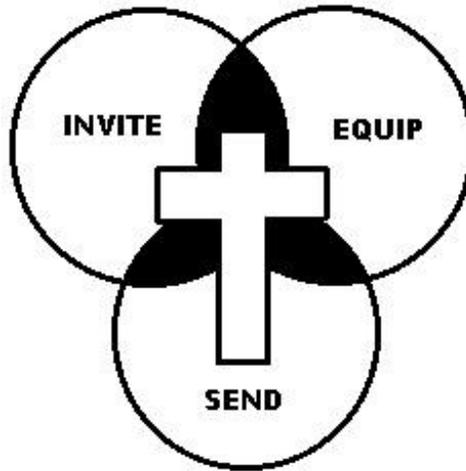


TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH



⁴Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. ⁶Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. ⁷Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. ⁸Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, ⁹and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.
Deuteronomy 6:4-9. (NRSV)

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"We are to fear and love God so that we do not neglect His word and the preaching of it, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it."

Luther's Small Catechism, Explanation to 3rd Commandment

A Faith5 Take-Home Catechism for Daily Use

Introduction-- When Martin Luther first published the *Small Catechism* in 1529, the last thing he had in mind was that it would become the tool of torture that it did! Far from intending that scores of adolescents would be cooped up in a class room memorizing the thing and regurgitating it back, Luther wrote the *Catechism* for moms and dads to learn it and teach it to their kids. Don't believe me? Here's what he wrote for the heading of each section of the Catechism:

"As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to the household."

See? Not a word about a classroom or memorization at all!

Actually, Luther DID feel pretty strongly about memorization: "...Teach them, first of all, these parts, namely, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, etc., according to the text, word for word, so that they, too, can repeat it in the same manner after you and commit it to memory."

But there's another word to be said about memorization at this point too. I have a sneaky suspicion that Luther was less concerned that the catechism simply be memorized word for word than he was that it got into people's lives and homes and hearts and minds. There is another way of talking about memorization. **Sometimes, we might say, "I learned that song by heart."** THAT'S the point of memorization: that we learn the Word of God *by heart*.

The format of *Luther's Small Catechism* that you'll find here flows from and follows a model of faith formation developed by an organization called Faith Inkubators. Their framework flows from repetitive, practical, and portable activities that help us answer the same question that the *Small Catechism* itself is after: *What does it look like to be a follower of Jesus in a every-day sort of way?*

Those faith practices are...

1. *Sharing*—Sometimes as simple as "Highs and Lows," this can also be as deep as talking about what we value, what excites us, what we are anxious about, what we fear...and where God might be in the midst of this, something into which the *Small Catechism* gives keen insight.
2. *Reading*—This is no less than being in the presence of and in communion with God through the Bible.
3. *Talking*—What did you read? What did you hear? What words or phrases or images jumped out at you? Why do you think these words captured your attention? These are questions that "make" you a theologian!
4. *Praying*—Remember those "Highs and Lows" from above? God is the source of those HIGHS. God is with you in those LOWS. There is a simple form suggested in this catechism to help you form those prayers with your family.
5. *Blessing*—Touch is a powerful thing, both when it is used as God intends to build up and express love as well as when it is misused and causes harm. The activity of blessing is a simple way that touch and God's Word are connected together in a moment of intimacy.

There are probably other faith practices, as well. (In fact, each day of the catechism suggests a "service project." That is, we are followers of Jesus when we serve God by serving others.) These are the simplest.

No doubt the process of faith formation in adolescent youth that we have called confirmation has been in flux for a number of years. And it is my deep conviction that most of those adaptations have done little in contributing to a visible, vibrant faith in our adolescent, much less in the adult lives into which those adolescents have grown. Our dire post-confirmation statistics, our empty pews, and the ardent prayers of our grandparents, "*Lord, get my children and grandchildren into church,*" bear witness to this reality. Whether or not this little resource does anything to stem the stream of our young people out of the Christian faith, I will probably never know. What I do know from my own practice and experience of the faith is that if anything will be different either in the big picture or in the individual lives of our youth, it will be because of the personal, trusted relationships between adults of faith and their youth that becomes contagious. It is my prayer that this catechism will be that for some.

Pastor Mike Pancoast

How to Use This Resource: Each day, review the catechism together. You might read it together. Or, one day, you might have the adult(s) read the questions and the kid(s) respond with the answer. The next day switch it up. However you do it, a typical application of this little book might look like this:

- **Opening Ritual & Tradition**—light a candle; make sure all the technology is switched off or silent; etc.
- The Faith5**
- **SHARE**—Highs & Lows (3 minutes or so)
 - **READ**—The Catechism and the accompanying Bible reading. (5-7 minutes)
 - **TALKING**—Some questions about the READING (5 minutes)
 - **PRAYING**—You’ll notice that there is a “canned” prayer of sorts that invites you to fold in what comes out of your **SHARE** time from above. (2 minutes)
 - **BLESSING**—*Mark each other with the sign of the cross, and say, “You are baptized in the name of the Father, + and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”*
 - **Service**—You’ll notice that there is always a suggested service project, as well—just another way to make visible what we say we believe about God.

