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# The Recovery of Memorization in Confirmation: A Study of Junior Confirmation at Concordia Lutheran Church, Geneseo, Illinois

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THE RECOVERY OF MEMORIZATION IN CONFIRMATION:  
A STUDY OF JUNIOR CONFIRMATION AT CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CHURCH,  
GENESEO, ILLINOIS

April 11, 2005

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CONCORDIA SEMINARY

THE RECOVERY OF MEMORIZATION IN CONFIRMATION:

A STUDY OF JUNIOR CONFIRMATION AT CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CHURCH,  
GENESE0, ILLINOIS

A MAJOR APPLIED PROJECT  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY  
PASTOR DANIEL A. OLSON

GENESE0, ILLINOIS

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to address the problem of junior confirmation students not retaining long term the material they were being assigned to learn. The project employed the use of various active teaching methods in order to include the different learning styles of the students. The project demonstrates that the use of these active learning methods did result in a reduction in rote memorization and a significant improvement in the student's ability to retain what they were being taught. The conclusion of the project is that there is a need for greater implementation of these active learning techniques.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### MEMORIZATION OF THE CATECHISM: SEEKING TO IMPROVE LONG TERM RETENTION

#### **The Problem**

One problem with the current confirmation system at Concordia Lutheran Church in Geneseo, Illinois is students not retaining long term the material they have learned. Rote memorization is of limited value to a student. It implies that a person is simply memorizing words that have little meaning to him. It also means that the student will not remember the things that are being learned for any great length of time. The student will remember what is required long enough to pass a test, but the material will quickly be forgotten. Rote memorization contributes to a problem with the current confirmation system at Concordia and many other congregations when it comes to students retaining long term the material they have learned. However, the problem goes beyond the limitations of rote memorization. It is my belief that a major part of this problem is due to some students being more or less uninvolved in the class, which hinders their meaningful memorization of the catechism.

The teaching technique currently employed is largely a lecture style with opportunity for students to ask questions which they may have. There are certainly students who react to this method extremely well and are involved in the class. However, there are also students who are clearly disengaged, and this disengagement is demonstrated in their lack of retention of the material. The current instruction method does not take into account the different ways that different students learn.

The current memorization method is also very difficult for a fair number of the students. There are no aids for memorizing the Six Chief Parts and the Biblical passages at this time. On their own, the students resort to rote memorization.

There is also a lack of involvement by some of the parents. Some parents simply bring their kids to confirmation instruction and have no involvement beyond that. The retention of material would be greatly aided if it were reviewed during the week at home. This review happens in some families but it is not the case for all students. However, it is my conviction that most if not all parents would play a larger role in helping their children learn if they were provided with clear simple activities by which to do this.

### **The Purpose**

The purpose of this Major Applied Project is to improve long term retention of the teachings of the Six Chief Parts in junior confirmation. The project will, through scholarly research, seek to better utilize teaching methods that are available to improve the amount of material that is retained long term by students and employ those methods in the confirmation program. It will seek to implement differing teaching methods that will target different ways in which students learn.

To that end, it will employ methods that will aid students in the actual memorization of the Six Chief Parts and the various Biblical passages that are assigned. These methods will assist the students in making memorization easier and will help the students to retain what they are memorizing long term. It will also employ methods that will enable parents to review the key concepts that are learned in class during the week with their children. These methods will increase the students' memory due to the

opportunity to review the various teachings more times than can be done in class alone. An added benefit will be getting parents to hear the truths of God's Word.

### **Process**

The study will involve the seven students who have completed the first year of confirmation instruction (during the seventh grade) and are entering into the second year. It will also include the four students who will be entering their first year of instruction.

The process will implement different teaching methods that are more interactive and involve the differing methods by which the students learn. I will seek to employ such things as role-playing, case-studies, and various other methods that will get the students involved in the learning process and demonstrate the relevance of what they are learning. It is anticipated that this will improve the long term retention of the materials that are being learned.

I will also seek to set the Six Chief Parts of The Small Catechism to music. This will involve a greater number of the senses and use music to aid in the memorization process.

I will also develop a plan for giving homework assignments each week that are to be done with parents. The assignments will be related to the sections of The Small Catechism that have been covered in class. They will be simple and intended to get the parents to discuss the sections of the Catechism learned in class with their children. These homework assignments will provide another opportunity for the students to cover the material that is to be retained and assist in the retention of the material. It is also expected that increased involvement by the parents will aid in the retention of the material that is covered.



## **Presuppositions**

This project begins with certain presuppositions. The first presupposition is that all of the current students were baptized prior to confirmation. Faith has been given to the students at Baptism (Matthew 28:19-20). The students are baptized children of God and are precious in His sight.

The faith which was given at Baptism is to be continuously nurtured and grown through the Word of God (Romans 10:14-16). Apart from the Word and the Sacraments, we have no right to expect that God will work; therefore, the communication of God's Word is the basis for confirmation. A confirmation rite is fine, but the essential part of confirmation consists of instruction in the Word of God.

Scripture is the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. As such, the teachings of Scripture are the foundation for confirmation instruction.

Scripture teaches that we are justified in God's sight by grace alone, through faith, apart from any good works on our part (Ephesians 2:8-9). Confirmation seeks to teach that Word of God to the students by which the Holy Spirit will grow faith in their hearts, but confirmation is not to be seen as a good work by which salvation is obtained or contributed to. Instructional methods that give the perception that confirmation is a meritorious work should be avoided.

A certain amount of knowledge of God's Word is essential for confirmation in the Lutheran Church. One of the overriding goals of confirmation at Concordia Lutheran Church is to prepare students for the reception of the Lord's Supper. Scripture teaches that one be able to examine himself before admission to the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians

11:28), and it is assumed that this necessary knowledge is obtained through the course of confirmation instruction.

Scripture also teaches that one who confesses to believe in Jesus Christ as Savior make a clear confession of that faith (Matthew 10:32-33). This means that a person is to have a certain amount of knowledge of God's Word and who Jesus is that a proper confession might be made. This confession is one of the purposes of confirmation instruction.

Confirmation instruction is a vital part of what the church does. The church has a responsibility to preach and teach the Word of God wherever it is given the opportunity to do so. Confirmation instruction is a vital part of what the pastor does (Romans 10:14-15). However, the family remains the primary religious instructor of children (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). The parents should play a role in the religious instruction of their children.

Confirmation instruction presupposes regular attendance in worship and Sunday School. Attendance by the parents with their children is also presupposed. This expectation of regular attendance is related to families being the primary religious instructors of their children.

### **The Project in Theological Perspective**

Scripture emphasizes the importance of retaining the teachings of God's Word and having them engraved on one's heart and will (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). The project will study some of the passages of Scripture that address memory and retaining the teachings of the Word of God. It will also consider the parts of the Lutheran Confessions which address this along with the pertinent teachings of Martin Luther in regard to the

memorization of the Catechism. The church's understanding of the role that parents play in the instruction of their children (Proverbs 22:6 and Deuteronomy 6:4-9) and how that relates to the church's responsibility for the instruction of youth will also be addressed.

Preparation for proper reception of Holy Communion (I Corinthians 11:28) is an important part of confirmation instruction. This project will specifically examine the role of memory in proper preparation for Communion.

Jesus tells His Church to go and make disciples by baptizing and teaching (Matthew 28:19-20). The Holy Spirit works through the Word and Sacraments to create and maintain faith in a person's heart. The Holy Spirit alone can create and maintain faith. Therefore, keeping God's Word central in confirmation instruction is essential. This project will look at the relevant passages from Scripture and the Confessions as well as various documents that address the purpose of confirmation instruction. Since the Holy Spirit works through the Word, committing Scripture to memory is an important part of confirmation instruction.

### **Literature Review**

The implementation of this Major Applied Project (M.A.P.) will result in a dramatically different approach to confirmation instruction at Concordia Lutheran Church at Geneseo, Illinois. Therefore, a number of different resources will be used to facilitate a faithful and effective approach to memorization that will target the different learning styles of the various students.

Thom and Joani Schultz have published their findings regarding different learning methods through Group Publishing in recent years.<sup>1</sup> Their books emphasize the different

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<sup>1</sup> Thom & Joani Schultz, *The Dirt on Learning: Groundbreaking Tools to Grow Faith in Your Church* (Loveland: Group Publishing, Inc. 1999).

ways in which different people learn. They also emphasize the need to use different teaching methods in order to help different students learn and retain things longer term. Concordia Publishing House has also published a book recently, Get Active, which emphasizes the importance of active learning.<sup>2</sup>

Charles Arand's book, That I May Be His Own, discusses the different ways in which Martin Luther anticipated that his catechism would be used.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, Luther anticipated that the catechism would be used in the home by parents to teach their children. He talked at some length about the different ways that his catechism would be used. He emphasized the importance of memorizing and retaining the words and teachings of the catechism, and he laid out how he anticipated that this would be accomplished.

Robert Wilken points out in his book the importance of memorizing the words and retaining them. He points out that the understanding that is attached to the words will change over time. The understanding that a person will have of the Sixth Commandment when he is thirteen years old in junior confirmation is much different than the understanding that a person will have when he is thirty five, married, and has children. It is important that a person hold onto the words so that he can hang the understanding on them.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Kurt Bickel, *Get Active! Active Teaching Ideas for Lifetime Learning* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Charles P. Arand, *That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Robert L. Wilken, *Remembering the Christian Past* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Company, 1995), vii.

Luther's understanding of what was to be memorized from the catechism (as he discusses it in his preface to the catechism) is more limited than what this project is focused on having the students memorize.<sup>5</sup> This project is more extensive in that the students will be expected to memorize all six of the Chief Parts with their meanings. Memorizing all of the Six Chief Parts has been the practice of many congregations throughout different periods of Missouri Synod history. This wider range of memorization is also the practice of Concordia Lutheran Church. The congregation expects that the students will memorize all of the Six Chief Parts with meaning and various Bible passages as well. Hence, working to assist the students in their memory work will be beneficial for them.

### **Research Methodology**

The students are given weekly tests that require them to write out the assigned memory work as well as answer basic questions from the material that was covered in the class the previous week. In preparation for this project, I have kept several weeks of tests from the previous year of confirmation instruction. I asked review questions on the tests from the previous year to see how well students would retain what they had learned over time.

I will continue to give the students weekly tests again in the coming academic year. The tests will also have review questions on them. Some of these questions will be asked on each test for several weeks to determine if there is a better long term retention rate of the material covered in comparison to the previous year.

The second method of assessing the project will be to do a situational analysis whereby I will conduct interviews of parents and the students involved. Among the

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<sup>5</sup> Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 338-341.

questions I will be seeking to answer from the parents are: “Have you noticed a change in the attitude of your child toward confirmation instruction? If so, how would you describe those changes? What is your reaction to the homework assignments that are being done with the parents?” Among the questions I will be seeking to answer from the students are: “What aspects of this method of confirmation instruction have been helpful to you? What types of things have helped improve your ability to do memory work? Has your understanding of the material covered in class increased? In what ways do you find the class to be more or less enjoyable? What things about the class do you find to be helpful and enjoyable? Do you have a greater understanding of the relevance of the materials that you are committing to memory? Do you find the things that you have memorized staying with you longer?”

I will also have another adult (a trained teacher) observe the class at least periodically to get the perspective of another adult. This person will pay attention to whether or not the students are involved in the class, if they appear to be involved with the materials being presented, if the students appear to be understanding what is being presented.

### **Conclusion**

I believe memorization in confirmation instruction is essential. So also is using differing teaching methods to target different learners. Better memorization involves as many of the senses as possible and getting students involved in the learning process. It also necessitates the students being able to attach a certain amount of understanding to what they are memorizing.

As a result of the project, I believe students will have a greater understanding of the relevance of what they are learning and enjoy a greater involvement in the learning process. They will have an increased understanding of the relevance of what they are learning which will lead to a greater retention of what they have learned. It is expected that the use of music and other learning methods will make the memorization process easier and more enjoyable and will also contribute to the students retaining what they have learned long term. The use of more learning techniques and the targeting of more learners will lead to an improvement in the overall attitude of the students and lead to the students having a positive learning experience. The increased involvement of parents will improve the amount of time spent on the material outside of class and improvement in the long term retention of the material. In other words, the extra attention and different approach to memory work in confirmation instruction will have many long term spiritual benefits for the students at Concordia Lutheran Church.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR MEMORIZATION

A woman well into her eighties sits in a chair alongside her bed at a nursing home. She seems oblivious to her surroundings. Another woman, much younger, comes into her room and begins to talk to her. She asks the older woman how she's doing. The older woman responds by saying, "Fine." The younger woman starts talking about common events from the past and good times that they have shared together. She mentions various people and things that they have had in common over the years. The older woman just smiles. After a few minutes, the younger woman takes the older woman's hands and looks directly into her face and says, "Do you remember my name?" The older woman looks intently at the younger woman and says, "Who are you?" She can't remember her own daughter. Disease has robbed her of her memory.

Pastors know first hand how heartbreaking it is to see a person who has been robbed of their memory by disease and other tragedies. A loss of memory robs one of the past. It leaves a person unable to understand his identity. But what about people who voluntarily give up their memory? What about the fact that there are so many people in churches today who are very willing to give up their memory? Churches today are filled with people who cannot remember the most basic promises from God's Word. A failure to remember ultimately leaves a person with no past. It robs the Christian of his very identity.

This chapter will look at the theme of memory in Scripture. It will look at some of the passages in Scripture that talk about the importance of memory. It would be



beyond the scope of this chapter to examine all of the passages that talk about the importance of remembering. However, the importance of memory will be demonstrated from Scripture.

Catechesis in the church is about memory. It is about making the memories of the Church the memory of the person who is to become a part of the Church. It is the memory of what God has done for the Church, particularly through Jesus Christ, that gathers the Church together and holds her together. "Without common memories and common hopes human beings, however numerous and proximate, remain an aggregation, without cohesion and national consciousness."<sup>6</sup> It is not only impossible to have a relationship with our fellowman without memory, but it is also impossible to have a relationship with God. "Growth in understanding is a hopeless dream if memory is not exercised. There is no liturgy without memory, indeed no dogma and no church."<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, the Scriptures are filled with references to the theme of memory. The importance of memory is emphasized throughout the Old and New Testaments. Throughout the Bible, people are called on to remember the mighty deeds of God. The Bible contains a theology of recital.<sup>8</sup> God's people are called on to remember, and they are warned of the dangers of forgetting.

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<sup>6</sup> Edward P. Blair, "An Appeal to Remembrance: The Memory Motif in Deuteronomy," *Interpretation* 15 (January): 41.

<sup>7</sup> David Konstant, *Voice of the Hidden Waterfall: Essays on Religious Education*, ed. Kevin Nichols (Middlegreen: St. Paul Publications, 1980), 76.

<sup>8</sup> Blair, 41.

## Remembering in the Old Testament

God's people are called on to remember, and they do this by using God's name. God tells Moses in Exodus 3:15 that he is to use the name by which God has revealed Himself to remember. The use of God's name will cause the people to remember who God is and all that He has done for them. It would be through the very use of His name that all generations would know and remember Him. By remembering this name Moses will proclaim deliverance to the people.<sup>9</sup> There is an element of remembering even in God's name.

God's people were also to constantly remember God's deliverance of them in the past. In Exodus 12:14, we see that the Passover is to be a remembrance to all generations. It was something that was to be celebrated forever. They were always to keep on remembering God's deliverance of them. They were never to forget how the Lord had delivered them. It should also be noted that this deliverance was something that was to be called to mind through a recurring festival that included rituals and prayers. They were to remember by doing.<sup>10</sup> They would act out the events of the past. This acting out of the story would make the memory a present reality for the people. In this account remembering involves more than just listening to an account of the past, though this was included. It involves remembering by doing-by acting out the events of the past through the rituals that were set forth.

Exodus 20:8 shows that the celebration of the Sabbath as well was an expression of this remembrance. They were to remember the Sabbath Day. The Children of Israel

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Hassold, "Memory and Mission," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 32 (July, 1998): 85.

<sup>10</sup> Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc, 1989), 20.

were to regularly observe a day when they would call to mind the rest that God had obtained for them through His deliverance of them from Egypt. They were to do this forever, because it would remind them of the fact that God's covenant with them was forever.<sup>11</sup> They were to regularly take the time to remember God's great deeds and deliverance of the past.<sup>12</sup> This regular rest was to remind them of the fact that God had obtained rest for them from their slavery in the land of Egypt. As in Exodus 12:14, the Children of Israel would learn by doing. They did not simply remember by hearing an account of all that God had done for them, although this was certainly a part of it, but it would also include what would be called active remembering or learning. There were various rituals involved, and they were active in the memory process.

Memory is a strong theme throughout the book of Deuteronomy. Edward Blair points out that memory in the book of Deuteronomy is not just a psychological recall; but rather, it is something that shapes the present. Remembrance of past events and deliverances shapes the future actions of God's people.<sup>13</sup> Moses is seen recounting all that God has done for His people in the past for a generation of Israelites who were not there to see the events first hand. This grace in the past is reciprocated by love from God's people.

