and Father. With open hands now. Feel Jesus's love and presence. Imagine obeying instead of disobeying; imagine how Jesus looks at you as you obey him and your parents? Imagine how you will feel.

Close with a prayer: *Thank you, Jesus, for taking my disobedience and giving me your obedience. Help me to remember that you always want to provide me with your obedience. Help me to ask and receive your obedience when I want to disobey. Amen.*

Thursday: The Sixth Commandment

Note to parents: This commandment covers a lot of ground, including murder, abortion, suicide, euthanasia, lawful killing, war, and issues of justice. For the sake of simplicity, I am focusing on murder and its inner heart motivation: anger and hate.

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 309. Why does God prohibit murder?

Because every human being is made in God's image, all human life is sacred, from conception to natural death. Therefore, I may not take the life of others unjustly. (*Genesis 9:6; Deuteronomy 19:4–13; Psalm 94:1–7; Isaiah 46:3–4; Romans 12:19–21*)

Read 311. How did Jesus extend the law against murder?

Jesus taught that this commandment also forbids the vice of ungodly anger. A murderous heart can lead to hatred, threatening words, violent acts, and murder itself, and is counter to God's life-affirming love. (Leviticus 19:17–18; Matthew 5:21–22, 43–45; 15:18–20; 1 John 3:15)

Devotional

Read: Once upon a time, there were two brothers. Their parents loved them very much, and they were poor and had to work very hard growing crops and caring for animals. As a family, they loved God and tried to love each other.

The older brother worked in the fields, while the younger brother tended their sheep. One day, both brothers brought God a sacrifice to thank and honor him. The older brother, however, didn't bring the best of his crops, while the younger brought the best of his flock. God thanked the younger brother, but not the older.

The older brother, was so angry, jealous, and frustrated, that, rather than repenting of his sin, he murdered his younger brother instead. The older brother's name was Cain, the younger brother's name was Abel.

Murder means taking another person's life. It is wishing that someone would go away so much that you make them go away forever. At the heart of murder is the desire to end another person's life because they are difficult or inconvenient.

You might be thinking, 'I haven't murdered someone.' But did you notice what happened before Cain killed Abel? He got angry and jealous. Jesus says that when we get so angry with someone that we think about or feel like hurting them or making them go away, we are murdering them in our hearts.

You might wonder if all anger is murder? It isn't. We get angry when things don't go our way or when bad things happen. But anger towards another that feels like "I wish they'd go away" is murderous anger. When we call someone a bad name or push them out of our way, we sin against them.

Reflection questions

I wonder how Cain felt when he murdered Abel?

I wonder how God felt when Cain murdered Abel?

I wonder why we get angry?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for the sixth Commandment. Amen.

Friday: Jesus and the Sixth Commandment

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 315. How did Christ cause life to flourish?

Jesus sought the well-being of all who came to him: he healed the sick, fed the hungry, cast out demons, raised the dead, preached good news, forgave his enemies, and offered his life to redeem ours. (*Isaiah* 53:4–5; *Matthew* 4:13–17; *Luke* 4:17–21; 7:20–22; 23:32–34; *Acts* 10:34–42)

Devotional

Read: From the days of Cain till now, God's beloved children have taken each other's lives in their hearts and actions. We are all murderers. So how does Jesus respond to our murdering hearts?

In the face of murder, Jesus brings healing, forgiveness, and life. In his Gospel, John calls Jesus the life of the world. In everything he did, he brought life out of death. What did Jesus do when someone was sick? He healed them! When someone died? He rose them from the dead! When someone was hungry? He fed them!

When things don't go our way, we get angry, wish others would go away; we murder. But Jesus did the opposite: he healed, forgave, and loved. Jesus is life.

But, humanity did not like Jesus. They did not like how Jesus told them to live, how he challenged them to repent, believe, and obey God. Jesus was making life uncomfortable, difficult, so he had to go. Like Cain, humanity murdered Jesus. Humanity killed the Life of the world on the cross.

How did Jesus respond to being unjustly murdered? He prayed: "Father forgive them; they know not what they do." He said to the repentant thief and murdered who died with him: "Today you will be with me in paradise." Till his last breath, Jesus gave life in the face of murder.

And then God rose Jesus from the dead. Jesus conquered death and forgives murder and anger. We no longer have to be like Cain. Jesus takes our murderous hearts and gives us his heart of life and love.

Reflection questions

I wonder what it felt like to see Jesus heal someone and forgive their sins?

I wonder why people were so angry with Jesus?

I wonder how I would've felt when Jesus told me to repent of my anger and sin?

Thank you, Jesus, for Taking my murderous heart and giving me your heart of love. Amen.

Saturday: Obeying the Sixth Commandment in Christ

Catechesis Question and Answer

316. How else can you obey this commandment?

As a witness to the Gospel and a follower of Christ, I can also keep this commandment by forgiving those who wrong me, patiently refraining from ungodly anger and hateful words; defending the unborn, vulnerable, and oppressed; rescuing those who harm themselves; and seeking the well-being of all. (*Psalms 37:5–11; Zechariah 7:8–14; Matthew 5:38–48; Ephesians 4:25–5:2; James 1:27*)

Devotional

Read: Years after Cain, murder had gotten so bad that God judged the world and purified it from murder and death by a worldwide flood, saving only Noah and his family. Like the flood, baptism unites us to Jesus's death and resurrection so that he can clean us of our sinful murderous hearts and gives us his forgiveness, love, and patient care for others.

We cannot stop being angry and hating others in our own strength. But united to Jesus, he takes our anger and hate and gives us his love and kindness.

Surrendering our anger begins by trusting that God is good and will care for us. We usually get angry when things don't go our way. So we have to ask Jesus to give us his trust in our Father with situations that bother and frustrate us. Let's pray for that: "Jesus, please give me your trust in our Father."

Next, we need to recognize when we get angry. In those moments, we take a deep breath, tell Jesus we are angry and ask Jesus to take our anger and give us his love for the person making us angry.

Let's practice: Imagine the last time you got angry with someone, or maybe even with yourself: now take a deep breath, remember that you are with Jesus, and pray: "Jesus, I am angry about... and I can't control it anymore. Please take my anger and give me your love. I surrender to you."

The more we practice giving our anger to Jesus and receiving his love, the more we will grow in his love and forgiveness for others. It takes time, and Jesus is infinitely patient. He loves seeing us learn to grow and walk closer and closer to him.

Reflection questions

I wonder what people or situations easily frustrate or anger me?

I wonder how much God loves and values you?

I wonder how much God loves and values the person who frustrates you?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for taking my angry and giving me your love. Help me to practice surrendering to you. Amen.

