

Memory Cards

Luther's Small Catechism



***Catechism: Christian Doctrine of the Evangelical
Lutheran Church of Finland***

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The First Commandment

“I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me.”

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The First Commandment

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

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The Second Commandment

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.”

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The Second Commandment

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God, and so we should not use his name to curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive, but in every time of need to call upon him, pray to him, praise him, and give him thanks.

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4

The Third Commandment

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

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5

The Third Commandment

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God, and so we should not despise his Word and the preaching of the same, but deem it holy and gladly hear and learn it.

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6

The Fourth Commandment

“Honor your father and your mother.”

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7

The Fourth Commandment

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God, and so we should not despise our parents and superiors, nor provoke them to anger, but honor, serve, obey, love, and esteem them.

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8

The Fifth Commandment

“You shall not kill.”

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9

The Fifth Commandment

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God, and so we should not endanger our neighbor’s life, nor cause him any harm, but help and befriend him in every necessity of life.

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10

The Sixth Commandment

“You shall not commit adultery.”

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11

The Sixth Commandment

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God, and so we should lead a chaste and pure life in word and deed, each one loving and honoring his wife or her husband.

The Seventh Commandment

“You shall not steal.”

The Seventh Commandment

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God, and so we should not rob our neighbor of his money or property, nor bring them into our possession by dishonest trade or by dealing in shoddy wares, but help him to improve and protect his income and property.

The Eighth Commandment

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

The Eighth Commandment

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God, and so we should not tell lies about our neighbor, nor betray, slander, or defame him, but should apologize for him, speak well of him, and interpret charitably all that he does.

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16

The Ninth Commandment

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.”

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17

The Ninth Commandment

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God, and so we should not seek by craftiness to gain possession of our neighbor’s inheritance or home, nor to obtain them under pretext of legal right, but be of service and help to him so that he may keep what is his.

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18

The Tenth Commandment

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his cattle, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

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19

The Tenth Commandment

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God, and so we should not abduct, estrange, or entice away our neighbor's wife, servants, or cattle, but encourage them to remain and discharge their duty to him.

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20

What does God declare concerning all these commandments?

Answer: He says, “I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

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21

What does God declare concerning all these commandments?

What does this mean?

Answer: God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. We should therefore fear his wrath and not disobey these commandments. On the other hand, he promises grace and every blessing to all who keep them. We should therefore love him, trust in him, and cheerfully do what he has commanded.

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22

The First Article of Faith

“I believe in God, the father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.”

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23

The First Article of Faith

What does this mean?

Answer: I believe that God has created me and all that exists; that he has given me and still sustains my body and soul, all my limbs and senses, my reason and all the faculties of my mind, together with food and clothing, house and home, family and property; that he provides me daily and abundantly with all the necessities of life, protects me from all danger, and preserves me from all evil. All this he does out of his pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness on my part. For all of this I am bound to thank, praise, serve, and obey him. This is most certainly true.

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24

The Second Article of Faith

“And in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord: who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried: he descended into hell, the third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and is seated on the right hand of God, the Father almighty, whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.”

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25

The Second Article of Faith

What does this mean?

Answer: I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, delivered me and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with silver and gold but with his holy and precious blood and with his innocent sufferings and death, in order that I may be his, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as he is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

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26

The Third Article of Faith

“I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.”

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27

The Third Article of Faith

What does this mean?

Answer: I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church he daily and abundantly forgives all my sins, and the sins of all believers, and on the last day he will raise me and all the dead and will grant eternal life to me and to all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true.

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28

[The Introduction]

“Our Father, who art in heaven.”

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29

[The Introduction]

What does this mean?

Answer: Here God would encourage us to believe that he is truly our Father and we are truly his children in order that we may approach him boldly and confidently in prayer, even as beloved children approach their dear father.

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30

The First Petition

“Hallowed be thy name.”

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31

The First Petition

What does this mean?

Answer: To be sure, God's name is holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may also be holy for us.

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32

The First Petition

How is this done?