Deuteronomy 4:9-24 is a strong call to memory. The Children of Israel are told to remember the things that they saw at Mount Horeb. Not only are they to remember these things themselves, but they are charged to teach them to their children so that they too

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<sup>11</sup> Konstant, 79.

<sup>12</sup> C.F. Keil and Delitzsch, 121.

<sup>13</sup> Blair, 43.

will remember them from one generation to another. Moses recounts all of the things that they had seen and charges them to remember all that God has done for them. These acts of God from the past formed the very foundation of the true religion and must not be forgotten.<sup>14</sup>

One of the strongest references to memory in all of Scripture is Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20-25. The Israelites are told in this passage that they are to have the Word of God before them at all times. The commandments of God are to be written upon their hearts. They are to talk to their children about them when they are at home, when they are walking on the road, when they lie down, and when they get up. The peoples' impressing these things upon their hearts involves much more than a general familiarity with the passages. It means more than simply reading these words from time to time from a book that they keep on the shelf. These were words that were to be ingrained on their memories. These words were to be committed by verbatim memorization. Scripture does not talk about simply storing things in books and making occasional contact with them. Scripture talks about committing things to memory so that they will always be with a person. "The common understanding of the frequent passages concerning laying things in the heart and hiding them in the heart, is that they were memorized (cf. Deut. 30:14; Ps. 119:11; 37:31). As I indicated in my previous article, the notion that one could separate Truth from persons' minds and hearts and store it in books is a relatively recent one."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*. 310-311.

<sup>15</sup> J. Marion Snapper, "Memorization in Church Education," *Calvin Theological Journal* 16 (April 1981): 41.

The people are to have these words of God committed to their memories so that they can repeat them daily wherever they might be. This repetition will prevent them from becoming cold and being forgotten. They are not to be memorized and then forgotten. They are to be memorized with the idea that they will then be able to be repeated over and over and constantly kept before a person. They are to be written on the peoples' hearts. In other words, they are to be learned by heart. This learning by heart has another aspect. When the people have committed these truths of Scripture, they will then speak them to their children. Memorization is not something that is simply kept to oneself, but it moves a person to share God's Word with others. Deuteronomy 6:20-25 also show that remembering affects present actions. When the people are reminded of all of God's saving acts from the past, their attitude toward Him will be affected in the present. Remembering God's grace in the past moves them to listen to God in the present.

See the order of treating the Word of God: first, it is to be pondered in the heart; secondly, impressed faithfully and constantly on the sons by word of mouth; thirdly, discussed openly and everywhere; fourthly, written on the hand and drawn before the eyes; fifth and last, inscribed, and that on posts and doorways, not in books, since Moses himself has already written them in a book. Here I pass over the hidden meanings, that writing the Commandments on the hand and placing them before the eyes signify fulfilling them in deed and pondering them. He simply wants these words to meet us everywhere and to be in our memories.<sup>16</sup>

Psalms 77:11-12 shows that comfort and encouragement in trials is also an element to memory. The psalmist talks about undergoing trials and hardship, and he talks about how it is remembering that brings him comfort and hope in the present. He remembers God's deliverance from the past. The psalmist remembers how the Lord has answered

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<sup>16</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Daniel Poellot, *Lectures on Deuteronomy* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), 69.

his cries in the past and granted him deliverance. This remembering of past deliverances brings comfort and strength in the present. The psalmist says that he will call to mind the deeds of the Lord and meditate on them. He will ponder them in his heart and keep them in mind at all times.

This present element to memory is also seen in Psalm 119:11. There the psalmist talks about hiding the Word of God in his heart so that he will not sin. He commits the Word of God to memory, or learns it by heart, so that he will always have it before him. Then it will guide him in his life. He is able to make it a part of his life. He does not need to return to a book somewhere to learn what the Lord would have him to do as he lives out his life. The psalmist has written the Word of the Lord on his heart. This type of verbatim memory is also seen in Psalm 37:31 where it says that the Law of God is on the heart of the righteous. As a result, he does not slip. He has the Word of God written on his heart, and it keeps him firm in his relationship with the Lord.

All of this remembering in the Old Testament is based on the fact that God remembers. God's people are able to remember because God remembers them, and He gives His people the assurance that He will never forget them. The Lord gives His assurance to His people in Isaiah 49:15 that even though His people may forget Him at times He will never forget them. The imperfect memory of God's people is contrasted with God's perfect memory. God's covenant people have a desire to remember because God always remembers them.

Memory is contrasted with forgetting in Scripture. To forget in the Bible is to forsake.<sup>17</sup> In Isaiah 49:14 the people of Israel believed that God had forgotten them.

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<sup>17</sup> Blair, 44.

This caused them to be convinced that God had completely forsaken them. It was the same with the people: to forget was to forsake. The warnings against forgetting and the dangers that are involved with it further emphasize the importance of memory.

Moses warns the Israelites against forgetting in Deuteronomy 8:11, 19. He tells them to be careful that they do not forget. He warns them that if they forget they will be destroyed. A failure to remember means complete destruction.

God also tells the people that He will punish them for their failure to remember in Hosea 2:13. The people had forgotten the Lord and would be punished as a result. Israel had forgotten the sacred days that it was supposed to be celebrating in order to be reminded of God's deliverances of the past. Instead, the Children of Israel were celebrating them in honor of Baal.<sup>18</sup>

### **Remembering in the New Testament**

Remembering is found almost immediately in the Gospels in Luke 2:51-52. After Jesus was left at the temple and His parents found Him, we are told that His mother Mary did not forget these things; but rather, she stored them up in heart. She held on to these things which she had heard Jesus say and that she had seen Him do. Luke specifies that Mary treasured up the Words and actions of Jesus in her heart.<sup>19</sup> This committing of these things to memory would enable Mary to further reflect on them. This type of remembering takes place deep within the heart, and it leads to a growth in understanding. Her growth in understanding would be dependent on her memory. "Reflection on my

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<sup>18</sup> C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Minor Prophets* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 58-59.

<sup>19</sup> Arthur A. Just Jr, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture Luke 1:1-9:50* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 128.

personal history shows continuity of being, increase in knowledge, growth in understanding, development of personal relationships, both consciously and unconsciously depend on memory.”<sup>20</sup>

Of course, Jesus Himself shows the importance of memory when He says, “Do this in remembrance of me.” There is no more powerful example of the force of memory among man.<sup>21</sup> Jesus’ call to remember here is a call to remember His atoning death and His promise to come again.<sup>22</sup> This remembering takes place at every celebration of the Lord’s Supper. His people remember all that He has done for them in the past through His death and resurrection, and they are reminded that He will return. Arthur Just also points out that there is a clear connection between God’s memory and the Church’s memory. Because God has remembered His promises in Christ, the Church is moved to then remember.

...God is the one who first remembers his promises in Christ and who prompts our response of remembering in faith. God’s grace in Christ precedes and is the cause of the church’s remembrance. Every time God showers us with his gifts, it is because he remembers his promises in Christ to save us. That is especially true of the Supper, where the divine gifts are Jesus’ own body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. The communicant receives the benefits of Christ’s perfect life, atoning death, and new resurrection life, God ‘remembers’ us for Christ’s sake as he bestows these gifts.<sup>23</sup>

The above quotation shows there is more to memory in the New Testament than a mere historical recitation. Memory means more than a simple recollection of facts.

When Jesus tells His church to remember, it is more than a request to simply recall the

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<sup>20</sup> Konstant, 78.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>22</sup> Arthur A. Just Jr, *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture Luke 9:51-24:53* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 831-832.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 832-833.



past events of Jesus' death. As the Apostle Paul says in I Corinthians 11:23-26, when we remember what Christ has done, we are proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes. The celebration of the Passover for the Children of Israel was more than a mere historical remembrance. It was a present experience of God's faithfulness. In the same way, the remembrance in the Lord's Supper does not just recall the events of Jesus' death. It makes them a present reality.<sup>24</sup>

The women at the empty tomb, Luke 24:5-9, were also charged to remember. A lack of remembering had caused the women to be filled with fear. They were told to remember what Jesus had spoken to them. They are to remember His words. This remembering drives out their present fear. This remembering is not just a historical recitation. It is combined with the present realities, and it affects their lives. We are told they did indeed remember Jesus' words, and it has a direct impact on what they do in the present. When they remembered Jesus' words they were moved to go and tell the eleven. Jesus' words bring to mind for the women His life, suffering, and death. It makes those things a present reality. This remembrance then moves them to go and tell others. It moves them into mission. Their memory moves them into the service of the Gospel.<sup>25</sup>

In Luke 24:44-48, Jesus reminds the disciples directly of the words that He had spoken to them while He was still with them. They are to remember those words and hold on to them. Jesus even begins His final teaching to the Eleven by using memory. "Jesus begins his final teaching to the Eleven and those with them by employing the

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<sup>24</sup> Hassold, "Memory and Mission," 89.

<sup>25</sup> R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 1175.

hermeneutic of remembrance.”<sup>26</sup> They are to remember the instruction that Jesus has given to them. Memory is a significant part of Jesus’ catechesis. Those who follow Him are called on to remember His words to them. Catechesis in the church today would greatly benefit by employing memorization in regards to the words of Scripture.

These verses also show us, however, that Jesus does not just want a rote memorization here. Jesus immediately connects understanding to memory. Jesus immediately opened their minds in verse 45 so that they could understand: memory and understanding are not separated in Jesus’ catechesis. Understanding is a necessary part of memory, and Jesus provides what is necessary for understanding. He does this specifically by giving His followers the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells His disciples in John 14:26 that He will send them the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit will remind them of everything that He has said to them. Jesus’ followers remember His Words and learn them by heart, and He gives them the Holy Spirit through that Word. The Holy Spirit gives the followers of Christ the understanding of that Word that is so important.

The church was given the responsibility to teach after Jesus’ ascension, and memory was an important part of the church’s catechesis. The apostles were to bear witness to Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. When a replacement was to be chosen for Judas, one of the requirements was that it be someone who had been with them the whole time (Acts 1:1-2, 22). It was to be someone who had heard and seen all that Jesus had done so that they could bear witness to those things. The person was to be someone who would be able to call to mind all that Jesus had done. Eventually, these things would be written down and the books of the New Testament produced. This process was

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<sup>26</sup> Arthur A. Just Jr., 1049.

ultimately controlled by the Holy Spirit, but memory would certainly play a role. “These were the fruit of a deep personal process of reflection, recollection and creativity.”<sup>27</sup>

The appeal to remember is also found throughout the epistles. In Romans 15:15, Paul is reminding the Roman Christians of things again that they had already learned. They are constantly to be reminded again and again of the things that they had learned previously. The teachings which they had received are not to be heard once and then forgotten. This memory also has a present effect. It leads to a growth in faith in the present time.

What the Christians have once learned, know, and understand, they must ever be reminded of again, in order that their knowledge may be furthered and confirmed. The believers of all times will turn again and again to the instructions contained in this inspired epistle, in order to become ever better acquainted with the mysteries of their justification and salvation, to become ever more fervent in faith, hope, and love.<sup>28</sup>

The Apostle Paul emphasizes the importance of remembering in I Corinthians 15:1 as well. Paul tells the Corinthian Christians that he wants to remind them of things that they have already been taught, but Paul is not reminding them here of things that are deep and unfamiliar. He says that he wants to remind them of the Gospel that he has taught them. Paul is emphasizing the importance of remembering what is normally considered as the very basic things in Christian teaching. Paul has shown previously in the book that the Corinthians had to some extent forgotten what they had learned. They had not

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<sup>27</sup> Konstant, 82.

<sup>28</sup> Paul E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible: The New Testament*, Vol. II (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1923), 80.

remembered, and there was tremendous danger in their forgetting. A reminder such of the basic facts of the Gospel should stimulate their faith.<sup>29</sup>

Paul gives the same exhortation to remember in 2 Timothy 2:8, 14. He specifically calls for remembering the content of the Gospel itself. Paul here says that Jesus Christ is to be ever kept in memory.<sup>30</sup> Paul charges Timothy to keep on reminding the churches of these things. He is to keep on reminding them of the teachings that Paul has laid out previously. These things that they have been hearing, they are to continue to hear over and over. They are to be constantly remembered.

The Apostle Peter gives the same importance to remembering as does Paul. In 2 Peter 1:12-13, he makes it clear to the believers that he wants to constantly remind them of the things that they have learned. He wants to make sure that they have committed to memory the facts about their justification. He sees it as being the responsibility of the pastor to make sure that the people do indeed remember certain things.

That was the conception that Peter had of his pastoral office, as it should be the idea of every true pastor, to make it his care, his business, ever and again to remind the believers of all these facts concerning their justification and sanctification. It is true, indeed, the Christians have learned these facts, they know them, but it remains true at the same time that they cannot learn them too well and that the eagerness of the true Christian to hear the fundamental truths over and over again will not diminish.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), 626.

<sup>30</sup> R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 786.

<sup>31</sup> Paul E. Kretzmann, 546.

## **Conclusion**

It has been shown that memory is a central theme throughout Scripture. God's people in the Old and New Testaments are called on to remember. They are called on to remember His Word to them and they are called on to remember His saving deeds in the past. Sometimes, this memory is a very active thing as was seen with the Passover and the Lord's Supper. It involves doing in the present, and it makes past deliverances a present reality. Memory bridges deliverances of the past with the present. Memory of God's Word also affects a person's present life. It is something that guides them at all times in the present. It keeps a person anchored in God's Word.

Memory means more than mere rote memorization. It means more than simply being able to recite certain words and events; although, this is certainly a part of remembering in the Bible. It is necessary to be able to call specific words and events to mind, but it is also important to understand what those things mean.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CONFIRMATION INSTRUCTION: AUGUSTINE, LUTHER, AND TODAY

#### **Memorization in the Golden Age of Catechesis**

This chapter will take a brief look at the role of memory in the early church. It is well beyond the scope of this project to consider the role of memorization in every era of church history. The fourth century will be considered briefly with focus on the catechesis of Saint Augustine. The reason for looking at Augustine in particular is because it is often considered to be the “golden age” of catechesis, and Augustine is often considered to be the foremost catechist from this period.<sup>32</sup> The catechesis in this period builds on the catechesis from the previous centuries.

Memorization was an important part of catechesis during this golden age of catechesis. Augustine would present the Apostle’s Creed to the catechumens line by line, and he would do the same with the Lord’s Prayer. He would also explain these things line by line as they were given. The catechumens would then be expected to memorize the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer word for word.<sup>33</sup> There were certain Scriptural truths that were considered so important that they needed to be committed to memory so that they would always be with a person.

This approach was by no means a simple rote memorization with no understanding. It was the practice in this period that the Creed would be explained thoroughly as it was given. It was expected that the catechumens would understand those

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<sup>32</sup> William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 55.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 274-275.

things that they were committing to memory. Egeria also explains this in her first hand account from the late fourth century.

When five weeks of instruction have been completed, they then receive the creed. He explains the meaning of each of the phrases of the creed in the same way he explained Holy Scripture, expounding first the literal and then the spiritual sense. In this fashion the creed is taught.”<sup>34</sup>

This memorization of the Creed was word for word. Augustine would test the catechumens eight days before Easter individually to see if they could recite it word for word. They would then stand before the assembled faithful and recite it as a public confession.<sup>35</sup> Augustine saw this as important because they were internalizing these truths of Scripture. They were making them their own and a part of themselves in a real and important way. The Creed was to be learned by listening. It was to be written on the heart rather than on anything else. “Moreover, he felt that by repeating it, they were not simply inscribing words in their memory; they were also internalizing truth, learning it ‘by heart’ in the truest sense of the term.”<sup>36</sup>

Further, Augustine did not see this memorizing as being a mere historical recitation. It was expected that what was learned would shape one’s life in the present. “Yet its truths were much more than propositions one assented to; they were to shape practice and link one to a community of searchers.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Thomas M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate: West and East Syria, Message of the Fathers of the Church*, ed. Thomas Halton, vol. 5 (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 53.

<sup>35</sup> William Harmless, 275.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 276.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 278.

The actual memorization process was aided in a number of ways. During this period, nothing was to be done without explanation, and this explanation took place in sermons as well as instruction. There was also the singing of hymns. All of these things were to make the teachings that were to be learned by heart very familiar.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, Augustine would employ various mnemonic devices to aid the actual memorization process. He would juxtapose opposites. He would use rhyming antithesis. He would use analogies to explain difficult ideas. He would use examples, including humorous ones. Allegory was another element that he used to aid the memorization process. Imagery, Biblical and otherwise, was also employed in this regard. Augustine used the best teaching methods that were available to him at the time to aid the catechumens in their memorization of the truths of Scripture.<sup>39</sup>

A brief survey of catechesis from the “golden age” of catechesis demonstrates that memory was an important part of catechesis. It was considered to be necessary for the catechumens to learn certain basic truths of Scripture by heart. This memorization was also not a rote memorization. Understanding was considered to be an important part of it, and the memorization process was aided by various teaching techniques that were available.