TOTAL ELAPSED TIME: Right around 15 minutes. There may be times that your conversations go longer than that, which is OK. But for the most part, the intent of this pattern is to be rather compact.

I. The Ten Commandments--As the head of the household might teach them in a simple way.

Each Day:

Opening Ritual & Tradition—light a candle; make sure all the technology is switched off or silent; etc.

The Faith5

- **SHARE**—Highs & Lows (3 minutes or so)
- **READ**—The Catechism and the accompanying Bible reading. (5-7 minutes)
- **TALK**—Some questions about the READING (5 minutes)
- **PRAY**—You’ll notice that there is a “canned” prayer of sorts that invites you to fold in what comes out of your **SHARE** time from above. (2 minutes)
- **BLESS**—*Mark each other with the sign of the cross, and say, “You are baptized in the name of the Father, + and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”* Each day there will be a suggested blessing like this.

Service—You’ll notice that there is always a suggested service project, as well—just another way to make visible what we say we believe about God.

The First Commandment—*You shall have no other gods before me.*

What is the first commandment?

You shall have no other gods before me.

What does this mean?

We are to fear, love, and trust God above all else.

Day 1

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 1st Commandment & Meaning
- Exodus 20:1-4
- **Key Verse:** *“I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, the land of slavery.”—Exodus 20:2*

TALK: What do you think that it means to *fear* God? Can you think of any good reasons to fear God?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren’t going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, thank you for telling us over and over that you are our God. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: The first two commandments are all about worshiping God. In fact, one could speak of worship as “service to God,” especially if we were to think of worship in terms of relationship. You can’t have a loving relationship with anyone without spending time together. And how we spend that time might reveal how connected we think we are to God and vice versa. Over the next few days, plan on being in worship TOGETHER at least 3 out of the next 4 opportunities. What will you need to do to make this service plan a reality?

Day 2

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 1st Commandment & Meaning
- Genesis 3:1-7
- **Key Verse:** *“God knows that when you eat [the fruit] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good from evil”*—Genesis 3:5

TALK: Talk about a time when “you knew better” than another person. For example, maybe your parents told you not to do something, but you did it anyway. How did you feel before? How did it turn out? Were there consequences for your actions?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren’t going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, sometimes we think we know better than you. Help us always to seek your wisdom and to trust you. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: The first two commandments are all about worshiping God. In fact, one could speak of worship as “service to God,” especially if we were to think of worship in terms of relationship. You can’t have a loving relationship with anyone without spending time together. And how we spend that time might reveal how connected we think we are to God and vice versa. Over the next few days, plan on being in worship TOGETHER at least 3 out of the next 4 opportunities. What will you need to do to make this service plan a reality?

Day 3

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 1st Commandment & Meaning
- Exodus 1:8-22
- **Key Verse:** *“The midwives feared God and did not do what Pharaoh had told them to do”*—Exodus 1:17

TALK: What is one thing that is wrong in this world, that is a threat to human life, and that worries you? What was it in the reading?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren’t going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, we thank you for those who are obedient to you. Make us also obedient, that the Evil One have no power over us. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: The first two commandments are all about worshiping God. In fact, one could speak of worship as “service to God.” How we spend that time might reveal how connected we think we are to God and vice versa. Over the next few days, plan on

being in worship TOGETHER at least 3 out of the next 4 opportunities. What will you need to do to make this service plan a reality?

Day 4

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 1st Commandment & Meaning
- Judges 21:25
- **Key Verse:** (There is only one verse today) *“In those days, Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit”*—Judges 21:25.

TALK: What do you think it would be like if everyone in your household did whatever he/she wanted to do, whenever he/she wanted to do it, without regard for anyone else?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, we human beings are a rebellious bunch. Forgive our willfulness. Help us to do as YOU see fit, especially in being the presence of love in this world. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: The first two commandments are all about worshiping God. In fact, one could speak of worship as “service to God.” How we spend that time might reveal how connected we think we are to God and vice versa. Over the next few days, plan on being in worship TOGETHER at least 3 out of the next 4 opportunities—Wednesday or Sunday. What will you need to do to make this service plan a reality?

Day 5

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 1st Commandment & Meaning
- Matthew 19:16-22
- **Key Verse:** *When the young man heard what Jesus had told him to do, he went away sad, for he was very wealthy*—Matthew 19:22

TALK: How do you know if you have put something ahead of God in importance?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, there is no end to the things we will put before you—our money, our possessions, our time. Forgive us, and help us to worship you alone. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: The first two commandments are all about worshiping God. In fact, one could speak of worship as “service to God.” How we spend that time might reveal how connected we think we are to God and vice versa. Over the next few days, plan on being in worship TOGETHER at least 3 out of the next 4 opportunities—Wednesday or Sunday. What will you need to do to make this service plan a reality?

The Second Commandment—You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God.

What is the second commandment?

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God.

What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God’s name, but instead use that very name in every time of need to call on, pray, praise, and give thanks to God.