Sunday:

Family Exercises

Honoring our parents: As a family, brainstorm ways we can honor our parents. Adults think of three ways to show your parents honor and care. Children, think of three ways to show honor and obedience to your parents. Bring these to Jesus in prayer and ask him to teach you his honor and love for his parents.

Caring for life: One way to live out this commandment is serving those who are sick, in need or dying. As a family volunteer to visit some shut-ins, a nursing home, help at a local crisis pregnancy center, or help at the local food bank.

Fourth Week of Lent: The Seventh and Eighth Commandments

Summary of the Seventh and Eighth Commandments:

Love and honor God by respecting and valuing marriage.

Love and honor God by honoring and giving to others.

Memorization:

The Ten Commandments:

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods but me.
2. You shall not make for yourself any idol.
3. You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

Memory Verse:

*Psalm 19:7-9 The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure,
making wise the simple;
the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes
the fear of the Lord is clean,
enduring forever;
the rules of the Lord are true,
and righteous altogether.*

Monday: The Seventh Commandment

A note to parents: This is an important and wide-ranging commandment. The issue of human sexuality is a place of great goodness, and great guilt and shame. You might feel inadequate, scared, or cautious about even covering this commandment, depending on the age of your children. Let me encourage us all: if we do not teach our children a biblical understanding of sexuality and live it out in repentance and faith, the world around us will. I say this not to encourage an obsession with purity or idolize marriage. Rather, we must remember that God gave marriage as a gift to bless and order human society, and this blessing of marriage actually reflects Christ's love for his church. I've written this section by focusing on the gift of Marriage between one man and woman, and how we are called to respect, honor, and love others by valuing marriage.

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 318. What is adultery?

Adultery is any sexual intimacy between persons not married to each other, at least one of whom is married to another. (*Leviticus 20:10; Romans 7:2–3*)

Read 322. What is marriage?

Marriage is the exclusive, lifelong, covenantal union of love between one man and one woman, and a reflection of the faithful love that unites God and his people. Marriage is therefore holy and should “be held in honor among all.” (*Hebrews 13:4; see also Genesis 2:18–24; Matthew 19:4–6; Ephesians 5:21–33; see questions 146–48*)

Devotional

Ask: (If you’ve been to a wedding together as a family that your children will remember) Do you remember the last time we went to a wedding? What did you see? What do you think we were celebrating?

Read: When God created Adam and Even, he united them in marriage. God celebrated the first wedding in his entire creation! God made humanity to love him and one another, and one way we love each other is in Marriage. Marriage is a good and beautiful thing.

We (parents) have been married for (X) years. (*Share some of your story: how you met, when you got married, how much you love one another*). When we got married, we committed to stay together and love one another as Jesus loves us until we die.

Because we are all sinners, marriage is hard work. We have to repent, forgive, and ask Jesus for his love and obedience daily. Marriage helps us to love one another, and love you, our children, and love others. God doesn’t call everyone to marriage. Jesus and Paul weren’t married. God called them to be chaste, which means loving and honoring everyone as Image bearers of God. But when God calls someone to marriage, it is a good and holy calling.

God’s seventh commandment tells us not to break our marriage by trying to be married to another person. That is what adultery means. God made us to love him and only be married to one other person. When we break this law we cause all sorts of pain, hurt, and sadness. When we break marriage, all sorts of damage can happen in our lives, the lives of others, and our whole community. That is why God commands us to love and honor him by honoring marriage.

Reflection questions

I wonder why God loves marriage?

I wonder How God felt when he blessed Adam and Eve’s marriage?

I wonder how I could support my parents in honoring and loving their marriage?

Thank you, Jesus, for marriage. Amen.

Tuesday: Jesus and the Seventh Commandment

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 319. What did Jesus teach about adultery?

Jesus taught that even to look at another person with lust violates this commandment. Adultery begins with a lustful heart, but the Lord calls us to be chaste. (*Matthew 5:27–28*)

Devotional

Read: Do you know how Jesus began his public ministry? By going to a wedding! Jesus blessed a wedding feast with his presence and provision.

By starting his ministry at a wedding, Jesus taught us two things about marriage. First, Marriage is a gift from God, and Jesus honors, respects, and values it with his very presence! Second, Marriage is supposed to be a picture of God's love for us and our love for God. Like a husband loving his wife, Jesus loves us with his whole heart, to the point of dying for us to save us from sin and death.

One sin that Jesus has to save us from is breaking marriages.

Do you remember how we can murder people with our thoughts when we get angry with them and wish they'd go away? Well, the same is true for breaking marriages. When we want to be married to someone that we are not married to, and we think about them so much that we can't think about anything else, we break marriage in our hearts.

You might not struggle with this sin right now, but we all do at various points in our lives. But while we are unfaithful, and we hurt or break marriages in our hearts or actions, Jesus perfectly loved and was faithful to his bride the church. He takes our marriage breaking, forgives us, and gives us his love and obedience.

Reflection questions

Suggestion: Depending on your children's age, discuss ways people break marriages through lust, sexual relations outside of marriage, or adultery proper. This would also be the place to affirm that God created us male and female, which is a good part of creation, contrary to transgender theory.

I wonder how the bride and groom felt when Jesus blessed the Marriage?

I wonder what Jesus was thinking of at their wedding?

I wonder what Jesus feels towards us?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for loving me and giving me your obedience. Amen.

Wednesday: Obeying the Seventh Commandment in Christ

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 321. How do you benefit from chastity?

Chastity establishes wise and godly boundaries that enable me to give freely of myself in friendship, avoid difficulty in marriage, and experience the freedom of integrity before God. (*Genesis 39:19–23; Proverbs 11:5–6; Matthew 5:8; 1 Corinthians 7:25–40*).

322. What is marriage?

Marriage is the exclusive, lifelong, covenantal union of love between one man and one woman, and a reflection of the faithful love that unites God and his people. Marriage is therefore holy and should “be held in honor among all.” (*Hebrews 13:4; see also Genesis 2:18–24; Matthew 19:4–6; Ephesians 5:21–33; see questions 146–48*)

Devotional

Read: God created marriage, sin breaks marriages, and God restores and blesses marriage through Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection. We are married and stay married because Jesus has saved us from sin and gives us his love, life, and forgiveness.

But did you know we won’t be married after we die? We will still love each other. But our love will be directed to the one who loves us way more than we can imagine: God, The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Our Marriage (parents) and all Christian marriages are supposed to be a picture of Jesus’s love for the church. It isn’t perfect, but our love for one another points you to Jesus’s love. Especially in how he forgives, cares, and provides for us. It also tells us about our relationship with God as his church.