### **Memorization and the Small Catechism**

Memorization has fallen on hard times in the church today. One can still talk to older members of Lutheran congregations who will recall with many fond memories learning the catechism by heart. Some of them will talk about memorizing it in German

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<sup>38</sup> Finn, 53-55.

<sup>39</sup> Harmless, 279-291.



as well as English. But those days are past. Memorization of the catechism is sometimes seen in the extreme light of having no value or having the potential to keep some away from the Sacrament if they are not capable of memorizing. Confirmation instruction was once about memorizing the historic confession of the Church in the words of the Creed and confessing the faith of the church. Now, it has become in many places about developing one's own confession of faith and writing about "What Jesus means to me."

But this denigration of memorization has come with a price. It was not that many years ago that the president of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, A.L. Barry, sent out a booklet to the pastors of the synod addressing the situation regarding catechesis in the Synod. The book was filled with not only his concerns but also by concerns that he was hearing from pastors all across the Synod regarding the biblical ignorance of so many of the people in churches today. These concerns extended to adults as well as children.<sup>40</sup> There are undoubtedly many different factors that play a role in the situation regarding catechesis in churches today, but the denigration of memorization contributes.

This crisis in catechesis may have started with the devaluing of memorization of the catechism, but it has not stopped there. Catechesis in the Lutheran Church has reached the point where the value of the catechism is questioned. It is no longer unusual to hear of confirmation programs, junior or adult, where the catechism is not even considered. The loss of memorization of the catechism has led to a continual decline in the familiarity that people in the church have with the catechism. "More and more

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<sup>40</sup> A.L. Barry, *What Does This Mean? Catechesis in the Lutheran Congregation* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 47-50.

members of the Missouri Synod have little to no awareness of the Small and Large Catechisms, let alone an intimate familiarity with them.”<sup>41</sup>

A devaluing of memorization has left people without the necessary knowledge to understand the Bible. Understanding has been emphasized over memorization. But can the two really be separated? Is memory of any value without understanding? Is understanding as complete or as long lasting without memorization? People at times lack a most basic historical knowledge of even the main characters in the Bible. They are unfamiliar with basic Bible stories and lack a Biblical vocabulary that makes understanding possible. Much of this can be traced to the fact that memorization of the catechism is no longer emphasized as it was in former times. “Memorization of the catechism, formerly a requirement of confirmands, has been denigrated as rote learning; as a result, persons being confirmed today know far less about the Bible, creeds, commandments, or church teachings than their counterparts in generations past.”<sup>42</sup>

Martin Luther certainly understood the importance of memorization when it came to catechesis. He did not separate memorization from understanding, but understood that memorization was important to having a full understanding of the text.<sup>43</sup> Luther did not believe one could have a full understanding without memorization at any age.

The idea of memorization rarely draws much enthusiasm! Luther regarded memorization as the essential first step in learning the catechism, but he was too innovative and perceptive of human nature in general and of children’s nature in particular to believe that memorization is sufficient. Nonetheless, it provides the essential foundation for building understanding. Luther had enough experience of

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<sup>41</sup> Charles P. Arand, “Does Catechesis in the LCMS Aim for the *Ars Vivendi Fide?*,” *Concordia Journal* 22 (January 1996): 57.

<sup>42</sup> Merton P Strommen and Richard H Hardel, *Passing on the Faith : A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry* (Winona: Saint Mary’s Press, 2000), 115.

<sup>43</sup> Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 338-341.

rote memorization in his own youth to know that memorization without interpretation is not true learning.<sup>44</sup>

Robert Wilken also points out that understanding changes over the years, and a person needs to have the words to hang the meanings on. He tells the story of a pastor in Saint Louis, Missouri who would divide confirmation instruction into two years. The first year would be spent simply memorizing the catechism. He would then spend the second year explaining to the students what it meant. The reason the pastor did it was because he understood that the Christian faith is a matter of words.<sup>45</sup> What counts in the catechism are the actual words.

Wilken goes on to point out that the meaning of the words grows and deepens as a person grows and matures. The meanings that a person will learn at one point in their life does not exhaust the fullness of the words, particularly meanings that are memorized at a very young age. The meaning that the Seventh Commandment has for a person who is older and the resident of a major company is going to be much different than when a person is twelve years old or even a college student with very few possessions. The Sixth Commandment will carry a much different meaning to a person when they are twelve years old than when they are forty years old and have a wife and children.

Meaning is ephemeral, and the meanings one learns at twelve years of age are not the fullness of the words one memorizes. If a young person is fitted out only with the meanings of youth, what does one return to when the words are faded and forgotten? Words, however, endure, and if one has the words the meaning is never wholly lost.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Marilyn J. Harran, *Martin Luther: Learning for Life* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 204.

<sup>45</sup> Robert L. Wilken, *Remembering the Christian Past* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), vii.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, vii-viii.

Clearly, the words must be retained. The meaning will be continually unpacked throughout a person's life, but that cannot take place if a person does not have the words on which to hang the meaning. If the words are lost, the meaning will also be lost over time. "We have a lifetime to unpack the words. But first, we do need the words engraved upon our hearts and minds."<sup>47</sup>

Arand describes memorizing of the catechism as learning it to the point where it becomes instinctive. It is something that should be second nature, something that a person can do without having to clumsily think about the steps. Memorizing the catechism is something that needs to be over learned until it is at our fingertips. It is like learning to dribble a basketball or playing scales on a piano. It is something that is learned over time.<sup>48</sup>

Of course, memorization is not the end. Understanding needs to be connected to this memorization. A person does move beyond a simple rote memorization, but a person should never let go of what has been memorized. A person will go out and live out what has been learned and see how the words play out in their everyday lives, but the words must be constantly revisited. "A pianist moves on to play music, a basketball player moves on to learn the strategy of the game. At the same time, we never stop practicing it. In the same way a pianist practices scales, a basketball player his shots, so also the Christian practices her catechism."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Charles P. Arand, *Formation in the Faith: Catechesis for Tomorrow* (Saint Louis: Concordia Seminary Publications, 1997), 67.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 69.

Christians benefit from having certain teachings of God's Word with them at all times. There are certain teachings that people need to be able to take with them wherever they go. I am not here referring to the stories that are at times told by missionaries and others about being locked up in foreign prisons without access to a Bible, and their memory was their only lifeline. I am here referring to the many situations that Christians face in their everyday lives. Christians daily face temptations and trials whereby they need to be able to readily call to mind the truths of God's Word. There are also daily opportunities to give witness to Jesus Christ and the hope which has been given to the Christian. The Christian needs to be prepared and able to respond to such situations just like the basketball player who needs to be able to make quick decisions and make a play. People cannot predict what may happen in their Christian life. They must simply be prepared for the Christian life. "I can't even begin to guess at the number of people who have told me that in their adult lives, during difficult times, their great strength came from the storehouse of memory verses and catechism texts they had been required to learn."<sup>50</sup>

Further, memorization gives importance to the material remembered. When people are memorizing something, they are saying that it has a high degree of importance for them. When a young man has a woman that he is attracted to give him her phone number, he will memorize that number. It is something that is important to him. A husband (who has any sense whatsoever and the slightest desire to see his marriage continue) will memorize his wedding anniversary. He understands that there is importance attached to it (his very survival could depend on having such information at

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<sup>50</sup> A.L. Barry, *What Does This Mean? Catechesis in the Lutheran Congregation*, 57.

his fingertips). It makes a statement about something when we memorize it. Things that matter, things that are truly of importance, are committed to memory. "To memorize something is to make a rather impressive statement about it because it is such a deliberate and thoughtful investment of time and energy."<sup>51</sup>

The simple fact of the matter is that people do indeed memorize. Children at very young ages memorize football players' numbers and positions that they play. People can remember the names of their favorite actors and recite the various films in which they have appeared. People of all ages can recall songs that they have heard on the radio and recite entire songs verbatim. Schools may not require the amounts of memorization that they did in times past, but memorization is still required for those things that are considered to be of great importance. The question is not if people will memorize. The question is what people will memorize and whether or not the teachings of the church are worth memorizing.

Out of this whole welter of cultural content we deliberately sort out a relatively small amount of literary material to be deliberately memorized. If, for example, we should favor the memorization of Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot and the multiplication tables but not portions of Scripture, then we would be making a statement: Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot and the multiplication tables are more important to have available for ordering and interpreting life than are the Scriptures.<sup>52</sup>

### **Memorization and the Catechism**

The importance of memorization in general for a Christian has been discussed. The importance of having certain truths of God's Word committed to memory has been explored. But it needs to be determined why the catechism itself should be considered the desired content of what is memorized. Why is it so critical to memorize the

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<sup>51</sup> Marion J. Snapper, "Memorization in Church Education." 38.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 39.

catechism in addition to Scripture? Why has the Lutheran Church for so many years throughout its history emphasized memorization of the catechism?

People need to know what is necessary for their salvation. Salvation is received through faith and faith involves a knowledge aspect along with trust. Those things that are essential to a person's salvation should be committed to memory, and Luther felt very strongly that the catechism provided those things. In particular, Luther emphasized the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. These things told a person all that was absolutely necessary.

It was not unintended in God's particular ordering of things that a lowly Christian person who might be unable to read the Bible should nevertheless be obligated to learn and know the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. Indeed, the total content of Scripture and preaching and everything a Christian needs to know is quite fully and adequately comprehended in these three items. They summarize everything with such brevity and clarity that no one can complain or make any excuse that the things necessary for his salvation are too complicated or difficult for him to remember.<sup>53</sup>

Luther believed that these teachings of the catechism were both Law and Gospel. These basic teachings showed a person the sinful hopeless situation that they were in and then showed them the antidote for their situation that God had provided. The Gospel also provided the strength that was needed to become devout and keep the Commandments.

Thus the commandments teach man to recognize his sickness, enabling him to perceive what he must do or refrain from doing, consent to, or refuse, and so he will recognize himself to be a sinful and wicked person. The Creed will teach and show him where to find the medicine—grace—which will help him to become devout and keep the commandments. The Creed points him to God and his mercy, given and made plain to him in Christ. Finally, the Lord's Prayer teaches all this, namely, through the fulfillment of God's commandments everything will be given him. In these three are the essentials of the entire Bible.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Gustav K. Wiencke, *Devotional Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 13.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

Luther also pointed out these three things were considered by the ancient fathers to be the essential things of Christian teaching. He would also go as far as to say that these were the things that a person who wanted to be called a Christian needed to know. A person who refused to learn these things was not to be considered a Christian. In fact, people who refused to learn these essential parts of the Christian teaching were demonstrating that they had no regard for God or His Word.<sup>55</sup>

Luther does regard the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer as being the essentials of the catechism, but he obviously includes other parts as well. Instruction in the sacraments and preparation for Communion were also central parts of the catechetical enterprise for Luther.<sup>56</sup> It is his expectation that memorization would begin with those three things and continue from that starting point. "Begin by teaching them the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, etc., following the text word for word so that the young may repeat these things after you and retain them in their memory."<sup>57</sup> Luther was proud of the fact that a boy or girl of fifteen knew more about the Word of God than all the universities or doctors before. He pointed out that they knew not only about the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer but also about confession, baptism, prayer, the cross, the Sacrament of the Altar.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. John W. Dobberstein, *Sermons* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), 137.

<sup>56</sup> Eric W. Gritsch, ed., *Encounters with Luther* (Gettysburg: Institute for Luther Studies, 1982), 238.

<sup>57</sup> Theodore G. Tappert, ed. *The Book of Concord*. 339.

<sup>58</sup> Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation 1521-1532* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 275.



It was also expected that this memory would expand to include various Bible verses that would be heard in the sermons. The children were expected to take these Bible verses home and repeat them for their parents at mealtime.<sup>59</sup> This recitation would benefit both the parents and children when it came to the memorization of Scripture. Luther saw this continued use of memorization as being an important part of the education of the laity. It would ensure that people were not simply leaving church without having learned anything. Memorization for Luther was a central part of religious education.

Otherwise, people can go to church daily and come away the same as they went. For they think they need only listen at the time, without any thought of learning or remembering anything. Many a man listens to sermons for three or four years and does not retain enough to give a single answer concerning his faith—as I experience daily.<sup>60</sup>

Note that Luther did not see memorization of the catechism as being something done solely by the junior confirmands. Luther understood the importance of memorization for people of all ages in the church, including the adults. He emphasized the importance of adults being capable of teaching the young people. He understood how much children learn at home from adults. Therefore, it was important the adults be models of learning when it came to learning the catechism.<sup>61</sup>

### **Luther on Memorization**

This project will now consider the value that Martin Luther placed on memorization in catechesis. It will look at the way that he wanted the catechism to be

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<sup>59</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Ulrich S. Leupold, *Liturgy and Hymns* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 66.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 67.

<sup>61</sup> Marilyn J. Harran, *Martin Luther Learning for Life*, 200.

used, and the ways that he intended for it to be taught. Consideration will also be given to the specific methods by which he expected memorization of the catechism to take place.

Luther took the memorization of the catechism very seriously. He saw the catechism as being the essential summary of Scripture, and should be something that any Christian would know by heart. A failure to learn the catechism was to be taken quite seriously.

But those who refuse to learn are to be told that they are denying Christ and are not to be admitted to the Sacrament, accepted as sponsors at Baptism, or allowed to exercise Christian liberty in any way. They should instead be simply directed back to Satan himself. Moreover, their parents and superiors should refuse them food and drink, telling them that the prince is of a mind to expel such rude persons from his realm, and so on.<sup>62</sup>

We can see how serious Luther himself took knowing the catechism by looking at the various methods he used to teach it. For example, preaching played a major role for Luther in teaching the catechism. The catechism was to be regularly included in the worship service, and it was to be preached on at special services as well.<sup>63</sup>

Music was also used in order to teach the catechism. Luther wrote hymns that taught either the content of the catechism or the catechism itself. These hymns were to be used in conjunction with the catechetical sermons.<sup>64</sup> Evidence of this is still found in the current synodical hymnal *Lutheran Worship* with such hymns as “Here is the Tenfold

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<sup>62</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991), 245.

<sup>63</sup> Charles P. Arand, *That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 76-79.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 79-80.

Sure Command.”<sup>65</sup> In this hymn, Luther sets the Ten Commandments with meaning to music. Luther understood the value of music in memorization of the catechism. Luther wanted music to be used in service to the Gospel, and he wanted the young to be given something of value to sing rather than ballads and carnal songs.<sup>66</sup>

Luther saw the memorization of the words of the catechism to be the necessary first step in learning it. He expected pastors to stick to a permanent fixed form and teach it to the people word for word.<sup>67</sup> However, Luther also made it clear that a mere rote memorization was not adequate. The catechumens were also to be taught what the words meant that they were learning. The memorization of the words was to be the foundation upon which an understanding of the text would be built.<sup>68</sup>

Luther was very flexible and creative with the methods by which he wanted the catechism to be taught. He used a wide range of methods and wanted learning the catechism to be a pleasant, even fun, experience. He realized that long term retention of the catechism would be greatly affected by the attitude that a child had towards learning the catechism. “This would be the right way to bring up children, so long as they can be trained with kind and pleasant methods, for those who have to be forced by means of rods and blows will come to no good end; at best they will remain good only as long as the rod is on their backs.”<sup>69</sup> These words of Luther need to be remembered by pastors in the

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<sup>65</sup> The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Worship* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 331.

<sup>66</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Ulrich S. Leupold, *Liturgy and Hymns*, 316.

<sup>67</sup> Theodore G. Tappert, ed. *The Book of Concord*, 338-339.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 339-340.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 375.

church today. A student can be forced to memorize and learn the catechism by coercive methods, but this will not be helpful in the long run.

Luther talked about teaching children different passages of Scripture by telling them to put different passages in various pockets. A child is to think of everything that he is learning and put it into two pockets for faith or for love.<sup>70</sup> By using this imaginative technique a child would learn a framework for what was being memorized. Luther referred to such techniques as child's play, and he made it clear that such imaginative techniques were to be employed in teaching the catechism.

And let no one think himself to wise for such child's play. Christ, to train men, had to become man himself. If we wish to train children, we must become children with them. Would to God that such child's play were widely practiced. In a short time we would have a wealth of Christian people whose souls would be so enriched in Scripture and in the knowledge of God that of their own accord they would add more pockets, just as the *Loci Communes*, and comprehend all Scripture in them.<sup>71</sup>

Luther also used various arts and mnemonic devices to convey the teachings of the catechism. The catechism was originally in poster form using pictures.<sup>72</sup> These posters could be hung up and constantly kept before people. Luther's use of the arts and visuals did not stop there. The catechism itself would also use woodcuts extensively. Each part of the catechism would use woodcuts that would depict a Bible story that could be used to explain the entire lesson that was being presented. The idea was that a person would see the picture and be able to remember the entire story that went with it. Easy to

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<sup>70</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Ulrich S. Leupold, ed., *Liturgy and Hymns*, 66-67.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 67.