Day 1

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 2ND Commandment & Meaning (Don’t forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Exodus 20:7
- **Key Verse:** “*You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God...*”—Exodus 20:7

TALK: What are the most common ways you hear God’s name being misused? What is the most common way YOU misuse God’s name?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren’t going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, thank you for giving us a way that we might call upon you. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: The first two commandments are all about worshiping God. In fact, one could speak of worship as “service to God,” especially if we were to think of worship in terms of relationship. You can’t have a loving relationship with anyone without spending time together. And how we spend that time might reveal how connected we think we are to God and vice versa. Over the next few days, plan on being in worship TOGETHER at least 3 out of the next 4 opportunities. What will you need to do to make this service plan a reality?

Day 2

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 2ND Commandment & Meaning (Don’t forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Matthew 5:33-37

- **Key Verse:** “Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’ and your ‘No’ be ‘No’.”—Matthew 5:37

TALK: Do you ever wonder if they’re REALLY telling the truth when someone is trying to convince you of something and they say, “Swear to God!”?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren’t going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, teach me to be trustworthy in all that I say, that I need not use your name to prop up lies and exaggerations. For if I lie and exaggerate in small things, how can I be trustworthy in big things? Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: The first two commandments are all about worshiping God. In fact, one could speak of worship as “service to God.” How we spend that time might reveal how connected we think we are to God and vice versa. Over the next few days, plan on being in worship TOGETHER at least 3 out of the next 4 opportunities. What will you need to do to make this service plan a reality?

Day 3

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 2ND Commandment & Meaning (Don’t forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Luke 11:1-4
- **Key Verse:** “When you pray, say, ‘Father, hallowed be your name...’.”—Luke 11:2

TALK: Can you think of one time when you asked your parent for something and you were SURPRISED to get it?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren’t going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, your Son our brother has taught us to call you Father. Remind us always that we can come to you with not with fear and trembling but with the expectation that you do hear and answer our prayers as a loving Father. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: The first two commandments are all about worshiping God. In fact, one could speak of worship as “service to God.” How we spend that time might reveal how connected we think we are to God and vice versa. Over the next few days, plan on being in worship TOGETHER at least 3 out of the next 4 opportunities. What will you need to do to make this service plan a reality?

Day 4

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 2ND Commandment & Meaning (Don't forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Psalm 61:1-3
- **Key Verse:** *"Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer"*—Psalm 61:1

TALK: Talk about a time when you were not at all sure that God heard or answered your prayers. What were you praying for? What did you expect to happen?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, you have promised not only to hear our prayers but also to answer them. Help us to figure out your "yes," your "no," and your "not now," that in all things we trust your goodness. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

"Because of God's promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Service: The first two commandments are all about worshiping God. In fact, one could speak of worship as "service to God." How we spend that time might reveal how connected we think we are to God and vice versa. Over the next few days, plan on being in worship TOGETHER at least 3 out of the next 4 opportunities. What will you need to do to make this service plan a reality?

Day 5

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 2ND Commandment & Meaning (Don't forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Mark 14:32-40
- **Key Verse:** *Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak*—Mark 14:38

TALK: What one thing consistently gets in the way of you praying regularly (daily)?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, there is so much that gets in the way of our prayers to you—distractions; forgetfulness; laziness. Please forgive us and remind us always to call upon you in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

"Because of God's promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Service: The first two commandments are all about worshiping God. In fact, one could speak of worship as "service to God." How we spend that time might reveal how connected we think we are to God and vice versa. Over the next few days, plan on being in worship TOGETHER at least 3 out of the next 4 opportunities. What will you need to do to make this service plan a reality?

The Third Commandment—Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy.

What is the third commandment? Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.

What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not despise the God's word or the preaching of it, but instead we regard that Word as special and different from all other words and gladly hear and learn it.

Day 1

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 3rd Commandment & Meaning (Don't forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Exodus 20:8-11
- **Key Verse:** *"In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in it, but the Lord rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."*—Exodus 20:11

TALK: What activity that is not part of your daily duty—your job; your household chores; and so on—really recharges you and makes your joyful?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, we really are part of your creation. So just as the earth itself rests under a blanket of snow in winter, allow us also to rest in peace. And as our bodies are renewed by rest, so let our souls too be renewed by resting in your Word. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

"Because of God's promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Service: The first two commandments are all about worshiping God. In fact, one could speak of worship as "service to God." How we spend that time might reveal how connected we think we are to God and vice versa. Over the next few days, plan on being in worship TOGETHER at least 3 out of the next 4 opportunities. What will you need to do to make this service plan a reality?

Day 2

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 3rd Commandment & Meaning (Don't forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Genesis 2:1-3
- **Key Verse:** *"God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creating that God had done."*—Genesis 2:3

TALK: Talk about one of your favorite family vacations.

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, if you, the creator of all that is, found it right and good to rest and to enjoy the goodness of your creation, then who do we think we are to not take some time out? Make us hungry to rest in you. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: The first two commandments are all about worshiping God. In fact, one could speak of worship as “service to God.” How we spend that time might reveal how connected we think we are to God and vice versa. Over the next few days, plan on being in worship TOGETHER at least 3 out of the next 4 opportunities. What will you need to do to make this service plan a reality?