Everyone who is baptized in Jesus is a part of his bride the church. He loves us with his infinite, eternal love. When we are baptized into Jesus, he gives himself to us, and we promise ourselves to him.

Baptism is kind of like a Marriage ceremony! We are united to Jesus and he loves us as a husband loves his wife. In Jesus, we learn to love and honor marriage, surrendering our desires to break a marriage because he has given us his love.

God may call you to marriage, and he may call you to be chaste and devote your life to him and his church. Either way, we are God’s beloved. He takes our sin, and gives us his life. That is the way of the beloved. The best way to prepare for either calling is to learn to love and honor God as the one who loves you, who delights in you, who sings over you with loud singing, who rejoices over you as his bride. (see *Ephesians 5:21–33; Isaiah 62:4–5; Zephaniah 3:17*).

Reflection questions

Read *Ephesians 5:21–33; Isaiah 62:4–5; Zephaniah 3:17*.

I wonder how it feels to be loved by God in this way?

I wonder why God loves us this way?

I wonder how I can love others as God has loved me?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for loving me with your infinite love. Amen.

Thursday: The Eighth Commandment

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 331. What is stealing?

Stealing is the unauthorized and willful taking of what rightly belongs to another. (*Joshua 7:10–26; Proverbs 1:10–19; Luke 19:1–10; Acts 5:1–11*)

Read 332. Why does God forbid stealing?

God is Creator and Lord of this world, and all things come from him. Therefore, I must never take what God has not entrusted to me. (*Exodus 23:19a; Leviticus 19:10–11a, 23–25; 1 Chronicles 29:14; Psalms 24:1–2; 50:7–12; Romans 13:9; Ephesians 4:28*)

Devotional

Read: Do you know the story of Zacchaeus? You’ve probably heard the song or the story: a short man climbed a tree to see Jesus. But did you know that he was a thief?

Zacchaeus was a tax collector. In Jesus’ day, tax collectors regularly took more than they needed or was right for them to take. Zacchaeus had all that he could imagine needing or wanting, he got paid well for his job, but even with all he had, he took more than he needed.

Stealing is taking something that doesn’t belong to you or taking more than you need. But we also steal in all sorts of other ways.

We steal when we don’t give back to God a portion of what he gives to us. When we don’t tithe, we fail to acknowledge that everything we have is from God.

We steal when we don’t take care of what God gives us or what we borrow from others. How would you feel if you let your friend borrow a book and they tore pieces out of it, stepped on it, broke the binding, and then they gave it back to you? They stole that book from you - it’s worthless now.

We do the same thing when we don’t take good care of the things God gives us or what others give us.

Stealing hurts others, and it hurts us. It hurts others because we are taking what God has given them. It hurts us because we are acting like we are God. We are taking more than we need; we are selfish, and that is not how God created us to live.

God created us to love and honor God by loving others, and when we steal, we do the opposite. Why do we steal? We steal because we don’t trust God and want to be in control. We are like Zacchaeus, we have more than we need, and we want more. Then Jesus walks into town and changes everything.

Reflection questions

I wonder what other ways people steal?

I wonder why Zacchaeus stole from people?

I wonder why we feel tempted to steal from others?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for the Eighth Commandment. Amen.

Friday: Jesus and the Eighth Commandment

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 335. What did Jesus teach about this commandment?

Jesus taught that I cannot serve God and be a slave to greed. I should seek first his will and rule, and trust that he will provide for my needs. (*Matthew 6:19–24; Luke 12:13–34*)

Devotional

Read: Zacchaeus always wanted more. He wanted more money, more clothing, a bigger house. How do you think that affected his neighbors? The more he had, the less they had. The more money he stole, the less his neighbors had. But Zacchaeus still wasn't satisfied.

Have you ever been super excited about a toy? You finally get it, play with it for a while, and then you want something else 10 minutes later? Me too. We are never satisfied.

Zacchaeus went looking for Jesus, because he was never satisfied. He wondered, "could Jesus satisfy me?" He felt powerless over his sin, and he needed Jesus. So Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see Jesus, to see the one who created him, to see the one who loved him, and to see the one who will satisfy him.

And Jesus saw him, and Jesus knew him. He didn't see his wealth or his riches, he saw his sin, and he saw a child in need of healing. Jesus, the Life of the World, called Zacchaeus by name and said, "I want to spend time with you." Zacchaeus stole because he was never satisfied, and God came to him and said, "Come and be with me."

We are all like Zacchaeus. We take more than we need, and we are never satisfied. But Jesus never stole because he delighted in the Father, and he always trusted because he loved his Father completely. So, Jesus calls us by name and calls us to surrender to him, and be truly satisfied in him. He takes our desire for more and gives us himself.

Reflection questions

I wonder how Zacchaeus felt when he heard Jesus call his name?

I wonder how Jesus felt when he saw Zacchaeus in the tree?

I wonder how the people who Zacchaeus stole from felt when Jesus spent time with him?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for taking my desire for things and giving me yourself. Amen.

Saturday: Obeying the Eighth Commandment in Christ

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 336. How does this commandment teach you to view your possessions?

God desires that I be content, responsible, and generous with what he has given me. Everything I own I hold in trust as God's steward, to cultivate and use for his glory and my neighbor's good. (*Genesis 1:28–31; Leviticus 25; Psalm 37:16; Proverbs 16:8; Luke 12:32–34; 1 Timothy 6:6–10; Hebrews 13:5; Articles of Religion, 38*)

Read 337. As God's steward, how are you commanded to use your possessions?

As I am able, I should earn my own living, care for my dependents, and give to the poor. I should use all my possessions to the glory of God and the good of creation. (*Deuteronomy 15:11; Psalm 41:1; Proverbs 30:8–9; Isaiah 58:6–7; Matthew 25:14–30; Luke 14:13; Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–12; 1 Timothy 6:17–19*)

Devotional

Read: Zacchaeus had spent his whole adult life stealing from his neighbors and making their lives terrible. Imagine if your neighbors consistently came over and stole money, food, and toys from your family, and the police encouraged them to do it. How terrible would that be?

So you can imagine how angry Zacchaeus' neighbors were when Jesus went to his house. But then Zacchaeus came out and started handing his neighbor money, food, and wine, paying back everything he stole and more! Like Ebenezer Scrooge on Christmas morning, Zacchaeus had changed: he was no longer a thief but a giver.

What changed? He met Jesus and discovered that all of his desires could never be satisfied in things. Only Jesus the Lord of life, could satisfy him. He surrendered to Jesus, which changed how he related to his material goods.

Since Jesus healed Zacchaeus's heart of greed and always wanting more, he could pay back what he stole with a joyful and repentant heart.