<sup>72</sup> Eric W. Gritsch, *Encounters with Luther*, Vol. 2, 240.

remember stories of the catechism would be used to present abstract portions of the catechism.<sup>73</sup>

Luther also wrote the catechism so that it would be more easily memorized, and he used down to earth expressions that the people of his day would recognize. He used the language in such a way that it would be more easily remembered to begin with and would be remembered longer by a person. It is unfortunate that these types of methods do not seem to be available in the English translations today. "Luther utilizes a wide range of rhetorical and mnemonic devices throughout the Small Catechism in order to render it memorable. As will be seen, many of these are simply lost in most English translations."<sup>74</sup>

This overview of Luther's attitude toward teaching the catechism emphasizes the importance of using a wide range of teaching methods. Luther wanted the catechism to be memorized, and he understood the importance of using the best teaching methods available to accomplish that goal.

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<sup>73</sup> Timothy J. Wengert, "Forming the Faith Through Catechisms," in *Formation in the Faith: Catechesis for Tomorrow* (Saint Louis: Concordia Seminary Publications, 1997), 43.

<sup>74</sup> Charles P. Arand, *That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms*, 104.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CURRENT APPROACHES TO CATECHESIS

#### **Learning Styles**

An effort to increase long term retention of what is learned by students will be greatly aided by some understanding of different learning styles. An insistence on teaching students as if all of them had the same learning styles can greatly hinder the amount of material that is retained long term. The educational system has at times in the past assumed that everyone can learn in the same way, and this has carried over into the church's attitude towards religious instruction. The realization that people learn in different ways will challenge the way that the church teaches.

Such well-documented differences among individuals complicates an examination of human learning and understanding. To begin with, these differences challenge an educational system that assumes that everyone can learn the same materials in the same way and that a uniform, universal measure suffices to test student learning. Indeed, as currently constituted, our educational system is heavily biased toward linguistic modes of instruction and assessment and, to a somewhat lesser degree, toward logical quantitative modes as well.<sup>75</sup>

Instead of just one approach, by using different learning styles the instructor can try to reach as many students as possible with the teachings of God's Word.

The church should be concerned if its teaching methods are biased toward people who learn a certain way. It is debatable whether or not public educational institutions can ignore a bias in teaching styles, but it is not debatable for the church. A failure to take different learning styles into consideration can greatly hinder a person's ability to learn and even cause them to simply fall away from the church altogether. The church has the responsibility to communicate God's Word as effectively as possible to all people. This

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<sup>75</sup> Howard Gardner, *The Unschooled Mind: How Children Think & How Schools Should Teach* (New York: BasicBooks, 1991), 12.

means that the church must work to try to reach as many people as possible in the way that is most effective for them to learn. Taking a person's learning style into consideration has the potential to help the person get excited about what is being learned and will also greatly affect the amount of material that is retained and the length of time for which it is retained.<sup>76</sup>

The approach to learning styles breaks them down into four groups: Imaginative Learner, Analytic Learner, Common Sense Learner, and Dynamic Learner.<sup>77</sup> Different people will learn differently based upon which one of these groups they fall into. The type of personality that they are will greatly affect the way that they are able to learn. This categorization does not mean that a person will rigidly fall into one learning style without any tendencies toward another or any ability to learn in another. It simply means that a person has a predominance toward a particular style and will learn best when that is taken into consideration. The first learning style to be considered is the imaginative learner. Imaginative learners are feeling people, and they learn best in settings that allow interpersonal relationships. They learn by sensing, learning, and watching.<sup>78</sup> Verbatim memorizing will be more difficult for this group. They are more likely to be able to tell the teacher what something means and how to put it into practice. This type of student will ask "why" questions. This student will be most likely to be engaged when he is able

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 17-21.

<sup>77</sup> Marlene D. LeFever, *Learning Styles Reaching Everyone God Gave You to Teach* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook Publishing Co, 1995), 20-21.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 20.

to be verbally involved. He likes to be able to talk things through. His mind will work best when his mouth is also working.<sup>79</sup>

If a teacher has this type of learner in class, this will have an impact on how the teacher reaches this student. What are the odds that an instructor will have this type of student in a class? These types of students make up 23.4% of the population.<sup>80</sup> This obviously means that an instructor can expect nearly one out of every four students will have this learning style.

What can be done to assist such students with long term retention of the material that is being taught? The one thing that is most important is to make sure that these students understand what it is that they are being expected to learn. This type of student will not do well with simple rote memorization. It is important for this type of student to understand why it is important that the material be learned and how they apply to his life. As was pointed out, these students will have difficulty retaining something for which they cannot see the value in their lives.

The next learning style to be looked at is the analytic learner. Analytic learners are the kind of learners that teachers love to have. They are the kind of people that sit quietly and listen to every word the teacher speaks. They are very diligent and are rational thinkers. They are quiet and want to make sure that everything makes sense. They will listen and verify what they are being told. They like to ask what questions, and they are more knowledge oriented than people oriented.<sup>81</sup> These are the children who

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 40-41.

<sup>80</sup> Kurt Bickel, *Get Active! Active Teaching Ideas for Lifetime Learning* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 36.

<sup>81</sup> LeFever, 49-50.



will succeed in most educational environments. They are also the kind of students that every pastor hopes to get in any class that he might be teaching. They are a joy to have in class. They love to learn. “School, and often the teaching aspects of our Christian education programs, were made for them.”<sup>82</sup>

Pastors and teachers of all kinds probably feel that they don’t have enough of these types of students in their classes. However, they account for 30.8% of the population.<sup>83</sup> What does a pastor need to do in order to make sure that this group’s learning style is taken into account? There really isn’t much that needs to be done in order to make sure that this particular group is learning and retaining things long term. People who fall into this group don’t need much encouragement to learn. They are the kind of people who will take an assignment and accomplish it with relish. They are the kind of people who will commit things to memory and hold onto it. If they are told to learn something, they are less likely to argue with the instructor or ask why.

The real danger with this group is making it the only group that does actually learn. Instructors have a tendency to focus on this group to the exclusion of other groups. The great danger in teaching primarily to this group is that would mean only thirty percent of those the church is trying to teach would actually be receiving the full benefit of what is being taught.

The next group to be considered is the common sense learner. They are the group that could best be described as practical. They are the students who ask, “How does it work?” They like to be able to take things apart and make them work. They tend to be

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>83</sup> Bickel, 36.

good with their hands, and they want to see how things relate to the here and now. They love to make things usable. The other characteristic to note with this group is their need to move. They need to have their hands moving as part of the learning process. They cannot carry out experiments in their heads alone.<sup>84</sup>

This group comprises 17.5% of the population.<sup>85</sup> In order to help these students learn material and retain it long term, it will be helpful for the instructor to show how the material being learned relates to everyday life. It will be helpful to the student if the instructor demonstrates the practical nature of the material. It may be difficult in religious education to involve “taking things apart and putting them together again,” but the instructor will want to try to find ways to involve motion in the learning process.

It would be helpful for all learners to see how what they have learned affects their everyday lives. Long term retention would be greatly aided if what was learned was something that a person actually used regularly in their life. “Current research on how we forget offers two main reasons for our inability to retrieve information that has been learned. What you don’t use, you lose (inactivity) points to the first reason for memory loss.”<sup>86</sup>

The final style, the dynamic learner, looks at things in terms of the future. The dynamic learner likes to ask “What if?” questions. They thrive on following hunches and exploring new possibilities. Dynamic learners love to start something new, and they are able to easily move from one idea to another. They are characterized by flexibility. They

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<sup>84</sup> LeFever, 57-59.

<sup>85</sup> Bickel, 37.

<sup>86</sup> Klaus Issler & Ronald Habermas, *How We Learn A Christian Teacher's Guide to Educational Psychology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 34.

will often want to do something different than what the teacher wants to do. They also value artistic expression. They are very sociable and are good at involving others.<sup>87</sup>

Dynamic learners make up 28.2% of the population.<sup>88</sup> What can be done to help them learn and retain things long term? Since they value artistic expression, they could be helped by using teaching methods that involve the use of the arts. A greater use of visuals may also be helpful in reaching students who fall into this particular learning style.

The specifics of how to include each learning style have to be determined by the particular lesson and what it is that the instructor is hoping to have the student learn and retain long term. The instructor will want to determine exactly what it is that he hopes to communicate and have the student hold onto and then explore methods that will help students with the different learning styles. A combination of active and passive styles will help to include as many students as possible. If a teacher uses only passive styles, he will only be honoring the analytical students.<sup>89</sup>

### **Modes of Learning**

Each of the four learning styles discussed previously also contains students who have different modes of learning. Each of the quadrants that was discussed previously will include people who have auditory, visual, and tactile/kinesthetic preferences. This means that some students will learn best by hearing. Others will learn best by seeing, and others will learn best by moving and doing.<sup>90</sup> Good teaching should include as many of

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 67-69.

<sup>88</sup> Kurt Bickel, 37.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 37.

the senses as possible. Students will learn best and retain things longer when as many of the senses are involved as possible.

A failure to involve the different ways that people learn will adversely affect learning. For example, many more females than males learn best through methods that involve hearing. Many more males than females learn best by methods that require movement. Most teaching methods lean in the direction of auditory rather than kinesthetic methods.<sup>91</sup> Could this help explain in part why boys drop out of Sunday School at higher rates and why it is difficult to keep males involved in the church?

These different learning styles that are present among students bring about the need to use active learning styles rather than simply allowing students to be passive. In active learning, students learn by doing. Using the different senses when a person learns something in the first place will greatly affect how long it is retained. “That’s why it’s so important to learn in ways that involve hearing, seeing, saying, and doing and which involve positive emotions such as when we learn collaboratively.”<sup>92</sup> The church will not want to abandon all passive styles of learning. There is a certain amount of lecturing that is necessary to learn certain concepts, but it also needs to include the other senses in the learning process. “A combination of active and passive styles will more likely provide the balance that will benefit the majority of students in a class.”<sup>93</sup>

Long term retention is greatly affected by the involvement of different senses in the learning process. The average retention for spoken or written communication is five

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<sup>90</sup> LeFever, 96.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 100.

<sup>92</sup> Thom & Joani Schultz, *The Dirt on Learning: Groundbreaking Tools to Grow Faith in Your Church* (Loveland: Group Publishing, Inc, 1999), 73.

<sup>93</sup> Bickel, 37.

to ten percent. The average retention for things that are seen or involve the use of media is twenty five percent. The average retention for things that involve role-playing goes up to forty to sixty percent. Retention for things that involve direct experience is eighty to ninety percent.<sup>94</sup> This retention rate says something about the methods that have predominated in religious education in the church. The church has long been relying almost exclusively on methods that are the least effective.

What the previously cited statistics demonstrate is that what students will retain the longest are those things that they are actually involved in doing. For example, if an instructor is trying to teach students about the importance of sharing their faith in Jesus Christ with others, students would be least likely to remember it if they were simply told how to do it. They would be most likely to remember it if they were actually involved with doing it.

These studies and readings bring to mind an event that took place while I was at the LC-MS National Youth Gathering in Orlando, Florida in the summer of 2004. The day after the gathering ended I took my group to Disney World. Six youth traveled in a taxi van with me from the motel. I sat in the front with the driver and began asking him where he was from as I could tell by his accent that he had a foreign background. It turned out that he was from Tunisia. I then started asking him about his religious background and discovered that he was a Moslem. As he drove, I asked him questions about how he hoped to be saved, and I shared with him the hope that I have in Jesus Christ. Anyone who has been in a van full of teenage kids knows the kind of noise that they generate. However, as the kids began to realize what was going on in the front, the

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<sup>94</sup> Thom & Joani Schultz, *Why Nobody Learns Much of Anything at Church and How to Fix It* (Loveland: Group Publishing, Inc, 1996), 138.

van became silent. The youth were riveted to the conversation, especially when the Moslem gentleman said that he could never be sure if he would be saved. The conversation extended to the drop off point at Disney World where I gave the driver the church's phone number as he wanted to continue the conversation.

When we got out of the van, one girl ran up to the other youth leader and said, "We were talking to a Moslem guy!" Another one walked up to me and said, "Pastor, did you like convert that guy?" Everyone of the kids went and told their friends who were in other vans about the experience. They were still talking about it the next day. All of these kids went through confirmation instruction with me. Moslem teachings and witnessing were all covered in class, but I can never remember much enthusiasm surrounding the classroom lectures. I have also never seen any evidence that what was covered was remembered. However, weeks later those youth still remember and talk about that van ride, and I doubt that they will soon forget it. Various Bible verses involved also made more sense.

That example illustrates the value of learning by doing (or at least being involved in a real life situation). However, it also raises the issue of how to accomplish that on a regular basis. It would not be possible to go to Orlando and find a Moslem every time the church wanted to teach about witnessing and impress the importance of memorizing certain Bible verses in regard to doing so. There are also many other situations that would not be possible or practical to demonstrate in real world experiences. However, it is possible to create many of these types of experiences even in a classroom setting. "Contrived experiences provide almost as much learning potential as direct, purposeful, personal experiences. These contrived activities can be performed in the classroom at

any time. Games, simulations, and role-plays, when carefully planned and later debriefed, can result in learning with lasting implications.”<sup>95</sup>

Such a contrived experience might well include role-playing a student witnessing to another person who was playing the role of someone who did not know Jesus Christ. They would incorporate in their witness verses that would be committed to memory that directly related to what the student was doing.

The use of visuals is also something that should receive a stronger emphasis in religious education. Faith does come by hearing, but the use of visuals greatly increases how well something is heard. Studies show that when text and picture go together learning is higher and what is learned is remembered longer. “There is overwhelming evidence that we should be using pictures with every lesson we teach. In no test among the fifty-five studies was text without pictures better in terms of the grades students got or what they remembered.”<sup>96</sup>

The use of arts, particularly music, can have benefits when it comes to the retention of what is being learned. The use of music for learning and retention is not a new concept. It is a concept that the church has not been using as extensively in recent times as it did in the past. Music can greatly reduce the amount of time that it takes to memorize something, and it can increase how long it is remembered. “And we know that putting a message into song lyrics greatly improves retention. Even in the Middle Ages, monks employed music to help them memorize lengthy passages of Scripture.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 138.

<sup>96</sup> LeFever, 103.

<sup>97</sup> Thom & Joani Schultz, *The Dirt on Learning: Groundbreaking Tools to Grow Faith in Your Church.*, 85.

The conclusion of this overview is that the church needs to do two things: place a stronger emphasis on memorization and use methods that will aid memorization. The church cannot abandon memorization. The dangers of forgetting have been discussed, and the importance of remembering certain things has also been emphasized. However, the church must also avoid falling into the extreme of rote memorization. Memorization for the sake of memorization will no longer work-if it ever did. The use of active learning methods can have a tremendous positive benefit on the recovery of memorization in the church today. The pastor needs to look seriously at the various learning styles that students have and find ways that will effectively communicate the truths of God's Word to those different students. Certainly, it is ultimately the Holy Spirit that works through the Word that is taught, but the Holy Spirit also gives various First Article gifts to the instructor that should not be neglected.<sup>98</sup>

### **The Role of Parents**

The role of parents in confirmation instruction cannot be overemphasized. Retention of material will be greatly enhanced if the parents are involved in a child's instruction. A pastor simply cannot in class expect to fully impress the importance of what is being learned on a student in such a way that the student will see the importance of holding onto it long term. The role of the parent in confirmation instruction is also critical. "The only way to instill faith in another is to carefully and purposefully model it on a daily basis, tenderly and with admonition."<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Charles P. Arand, "Moving Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Church and Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." (Dec. 3, 2001), 9.

<sup>99</sup> Dave Rahn, *Christian Education Foundations for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 2001), 216.



Much research demonstrates that the greatest influence on a child's faith is the parents. If parents model and talk about their faith at home, it virtually doubles the chances of a person entering into the life and mission of Christ's church. Parents often complain that they feel that their efforts are not adequate, but this does not seem to matter. The research shows that when parents talk to their children about their faith it has a dramatic impact on their children<sup>100</sup>

That creates a challenge and an opportunity for the church. The opportunity comes from the fact that parents can do a great deal to help their children retain the teachings of Scripture. If a child learns the basic truths of Holy Scripture, those truths have a good chance of being impressed upon their minds long term. "Early memorization of God's promises can indelibly imprint them in the minds of children to support their faith in times of need."<sup>101</sup> The challenge comes from the fact that most parents have little interest in Scripture and are largely ignorant of the most basic teachings of Scripture themselves. "Research clearly shows that one of the reasons youth have little interest in the Scriptures is that their parents and other primary caregivers are not reading the Scriptures."<sup>102</sup>

Luther addressed the same challenge when he introduced the catechism. In the preface to his catechism, he talks about the critical role that parents play in the instruction of their children, but he also talks about the challenges of getting parents to take that role seriously. Luther talks about the importance of impressing upon parents that they are

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<sup>100</sup> Merton P Strommen and Richard A. Hardel, *Passing on the Faith*. 97-99.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 115.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 131.

guilty of great evil if they fail in their responsibilities to teach their children the catechism. He emphasizes that it is necessary for the pastors to preach against this evil so that parents do understand the importance of the role that God has given them in the instruction of their children.<sup>103</sup>

A confirmation program that does not include the importance of parents is unlikely to have a great deal of success. One way of addressing the role of parents in confirmation instruction (the way that is proposed by this project) is to have the students do projects at home that involve the parents. The church can supply the students with simple activities that any parent can help a child with and send them home with the students each week.