Day 3

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 3rd Commandment & Meaning (Don't forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Deuteronomy 6:4-8
- **Key Verse:** *“Impress these things that I am giving you today upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you are away, when you go to bed and when you get up.”—Deuteronomy 6:7*

TALK: What's the hardest thing about reading a little bit from God's Word in quiet place and time, even for just 5 minutes a day? What would you need for that to be different in your life?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, you tell us that Sabbath time is not just about rest and relaxation for our bodies, but also a time for our hearts, minds, and souls to be renewed in your presence with your Word. Help us so to grow. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: The first two commandments are all about worshiping God. In fact, one could speak of worship as “service to God.” How we spend that time might reveal how connected we think we are to God and vice versa. Over the next few days, plan on being in worship TOGETHER at least 3 out of the next 4 opportunities. What will you need to do to make this service plan a reality?

Day 4

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 3rd Commandment & Meaning (Don't forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Psalm 1
- **Key Verse:** *“The one whose delight is in the Word of the Lord is like a tree planted by streams of water.”—Psalm 1:3.*

TALK: How might God’s Word make one like a deeply rooted tree?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren’t going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, help me be strongly rooted in your word, that no matter what befall me in life, I may be strong in you.
Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.”

Service: The first two commandments are all about worshiping God. In fact, one could speak of worship as “service to God.” How we spend that time might reveal how connected we think we are to God and vice versa. Over the next few days, plan on being in worship TOGETHER at least 3 out of the next 4 opportunities. What will you need to do to make this service plan a reality?

Day 4

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 3rd Commandment & Meaning (Don’t forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Luke 6:46-49
- **Key Verse:** *“The one who hears my words and puts them into practice is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.”—Luke:6:48*

TALK: Have you ever played the game Jenga? (Look it up on the interwebs if you haven’t.) How might Jenga be like the Bible verse for you?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren’t going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, we work hard to build ourselves up—in our jobs; through our school work; in our physical activity. Help us also to be built upon the rock of your Word. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.”

Service: The first two commandments are all about worshiping God. In fact, one could speak of worship as “service to God.” How we spend that time might reveal how connected we think we are to God and vice versa. Over the next few days, plan on being in worship TOGETHER at least 3 out of the next 4 opportunities. What will you need to do to make this service plan a reality?

The Fourth Commandment—Honor your father and your mother.

What is the fourth commandment? Honor your father and your mother.

What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not despise nor anger our parents and all in authority, but instead, honor, serve, obey, love and think of them with the highest regard.

Day 1

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 4th Commandment & Meaning (Don't forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Exodus 20:12
- **Key Verse:** *"Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land."*—Exodus 20:12

TALK: Name three things that your parents do or have done for you for which you are thankful.

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, you created our first parents Adam and Eve with the job of taking care of creation. That really hasn't changed for our own parents or for anyone in authority over us. Help them to do their jobs with grace and skill, and help us to honor and support their attempts. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

"Because of God's promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Service: Do something nice for your parents--something that you wouldn't normally do. Tell them how thankful you are for the role they play in your life.

Day 2

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 4th Commandment & Meaning (Don't forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Genesis 41:1-44
- **Key Verse:** *"The proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. Pharaoh said to his servants, 'Can we find anyone else like this--one in whom is the spirit of God?'"*—Genesis 41:37-38

TALK: Can you talk about one public servant whom you respect and admire the way they have used their authority for service?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, because he trusted in you and sought your guidance, Joseph's authority was used to benefit an entire nation. Give us these kinds of leaders and guide their authority. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: Many public servants open themselves up to tremendous public criticism and seldom hear words of encouragement or appreciation. Write a note to one of your government officials thanking him/her for his/her service.

Day 3

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 4th Commandment & Meaning (Don’t forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Deuteronomy 6:4-8
- **Key Verse:** *“Impress these things that I am giving you today upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you are away, when you go to bed and when you get up.”—Deuteronomy 6:7*

TALK: Name someone from whom you have learned something important about Christian faith.

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren’t going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, you have given us our parents not just to give us life and help us to survive. Our parents are the first from whom we learn the faith. Help them. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: Figure out a way to tell the person you named in the Caring Conversation section above how important he/she has been in helping to form your faith.

Day 4

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 4th Commandment & Meaning (Don’t forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Luke 7:1-10
- **Key Verse:** *“When Jesus heard [the faith of the Roman officer], he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, ‘I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.’”—Luke 7:9.*

TALK: Do you know of any government or civil authorities who are regular worshipers in your congregation? Who are they?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren’t going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, thank you for leaders whose faith in your love impacts the way that they understand their authority and power. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: Pray for the servants you named above: *Dear God--thank you for (name(s)) and for their willingness to serve you by serving our community. Protect them, and give them wisdom, patience, and grace that comes only from you.*

Day 5

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 4th Commandment & Meaning (Don’t forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Matthew 7:7-11
- **Key Verse:** *“Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone?”—Matthew 7:9*

TALK: What is one thing for which you have been pestering your parents? Is it something you want or something you need? How are those two things different?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren’t going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, as parents, help us to give our children what they need, and as children, help us to trust in what our parents say and do as best. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: Take a week off from "wanting" and think about a creative way you can meet someone else's need: the local food pantry or second hand clothing store? A younger sibling? Your parents?