Since Jesus is all Zacchaeus needed, Zacchaeus could be generous with the things God had given him.

Since Jesus was all Zacchaeus needed, he could live with what he needed and give everything else away.

Jesus takes our thieving hearts and gives us his heart of generosity and trust. United to Jesus, we can be thankful for what he gives us and be generous with others. We live with what we have and share it with others. Stealing says, "I need more than I have," but generosity in Jesus says, "Jesus gives me everything I have, and he shares his life with me, who can I share with?"

Reflection questions

I wonder how Zacchaeus felt when Jesus came to his house?

I wonder why Zacchaeus starts giving his money and stuff away?

I wonder how we as a family can be more trusting and generous with what Jesus has given us?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for giving me your life, help me share my things with others. Amen.

Sunday

Family Practice

Practice caring for your Marriage. Like Sabbath rest, we need to care for our marriage intentionally. Prioritizing our marriage with evenings together, date times, practicing good communication, and investing in our relationship with God are essential to honoring marriage. Talk together about ways you can care for your marriage.

How we relate to our money and things will shape how our children think about these things. Doing these inventories can help shape our family cultures in relation to God's way of life.

Desire inventory:

- As parents and a family, brainstorm where we regularly spend our time and money?
- What is the balance between our needs and our wants?
- Does what we spend reflect our confession of God as the Lord of our life?

- Think about our buying habits. Do we buy more than we need?
- Do we justify having more because we tithe 10%?
- Do we daydream about the next piece of technology, car, or (choose your hobby)? Why?

Stuff inventory

- Think about the things in our lives we haven't used in a long time. Can we see it or give it away to those who need things?
- Think about how we are caring for the things we own. Do we care for them, so we don't have to buy new things every year? Do we purchase used clothing or second-hand furniture?
- Think about how we use our things; do we use them to help others, bless others, and care for others?

Generosity inventory

- How do we think about generosity? Do we give from the leftovers of scarcity or trust in God's abundance?
- Think about ways you can be generous as a family with your time, talent, and treasure:
 - Tithing
 - mission//ministry
 - Local charities
 - Hospitality
- Think about how we could live below our means to give away more to those in genuine need; think of it as living in the socio-economic rug below you and then giving away what you have leftover.

Fifth Week of Lent: The Ninth and Tenth Commandments

Summary of the Ninth and Tenth Commandments:

Love and honor God by speaking the truth in love.

Love and honor God by being content with what you have.

Memorization:

The Ten Commandments:

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods but me.
2. You shall not make for yourself any idol.
3. You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.

5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

Memory Verse:

*Isaiah 53:5-6 But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.*

Monday: The Ninth Commandment

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 340. What is bearing false witness against your neighbor?

It is to willfully communicate a falsehood about my neighbor, either in legal or in other matters, in order to misrepresent them. (Deuteronomy 19:16–19; Psalm 109; Proverbs 12:17; Matthew 26:57–61)

Read 344. What other acts are forbidden by this commandment?

This commandment forbids all lying, slander, or gossip; all manipulative, deceitful, or insulting speech; and testifying falsely about myself for personal gain. (Leviticus 19:15–17; Psalm 12:2–3; Proverbs 10:18; 11:12; 16:28; Matthew 5:21–22; Romans 16:17–18; 1 Peter 2:1)

Devotional

Read: We've been lying since Satan deceived Adam and Eve, and they lied to God in the Garden. Scripture calls Satan the Father of lies, and we all follow in his footsteps when we lie. Lying means not telling the truth about others, ourselves, or God.

Sometimes we lie to get out of trouble; other times we lie because we want people to think better of us. Do you know the story of David and Bathsheba? David broke Bathsheba's marriage with her husband, lied about it, and had Bathsheba's husband murdered. Lying leads us to hurt others in all sorts of ways.

We also lie to ourselves. When we feel bad about ourselves, we sometimes think, "God doesn't love me." When we feel good about ourselves, we sometimes will say, "I'm the best. I don't need anyone else's help." Both of these are lies, and I know I've believed them a lot in my life. When we lie, we hurt ourselves.

We even lie to God. Every lie to others or ourselves is a lie to God as well. Because every lie rejects the truth, and God is the truth himself. We also lie to God when we tell others lies about God or twist Scripture.

Why do we lie? Because we don't want to face the truth about ourselves, others, or God. Like Adam and Eve, we want to be God, and we don't want to face our sin and the consequences of our sin, so we twist the truth, deny the truth, and hide from the truth. But the Truth loves us too much to let us live in lies. So he comes to save us.

Reflection questions

I wonder why Adam and Eve lied to God?

I wonder what ways we lie to each other?

I wonder how it feels when someone lies to me?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for the Ninth Commandment. Amen.

Tuesday: Jesus and the Ninth Commandment

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 345. What sort of speech should you practice instead?

I should speak at all times with love, wisdom, and truth, so that my words may honor God, and comfort and encourage my neighbor. (Psalm 32:2; Proverbs 12:17–20; 14:25; 15:1–4; Zechariah 8:16–17; Matthew 5:33–37; Ephesians 4:25)

Devotional

Read: We all lie. But there is one person who never lied. Jesus said he was the Way the Truth and the Life. The Truth came into the world to fight and defeat the Father of lies, who first lied to Adam and Eve.

Imagine meeting The Truth in flesh. Jesus who never lies, who never twists the truth, who never tries to make himself look better than he is. Imagine how free, humble, and loving he would be. He tells the truth to bring life, healing, and freedom, to save us from the lie of Satan.

Jesus the truth came and conquered the Father of lies throughout his ministry. One time Jesus met a woman who had broken lots of marriages. She lived in adultery and lies. Jesus slowly and lovingly revealed the truth to her. "I know your sin, and I love you. Come to me and I'll save you from your sin and give you life so you can live in the truth." he conquered the lies of Satan with his truth.

But not everyone wanted to hear the truth. Religious leaders were scared of the truth, and political leaders didn't believe in the truth. So they killed Jesus; they Killed Truth himself.

But the Father of lies could not conquer the truth. In his death, Jesus took our lies, deception, and self-hate, and he killed them on the cross. He conquered our lies and the father of lies in his death and resurrection.

Jesus is Truth, and all who are baptized in him receive him and his truth. Being with Jesus means being with the Truth. In Jesus, we can let go of our lies: the lies we tell others, tell ourselves, and tell God. In Jesus, we receive and live the truth.

Imagination exercise:

Take time to imagine what it would be like to meet Jesus as the truth.