### **Conclusion**

This idea of memorization when it comes to the basic teachings of the Christian faith is not a novel idea. This brief overview of Augustine and Luther has demonstrated that memorization was a central part of their instruction, and they also used different learning methods in order to help the different people they were teaching. The idea of using different types of learning methods is not new. Memorization will increase when a broader range of teaching methods are employed in confirmation instruction.

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<sup>103</sup> Tappert, 340.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### IMPROVING LONG TERM RETENTION OF CONFIRMATION MEMORIZATION: A PROJECT DESCRIBED

At Concordia Lutheran Church, Geneseo, Illinois, the students are expected to commit the Six Chief Parts of the Small Catechism to memory, along with various Scripture verses that support them. The students are also expected to have a certain amount of understanding of what it is that they are learning. The memorization and the understanding are not to be separated from one another. It is also the goal of the confirmation program that the students would not simply retain what they are learning long enough to pass a test. The goal is that the students would retain what they are learning long term. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to improve the long term retention by the confirmation students of the materials that they are being taught. The goal is for them to hold onto the teachings of the Catechism for a longer period of time—ideally for the rest of their lives.

This long term retention has not been taking place under the method of confirmation instruction that has been used in the past. In the past, the confirmation instruction has consisted of a largely lecture based approach. The students have always been expected to memorize the Chief Parts during confirmation instruction at Concordia, but it has often times been a fairly painful process. The students, and sometimes parents, have complained about it loudly. Getting this memorization accomplished has not been easy. I have often times felt that expecting the students to memorize has been seen on the level of asking them for vital organs.

However, the students have memorized the Six Chief Parts and various Bible verses in the past. It has often times required phone calls home by the pastor, and there

have always been students who do not have their memory work completed by the summer and end up going to confirmation class for at least part of the summer. Two of the students returning and going into the second year of confirmation instruction in this class were required to continue well into August in order to complete all of the work.

However, the students were not currently retaining what they have memorized much beyond the tests that they take on Wednesday evenings. In preparation for this project, the students were asked various review questions on their weekly tests last year. The questions were all taken from the tests of the previous week. What the questions demonstrated was that the students are not retaining the materials learned long term. I have also been frequently frustrated (with their inability to remember) when asking questions in class that they have learned previously.

Three major parts of this problem were identified in the first chapter. The first part of the problem is with the teaching technique that has been employed in the past. The class has not used teaching methods that will do an adequate job of reaching all of the different learning styles that the students have.

The second part of the problem is that the actual method of memorization is difficult for many of the students. There are no aids for memorizing the Six Chief Parts of Bible verses at this time. The students resort to rote memorization. They simply memorize words on a page without understanding what they mean or how they are relevant to them.

The third part of the problem is a lack of involvement by some of the parents. Long term retention of the materials would be greatly aided if it were reinforced by the parents at home during the week. This reinforcement is not taking place with all of the

students. It should be noted that it is not necessarily the fault of the parents that the materials are not covered at home between them and their children. In the past, there have not been any materials available to them to assist their children with learning the materials covered in confirmation class. It is my firm belief that most if not all of the parents would be willing to play a greater role in their children's confirmation instruction if simple materials were made available to them for doing this.

### **The design of the study**

This study was conducted during the 2004-2005 school year. Those involved in the study were the seventh and eighth grade confirmation students and their parents at Concordia Lutheran Church in Geneseo, Illinois. All of the students were between the ages of twelve and fourteen-the expected ages for a junior confirmation program. The class sizes were also about average for the congregation.

There are seven students in the eighth grade class. They have already completed their first year of instruction and will now be moving into the second year. As was noted previously, some of these students had a great deal of difficulty with memorizing and retaining things last year. Of course, that is not unusual. I cannot remember a year when there were not students who did not require additional time in the summer to complete all of the work. They are very typical of junior confirmation classes in this congregation, and probably for any junior confirmation class. Some of the students are fairly quiet and subdued and some of the students have tremendous energy and volume. There are three boys and four girls in the class.

The seventh grade class has four students in it. There are three boys and one girl in the class. Again, they are what I would consider to be a very typical junior confirmation class.

The first part of the problem that was identified was with the teaching technique in the class. This part of the problem will be addressed by employing different teaching methods that will target the differing learning styles of the students. The project will seek to employ a more active learning technique for each part of the Catechism, that is for each of the Ten Commandments, each of the articles of the Apostle's Creed, and so forth.

One example would be the use of a video clip from the movie "Chariots of Fire" to reinforce the Third Commandment. The students will see how Eric Liddell refused to run on Sunday because of his religious convictions. They will see the clip where he is pressured by the Prince of Wales to go against his beliefs and told that other things are more important than worship of God. They will then be asked various questions regarding the movie clip in connection to what God teaches them in the Third Commandment.

Interactive games will also be used to get students more involved and learning what is being presented in the class. One example of this would be a game that will be used for teaching the meaning of faith under the Second Article. An obstacle course will be set up in an area of the church and the students will be asked to try to maneuver the course blind folded by themselves. There will be a reward for successfully completing it, but the course will be made very formidable. When no one volunteers, they will be given the opportunity choose anyone in the room to lead them through the course (the person they choose does not have to be blindfolded). They will then be asked to discuss why

they were willing to do it with someone to lead them and why they chose the person they did to lead them. They will then be asked to compare this trust to trust in Jesus. All of these activities are contained in Appendix B.

It is my expectation that the use of these methods will increase the students' understanding of the material that is being covered. This increased understanding will lead to a greater retention of the material that is being learned. It is also my expectation that the students will demonstrate a greater involvement in the class, and a larger number of the students' learning styles will be included in the learning process. It is also my expectation that the students will be more attentive in the class simply because the class will be more varied. It will not be the same old routine. There will be an element of surprise and not knowing what to expect next. In the past, the class routine is always the same: test, lecture. There are times in the past when there have been audible groans when the students were told to open their Catechisms. As was pointed out in chapter three, the students should retain the materials longer and understand them better when they are not just sitting in the classroom.

The key in using these different learning activities will be to keep them closely connected to what is being covered in the Catechism. This will be accomplished through the discussion that follows whatever interactive learning event that is used. For example, after the clip from "Chariots of Fire" is shown, the students will be asked questions that specifically relate to The Third Commandment.

The second part of the problem involves the actual methods of memorization. The students currently resort to rote memorization. There are no aids given to them to help in the memorization process. They also have difficulty understanding what it is that

they are actually memorizing—this is particularly true of the Bible verses that they memorize.

This part of the problem will be addressed by setting the Six Chief Parts of the Catechism to music. Mr. Shawn Anderson will work with me to set all of the Six Chief Parts to music. This will be recorded on Compact Discs and each student will be given a copy of the music. Each part of the Catechism will be placed on a separate track on the CD. For example, the First Commandment will be on its own track. The Second Commandment will then be on another track. The idea is that the students will then be able to listen to the different parts at different times.

It is my expectation from this that the student's ability to memorize will be greatly improved for a couple of reasons. The first reason is that the use of music helps to retain things longer and it makes it easier to memorize things in the first place. More of the senses will be involved than just looking at the words on a page. The second reason is that the students will have the opportunity to listen to the words in more places. They will be able to listen to the words when they are doing other things. This added exposure will increase the opportunity for them to come into contact with the words and will thereby greatly increase their ability to remember the Six Chief Parts.

The other way that this part of the problem will be addressed is by giving the students case studies for each of the Bible verses that they will be memorizing throughout the year. The students will be presented with a real life situation that they might face and asked to respond to that situation based on a particular Bible verse. After having responded to the situation using the Bible verse, they will then be asked to memorize the verse. These assignments will be written out and turned in to ensure that they are done.



One example is when the students are asked to memorize Psalm fifty one verse five. They will be given the scenario of having a Baptist friend who tells them that they don't believe that babies should be baptized since they are born innocent. They will be asked to write out how they would respond based on the verse. They will then be asked to memorize the verse. All of these different case studies can be found in Appendix A.

It is my expectation that the student's ability to remember the verses long term will be greatly aided because they will have an increased understanding of the verses that they are being asked to memorize. The students will also have a much better understanding of how the verses they are memorizing are relevant to their lives. They will see why it is important for them to know these verses and see how they might be applied in their everyday lives. Seeing the relevance of these verses will avoid simple rote memorization and increase long term retention of the verses.

The third part of the problem that was identified was the level of involvement by the parents. The parents are not in all cases as deeply involved with their children's confirmation instruction as might be desired during the week. This part of the problem will be addressed by giving the students different take home activities for each week of the year. These take home activities are to be done by the students with their parents and in some cases the rest of their family. They are designed to be activities that are directly related to the section of the catechism that the students are learning and memorizing for the particular week.

These activities will also incorporate a variety of different learning methods. They will not all be the same so that the different learning styles of the students are missed. Some of the activities will involve watching various programs on television and

analyzing the program with their parents in light of the section of the catechism being studied. In other instances, they will be asked to draw a picture illustrating a particular teaching of the catechism. One example of this is for the Second Commandment where the students are to sit down with their parents and watch a show on television or listen to one of their music CDs. They are then to analyze the show with their parents in regard to the Second Commandment. For the Third Commandment, the students are to create a poster with their family promoting church attendance. The poster is to include reasons why their family attends worship services and why it is so important to them.

The development of these activities was greatly aided by two school teachers in the congregation. The first teacher was Mrs. Diane Quart. She is a teacher in a public middle school in the area. The second teacher was Mrs. Tonya Alliger. She is currently a kindergarten teacher, but she taught sixth, seventh, and eighth grades at different times in the past.

The assistance of these two teachers was very helpful from the perspective of having more people involved who were much more creative than I could have ever been on my own. The idea is that the assignments will be seen as serious and will be helpful to the students in reinforcing the material that they are learning. This reinforcement will improve their long term retention of what is being learned. The goal is not to make the assignments too difficult but to avoid having the assignments amount to nothing more than busy work. The take home work includes several different types of assignments, but all of them need to be initialed by a parent or guardian.

Almost all of the assignments include the students speaking the memory work to their parents at some point in the take home work. The idea is that the parents will be

involved in making sure that their children have done the memory work for the week. I have always been surprised in the past when students have not been doing their memory work and parents will tell me that they are surprised. They are surprised because they asked their children if they had done it and they told them that they had done it. With the current take home assignments the parents are expected to listen to the students speak it to them before initialing the paper. All of the family activity sheets can be found in the Appendix C.

It is my expectation that the family activity sheets will improve the long term retention of what is being learned in confirmation class. Getting the memory work done in the class time will become easier when the parents are verifying at home whether or not it has been completed before class. The activities that the students will be doing at home should increase their understanding of what they are learning and this will contribute to their long term retention. Anytime a student has an adult working on an assignment with him, it should greatly improve his understanding of what he is learning, increased understanding contributes to increased long term retention.

The parent's direct involvement in the assignments should also help the students see that this is something that is important to their parents. A side benefit is that the adults in the congregation will increase their knowledge and understanding of the teachings of the catechism; although, this is something that is difficult to measure. Having the parents directly involved with their children's confirmation instruction should have a profound impact upon the student's faith development. As was mentioned in chapter three, the greatest factor in a child's faith development is having a conversation

with parents about God. The take home assignments should have a significant impact on these conversations taking place between parents and kids.

### **Research tools and methodology**

Data for verifying the impact of this project was gathered through tests, interviews, and observations. The first method was accomplished through weekly tests. I had already kept copies of tests from several weeks of the previous year. Those tests required the students to write out the memory work that had been assigned for the week. They were then asked basic questions from the materials that were covered in class the previous week. The purpose of those questions was to determine what they were retaining from the class time.

I also started putting review questions on the back of the tests. The students were asked to write out portions of the memory work that had been assigned from the week prior on the test that they had written the previous week. These review questions generally consisted of writing out one part of the Six Chief Parts (a commandment, an article of the creed, or a petition of the Lords Prayer) and a Bible verse. They were then asked a question from the previous week's test as well. For example, they might be asked to explain the difference between Jesus' active and passive obedience, explain what coveting is, or some other question based on the catechism. All of these were questions that they had already answered the previous week.

This year the students were once again given weekly tests. They were required to write out the parts of the catechism which they had been given to memorize along with various Bible verses for the week. They were then asked questions from what was

discussed in the class the previous week. The purpose of these questions was to determine how much they had retained from what was taught the previous Wednesday.

Review questions were also given on the back of the tests. The students were asked to write out parts of the memory work from the tests the previous week. This review normally consisted of one part of the Six Chief Parts and a Bible verse. The students had already written that memory work out on the last week's test, but it was not assigned for that week. This was a good measure of how well and long the students were retaining what they had learned. The tests also had questions that were asked the previous week based on the class time (questions regarding the difference between Jesus' active and passive obedience and so forth).

These tests which had been collected from the 2004-2005 confirmation year were compared to the tests from the 2003-2004 confirmation year. It was expected that the tests from the 2004-2005 year would show an increase in retention of what was being learned.

The next method for data collection was done through a situational analysis. I conducted interviews of the parents and students involved. From the parents, I was seeking to find out if they had seen an improvement in their child's attitude toward confirmation. I was looking to see if their child been more or less likely to discuss what was learned in confirmation instruction and if their child saw a greater connection between what was being learned and his own life. I asked them if they had to spend more or less time in encouraging their child to complete the assigned work. I asked them if their own attitude towards confirmation instruction and the importance of it had changed. I asked the parents what value they saw in the take home activities that they had been

doing with their child. I asked them if they believed that their child had benefited from the take home activities and also if they had benefited from it as parents and as a family. I also asked them if they were aware of whether or not their child had made use of the music CDs which had been distributed and if they saw this as having any positive impact on their child's ability to retain the materials that were being learned. Finally, I asked them if they believed the confirmation program this year had a greater impact upon their child or a lesser impact than the previous program.

Obviously, the parents of the seventh grade students were not able to compare this year with last year like the students who were in the class last year. They were not able to give as complete answers to all of the questions. However, all of the seventh grade parents, with the exception of one, had children who went through confirmation instruction with me in the past. This experience gave them the ability to reflect well on the different approaches in confirmation instruction.

The confirmation students were also interviewed in addition to their parents. The eighth grade students in particular were asked to compare the difference that they saw between this year's confirmation instruction and their previous year of instruction. They were asked to point out what changes they believed had helped them and what changes they believed had not helped them. The eighth grade students were asked whether they had to spend more or less time on memorization this year, and if they had found it to be easier.

All of the students were asked to explain how they do their memory work. They were asked to explain what methods they found the most helpful in retaining things.

They were asked specifically if they had used the music CDs, in what way, and what degree of usefulness they had found them to have.

The students were also asked if they had found the things that they had learned to be relevant to their lives and what parts of the program helped with this. They were asked what parts of the confirmation program they found to be more or less enjoyable. They were also asked to explain which parts of the program they believe have been the most helpful to them in retaining the things that they had learned. They were specifically asked about the different learning methods that had been used in class (e.g. the various interactive methods) and asked if those things had helped them in retaining the teachings of the catechism.

The third thing that was done to evaluate the project was to have another person come in and observe the class periodically. I asked a school teacher in the congregation to do this. She came in and observed the class periodically and shared her observations with me. She was asked to identify which aspects of the class appeared to be the most effective in helping the students to understand and learn the materials that were being presented long term. She was asked to identify which parts of the class the students were the most involved with and seemed to be having the greatest impact upon them.

### **Implementation of the project**

Most of the steps of the project were implemented simultaneously. I requested the parents of the students to attend class with their children on the first night of confirmation instruction in August. The confirmation class takes place on Wednesday evenings from six to seven thirty. Students that are not able to be there on Wednesday evenings are expected to come the following Saturday morning and meet with myself or

the vicar to make up the class. There are a fair number of sports events and other things that interfere with some of the student's ability to be there at times in the fall of the year. The program goals and expectations of the class were explained in detail to the students and parents on the first night of class. They were given a sheet that listed everything that the students would be expected to do each week for class. The requirements of weekly worship and Sunday School attendance were listed and the reasons for it explained.