Answer: When the Word of God is taught clearly and purely and we, as children of God, lead holy lives in accordance with it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But whoever teaches and lives otherwise than the Word of God teaches, profanes the name of God among us. From this preserve us, heavenly Father!

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33

The Second Petition

“Thy kingdom come.”

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34

The Second Petition

What does this mean?

Answer: To be sure, the kingdom of God comes of itself, without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may also come to us.

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35

The Second Petition

How is this done?

Answer: When the heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit so that by his grace we may believe his holy Word and live a godly life, both here in time and hereafter forever.

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36

The Third Petition

“Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

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37

The Third Petition

What does this mean?

Answer: To be sure, the good and gracious will of God is done without prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may also be done by us.

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38

The Third Petition

How is this done?

Answer: When God curbs and destroys every evil counsel and purpose of the devil, of the world, and of our flesh which would hinder us from hallowing his name and prevent the coming of his kingdom, and when he strengthens us and keeps us steadfast in his Word and in faith even to the end. This is his good and gracious will.

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39

The Fourth Petition

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

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40

The Fourth Petition

What does this mean?

Answer: To be sure, God provides daily bread, even to the wicked, without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that God may make us aware of his gifts and enable us to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

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41

The Fourth Petition

What is meant by daily bread?

Answer: Everything required to satisfy our bodily needs, such as food and clothing, house and home, fields and flocks, money and property; a pious spouse and good children, trustworthy servants, godly and faithful rulers, good government; reasonable weather, peace and health, order and honor; true friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

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42

The Fifth Petition

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

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43

The Fifth Petition

What does this mean?

Answer: We pray in this petition that our heavenly Father may not look upon our sins, and on their account deny our prayers, for we neither merit nor deserve those things for which we pray. Although we may sin daily and deserve nothing but punishment, we nevertheless pray that God may grant us all things by his grace. And assuredly we on our part will heartily forgive and cheerfully do good to those who may sin against us.

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44

The Sixth Petition

“And lead us not into temptation.”

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45

The Sixth Petition

What does this mean?

Answer: God tempts no one to sin, but we pray in this petition that God may so guard and preserve us that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or mislead us into unbelief, despair, and other great and shameful sins, but that, although we may be so tempted, we may finally prevail and gain the victory.

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46

The Seventh Petition

“But deliver us from evil.”

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47

The Seventh Petition

What does this mean?

Answer: We pray in this petition, as in a summary, that our Father in heaven may deliver us from all manner of evil, whether it affect body or soul, property or reputation, and that at last, when the hour of death comes, he may grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to himself in heaven.

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48

The Gloria

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

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49

“Amen.”

What does this mean?

Answer: It means that I should be assured that such petitions are acceptable to our heavenly Father and are heard by him, for he himself commanded us to pray like this and promised to hear us. “Amen, amen” means “Yes, yes it shall be so.”

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50

What is Baptism?

Answer: Baptism is not merely water, but it is water used according to God's command and connected with God's Word.

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51

What is Baptism?

What is this Word of God?

Answer: As recorded in Matthew 28:19, our Lord Christ said, “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.”

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52

The Gift of Baptism

What gifts or benefits does Baptism bestow?

Answer: It effects forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and grants eternal salvation to all who believe, as the Word and promise of God declare.

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53

The Gift of Baptism

What is this Word and promise of God?

Answer: As recorded in Mark 16:16, our Lord Christ said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

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54

The Gift of Baptism

How can water produce such great effects?

Answer: It is not the water that produces these effects, but the Word of God connected with the water, and our faith which relies on the Word of God connected with the water. For without the Word of God the water is merely water and no Baptism. But when connected with the Word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul wrote to Titus (3:5-8), “He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. The saying is sure.”

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55

The Significance of Baptism

What does such baptizing with water signify?

Answer: It signifies that the old Adam in us, together with all sins and evil lusts, should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance and be put to death, and that the new man should come forth daily and rise up, cleansed and righteous, to live forever in God's presence.