Read through this meditatively and slowly. Allow your children and yourself to take time to imagine and think through the situation. Don't worry about correcting or challenging your children's responses; this is a learning process. Take 8-20 seconds after each sentence in silence. Do it with your child.

Pray: *Come, Holy Spirit.*

Imagine sitting at a meal with Jesus. What kind of food do you see? What do you smell? How does the room feel?

Imagine seeing Jesus across the table. He smiles at you. What does he look like? How does he feel? How do you feel seeing Jesus?

Jesus comes over to you and sits down beside you and tells you, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Jesus says, "I know every part of you, your thoughts, desires, and actions."

He says: "I love you."

I wonder how you feel hearing this?

Jesus scoots closer and says, "I am the truth, and I live the truth. I know you don't, but I am here to give you my life and my truth. Will you give me your lies? Your fears? Yourself?"

I wonder how we could respond to Jesus's offer?

I wonder what would change if we gave him our lies and fears?

I wonder what would change if we gave him ourselves and belonged totally to him?

Invite your children to respond by drawing a picture of how they feel or what they imagined.

Pray: *Thank you, Jesus, for taking my lies and giving me your truth. Amen.*

Wednesday: Obeying the Ninth Commandment in Christ

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 348. How does keeping this commandment help you to become like Christ?

By practicing love and truthfulness in speech, I grow in self-restraint, kindness, and honesty, so that I may know God with a mind free of deception, praise him with an undefiled tongue, and more truly love my neighbor. (Proverbs 8:1–17; Matthew 15:10–20; Ephesians 5:1–4; James 3:1–12)

Devotional

Read: When the priest sprinkled or submersed you in the water of baptism, God transferred you from the Kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of His beloved Son (see Colossians 1:13). We do not belong to the Father of lies. We belong to the Father of the Truth: The God and Father of our Jesus Christ.

While we still struggle against lying, we will be tempted to lie to others, ourselves, and God. That is not who we are. We are united to Jesus, and we are beloved: that is who we are.

Because we belong to Jesus, we can practice being truthful in our daily lives. Like learning to walk, eat, do dishes, or even ride a bike, we learn to be truthful, kind, honest, and loving by receiving Jesus's love and imitating his truthfulness.

We can practice truth by loving one another with words of love, kindness, and encouragement. Regularly encouraging one another is one way we live in the Kingdom of Truth and banish the kingdom of lies.

Another way to practice truth in Jesus is by confessing our sin. We can do this as a family, in morning and evening prayer, but also be honest with each other when we have sinned. When we confess our sin, Jesus forgives us, and we slowly learn to be truth-tellers.

We will feel tempted to lie, but then, we remember: we belong to Jesus, we belong to the truth. The Truth is with us, he is our Good King, and we can surrender to him and live in the truth.

Reflection questions

I wonder what ways we twist the truth in our daily lives? (Parents, this begins with us imitating Jesus and modeling truth-telling, humility, and honesty. Think especially about how we present ourselves to others through social media, conversation, or work).

I wonder how we can be more encouraging to each other?

I wonder how we can practice confession?

Response: allow space for you and your children space to respond to these questions with a prayer, drawing, or action. They may want to confess something, draw a picture about how they feel, or ask Jesus to forgive them.

Thursday: The Tenth Commandment

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 350. What does it mean to covet?

Coveting is the disordered desire for what belongs to another or what I am unable to have by law, by gift, or by right. (Joshua 7:1, 10–26)

Read 352. Why does God forbid coveting?

God forbids coveting because it breeds enmity with my neighbor, makes me captive to ungodly desire, and leads me into further sins. (Deuteronomy 7:25; Proverbs 12:12; Ephesians 5:5; James 4:2)

Devotional

Read: Do you remember the story of the rich ruler? (Luke 18:18-30). He came to Jesus and asked how he could have eternal life.

Jesus said, ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’” What do these sound like to you? Jesus tells him to obey the commandments! But do you see what is missing? The Tenth Commandment.

The Rich ruler says he's obeyed all of these without fail. So Jesus challenges him not to covet. Jesus said: “sell everything he had, give it to the poor, and follow me.”

The Ruler wanted affirmation that he was okay, but Jesus knew his heart. Jesus knew he was a coveter.

Coveting is desiring what others have, and when we covet, we usually break one of the other commandments. We covet a toy, so we steal it; we desire to watch more T.V. than we should, so we lie and dishonor our parents. Parents struggle with coveting all sorts of things: houses, cars, other people's lives, and careers.

Coveting is something we do in our hearts. When we see something we want and don't have, the desire to have it grows in us, and we start obsessing over it. We won't be happy, we say, till we have it. So we take control, we lie, steal, cheat, break marriages, and dishonor our parents to get what we want.

When we covet, we break all the other commandments. If we ever think we've kept the whole law, we come to the last commandment and see that no one can keep the law without Jesus.

Reflection questions

I wonder how it feels to covet something?

I wonder why I covet?

I wonder how we break the other commandments when we covet?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for the Tenth Commandment. Amen.

Friday: Jesus and the Tenth Commandment

Catechesis Question and Answer

Read 353. Why do you covet?

I covet because I do not trust God to provide what I need, and I do not remain content with what I have; rather, I persist in envy and desire. (Proverbs 14:30; 23:17–18; Luke 12:13–21; Galatians 5:17–21)

Read 355. What did Jesus teach about this commandment?

Jesus taught us not to seek anxiously after possessions, but to put our trust in God; and he showed us how to live by taking the form of a servant, and loving and trusting his Father in all things. (Matthew 6:19–34; Acts 8:9–24; Philippians 2:3–11).

Devotional

Read: It is hard to imagine going through life and never desiring what others have. It is hard to imagine not being anxious about our possessions, future, or daily needs. But amazingly, Jesus never coveted.

At the heart of coveting is not trusting God to care for us.

Jesus trusted God completely because he knew his Father would give him everything he needed. He was never anxious about the future, and he never sought after possessions to make him happy because he was completely happy with his Father.

Jesus trusted God throughout his life and never sought after or desired anything except his Father and his Father's will. The opposite of coveting is trust and contentment, and Jesus trusted the Father completely and was content with what his Father gave him.

At every stage of life, Jesus trusted his Father. He did not try to take control, he did not desire anything but his Father and his Father's will, all the way to the cross. Jesus's prayer to his Father is the ultimate anti-coveting prayer: "Not my will but yours be done."

Jesus became human and lived this perfect life of trust and contentment for us so that he could give us his trust and contentment.

Jesus takes our coveting and gives us his trust and contentment so that we can know and enjoy the love and goodness of his Father.

Reflection questions

I wonder what contentment feels like?

I wonder what it feels like to trust someone completely?