Each student was given a catechism, a Bible, and a packet of other materials needed. The packet with the other materials included a calendar for the year with all of the assignments for the year listed week by week (see appendices). The students were expected to memorize a portion of the catechism each week and various proof texts from Scripture which go along with the catechism section.

In conjunction with the memory work, the students were given in their packets a CD containing the Six Chief Parts set to music. Each item that they were to memorize was on a separate track. The students were told to use these CDs to assist them in doing their memory work and why this would be helpful to them. I explained to them that this would make the memorization process easier and help them to retain what they were learning for a longer period of time. It was pointed out to them that whether they liked the particular type of music or not was not the issue. I also explained to them that they would be able to use the CDs in more places than if they were to just rely on reading the various parts of the memory work from the Catechism.

The students were also given the various case studies that went along with the Bible verses that were assigned for each week of the year. It was explained to the students that they were to answer the questions regarding each of the Bible verses and



then memorize the verses. They were encouraged to reflect on what the verses mean and what they have to do with them and then memorize the verses. They were also told that they would need to turn in a sheet with their answers according to the schedule that was given to them.

They were also given the family activity sheets for the year. It was explained to the parents that their children would have a family activity every week that needed to be done with them. The parents were told to expect their children to ask them to do some activity with them every week for the entire year. It was explained to the students that they would be expected to turn in these family activity sheets each week when they came to class.

The sheets came in regularly with no difficulty. I read all the homework sheets that were turned in each week (the family activity sheets, and the sheets relating to the Bible verses) and returned them to the students with comments the following Wednesday.

I began using various active teaching methods from the beginning of the year. Some type of active learning technique was designed for each part of the catechism. These different teaching methods were used in class as the corresponding part of the catechism was being presented in class. The activities used can be found in Appendix B. The activities were done at various times in the course of the class. Sometimes, a game illustrating the lesson was played at the beginning of the class and sometimes not until the end. The idea has been to break things up and keep the students from becoming bored with the routine of the class.

The students began taking tests immediately after the first night of class. The first memory work assignment was due the second night that the class met. Assignments were

given for every night that the class met, and there were weekly tests administered to determine to what degree the assignments were being accomplished. The tests required the students to write out all of the memory that was assigned for the week and answer questions from the material that was covered in class. I reviewed the tests every week after the students turned them in and returned them to the students with comments. I also kept all of the tests so that they could be compared to last year's tests to see if there had been any improvement.

In addition to writing out the memory work for the week assigned and answering questions from the material covered that week, the students were also given review questions. They were asked to write out memory work from the week prior which they had already done, as well as being asked questions from material that was covered in the class the week prior. These review questions were then compared to the review questions that were asked the previous year to see if there had been any improvement in the student's ability to retain what they were learning.

These methods that were employed take into consideration the different learning styles that were discussed in chapter three. It was expected that the use of these methods would accomplish the goal of increasing long term retention. The next chapter will evaluate what impact the project had on the students.

## CHAPTER SIX

### IMPROVEMENT OF LONG TERM RETENTION OF CONFIRMATION MEMORIZATION: A PROJECT ASSESSED

It was anticipated that the implementation of the project would lead to an increase in the long term retention of what the students are learning. In order to assess whether or not the goal was achieved, three different mechanisms were used to analyze the results. The first tool is the comparison of class tests from the current confirmation year and the previous year. The second tool is the results of interviews that were conducted of confirmation students and also interviews of the parents of confirmation students. The final tool is the input of a teacher who periodically observed the class. The goal with this last method was to obtain this person's observations regarding when the students were retaining material in class.

The specific aspects of the project that were implemented will be now considered. The first aspect was the different teaching methods that were employed. The project implemented more active learning techniques into the confirmation instruction. Another part of the project that was implemented was the setting of The Six Chief Parts to music. The students were also given homework assignments that were to be done with their parents. The final part of the project considered is the assignments given that relate to the Bible verses. These assignments required the students to address certain real life situations based on the verses that they were committing to memory.

#### **General Observations**

There are some general observations that should be noted first. I have always used the same curriculum for the student memory work. The students always learn The Six Chief Parts in their entirety along with certain Bible verses. This year's class is the

tenth class that I have taught as a pastor. It has always been my expectation at the beginning of the year that there will be students who will fall behind in their memory work. I anticipate that happening and I tell the parents that I will be calling them if it happens with their child after a few weeks. It has also happened that there have been students who have not been confirmed on a two year time table because they did not accomplish everything on schedule.

I have always dreaded the late September phone calls that have to be made to parents to tell them that their child is not completing assignments in confirmation. The parents virtually always express shock due to the fact that their son or daughter has been telling them that they have completed all of their work. This shock is usually followed by extended discussions about why the assignments are important at all in the first place.

There is always improvement between the first and second year of confirmation. There has not been a single student over the years who has not shown improvement after the first year. However, the improvement is not always as dramatic as might be hoped. It has generally been the case that students who struggle in the first year of confirmation continue to struggle in the second year—though to a lesser degree.

This year has been the first year that I have not had any students with outstanding work by the time we reached the Christmas break. It is the first year that I have not had to make a single phone call to parents explaining to them that their child is having problems in confirmation. All of the students, from the very first week of class, have consistently completed all of the assignments. All of the students have at the least been able to accomplish the memory work assignments for the tests in class.

This improvement is particularly encouraging given the performance of some of the students in their first year of confirmation. Almost all of the students had work outstanding at the end of the 2003-2004 year. Two of the students had to continue to meet with me into August in order to be able to complete all of their work and begin the second year of instruction on schedule.

Determining the cause of this improvement was obviously a source of great interest during the interviews that were conducted. It is true that the students had memorized everything that was assigned the previous year, but that is the case every year. The improvement that was seen this year has never been accomplished in the past.

#### **Comparison of tests**

The students were given review questions on their weekly tests during the 2003-2004 confirmation year. These questions generally consisted of one thing from The Six Chief Parts that they had to write down that was from the memory work the previous week. It would also include Bible verse from the previous week's memory work. In other words, they might be requested to write out the First Commandment with meaning even though it had not been on their memory list for that week but the week before. They would also be asked questions from things that were discussed in class. The idea would be to see if they could remember the things that had been discussed in class.

The students were again given review questions on their weekly tests during the 2004-2005 confirmation year. The same format was used. The students were again asked to write out a part of the memory work from The Six Chief Parts that was given as an assignment the previous week. The purpose was to see if they were remembering

things longer term. They were also asked to write out a Bible verse from the previous week and answer questions that they had been asked previously as well.

The tests from the 2003-2004 year show that when it came to remembering the sections from The Six Chief Parts and the Bible verses the students were unable to do so. All of the students were consistently unable to write out any of the memory work that they had been assigned even one week prior. Occasionally, there would be a student who could write out a part of the memory work and in some cases could come close to writing out a complete part.

Obviously, a part of the problem with some of the students being able to remember what they had been assigned the previous week was that they had not memorized it in the first place. It was pointed out that two of the students had to continue into August to get caught up. However, most of the students did complete most of the memory work on schedule most weeks. What the review questions demonstrated was that the students were not retaining what they were memorizing. They would remember what had been assigned long enough to write out the test on Wednesday night and then it was forgotten by the next Wednesday.

The students did better as a whole on the review questions that were based on the things that were discussed in class. These would be questions such as, "What is the doctrine of justification by grace through faith?" The students as a whole got about fifty percent of those questions correct. However, the overall number should not give the impression that all of the students were scoring at about fifty percent. Some of the students were consistently getting all of the review questions on this section correct. Other students were consistently getting all of the review questions on this section

incorrect. What is interesting about the results of these particular questions is that the students who would be considered to be analytical learners consistently got the questions right.<sup>104</sup> Students who would not be considered analytical learners consistently missed these questions. What these results demonstrated is that not all of the students were retaining what was being taught. This concern was discussed in chapter one.

How does this compare to the results of the tests for the 2004-2005 year? When it came to writing out portions of The Six Chief Parts and various Bible verses in the review section, the results were the opposite of the previous year. All of the students were able to write out all or most of what was requested. There were in some cases more missed words than the previous week, but the sections were completed at an acceptable level. Obviously, some of this improvement is due to the fact that all of the students completed all of the memory work on schedule in the first place. It was pointed out earlier that there were no students this year who did not complete the assigned work on schedule.

There was also some improvement on the questions that were asked regarding the material that was covered in class; however, this improvement was not as substantial. The students as a whole gave acceptable answers eighty percent of the time.<sup>105</sup> The

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<sup>104</sup> They did get the questions right that were asked about materials that were discussed in class. However, they did not do any better than other students when it came to the memory work review. I would have expected them to have retained at least a majority of the memory work since they had written it out just one week prior. These were the students who completed all of the memory work assignments on schedule.

<sup>105</sup> What constitutes an acceptable answer is admittedly a somewhat subjective thing. On these particular types of questions, it is not based on a word for word rendition of an answer. It is instead based on whether or not I feel the student has demonstrated an adequate understanding of the concept that is being asked about. There is a great deal of latitude between answers that might be considered correct. Two students might give answers that are accepted as correct, but one student might have a much more complete and desirable answer than the other.

eighty percent performance is compared to the fifty percent performance from the previous year.

However, an important factor does not show up in the overall percentage. The improvement in the questions from this section comes from questions that were asked based on active learning methods that were used in class. Active learning is referring to games or other activities that were used in class to illustrate a particular concept. All of the students were able to get the questions correct when I would list the game that was connected to it in parenthesis next to the question. The students demonstrated their poorest performance in regard to concepts that were simply presented in a lecture format in the class.

### **Interviews**

During the interview process, the parents and the students were asked separately about the specific changes that were made to the confirmation program as a result of this project. In other words questions were asked concerning the value of the different teaching methods that were employed in the confirmation program this year. Questions were also asked about the music CDs that were given to the students to aid in their memorization of The Six Chief Parts. The family activities that were to be done with parents were also asked about. Finally, questions were asked about the sheets that were given to the students that were based on the Bible verses that were assigned.

The parents were not able to comment as completely on some of these parts of the program. The parents were limited in their ability to comment on the teaching methods that were used in class. A parent could comment on their child's overall attitude towards the class based on their observations from outside of the class, but they obviously would



not be able to comment specifically on what took place in the class. The parents also were not able to comment to any great extent on the assignments that related to the Bible verses. The parents were not expected to do the assignments relating to the Bible verses with their children; although, a few parents were indeed directly involved with helping their children do those assignments.

### **Teaching Methods**

The students were asked what things they found to be most helpful about the class time itself, and they were also asked what things they enjoyed the most and would like to see more of in the class. They were also asked what things they enjoyed the least, found the least helpful, or would like to see less of in the class. Every one of the students said that they liked the games and wished they got to have more of them in class. When I asked them why, the responses were all fairly similar with statements like, “It beats just sitting there and listening to you talk.”<sup>106</sup> The students made it very clear that they enjoyed being able to do something different. Being able to get up and move around rather than just sitting and doing the same thing over and over was very attractive to them.

Of course, not all of the students would necessarily learn the best during that time. It simply means that they just like being able to do something different. They get bored when they are expected to sit too long and learning is not taking place at that point. It was my strong impression that there was value in the active learning methods employed just from the perspective that it was a change of pace for the students, and those methods

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<sup>106</sup> It should be noted that there might be people who would have concerns about students being interviewed by their pastor. The concern was that the students would feel intimidated and might not feel free to answer questions honestly. I did not find that any of those concerns were realized. It was my experience that the students needed very little encouragement to be brutally honest.

greatly improved their attitude towards the class. A certain level of unpredictability was helpful in keeping (or getting) the students interested in what was going on in the class.

Obviously, I was interested in knowing whether or not the games and other activities used were actually teaching the students something about the materials that were being covered as well. The students expressed that the activities did help them to remember what was being covered. They felt that the active learning techniques helped them to remember better when they were asked questions on the tests. One student stated that it was particularly helpful when I would put in parentheses next to the question what game related to the question. When the student was reminded of the game that was played in class, he was able to call to mind the concept that was being asked on the test. That statement supports what was demonstrated on the tests that were taken. When the particular activity was listed in parentheses next to the question, the students were able to answer the question correctly.

The students did also express that not all active learning techniques are of equal value, which was no surprise. It was extremely difficult to come up with activities that would do an adequate job of teaching the concept that was at hand. It was definitely my feeling that some of the activities were of a much greater quality than others, and the students expressed that feeling as well. This imbalance is one of the major challenges with using active teaching methods: being able to consistently come up with activities that do more than just entertain.

As was stated earlier, the parents were not able to give as thorough an evaluation of the class activities, but they did hear comments from their children. Several of the parents expressed that their children had made positive comments about the different

activities that were being used in the class. They did feel that those activities had a positive impact on their child's attitude towards the class.

The teacher that observed the class, Mrs. Diane Quart, also commented on the various active learning techniques that were used. She noted that there was clearly an increase in the student's level of interest and involvement in the class when they were doing something other than just sitting and listening. The students were retaining concepts better during the activities due to the fact that they were actually involved and paying attention. She also noted that the students were more likely to ask questions about the material when it was connected to an active learning method and appeared to process the material much more thoroughly than at other times.

The classroom retention has an important connection to the memory work that is assigned. Understanding is a key factor in determining whether or not something will be remembered long term. The time in class is a key factor in the students gaining an understanding of what they are memorizing. It is during the class that the students are taught the meaning of the parts of the catechism that they are memorizing. If students do not gain an understanding of what they are being expected to memorize, they resort to rote memorization and will not retain what they are memorizing long term. Methods that are more effective in communicating an understanding of the materials will help to improve long term memorization.

### **The Six Chief Parts to music**

The next method to be considered is the setting of The Six Chief Parts to music. The students were each given a CD that had the parts of the catechism on it set to music. Each of the Ten Commandments was set to music as well as all of the other parts. There

is a member in the congregation, Mr. Shawn Anderson, who had his own band at one time (Doxa) and is an accomplished musician. He set the parts to music and then recorded them on the CDs.

The assumption was that the use of music would greatly aid the students in retaining what they memorized. When I was a senior in college (1990-1991), I studied in Jerusalem, Israel. I was required to memorize two psalms in Hebrew for my Hebrew class. The director of the school had Psalm eight set to music. The music was not a style that I would listen to normally, but I listened to it just the same. I can no longer even remember what the other psalm was that I had to memorize, but I can still remember Psalm eight in Hebrew. I don't what it is in English, but I can remember it in Hebrew. Music can have that kind of powerful effect on memorization.

Unfortunately, the music CDs that were given to the confirmation students did not have nearly as great an impact as was hoped. Only three students used the CDs to any degree, and they only used them for The Ten Commandments. They stopped using them after that point.

The students who used the CDs for The Ten Commandments stated that they did find them to be helpful in memorizing. But even these students did not use them to the extent that had been hoped. They did not use them outside of the time when they were specifically trying to memorize, which in some cases was only the night before confirmation class. They did not use the CDs at other times when they were in a car or just sitting around doing other things.

The students who used the CDs stopped using them after the commandments because they felt that the music was not nearly as helpful with the articles of the Creed.

This was not entirely surprising since setting the meanings of the articles to music presented special problems. The commandments were much shorter and therefore able to be set to music more easily, and the commandments simply turned out better.

The students who did not use the CDs at all repeatedly expressed that they did not like the musical style. They did not use the CD because the sound did not appeal to them. It became very obvious during the interviews that the value of the CDs and the way to use them was not adequately introduced (though I thought it had been at the time). The students were not able to see past their personal musical tastes in order to reap any benefits from using them. Since all of the kids had different musical tastes, it would be difficult to come up with music CDs that would appeal to everyone of them.

It was also interesting that some parents had a greater interest in the CDs than did the students. These parents said that they listened to them and liked the idea. Some Sunday School teachers also expressed an interest in having the CDs available and felt that they would be quite helpful to them. Their younger students found them to be quite helpful. It is my conclusion that a major part of the problem is with the age of the confirmation students. They simply perceive the style of the music to be “uncool” and therefore did not use them. I am still convinced of the value of the CDs, but will need to consider ways to get the confirmation students to use them.

### **Family Activities**

The family activities were designed to get the parents more involved with their children’s confirmation instruction. It was hoped that getting the children to discuss what was being covered with their parents would increase their understanding of the material and have an impact on their memorization of the material. It was also hoped that having

the parents more directly involved with the confirmation program would ensure that the parents would work with their children in getting the memory work done.

The family activities were seen by both parents and students alike as having the greatest impact on the students' memorization. The parents said that it did indeed make them much more aware of whether or not their child had really completed the memory work. One of the students who had great difficulty in completing the work the previous year expressed that it was more difficult to get away with it this year because the parents were more involved with the program. Parents were now directly working with their children to ensure that the memory work was completed.

The parents also said that they enjoyed being able to work with their children on the assignments in manageable ways. In some cases, the assignments were actually used as a devotional time. Other parents stated that it was valuable for them to review things that they had learned many years ago but had not necessarily studied since that time. They could remember some of the things but had forgotten some of the things that were covered.