The Fifth Commandment—You shall not kill.

What is the fifth commandment? You shall not kill.

What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not hurt our neighbor in any way but rather help our neighbor in all his or her physical needs.

Day 1

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 5th Commandment & Meaning (Don’t forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Exodus 20:13
- **Key Verse:** *“You shall not murder.”—Exodus 20:13*

TALK: Look through the newspaper until you find a story that has something to do with this commandment. What could have

been a better alternative to the way the story turned out?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, in the beginning your word tells us that each human being is created in your image. How you must ache with pain when any one of us finds it necessary to harm or to kill. Forgive us; and help us find better ways. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: Figure out a way to help someone in your house with *“his or her physical needs.”*

Day 2

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 5th Commandment & Meaning (Don't forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Genesis 4:1-12
- **Key Verse:** “⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Where is your brother Abel?’ Cain said, ‘I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?’”—Genesis 4:9

TALK: Talk about which you think is most important and why—shelter, food & water, or clothing.

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, the answer to Cain’s question is, “Yes,” isn’t it? We ARE our brothers and sisters keepers, intended to help them in any way we can, aren’t we? Help us to recognize this need, and to act accordingly. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: Figure out a way to help someone you don't live with with *“his or her physical needs.”*

Day 3

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 5th Commandment & Meaning (Don't forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Exodus 1:8-22
- **Key Verse:** ²⁰So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. ²¹And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. ²²Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live.”—Exodus 1:20-22

TALK: Whether or not you ended up doing the right thing, talk about a time when you were faced with a choice of standing up to someone who intended harm to another person.

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, it's really quite easy if we stop and think for moment what you intend for our world and for our lives. We see all around us how violence, death, and destruction goes against your goodness. Help us to stand up and to speak out, even if that means putting ourselves at risk. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: Law enforcement officers risk their lives every day with the potential of having to stand up to someone who intends another person harm. Write a letter to one of your local law enforcement agencies thanking them. Write a prayer to include with your letter. The internet can be a resource for finding prayers like this.

Day 4

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 5th Commandment & Meaning (Don't forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- 1 Samuel 17:1-50
- **Key Verse:** ³²David said to Saul, 'Let no one's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.'—1 Samuel 17:32

TALK: Do you know of any law enforcement officials who are regular worshipers in your congregation? Who are they?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, there are times when force becomes unfortunately necessary in order to protect the lives of others. We thank you for those whom you have appointed to do this, so that we do not have to take violence into our own hands. Protect the lives and the hearts of our law enforcement officials. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: Law enforcement officers risk their lives every day with the potential of having to stand up to someone who intends another person harm. Write a letter to one of your local law enforcement agencies thanking them. Write a prayer to include with your letter. The internet can be a resource for finding prayers like this.

Day 5

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 5th Commandment & Meaning (Don't forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Luke 22:47-53
- **Key Verse:** *⁵⁰Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. —Luke 22:50-51*

TALK: When might it be necessary for someone who is not a law enforcement officer to take violence into one's own hands? Why do you think this?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord Jesus Christ, we are tempted to take matters into our own hands sometimes. We note with wonder how even you who had all power available stood by while you were being arrested, except to stop for a moment and heal him who had been harmed, even by someone seeking to protect you. We pray for those whose bodies, minds, and spirits have been damaged by violence done to them. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

"Because of God's promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Service: Give each person in your family a hug...a back rub...some sort of good, physical touch—as opposed to a hit or other bad physical touch.

The Sixth Commandment—You shall not kill.

What is the sixth commandment?

You shall not commit adultery.

What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that in matters of sex our words and actions are pure and honorable, and husband and wife love and respect each other.

Day 1

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 6th Commandment & Meaning (Don't forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Exodus 20:14
- **Key Verse:** *"You shall not commit adultery."—Exodus 20:14*

TALK: Have your parents tell you something that attracted them to each other.

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, in the beginning your word tells us that each human being is created in your image, male AND female. Surely this tells us something about how our homes and marriages should be? Help us live together so that the love in our homes tells the world something about you. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: Figure out a way to create a “night out” for your parents. What kinds of things need to be taken care of for them to be able to go out and enjoy a night together?

Day 2

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 6th Commandment & Meaning (Don't forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- Genesis 39:1-23
- **Key Verse:** *And although Potiphar's wife spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not consent to lie beside her or to be with her.*—Genesis 39:10

TALK: What other commandments come into play and are broken in the story of Joseph in Genesis 39. Does this tell you anything about what happens once one commandment gets broken?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, when Joseph was faced with temptation, he removed himself from it. Our world is filled with temptation, sexual and otherwise. Give us the wisdom and strength to remove ourselves from it. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

“Because of God’s promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Service: If you were to continue thinking about a night out for your parents, who would take care of your younger siblings while your parents were out?

Day 3

SHARE—Highs and Lows

READ:

- The 6th Commandment & Meaning (Don't forget to review the previous commandments & meanings.)
- 2 Samuel 11:1-27
- **Key Verse:** *²It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful.*—2 Samuel 11:2

TALK: Once again, it's not just the 6th Commandment that is broken; it's any number of them. Which ones can you identify?