Thank you, Jesus, for taking my coveting and giving me your trust and contentment. Amen.

Saturday: Obeying the Tenth Commandment in Christ

Catechesis Question and Answer

356. How can you keep this commandment?

I can keep this commandment by learning contentment: seeking first the kingdom of God, meditating on God's provision in creation and in my life, cultivating gratitude for what I have and simplicity in what I want, and practicing joyful generosity toward others. (Exodus 35:20–29; 36:2–5; Psalms 104; 145:15–21; Ecclesiastes 5:10; 2 Corinthians 9:6–15; 1 Timothy 6:6–10; Hebrews 13:5)

Devotional

Read: God created us to love and desire him. Sin twists our hearts and leads us to desire everything but God. We covet. But Jesus is fixing our hearts by forgiving our covetousness and giving us trust and contentment.

What is so beautiful about Jesus is that he knows how broken our hearts are, how powerless we are over coveting, and gives us his heart. In baptism, Jesus unites us to his heart. He makes us children of the Father and gives us an infinite supply of his trust and contentment.

We are all tempted to covet, and we all give into it. But Jesus is patient. Every time we covet and confess our sin, he forgives us and gives us trust and contentment.

Jesus gives us his trust: Jesus gives us his trust in our perfectly good Father. You know that I've messed up, sinned, and not loved you perfectly. But our heavenly Father loves you perfectly and completely. When we feel tempted to covet we can remember: I can trust my Heavenly Father to give me what I need.

Jesus gives us his contentment: Jesus was content with what he had because he focused on one thing; His Father. He was content because he knew his Father would provide, protect, and guide him. Like the sheep in Psalm 23, Jesus was content with his Father the Shepherd because he is perfectly good and provides what we need. We are the sheep of the Father in Jesus. So we look to Him, trust in Him, and desire Him above all.

Growing in contentment takes time. The more we receive Jesus's trust and contentment, the more we will grow in gratitude for what we have, desire only what we need, enjoy what God gives us, and learn to desire and love God more than anything else.

We cannot be content apart from Jesus. But in Jesus, we can be content, trusting, and grateful. We obey the tenth commandment and all the commandments in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Reflection questions

I wonder how Jesus feels when we ask for help?

I wonder how The Father feels about us when we confess our sins?

I wonder how we can practice contentment and trust as a family?

Pray: Thank you Jesus for giving me all the commandments. Amen.

Sunday

Family Exercises

Truth Inventory: Take time to assess how you and your family can twist, spin, or not participate in the truth of Jesus. Areas of life where this is easy:

- Social media
- Spreading Gossip
- Talking about our family's achievements
- Describing our work habits

Write down areas where we do not live by the truth, confess them, and surrender them to God. If participating in certain areas of life leads you to lie, then cut those off.

Practicing encouragement

- Have everyone in your family try to offer a word of encouragement to each other once a week.
- Think about people in your church who need to be encouraged, write them a note.
- Brainstorm other ways you can be encouraging as a family.

Dream Inventory: What we dream about is a good indication of what we covet. Consider these categories:

- What I compare my family or myself to
- What I wish I had
- What I wish I did
- Where I want to live
- How I wish I could spend my time

Confess the covetous dreams, surrender them to Jesus, and receive his contentment and gratitude.

Practicing Gratitude and Contentment: as we confess our covetousness and receive Jesus's contentment, we put it into practice. Here are some suggestions:

- Pray the General Thanksgiving Daily
- Make a family gratitude list and add to it every Sunday.
- Think about your buying habits and give up one superfluous purchase a month. Give that money to a ministry.
- Think about the things you want versus the things you need. Practice for a month buying what you need.

Sixth Week of Lent: Holy Week

Summary of Holy Week: Jesus takes my sin and gives me his life

Memorization:

The Ten Commandments:

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods but me.
2. You shall not make for yourself any idol.
3. You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

Memory Verse:

*Isaiah 53:5-6 But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;*

*we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.*

Monday of Holy Week

Catechesis Question

Read 357. Is it possible for you to keep these commandments?

No. I fail to keep them perfectly, however hard I try. They show me my inability to obey God's Law and my need for God's grace in Christ Jesus. (*1 Kings 8:46; Psalms 53:2–3; 130:3; Proverbs 20:9; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:9–20; 1 John 1:8, 10*)

Devotional

Read: Have you ever gone to the doctor when you felt really sick? What does the doctor do? She asks you questions. She looks at your throat, eyes, ears, nose, checks your heart and your temperature. After she does all that, she tells you what is wrong and gives you some medicine and instructions about getting better.

Reading through the Ten Commandments united to Christ is like going to the doctor to see where and how we are sick with sin. Jesus isn't surprised that we are sick with lying, coveting, and idols, just to name a few. He gives us the commandments to help us see where we need his healing and care.

Sometimes we are so sick with sin that we don't recognize the symptoms. Imagine having a sore throat for so long you just thought it was normal. We need Jesus to show us through his Commandments and the Holy Spirit to show us how sick we are so that we can surrender to him and his good remedies.

Daily we repent because we struggle with sin daily, and that is why we pray the confession at church and why we can confess our sins daily to Jesus. Daily repentance is hard, but it is good because every time we repent, Jesus picks us up, takes our sin, and gives us his life.

Reflection questions

I wonder how Jesus feels when we come to him with our sin?

I wonder why it is hard to see where we struggle with sin?

I wonder how we can practice repentance daily?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, that I can repent daily to you. Please take my sin and give me your life. Amen.

Tuesday of Holy Week

Catechesis Question

Read 360. How does God enable you to live in his forgiveness?

Through faith, repentance, and Baptism, I am made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven. Washed of sin and united to Christ, I am "justified," being declared righteous by God,

and I am given the grace to live continually in repentance and faith. (*Psalm 130:4; John 15:26–16:1; Acts 22:16; Romans 5:12–21; Titus 3:3–8*)

Devotional

Read: Do you sometimes think that If you obey all the commandments, do everything your parents tell you, and in general obey, you'll be loved, accepted, and good? I think that too sometimes. It's tempting to memorize the Ten Commandments and think, "I know these now, I can obey these easily, and God will love me." This is called legalism.

Let me tell you two secrets: 1. No one keeps these commandments perfectly. 2. God doesn't accept you because you keep these commandments.

When you are united to Jesus in faith and baptism, Jesus gives you a fantastic gift: he takes all our sin, including all our attempts at making ourselves 'good,' and gives us his goodness, obedience, and rightness with God. The Bible calls this 'justification.' Apart from anything you've done, you are forgiven, accepted, belong, and loved in Jesus.