The parents also repeated they had a much better understanding of what the students were doing and why. This understanding helped to greatly improve the support received from the parents. One parent who had expressed great concerns the previous year now understood why the students were being expected to learn the things they were learning. I cannot help but think that when the parents have a more positive attitude toward the program this has a great impact on the students. If the students perceive that their parents are not supportive of the pastor, they will be less likely to complete assignments.

The assignments also forced the students to spend more time working with the materials than what they might have otherwise. One parent stated that his daughter was more interested in putting in the bare minimum and getting the assignment done. She did not want to spend as much time on it as he wanted her to. One student stated that her parents wanted to spend way too much time talking about the different issues that were covered on the assignments. I consider those to be very positive results.

The students also confirmed that the time spent working with their parents was of value and did help them gain a greater understanding of the material. Some of this undoubtedly comes from the fact that some students spent much more time on the material than they would have if left to themselves.

There was only one serious complaint on the family activities. One family complained that the assignments were too simplistic. They expressed that they already spend a great deal of time with their children talking about the things that were covered in the assignments. They felt that the assignments were actually a step down for them. This came from a family that does spend a great deal of time with their kids talking about spiritual matters, and their children are exceptional students. The problem in addressing their concern is that most students in the class do not have the background that their children have.

### **Bible verses**

The last aspect of the project to be considered is the assignments given regarding the verses to be memorized. The students were given case studies for each of the Bible verses that they were to memorize. The case studies presented real life situations that they might face. They were then asked to look at the various Bible verses and explain

how those verses would help them address that real life situation. The students were then told to memorize the verse after they had thoroughly explained how they would use the verse to address the situation presented.

I was somewhat disappointed with the brevity of the answers that the students gave to the questions posed. In typical junior high fashion, they wrote as little as they possibly could, but the answers that were given were fairly good. The students' answers (while not as thorough as I would have liked) did demonstrate that they had given some thought to the relevance of the Bible verses that they were memorizing. Their answers showed that they were capable of relating the passages being memorized to real life rather than seeing them as being irrelevant information.

The students did not have any great objections to doing these assignments. The only complaint that was voiced was that the many of the case studies presented seemed very similar to them. The students would have liked to have seen a greater variety in the types of scenarios that were presented. The problem here is that the case studies were written solely by me without any input from others. It is possible that without knowing it my stories started to blur together.

The students did express that the case studies helped them to understand why they were being expected to memorize the verses. They stated that it helped them to see how the verses might be used in their everyday life. They felt that this made the memorization more useful and enjoyable because they knew that the verses could actually have some future relevance in their lives.

It was also interesting to note that the students expressed that the assignment forced them to think about what the verses meant before memorizing them. The



increased understanding was helpful for long term memorization. One student said that these assignments actually forced him to read the verses before memorizing them. When questioned about this, he explained that if it were not for the assignments he would not actually read the verse. I asked for further explanation as to how it would be possible for him to memorize a verse without actually reading it. He explained that he would simply start memorizing the words a part at a time and continue until he had memorized the entire thing. It was very obvious from his description of this process that he was simply memorizing words that had no meaning whatsoever. Eliminating this type of rote memorization was a part of this project's purpose, and these assignments helped to correct it.

### **Conclusion**

The parts of the project that were undertaken greatly aided in accomplishing the project's goals. The project had a very positive effect on memorization among the confirmation students. The project also gave some suggestions for future confirmation instruction. Those ideas for future confirmation instruction will be discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE RECOVERY OF MEMORIZATION IN CONFIRMATION: FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

#### **Contributions at Concordia**

The project has made positive contributions to the way that confirmation instruction is viewed and carried out at Concordia Lutheran Church of Geneseo, Illinois. One contribution is in regards to the involvement of the parents. The parents are much more directly involved with their children's confirmation. This involvement has helped the parents to understand the importance of what the children are required to learn. It has also helped to take a great deal of the burden for insuring that the students complete their memory work off of the pastor and placed it with the parents-where it belongs. The involvement of the parents has also had the added benefit of increasing the knowledge and familiarity that the parents have with the basic teachings of the catechism. This increased knowledge by the parents is something that has benefits for the congregation in other areas as well. Any time members of a congregation are more knowledgeable of the basic teachings of God's Word, the possibility for greater involvement in the life of the church grows.

The methods that have been employed have also helped to improve the attitude of the students toward confirmation instruction. The changes to the classroom instruction have made the class more enjoyable for the students and also more memorable. The students have been able to better retain what is being taught in the class in ways that are more positive for them. The students have memorized the same amount of material this

year, but their relationship to the pastor has been less adversarial than in the past. Some of this is because I have not had to spend as much time in the role of the enforcer.

Another contribution to the confirmation program that was not anticipated has been the increased awareness of the congregation. This has been the first year that anyone outside of the pastor has been involved with developing and implementing the confirmation curriculum, and it has been very positive to see the increased awareness of the program by the congregation. One of the individuals who helped develop the family activities has a child that will be starting confirmation instruction in another year. She was deeply interested in seeing what is taught and how she could assist with improving the instruction. The individual that developed the music CDs is also the chairman of the Board of Deacons. His involvement has led to a greater awareness of the goals of confirmation among other people in the congregation and also an interest in accomplishing those goals. The congregation as a whole has become more aware of what is being accomplished in confirmation instruction and why it is important. This increased awareness and support by other members of the congregation has also helped the students to see the importance of what they are being expected to learn and retain. It is not just the pastor's opinion any longer, but a congregational commitment.

This increased involvement by other members of the congregation and the positive contributions of that involvement raises possibilities for the future. It is my hope to be able to involve other people in the confirmation instruction in greater ways in the future. It would be helpful to find other ways to increase the involvement of the parents in the instruction of their children as well as the rest of the congregation. It is my belief that the congregation does have a desire to be more supportive of the youth in their

confirmation instruction if methods are developed for that to be done. One possibility might be to have the adults memorizing their catechisms as well as the youth. The youth would then see that memorization is something that you do throughout your life.

### **Contributions beyond Geneseo**

The findings of this project support what was found in the literature review, that is, we need to change the way confirmation is carried out. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod at large would benefit from employing more active learning methods in its confirmation programs. It is difficult to find good materials that employ more active learning methods and focus on the different learning styles of students. Group Publishing has done a great deal of work in this area; however, there are often times problems with their materials. Their materials tend to have moralizing and synergistic tendencies that are not conducive to a Lutheran confirmation program. The LC-MS would do well to produce materials that make a greater use of active learning methods when it comes to aiding students with memorization.

The LC-MS would also do well to produce more materials that make a greater use of music and visuals in confirmation instruction. Concordia Publishing House expends a great deal of energy in producing Vacation Bible School materials that put words of Scripture to memorable tunes. It would be helpful for confirmation instruction as well.

### **Contributions to personal growth**

This project has increased the value that I place upon memorization. I have always seen memorization and long term retention as being important goals of confirmation instruction. However, I now have a much better understanding of why memorization is of such value. This increased understanding on my part has enabled me

to better convey the importance of memorization to the confirmation students and their parents. The biblical and theological sections of this study in particular have helped in better understanding and conveying this importance.

The project has also changed my perspective in accomplishing the goals of confirmation instruction. I have greatly increased the different methods that I use in confirmation instruction as well as in other areas of instruction in the congregation. The literature review section has changed my perspective on how to accomplish the goals of the various classes that are taught in the church. I have made greater attempts to employ different methods of instruction.

### **Recommendations for the future**

The project has raised several possibilities for the future. Some of the things that I would like to explore for the future were suggested by the parents or students during the interviews. Other changes are things that presented themselves during the implementation of the project.

The need for better active and interactive learning methods has been discussed to some degree during the previous chapter. These types of activities helped in increasing long term retention, but the degree to which they helped was greatly affected by the quality of the activities. The students requested more of these types of activities, but they also expressed that some of the activities were much better than others. It was difficult during the development of the project to be able to come up with consistently good and helpful activities of this nature. The difficulty came in finding activities that did an adequate job of carrying Lutheran theology. It was also difficult to find activities that the kids would not consider to be “lame” but would hold their interest.

One of the most helpful things for coming up with good ideas for learning activities was a workshop done by Dr. John Oberdeck on October 30, 2004. While he was conducting a Sunday School Teacher's workshop at Concordia for the Rock Island Circuit of the Central Illinois District, he divided the participants up into various groups with each including one of the different learning styles (he did an exercise to help people determine their learning style prior to that point). He then gave the groups a Bible story to work with and asked them to develop an active learning exercise to teach the story. I was highly impressed with the outcome of each group's exercise. They were able, in a relatively short period of time, to come up with excellent activities that were far better than I could have developed on my own in any length of time.

This workshop made me think that this type of model has great potential for confirmation instruction. It would be possible to assemble a group of people who could come up with good activities for confirmation instruction in a relatively short period of time. This approach would be much more effective than trying to develop them on my own.

The use of music to improve long term retention should also be expanded in the future. The first thing that I would like to accomplish would be to further improve the quality of the music that is being used to aid the student's memorization. I would like to come up with music that fits the words of the catechism better and will be easier for the students to use. I will also try to get more people involved in this aspect of the program and thereby get more variety in the type of music that is available to the students. I'm not sure that there was enough variation between the music that was used for each of The Six Chief Parts.

I would also like to do more than just give the students a CD to take home with them. It would be helpful to have someone come into class and introduce the music for the students. They could help demonstrate to the students the value of the music for the memorization process.

The development of the case studies for the Bible verses that are memorized should also be expanded. I developed them without any input from others. Some of the students felt that they began to look too similar. They could be greatly improved and further aid with memorization if more people were involved in their development. The idea would be to put together a group, or use an existing group, in the congregation to develop case studies that will better connect to the students.

A couple of other ideas also presented themselves during the interviews with the students and with the parents. When the students were asked what methods they used for memorizing, several of them stated that they would write things out as part of the memorization process. They found it helpful to write out the things that they were memorizing at least a few times. One parent also wondered about the use of sign language. He stated that he learned sign language several years prior when he helped out at the deaf congregation that the Central Illinois District has in Jacksonville. He pointed out that he can still remember all of the things that he had to sign during that time. He wondered if that was not due to the physical motions that are involved in sign language.

The value of signing connects with the students finding it helpful to write out the various things that they are memorizing. Using body motions to aid in memorization would make sense based on the literature review. This suggestion raises questions about how physical motions might be helpful for further improving memorization. It would

appear to be impractical to have students learn sign language as part of the confirmation curriculum, but that would not necessarily be required to gain the desired benefit. Would it be possible to develop a series of physical motions that would aid students in being able to better memorize and increase long term retention of what they have memorized?

The other suggestion that was given by one set of parents was in regards to servant events. These parents felt that it would be helpful to the students to actually see what they were learning in action. The idea being that they would not just study what it meant to help one's neighbor, but they would actually experience it in real life. This would help improve the student's understanding of some of the concepts that they were learning, and it would help them to see the relevance of what they were learning. This increased understanding would help them to better retain what they were learning. They would also see that the Christian life is not just studied but it is also lived.

This suggestion is supported by the literature review section. Active learning techniques many times seek to create contrived experiences that people could actually experience someday. Obviously, a servant event would not be contrived, but would be a real situation. I had originally considered making some servant events a part of this project but was concerned that the project would become too broad and would not be able to adequately implement them. The idea of servant type events would be well worth considering in the future-especially if the parents are the ones suggesting the idea.

### **Summary**

The project has made substantial changes and contributions to confirmation instruction at Concordia Lutheran Church in Geneseo, Illinois. It is difficult to imagine that confirmation instruction could ever be carried out in the previous manner again.



Students and parents now have different expectations. The project has improved the confirmation instruction for the students which will certainly have blessings for the congregation for many years to come.

**APPENDIX A**

**CASE STUDIES:**

**ASSIGNMENTS FOR MEMORIZING BIBLE VERSES**

**Due September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004**

One of your fellow confirmation students complains to you about all of the Bible verses and things that you have to memorize in confirmation. He says that he doesn't see the point in all of it and doesn't think there's any value. Briefly explain (in a short paragraph) how you would respond to him based on (15) 2 Timothy 3:16-17. After you have answered memorize the verse.

You are talking to a friend who finds out that you are attending confirmation instruction at church. She tells you that she doesn't go to church and wonders about heaven. She asks you how you can get to heaven. Briefly explain (in a short paragraph) how you would respond to her based on (34) John 3:16. After you have answered memorize the verse.

**Due September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

The words of (44) Numbers 6:24-26 are the last words that the pastor speaks in church (the benediction). Explain why you think that God would want the pastor to speak these words to the people every Sunday (what meaning do they have?). After you have answered memorize the verse.

You know somebody at school who says that he never has to apologize to anybody because he never does anything wrong. Write out your answer to him ( a brief paragraph) using (75) I John 1:8. After you have written out your answer memorize the verse.

**Due September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2004**

In (111) Matt. 11:28, Jesus promises to give rest to those who are weary and burdened. Explain what kind of rest you think Jesus is talking about and where it is given based on this verse and the Third Commandment. After you have explained memorize the verse.

You have a relative who comes to church with your family one Sunday. This person asks you afterwards why your church uses the kind of service that it does and does the things it does in the service. Based on (129) Col. 3:16 how would you answer? After you have written your answer memorize the verse.

**September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

Your parents tell you that you have to go clean your room when you want to go to the movies with your friends. You're thinking about not doing what they told you. Explain how (145) Col. 3:20 might help shape your attitude. After you have explained memorize the verse.

Your friend has an older sister who is pregnant and is thinking about getting an abortion. What would you say to this person about when life begins based on (152) Jer. 1:5? After you have answered memorize the verse.

**Due October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

You are checking your e-mail and you receive an advertisement inviting you to come to a website for free that has sexually explicit materials on it. Based on I Cor. 6:18 what should you do? After you have answered memorize the verse.

You are told in school that we should be accepting of people who live in homosexual relationships and that you shouldn't try to change who they are. Based on (180) I Cor. 6:9-10 how would you respond? After you have answered memorize the verse.

**Due 10/13/04**

One of your classmates in confirmation has been telling everyone that the reason that you have been doing so well on your confirmation tests is that you've been cheating. What they are saying isn't true. Based on (206) Matt. 18:15, what should you do? After you write your answer memorize the verse.

You have career day in school where they talk about different careers that you might you go into after you graduate from high school. The idea is to help you figure out what job you want to have someday. The teacher tells you how much money different jobs make and encourages you to consider jobs that make the most money possible. Based on (215) I Tim. 6:8-10 what would be your reaction? After you have answered memorize the verse.



**Due Oct. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

You get a job when you're in high school, and you have the chance to work extra hours. It would mean a lot of extra money for you and you need the money so that you can make car payments on the new Mustang you just bought. However, it would mean that you would have to work on Sunday mornings and miss church. Based on (219) Luke 12:15 what should you do? After you have answered memorize the verse.

You are standing around with some of your friends after lunch. They start telling crude jokes and cutting people down. Based on (226) Phil. 4:8 what should you do? After you have answered memorize the verse.

**Due 10/27/04**

You have a Baptist friend who doesn't think that you should baptize babies because she feels that they don't need it since they are born innocent. Based on (255) Ps. 51:5 what would you say to her? After you have answered memorize the verse.

You get into trouble with your parents and are feeling bad about things that you have done. You wonder how God feels about you. What comfort can you draw from (270) John 3:16? After you have answered memorize the verse.

**Due November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004**

You are feeling weak in your faith in Jesus. You wish that there was something that you could do to overcome the doubts that you find in your heart about what you believe. According to (278) Rom. 10:17 how can you have a stronger faith? After you have answered memorize the verse.

You tell someone that you have faith in Jesus. They ask you what that means. What could you tell them based on ((279) Heb. 11:1? After you have answered memorize the verse.

You tell someone that you are saved and they ask you why God would want to save you. How would you respond to them based on (311) Titus 3:5? After you have answered memorize the verse.

**Due 11/10/04**

You are in a science class in school and the theory of evolution is being taught. You state that you believe that God is the one who created the world. The instructor asks you why you would believe that since you can't prove that God created the world. Based on (327) Heb. 11:3 how would you respond? After you have answered memorize the verse.

You feel like God is very distant from you and really doesn't care about your life. What comfort could you draw from (346) Jer. 1:5? After you have answered memorize the verse?

**Due November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

What does (364) Rom. 6:23 tell you that you deserve from God versus what He actually gives you? After you have answered memorize the verse.

The words of (367) Ps. 145:15-16 are commonly used as a table prayer before and after meals. Why would the words of this passage be appropriate for you to use as a meal prayer? After you have answered memorize the verse and use it as your prayer before dinner this week.

You have a very important math test coming up in school tomorrow and you are having trouble sleeping because you are thinking about it. What comfort can you draw from the words of (368) I Peter 5:7? After you have answered memorize the verse.

**Due November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

You have a friend who tells you that he doesn't think that it matters what church you go to since all churches pray to the same God. Based on (379) Acts 4:12 how would you respond? After you have answered memorize the verse.