PRAY: Lord God, we thank you for the Highs that we have been able to experience, especially...

We know that in baptism you have promised always to be with us, even with things aren't going so well. So we thank you also, that you have been with us in our Lows, when...

Lord God, some us remember a song we learned when we were small children: *"O be careful little eyes what you see..."*. David's eyes saw something he wasn't supposed to see, and his actions as a result caused all manner of heartache. Guard our eyes, that we may not be led to disaster. Amen.

BLESS: Each day, close with this ritual: *Mark each other with the sign of the cross and say,*

"Because of God's promises in baptism, your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Service: OK...so yesterday you thought about who might care for your younger siblings while your parents were out. What would your siblings like to eat while your parents are out? Who would do this?

Day 4

Devotion & Prayer:

- 2 Samuel 12:1-10
- **Key Verse:** *Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; ⁸I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more.*—2 Samuel 12:7-8
- Lord God, your Word tells us that there is consequence for our sin. People's lives get wrecked. Hearts are broken. Marriages die. Strengthen relationships between men and women, mothers and fathers. Help heal those who have experienced brokenness and pain. Amen.

Caring Conversation: How did the prophet Nathan trick David into condemning himself? How is adultery like stealing?

Service: When your parents finally have their night out, MAKE SURE THE HOUSE IS NICE AND CLEAN when they come back.

Day 5

Devotion & Prayer:

- John 8:2-11
- **Key Verse:** ¹⁰*Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."*—John 8:10-11
- Lord Jesus Christ, there is no sin that is without the possibility from you. Sometimes we like to pretend though that other's sin is somehow worse than our own, especially if this makes us feel better about our own sin. While you did not condone the sin of that woman caught in adultery, neither did you condemn her. Forgive us and heal us. In your name we pray. Amen.

Caring Conversation: Interesting, isn't it, that while the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law bring forward this woman caught in adultery, there was no MAN produced to shame and ridicule? Why do you think that is? What are some possibilities?

Service: Seriously. How can you help your parents enjoy a night out?

The Seventh Commandment—You shall not steal.

What is the seventh commandment?

You shall not steal

What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not take our neighbor's money or property or attempt to get them in any dishonest way, but rather help our neighbor improve and protect his/her property and means of making a living.

Day 1

Devotion & Prayer:

- Exodus 20:15
- **Key Verse:** *"You shall not steal."*—Exodus 20:15
- Lord God, our stuff matters, doesn't it? Especially that stuff that helps us make a living—our property, our tools, the daily bread that you give us to live. Help us not only not to take what doesn't belong to us; help us also help provide for those who are in need. And help us also give thanks and praise to you for what we do have. Amen.

Caring Conversation: Is this true: *"Finders, keepers; losers, weepers"*? Why or why not?

Service: You will find throughout your readings this week that there is a very strong association in the Bible between property, stealing, and taking care of the poor. Regardless of the season, most grocery stores and churches these days have some sort of food collection for area relief pantries. How will your family participate in that?

Day 2

Devotion & Prayer:

- Genesis 27:1-35—Jacob Steals His Brother's Blessing
- **Key Verse:** *Isaac said to his son Esau, "Your brother Jacob came deceitfully and took your blessing."* Genesis 27:35
- Lord God, Jacob and his mother did everything they could to lie and steal, and it stuck to Jacob for the rest of his life. Help us to see that there are very real consequences for disobeying your loving Law. Forgive us when we fail, and free us in love to make things right. Amen.

Caring Conversation: Again. And again. And AGAIN. One can seldom break one commandment without stringing a whole bunch of others along, as well. What other commandments come into play and are broken in the story of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 27?

Service: You will find throughout your readings this week that there is a very strong association in the Bible between property, stealing, and taking care of the poor. Regardless of the season, most grocery stores and churches these days have some sort of food collection for area relief pantries. How will your family participate in that?

Day 3

Devotion & Prayer:

- Leviticus 19:9-15
- **Key Verse:** *¹¹Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another.* Leviticus 19:11
- Lord God, it turns out there are lots of ways that we can steal, aren't there? Not caring for the poor is like stealing. Shady business practice is stealing. To take advantage of those who are burdened physically is stealing. Remind us that in the end, your law is also about loving and caring for others. Amen.

Caring Conversation: Have you ever felt ripped off?

Service: You will find throughout your readings this week that there is a very strong association in the Bible between property, stealing, and taking care of the poor. Regardless of the season, most grocery stores and churches these days have some sort of food collection for area relief pantries. How will your family participate in that?

Day 4

Devotion & Prayer:

- Amos 8:1-7
- **Key Verse:** *Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land... The Lord has sworn by the Pride of Jacob: "I will never forget anything they have done."*—Amos 8:4 & 7
- Lord God, we hear it again and again and again. You desperately care for the physical needs of the poor. And you desire the same from us. How little takes, even for just the cost of a pair of sandals. Remind us how much we have, and help us not to overlook the poor. Amen.

Caring Conversation: Find one article in the newspaper or on the news that is about stealing. Talk it over—what do you think motivated this person?