Here are three more secrets: 1. We can't keep these commandments perfectly, but Jesus did, and he gives you his obedience. 2. God accepts you because you belong to Jesus, not because of your good works. 3. You belong to Jesus.

Do you know what this means? You don't have to obey to be loved. You are loved so that you can obey! We learn to obey because we belong to Jesus.

Reflection questions

I wonder why we feel tempted to keep rules to make God happy?

I wonder why God would forgive us apart from anything we've done?

I wonder how we can remember that we belong to Jesus?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, that I belong to you. Amen.

Wednesday of Holy Week

Catechesis Question

Read 361. Does God's forgiveness excuse you from personal obedience?

No. God has reconciled me to himself and freed me from bondage to sin in order to conform me to the image of his Son. As I live each day in gratitude for God's forgiveness, I seek to turn from sin and follow Christ in loving obedience. (*John 14:15–24; Romans 6:1–14; 2 Corinthians 5:14–15; 1 John 3:4–10*)

Devotional

Read: Have you ever thought: "God loves me so much. He will forgive me over and over again. I guess it won't be that big of a deal if I disobey him." Maybe your parents gave you something to do, and you decided not to do it because you knew they would forgive you. This is the opposite of legalism, and it is called lawlessness.

God saved Israel from slavery from Egypt, and they rebelled against him. Like them, God has saved us from Sin. We belong to him. But Sin still is at work in us. We are still struggling against the sickness of sin. And sometimes, we just don't want to be healed. You know that feeling: "I just don't want to obey right now." I know that feeling too.

So rather than allowing God to change us, we feel like we can just keep sinning, and God will just keep forgiving. But that is not how it works.

When we are united to Jesus, he takes our sins and gives us his life to obey and grow in loving obedience in Jesus. Lawlessness says "I'm forgiven, so I don't need to change." But Scripture says, "you are forgiven, so you can grow and change in Jesus."

But we don't grow by going back to legalism!

Instead, we grow by remembering we belong to Jesus, repenting when we sin, surrendering our sin to Jesus, and receiving his obedience and love. Jesus keeps forgiving us because his love, forgiveness, and goodness change us. The more we practice surrendering and obeying, the more we will grow in the life Jesus gives us.

Reflection questions

I wonder how we are tempted to lawlessness? I wonder why?

I wonder if we are more tempted by legalism or lawlessness? I wonder why?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for giving me your obedience. Amen.

Maundy Thursday

A note to parents: As we turn to the three holy days of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, we enter into the mystery of our faith: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Please make it a priority to go to all the services of Holy Week. Easter is only good news because of the days that precede it. The pattern of the Great Exchange is built into these days: Jesus loves us (Maundy Thursday), so he takes our sin (Good Friday) and death (Holy Saturday) to give us his life (Resurrection Sunday).

Catechesis Question

Read 362. Are you still affected by your sin, despite God's forgiveness?

Yes. My sinful actions can harm my relationship with God, do lasting damage to others, and leave me conflicted within myself. I live in constant need of Christ's healing grace. (*2 Samuel 12:1–23; Psalm 32:1–5; Matthew 15:18–20; Romans 7:15–25; 1 Corinthians 10:1–13; 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8*)

Devotional

Read: On Maundy Thursday, we remember washing his disciples' feet and the Last Supper. Jesus knows how much we struggle with sin. He saw it in Peter's face as he washed Peter's feet. Jesus knew that Peter would betray him. Jesus knows that even as we belong to him, we will sin, disobey, and rebel. It isn't an excuse to disobey. We are just acknowledging that we are powerless over sin. We need Jesus.

Jesus knows we need him, so he gives us himself. When he washed his disciples' feet, he demonstrated that he will always wash us as we struggle with sin. We can come to him, admit that we are powerless over sin, and ask him to cleanse us. And he does.

Jesus knows we need him, so he gives us himself. When he celebrated the Last Supper, he provided us a meal where he gave us his life in the bread and the wine, his body and blood. We constantly live in need of Christ's healing grace, and in Holy Communion, he gives us his grace.

In Holy Communion, he tells us: "I love you, You belong to me."

In Holy Communion, he tells us: "you are powerless over sin."

In Holy Communion, he tells us: "I am more powerful than your sin."

In Holy Communion, he tells us: "I take your sin, and I give you my life: Eat and drink."

Reflection questions

I wonder why Jesus washed his disciples' feet?

I wonder how Jesus felt as he washed their feet?

I wonder how it would feel to receive communion from Jesus?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for loving me. Amen.

Good Friday

Catechesis Question

Read 363. How does Jesus heal you?

Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, as I continue in repentance and faith, Jesus mends my disordered soul from the effects of sin in my mind, will, and desires. (*2 Chronicles 7:12–14; Psalms 25:4–11; 41:4; 103:1–5; 2 Corinthians 3:17–18*)

Read 364. What is this healing called?

This healing is called "sanctification," which means to be made whole and holy. By the work of the Holy Spirit, my mind, will, and desires are increasingly transformed and conformed to the character of Jesus Christ. (*Proverbs 2; John 17:15–17; Romans 12:1–2; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11; Ephesians 2:1–10; 3:14–21*)

Devotional

Read: What is the Great Exchange? Jesus takes our sin and gives us his life. It is on the Cross that Jesus Christ completes this extraordinary gift. Throughout his life, he lived the perfect life to give it to us. On the cross, Jesus takes our sin, rebellion, legalism, and lawlessness and destroys, judges, and conquers it in his suffering and death.

When we are united to Jesus Christ, he gives us two gifts. A couple of days ago, we talked about the first one: Justification. Jesus accomplished our justification on the cross: he forgave our sin and declared over us that we belong.

The second gift is sanctification. When we believe, repent, and are baptized into Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells in us and gives us Jesus. The Holy Spirit makes us whole and holy; he makes us lovely and loving.

We receive both of these gifts in union with Christ because of the Great Exchange of Good Friday. On the cross, Jesus took our covetousness, lying, stealing, idolatry, marriage breaking, idolizing, God-dishonoring sin and threw it into the depths of the sea.

Because Jesus dealt with our sin thoroughly and finally on Good Friday, we can grow in holiness, love, and obedience in Him. Today is the day of the Great Exchange. Let us praise and adore our God!

Reflection questions

I wonder how Jesus felt as he suffered on the cross?

I wonder what it was like to see Jesus die on the cross?

I wonder what it feels like to receive the great exchange?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for taking my sin on the Cross. Amen.

Holy Saturday

Catechesis Question

Read 367. For what does sanctification prepare you?

Sanctification enables me to serve and bear witness to Christ in this life, and prepares me for the glory of God in the world to come. There I will be completely freed from sin and conformed to the likeness of my Lord, whom I will see face-to-face. (*Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 13:9–13; 2 Corinthians 3:17–18; 1 John 3:1–3*)

Read 368. What marks a life of sanctification?