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56

The Significance of Baptism

Where is this written?

Answer: In Romans 6:4, St. Paul wrote, “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

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57

What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

Answer: Instituted by Christ himself, it is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given to us Christians to eat and drink.

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58

What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

Where is it written?

Answer: The holy evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and also St. Paul, write thus: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you. This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’”

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59

The Gift of Holy Communion

What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?

Answer: We are told in the words “for you” and “for the forgiveness of sins.” By these words the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given to us in the sacrament, for where there is forgiveness of sins, there are also life and salvation.

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60

The Gift of Holy Communion

How can bodily eating and drinking produce such great effects?

Answer: The eating and drinking do not in themselves produce them, but the words “for you” and “for the forgiveness of sins.” These words, when accompanied by the bodily eating and drinking, are the chief thing in the sacrament, and he who believes these words has what they say and declare: the forgiveness of sins.

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61

The Significance of the Holy Communion

Who, then, receives this sacrament worthily?

Answer: Fasting and bodily preparation are a good external discipline, but he is truly worthy and well prepared who believes these words: “for you” and “for the forgiveness of sins.” On the other hand, he who does not believe these words, or doubts them, is unworthy and unprepared, for the words “for you” require truly believing hearts.

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62

What is confession?

Answer: Confession consists of two parts. One is that we confess our sins. The other is that we receive absolution or forgiveness from the confessor as from God himself, by no means doubting but firmly believing that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven.

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63

What sins should we confess?

Answer: Before God we should acknowledge that we are guilty of all manner of sins, even those of which we are not aware, as we do in the Lord's Prayer. Before the confessor, however, we should confess only those sins of which we have knowledge and which trouble us.

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64

What sins should we confess?

What are such sins?

Answer: Reflect on your condition in the light of the Ten Commandments: whether you are a father or mother, a son or daughter, a master or servant; whether you have been disobedient, unfaithful, lazy, ill-tempered, or quarrelsome; whether you have harmed anyone by word or deed; and whether you have stolen, neglected, or wasted anything, or done other evil.

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65

Morning Prayer

In the morning, when you rise, make the sign of the cross and say, "In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Then, kneeling or standing, say the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Then you may say this prayer:

"I give thee thanks, heavenly Father, through thy dear Son Jesus Christ, that thou has protected me through the night from all harm and danger. I beseech thee to keep me this day, too, from all sin and evil, that in all my thought, words, and deeds I may please thee. Into thy hands I commend my body and soul and all that is mine. Let thy holy angel have charge of me, that the wicked one may have no power over me. Amen."

After singing a hymn (possibly a hymn on the Ten Commandments) or whatever your devotion may suggest, you should go to your work joyfully.

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66

Evening Prayer

In the evening, when you retire, make the sign of the cross and say, "In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Then, kneeling or standing, say the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Then you may say this prayer:

"I give thee thanks, heavenly Father, through thy dear Son Jesus Christ, that thou hast this day graciously protected me. I beseech thee to forgive all my sins and the wrong which I have done. Graciously protect me during the coming night. Into thy hands I commend my body and soul and all that is mine. Let thy holy angel have charge of me, that the wicked one may have no power over me. Amen."

Then quickly lie down and sleep in peace.

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67

Grace at Table: Blessing before Eating

“The eyes of all look to thee, O Lord, and thou givest them their food in due season. Thou openest thy hand; thou satisfiest the desire of every living thing.”

It is to be observed that “satisfying the desire of every living thing” means that all creatures receive enough to eat to make them joyful and of good cheer. Greed and anxiety about food prevent such satisfaction.

Then the Lord’s Prayer should be said, and afterwards this prayer:

“Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us, and these thy gifts which of thy bountiful goodness thou hast bestowed on us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

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68

Grace at Table: Thanksgiving after Eating

“O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever. He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens which cry. His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man; but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.”

Then the Lord’s Prayer should be said, and afterwards this prayer:

“We give thee thanks, Lord God, our Father, for all thy benefits, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns forever. Amen.”

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69