Service: You will find throughout your readings this week that there is a very strong association in the Bible between property, stealing, and taking care of the poor. Regardless of the season, most grocery stores and churches these days have some sort of food collection for area relief pantries. How will your family participate in that?

Day 5

Devotion & Prayer:

- Luke 19:1-10
- **Key Verse:** *“Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”* –Luke 19:9
- Lord Jesus Christ, there is no sin that is without the possibility from you. Zacchaeus was a smooth operator, and yet when he came into your presence, he was both convicted and forgiven. Convict us in our sin, that we too might be forgiven. In your name we pray. Amen.

Caring Conversation: What do you think about Jesus by-passing all the “good people’s” homes in order to stay with Zacchaeus?

Service: You will find throughout your readings this week that there is a very strong association in the Bible between property, stealing, and taking care of the poor. Regardless of the season, most grocery stores and churches these days have some sort of food collection for area relief pantries. How will your family participate in that?

The Eighth Commandment—You shall not bear false witness.

What is the eighth commandment?

You shall not bear false witness.

What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not betray, slander, or lie about our neighbor but defend our neighbor, speak well of him or her, and explain his or her actions in the kindest possible way.

Day 1

Devotion & Prayer:

- Exodus 20:16
- **Key Verse:** *“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”*—Exodus 20:16
- Lord God, it’s not just about telling the truth, is it? How we use words when talking about someone can hurt them just as easily as sticks and stones. Help us to guard carefully what we say about others, and where we do not know exactly what we’re talking about, guide us either to say nothing or else to speak well of them. Amen.

Caring Conversation: Is this true: *“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me”*? Why or why not?

Service: Find one way to stop a rumor this week, especially if it is about another person.

Day 2

Devotion & Prayer:

- Proverbs 6:16-19
- **Key Verse:** *“There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him:…a lying tongue…”*—Proverbs 6:16-17
- Lord God, it’s not just about telling the truth, is it? How we use words when talking about someone can hurt them just as easily as sticks and stones. Help us to guard carefully what we say about others, and where we do not know exactly what we’re talking about, guide us either to say nothing or else to speak well of them. Amen.

Caring Conversation: Talk together about the following statement. Do you think it is good advice? Why or why not?

Before speaking about someone else, let your words pass through 4 gates:

1. *Is it true?* (And if you don't know...?)
2. *Is it necessary?* (I.e., Your neighbor may be unhealthily overweight. (True—Gate #1) But is it necessary for you to ring the doorbell and tell him?)
3. *Is this the appropriate time?* (Does this need to be spoken in front of a crowd, for example?)
4. *Can this be said with kindness and compassion?*

Service: Practice saying one nice thing about each other right now. Now carry that across the rest of the week.

Day 3

Devotion & Prayer:

- Psalm 27:1-5, 9-14
- **Key Verse:** *¹²Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes, for false witnesses rise up against me, breathing out violence.—Psalm 27:12*
- Lord God, it's not just about telling the truth, is it? How we use words when talking about someone can hurt them just as easily as sticks and stones. Help us to guard carefully what we say about others, and where we do not know exactly what we're talking about, guide us either to say nothing or else to speak well of them. Amen.

Caring Conversation: Talk about how social media—Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.—can be used for great harm when it comes to this commandment.

Service: Find one way to stop a rumor this week, especially if it is about another person.

Day 4

Devotion & Prayer:

- Matthew 26:57-68
- **Key Verse:** *The chief priests and the whole Council were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they could not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.—Matthew 26:59-60*
- Lord God, it's not just about telling the truth, is it? How we use words when talking about someone can hurt them just as easily as sticks and stones. Help us to guard carefully what we say about others, and where we do not know exactly what we're talking about, guide us either to say nothing or else to speak well of them. Amen.

Caring Conversation: What is the worst thing someone else has said about you? How did it hurt?

Service: Use social media to say something good about someone this week.

Day 5

Devotion & Prayer:

- Matthew 28:1-15
- **Key Verse:** *When the chief priests had met with the elders from the council and had devised a plan to explain the missing body, they gave the soldiers who had been guarding the tomb a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep'."—Matthew 28:12-13.*
- Lord God, it's not just about telling the truth, is it? How we use words when talking about someone can hurt them just as easily as sticks and stones. Help us to guard carefully what we say about others, and where we do not know exactly what we're talking about, guide us either to say nothing or else to speak well of them. Amen.

Caring Conversation: Talk together about the following statement. Do you think it is good advice? Why or why not?

Before speaking about someone else, let your words pass through 4 gates:

5. *Is it true?* (And if you don't know...?)
6. *Is it necessary?* (I.e., Your neighbor may be unhealthily overweight. (True—Gate #1) But is it necessary for you to ring the doorbell and tell him?)
7. *Is this the appropriate time?* (Does this need to be spoken in front of a crowd, for example?)
8. *Can this be said with kindness and compassion?*

Service: Find one way to stop a rumor this week, especially if it is about another person.

The Ninth & Tenth Commandments —You shall not covet your neighbor’s belongings. You shall not covet your neighbor’s people.

What is the ninth commandment?

You shall not covet your neighbor’s belongings.