God calls me to a life marked by gratitude and joy. In gratitude for God's grace in Jesus, I die daily to the desires of my fallen nature. In the joy of knowing that I will become like Jesus, I live each day in service to him. (*Luke 9:23–26; Romans 5:1–5; 2 Corinthians 4:5–18; 1 Thessalonians 1:6–10; Titus 2:11–14*)

Devotional

Read: What is the opposite of life? (Death) On Holy Saturday, we remember that Jesus saved us from death itself. In Eden, the punishment for sin was death, and in the cross and the grave, Jesus takes our sin and death so we can live in him.

Apart from Jesus, the Ten Commandments show us that we are sinners who deserve to die because of our sin. We deserve to be in the grave instead of Jesus. But Jesus is the one who destroyed the sin we commit and died the death we deserve, so we do not have to die in sin. In Jesus, we die daily to our desire to disobey, and lovingly learn to obey his will and serve others.

Jesus lived and died so we could live this life in him. In Jesus, we live in gratitude, surrender and repent of sin, and grow in love and thankfulness. He obeyed the Ten Commandments for us so that in him we could obey and love him and love others.

Jesus lived and died so we wouldn't have to die apart from him. When we die, we will be with Jesus and our Heavenly Father. We will be completely happy, joyful, and sinless.

Today we remember how far Jesus went to make salvation possible: Jesus died so we could live. He died so we could grow in holiness. He died so that we could see him Face-to-Face.

Reflection questions

I wonder what it felt like to bury Jesus in the grave?

I wonder how we should feel about death Sin Jesus already died and rose again?

I wonder what it will feel like to see Jesus face to face?

Pray: Thank you, Jesus, for dying for me so I can live in you. Amen.

Easter Sunday: Alleluia, Christ is Risen; The Lord is Risen, Indeed! Alleluia!

Family exercise:

Celebrate Easter

- Go to Church and celebrate Jesus's Resurrection with the Body of Christ.
- Enjoy a Family Feast together, and invite a neighbor, friend, or person who doesn't have a home to join your celebration.
- Ask everyone to share which of the Ten Commandments were most impactful/revealing for them.
- Celebrate Jesus's Resurrection with singing, gifts, and service to each other.
- Celebrate Easter for 50 days (the Easter Season goes from Easter to Pentecost!).
 - Say: "Alleluia Christ is Risen, the Lord is Risen, indeed! Alleluia!" at every meal
 - Read through some of the suggested Children's books as a family.
 - Have a special treat or snack that you enjoy as a family for those 50 days.
 - Work on an Easter playlist to listen to during those 50 days.
 - Celebrate Easter by collecting a family offering to give to a local charity or family in need.

Reflect on what your family has learned during Lent

- Recite the Ten Commandments together
- Recite the Memory verses together
- See if you can say any of the prayers from the Daily Devotional
- Talk about the meaning of the Great Exchange. Encourage everyone to reflect on what it means and how it has helped you think about Jesus and the Ten Commandments?
- Reflect on the different family exercises
 - How did they help you see your sin?

- How did they help you remember you are united To Christ and that he gives you his life?
- How did they help you worship God?
- How did they help you love God and others?

Keep the new habits growing:

- Keep Practicing Daily Prayer, reading your Bible and praying.
- Prioritize Family Sabbath and Sunday Worship.
- Help your children to engage the Bible through further memorization, reading, and “I wonder” conversations.

Resources for Growing in Christ as a Family:

Family Discipleship and Catechesis

If you want to learn more about family Discipleship and catechesis, these books are a good place to start.

Winfield Bevins. *Grow at Home: A Beginner's Guide to Family Discipleship: A Beginners Guide to Family Discipleship*. Franklin: Seedbed, 2016.

Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin. *Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home through Time, Moments, and Milestones*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2020.

Philip Mamalakis. *Parenting Toward the Kingdom: Orthodox Christian Principles of Child-Rearing*. Chesterton: Ancient Faith Publishing, 2016.

- The best book I have read on parenting. It is written from an Orthodox Christian perspective, but 99% of it is applicable to any creedal Christian.

Trevecca Okholm. *Kingdom Family*. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2012.

- An amazing book to read alongside Mamalakis to help grow in the vision of being a Family who grows Children in the virtues of the Kingdom.

Ten Commandments

Peter Leithart, *The Ten Commandments: A Guide to the Perfect Law of Liberty*. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2020.

- This is my favorite short book on the Ten Commandments. If you are interested in learning more start here.

Gilbert Meilaender. *Thy Will Be Done: The Ten Commandments and the Christian Life*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020.

Luke Gilkerson. *Christ and the Ten Commandments*. Self Published, 2014.

- If you want to go through the Ten Commandments another time, this and anything by Luke is worth your time. He also has a family devotional on The Apostles Creed.

Family Devotional

My Family reads through these story bibles on a rotation throughout the year. Each has its strengths and weaknesses. But they all accomplish the task of introducing our children to the overall story of Scripture. This is a great way to keep the habit of evening prayer going. We do family devotions from The Book of Common Prayer and read a story each night.

The Jesus Storybook Bible, written by Sally Lloyd-Jones

The Big Picture Story Bible written By David Helm.

Laugh and Learn Bible For Kids, written by Phil Vischer.

The Biggest Story, written by Kevin DeYoung.

Young Children's books

There is an abundance of Good (as opposed to really bad, cheesy, childish and moralistic) Christian Children's books published in recent years. These are a few of my favorites.

The Baby Believer Series. Written By Danielle Hitchens.

- This series is wonderful. It is beautifully illustrated and faithful to Scripture.

Tales that Tell the Truth Series. Various Authors

- These are wonderful retellings of stories and themes from Scripture. My girls favorites include *The Friend who Forgives* (The Story of Peter); and *The God Contest* (Elijah's story connected to Jesus).

Andrew Wilson. *Sophie and the Heidelberg Cat*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2020.

- This book inspired my use of the Heidelberg Catechism in this devotional. I cannot recommend it enough.

Older Children's books

As our children grow older we want them to know, experience and grow in their faith and knowledge of God. These books can assist in that growth. Above all though, as soon as your children can read, help them to read the Bible itself.

Jared Patrick Boyd. *Imaginative Prayer: A Yearlong Guide for Your Child's Spiritual Formation*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2017.

J. Ryan Lister. *Emblems of the Infinite King: Enter into the Knowledge of the Living God*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2019.

Marty Machowski. *The Ology: Ancient Truths, Ever New*. Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2021.