What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not try to trick our neighbors out of their property or try in any way to get it for ourselves by claiming to have some legal right to it, but instead, we should help our neighbors and be of service to them in keeping what is theirs.

What is the tenth commandment?

You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or friends or employees.

What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not entice, force, or steal away from our neighbors their spouses, family members, friends, or employees, but instead urge them to stay with and to be faithful in their responsibilities to our neighbors.

Note: You will notice that the content of the next two commandments vary little from the content regarding stealing. Have some conversation about why that is. Why is it that stealing and coveting are so closely related?

Day 1

Devotion & Prayer:

- Exodus 20:17
- **Key Verse:** *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house....”—Exodus 20:17*
- Lord God, our stuff matters, doesn’t it? Especially that stuff that helps us make a living—our property, our tools, the daily bread that you give us to live. Help us not only not to take what doesn’t belong to us; help us also help provide for those who are in need. And help us also give thanks and praise to you for what we do have. Amen.

Caring Conversation: Why is it, do you think, that stealing and coveting are so closely related?

Service: Someone once said, *“The best antidote to coveting is ‘generosity.’”* Find some way to be generous this week, especially for someone who might not be able to pay you back.

Day 2

Devotion & Prayer:

- 2 Samuel 1-10
- **Key Verse:** *David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “...He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”—2 Samuel 12:5-6.*
- Lord God, our stuff matters, doesn’t it? Especially that stuff that helps us make a living—our property, our tools, the daily bread that you give us to live. Help us not only not to take what doesn’t belong to us; help us also help provide for those who are in need. And help us also give thanks and praise to you for what we do have. Amen.

Caring Conversation: How are “lust” and “coveting” related to each other? How might they harm relationships?

Service: Someone once said, *“The best antidote to coveting is ‘generosity.’”* Find some way to be generous this week, especially for someone who might not be able to pay you back.

Day 3

Devotion & Prayer:

- Leviticus 19:9-15
- **Key Verse:** *¹¹Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another.* Leviticus 19:11
- Lord God, it turns out there are lots of ways that we can steal, aren't there? Not caring for the poor is like stealing. Shady business practice is stealing. To take advantage of those who are burdened physically is stealing. Remind us that in the end, your law is also about loving and caring for others. Amen.

Caring Conversation: Is there any material thing that you do not own about which you tend to obsess over? How do you think that thing might make your life better? How might it make your life worse?

Service: You will find throughout your readings this week that there is a very strong association in the Bible between property, stealing, and taking care of the poor. Regardless of the season, most grocery stores and churches these days have some sort of food collection for area relief pantries. How will your family participate in that?

Day 4

Devotion & Prayer:

- Amos 8:1-7
- **Key Verse:** *Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land... The Lord has sworn by the Pride of Jacob: "I will never forget anything they have done."*—Amos 8:4 & 7
- Lord God, we hear it again and again and again. You desperately care for the physical needs of the poor. And you desire the same from us. How little takes, even for just the cost of a pair of sandals. Remind us how much we have, and help us not to overlook the poor. Amen.

Caring Conversation: Find one article in the newspaper or on the news that you think might have something to do with coveting. Talk it over—what do you think motivated this person?

Service: You will find throughout your readings this week that there is a very strong association in the Bible between property, stealing, and taking care of the poor. Regardless of the season, most grocery stores and churches these days have some sort of food collection for area relief pantries. How will your family participate in that?

Day 5

Devotion & Prayer:

- Luke 19:1-10
- **Key Verse:** *⁹Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."*—Luke 19:9
- Lord Jesus Christ, there is no sin that is without the possibility from you. Zacchaeus was a smooth operator, and yet when he came into your presence, he was both convicted and forgiven. Convict us in our sin, that we too might be forgiven. In your name we pray. Amen.

Caring Conversation: What do you think about Jesus by-passing all the "good people's" homes in order to stay with Zacchaeus?

Service: You will find throughout your readings this week that there is a very strong association in the Bible between property, stealing, and taking care of the poor. Regardless of the season, most grocery stores and churches these days have some sort of food collection for area relief pantries. How will your family participate in that?

Ten Commandments Conclusion—*What then?*

What then does God say about all these commandments?

God says the following: *"I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments"* (Exodus 20:5-6).

What does this mean?

God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore, we are to fear God's wrath and not disobey these commandments. However, God promises grace and every good thing to all those who keep these commandments. Therefore, we also are to love and trust God and gladly act according to God's commands.

*However, this is not necessarily to say that God actively pursues or inflicts punishment generation upon generation or that God takes joy in punishment. Far from it. **Rather, one could say that God has created the world to work in a particular way. And when the world—and the people who make active decisions in that world—does not work in the way that God hopes and intends, there are consequences.***

*Patterns of behavior also have a way of repeating themselves in families. For example, we know that abused children often grow up to become abusers. Did God CAUSE that to happen? Is God somehow punishing the next innocent generation by allowing the abuse to continue? Or, are people behaving in the only way they have come to know in their family so that the unaddressed patterns of sin and death continue even into the next generation? **What would happen if the abuser somehow is confronted in such a way that he/she says, "My behavior has caused bitterness and death in my family, and I must change"?***