What does (384) John 3:36 tell you about why a person goes to either heaven or hell? After you have answered memorize the verse.

You did something terrible that nobody else knows about. You are afraid that you can never be forgiven for what you have done. What comfort do the words of (415) I John 1:7 give you? After you have answered memorize the verse.

**Due 12/1/04**

You have a friend who says that they aren't worried about believing in Jesus since they are young and have plenty of time to worry about that later. What would you say to this person based on (522) Matt. 24:44? After you have answered memorize the verse.

You wonder why you are here on this earth and what purpose your life serves. What do the words of (535) 2 Cor. 5:15 tell you about your purpose in life? After you have answered memorize the verse.

What does (536) Col. 2:6 tell you about what your faith in Jesus Christ has to do with the rest of your life? After you have answered memorize the verse.

**Due 12/8/04**

You have a friend that tells you he's not worried about going to heaven because he's basically a nice guy. He tries to be nice to everyone and do the right thing. What would you tell him based on (555) Eph. 2:8-9? After you have answered memorize the verse.

According to (556) I Cor. 12:3 what is the only way that a person can believe in Jesus Christ? After you have answered memorize the verse.

You know someone who doesn't believe in Jesus. You want them to have the same hope of salvation that you have. What can you do to bring them to faith according to (567) Rom. 10:17? After you have answered memorize the verse.



**Due December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

You have a friend who says that she's afraid of God. She says that she looks at all of the terrible things that go on in our world, and she sees God as being mean and vengeful. How would you respond to her based on (722) Ps. 103:13? After you have answered memorize the verse.

According to (724) Gal. 3:26 what makes you a child of God. What comfort does it give you to know that you are a child of God? After you have answered memorize the verse.

What do the words of (727) Luke 1:37 tell you about your attitude should be towards the various challenges that you face in your life? After you have answered memorize the verse.

**Due December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2004**

How might the words of (730) Ps. 103:1 guide you as prepare for worship on Sunday morning? After you have answered memorize the verse.

**Due January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2005**

When you face trouble in your life, what encouragement do the words of (820) Ps. 50:15 give you? After you have answered memorize the verse.

**Due 1/26/05**

You have a Baptist friend who says that Baptism isn't for children, a person should wait until they are old enough to make their own decision to be baptized. How might you respond based on (839) Acts 2:38-39? After you have answered memorize the verse.

You have a Baptist friend who tells you that Baptism is nothing more than a symbol. It doesn't do anything for a person. How might you respond based on (846) Acts 2:38? After you have answered memorize the verse.

A friend from a different church says to you that Lutherans teach that as long as a person is baptized they will go to heaven no matter what they do or believe afterward. Based on (851) Mark 16:16 how would you correct this person? After you have answered memorize the verse.

**Due February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005**

What does (872) Rom. 6:3-4 tell you about what happened in your Baptism? What did you receive? After you have answered memorize the verse.

**Due 2/16/05**

What does (893) Matt. 18:18 tell you about the authority to forgive or retain sins that Jesus has given to His church on earth? After you have answered memorize the verse.

What does (903) Matt. 18:17 tell you the church should do with a person who refuses to repent of their sins? After you have answered memorize the verse.

**Due February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2005**

You have a friend come with you to church who goes to a Reformed church that does not believe that Jesus' body and blood is truly present in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. They ask you if they should come to Communion in our church. What would you say based on (934) I Cor. 11:27, 29? After you have answered memorize the verse.

You know someone who was confirmed in the church several years earlier and no longer comes to church. He says that he doesn't need to come to Communion since he took it in the past. Based on (936) I Cor. 11:26 what would you tell him that Scripture teaches in regard to how long we should keep coming to Communion? After you have answered memorize the verse.

**Due March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005**

You know a person who goes to a church that is very legalistic. She tells you that there are certain sins that God will not forgive because they are too great. How would you respond based on (948) I John 1:7? After you have answered memorize the verse.

What does I Cor. 10:17 tell you about the unity that exists among those who come to Communion together? After you have answered memorize the verse.

According to (954) I Cor. 11:26 what is one of the things that you are doing when you come to Communion? After you have answered memorize the verse.



**Due 3/9/05**

You know someone in the church who is always trying to cause trouble and stir up divisions. Based on (972) how should you react to such a person? After you have answered memorize the verse.

You are going to church on Sunday morning and you run into a group of your friends. They don't go to church and you feel that they might make fun of you if they knew you did. Based on (974) Matt. 10:32-33 what should you do? After you have answered memorize the verse.

**APPENDIX B**  
**ACTIVE LEARNING EXERCISES**

## **Introduction**

The students will be divided up into two teams. The teams will gather at one end of the room and a piece of masking tape will be placed at the other end of the room. Each team will be given three balloons, a pail, and two spoons. I will tell them that the object of the game is to be the first team finished. I will then tell them to go. Obviously, the students will begin to ask what they are supposed to do. I will simply tell them that they have to finish first and that they have to figure the rest out for themselves. They will then be given the opportunity to play the game. After a few minutes, I will tell them that what I wanted them to do was to have two people use the spoons to carry a balloon down to the tape without touching the balloons with their hands, deposit it in the pail, and give the spoons to the next pair.<sup>107</sup>

The kids will then be asked to explain why the game didn't work. They will be asked to explain how that game relates to God giving His people the Ten Commandments and what our lives would be like if we didn't have the Ten Commandments.

## **The 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment**

The students will each be given five note cards and a marker. They will then be asked to think about what is most important in their life, and they will be asked to write an example on each of the five cards. I will write some examples myself including one card that says, "God's love." I will then say, "Suppose someone steals one of these important things away from you." They will then be told to give up one of their five cards. The cards will then be placed in a pile. The students will then be invited to

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<sup>107</sup> Thom and Joani Schultz, *Why Nobody Learns Much of Anything at Church: And How to Fix It* (Loveland: Group Publishing, Inc.), 186.

describe the impact of the loss of that thing. They will then be told that there has been a natural disaster and told that they must give up another card. Again, they will be invited to describe the impact of that loss. This will be followed by a third round and then a fourth round. They will then be asked what the one thing is that they still have left in their life.

The students will then be asked what it is that is most important in their lives. Is it sports? Friends? Parents? Possessions? They will be asked if even those things can be lost. The final discussion will talk about the fact that only God's love cannot be taken away. The First Commandment will then be read, and the students will be asked to reflect on how the Commandment relates to losing the various cards.<sup>108</sup>

### **The 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment**

A video clip will be shown from the movie "It's a Wonderful Life." The students will be shown the scene where it appears that George Bailey has lost everything and is in danger of facing prison. It shows George sitting on a bar stool with a drink in front of him. He then begins to pray and cry out to the Lord for help. He confesses that he has not been much of a praying man in the past but that he needs the Lord to help him in his desperate situation.

The Second Commandment with meaning will then be read. The students will be asked to reflect on the ways that George is using the Lord's name and how it relates to the Second Commandment. They will be asked to describe what is positive about the way that George is using the Lord's name. They will be asked to describe what is negative about the way that George is using the Lord's name.

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<sup>108</sup> Julie Kammrath and Edward A. Engelbrecht, eds., *Eyes, Ears, and All My Senses Activities for Teaching the Catechism* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 4.

### **The 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment**

A video clip from the movie “Chariots of Fire” will be shown. The students will watch the scene where Eric Liddell has the chance to run in the Olympics and is widely expected to win the gold medal. However, he finds out that his race is supposed to be run on a Sunday, and he refuses to run. He explains that Sunday is a day to worship the Lord and hear His Word. Despite pressure from numerous people, he refuses to run.

The Third Commandment with meaning will be read. The students will be asked to discuss what they would have done if they were in Eric Liddell’s position. They will be asked to think of things that they have always wanted to do in their lives and what they would do if those things interfered with hearing God’s Word. They will be asked to consider why missing just one Sunday of church was that big a deal to Eric. They will be asked to consider times when they have missed church and asked to discuss how those things relate to the Third Commandment.

### **The 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment**

In this activity, the kids will be asked to sit in a circle of chairs. I will then tell them that I am going to read statements that may or may not reflect things that happened between them and their parents in the past week. If a statement is true for them, they are to move in the direction I indicate. If it’s not true for them, they are to remain seated. If someone is in the seat they are supposed to move to, they are to sit on that person’s lap.

I will then read the following statements: Move one seat to your right if you said, “I love you” to your parents.” Move two seats to your left if you had an argument with your parents. Move one seat to your left if you fought with your parents about the bathroom. Move one seat to your left if you were told to clean your room. Move three

seats to your right if you helped wash dishes. Move eight seats to your left if you were grounded. Move one seat to your left if you yelled at your parents. Move two seats to your right if you talked about school problems with your parents. Move five seats to your right if you spent time alone with your parents talking. Move one seat to your right if you helped cook.<sup>109</sup>

The Fourth Commandment will then be read. The students will then be asked what they learned about how they relate to their parents and how this relates to the Fourth Commandment. They will then be asked if they think they have a generally good or bad relationship with their parents and if it reflects what the Fourth Commandment teaches. They will then be asked what they think they can do to make their home life better reflect the Fourth Commandment.

### **The 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment**

The students will be shown a video of a baby ultrasound. It will be explained to them that this is what a baby looks like before it is born. The students will be asked to compare how the baby looks before it is born versus a baby after it is born. They will then be asked whether they think the baby is alive or not.

The Fifth Commandment will then be read. The students will be asked to discuss when they think the gift of life begins and who they feel should have the right to end it. They will then be asked to discuss what their response would be to someone who thinks that abortion isn't a big deal.

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<sup>109</sup> Mike Nappa, ed., *The Youth Worker's Encyclopedia of Bible-Teaching Ideas: New Testament* (Loveland: Group Publishing, Inc.), 265.

### **The 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment**

Two students will be chosen from the class. They will then be tied together with string at the ankle and wrist. They will then be asked to walk around the room. It will be explained that in order to stay together they will need to communicate and coordinate their steps. God calls couples to work the same way in marriage. I will then cut the strings on the couples' ankles and wrists but have them continue to hold hands. They will be told to work together using their free hands in order to retie the strings. When this fails, I will have a third student help tie them back together. I will then explain that when problems arise in marriage and divide a couple, Christ can bind a couple back together again with His love and forgiveness.<sup>110</sup>

The Sixth Commandment will then be read. The students will be asked how the exercise is similar to the way a couple must be united in a marriage. They will be asked to explain what kind of things can divide a couple. They will then be asked to explain how a third person coming in and reuniting the couple is similar to what Christ does for a marriage.

### **The 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment**

One of the students will be given several paper cups and asked to build a pyramid with them. The other students will be given paper that they will make into paper balls to throw at the pyramid. The student who built the pyramid will then be asked to protect his pyramid while the other students try to knock it down by throwing the paper balls at it. When it gets knocked down, one of the other students will be assigned to help rebuild and

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<sup>110</sup> Julie Kammrath and Edward A. Engelbrecht, eds., *Eyes, Ears, and All My Senses Activities for Teaching the Catechism*, 15.

protect the pyramid. This will continue until the remaining students are no longer able to knock down the pyramid.<sup>111</sup>

The Seventh Commandment with meaning will be read. The students will be asked to explain how helping to protect the pyramid is like defending a neighbor's property. They will be asked to discuss what happened eventually when enough people helped the person protect his property and how this relates to what God would have us to do for others. The students will be asked to explain how their attitude toward the person building the pyramid changed when they were trying to help him protect his possessions.

### **The 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment**

Two students will be asked to volunteer from the class. They will each be given a tube of toothpaste, and they will be told that there will be a contest. They will be told to see who can squeeze all of the toothpaste out of their tube first. After the students have finished squeezing all of the toothpaste out of their tubes, they will then be told to use toothpicks to put all of the toothpaste back into the tubes.<sup>112</sup>

When the students give up on putting the toothpaste back into the tubes, the Eighth Commandment with meaning will be read. The students will be asked to explain why it was so much easier to squeeze the toothpaste out of the tubes and how that compares to telling lies and saying harmful things to a person. They will then be asked to compare the exercise to the dangers that come with saying untrue things about someone else.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>112</sup> I have seen this idea used many times before, but I cannot find any reference as to where it came from.



### **The 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment**

The students will be asked to sit in a circle. There will be several food items placed in the middle of the group (enough for each person). There will be items like celery, a carrot, etc., but there will only be one candy bar placed among the items. The students will be told that they can take one item. Once each student is allowed to take an item, they will be told that they can trade with one other person for something different. They will be told that the other person must trade when requested to do so. The game will continue until everyone has had the chance to exchange their item.<sup>113</sup>

The students will then be asked why they chose the item that they chose. They will be asked to describe how they felt if they didn't end up with the item they wanted. They will also be asked to describe how they felt if they knew that everyone else wanted the item that they ended up with. The Ninth Commandment will then be read. They will be asked to describe how the game was like dealing with jealousy over things that someone else has. They will be asked to describe what their feelings of jealousy felt like. They will then be asked to give ideas on how they can deal positively with feelings of jealousy.

### **The 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment**

Enough cups for each student will be set out. A piece of candy will be put in the first one, two pieces in the second one, and so on. The cups will then be mixed up. The cups will be covered so the students cannot see how many pieces of candy are in each of the cups, and they will be asked to take a cup. The students will be given the chance to either celebrate or complain what they have received. They will then be asked if this is

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<sup>113</sup> Susan L. Lingo, *200+ Activities for Children's Ministry* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1999), 92.

fair (it is anticipated that they will say no). The students will be reminded that they did nothing to receive the candy that they received. It was a gift.<sup>114</sup>

They will be told that everyone has different gifts and talents in this life. The Tenth Commandment with meaning will be read. They will be asked what God wants us to do for those who have more than we do. They will be asked to explain what God says about envying those who have more than we do. They will also be asked what they should do for those who do not have as many gifts and talents as they do. They will also be asked what Christ did with His gifts and talents for them.

### **Close of the Commandments**

Before class, I will set up a miniature golf course in the doorway so that the one who putts cannot see the cup that will serve as the hole. A two-by-four will be used as a curb at the beginning of the course. A mirror will be set behind the two-by-four so that the students can see the hole. A piece of masking tape will be placed along the floor that shows how they should putt the ball so that it banks off the two-by-four and goes into the cup. The students will then be given the chance to tee off.<sup>115</sup>

The students will then be asked to describe the features of the course (the use of the curb, mirror, and guide). The students will then be asked to review the three uses of the Law and describe how they relate to each of the parts of the course. They will then be asked to explain how the Law of God functions in their lives.

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<sup>114</sup> Julie Kammrath and Edward A. Engelbrecht, eds., *Eyes, Ears, and All My Senses Activities for Teaching the Catechism*, 21.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

## First Article

Two students will be chosen to as the characters for a skit that will illustrate the role that faith ultimately plays in what one believes regarding creation versus evolution. The scene will be set up so as to look like a school classroom. The dialogue between the two is listed below.

Justin: Morgan? Hey, Morgan! Wake up! The bells about to ring for first period.

Morgan: Hmm? Oh, thanks, Justin.

Justin: What's up? Why so tired?

Morgan: I was up all night working on Mr. Long's biology paper. Darwin's theory of evolution...How boring. The first paragraph alone is enough to put anyone to sleep.

Justin: Yeah, I know. That's why I did mine on creation.

Morgan: Creation? You mean you supported creation?

Justin: Morgan, I tried to write that stupid paper on evolution. I tried to support the idea that we came from monkeys or squid or some form of algae...but I couldn't!

Morgan: But you have to—that's the assignment, Justin!

Justin: I know it's the assignment. But it just didn't make sense. Think about it, Morgan. Think about little, tiny ants and how they know how and when to get food. Think about the ocean and all the fish and stuff that live there. Think about us—how complicated our bodies are. All this great stuff doesn't equal the idea that it all began with some "big bang."

Morgan: Well, Mr. Long thinks it does, and he's the one grading your paper. You know, you could get an F for not following instructions.

Justin: Yeah, I know. But I figure that the instructions said to write a paper explaining Darwin's theory of evolution, and I couldn't explain it. So I wrote a paper on what I believe. The world's an incredible place, Morgan. I know that someone made it that way—it didn't just happen.

Morgan: You're right about the world being a pretty incredible place. But how do you support a paper on creation?

Justin: Well, for starters, I switched textbooks. (Holds up Bible)<sup>116</sup>

The skit will then be discussed with the students. They will be asked to respond to the situation that Justin found himself in with the teacher. The students will be asked to consider how they would respond if they were in Justin's situation. The students will be asked about what they have been taught regarding evolution in school and how they can respond to it based on what the First Article teaches about how the world was created. They will be asked to consider why they think there is so much controversy over evolution and creation. They will be asked why they think it's so important for them to believe that God created the world.

### **The Second Article**

The goal of this game is to teach the students what faith looks like, to show them what it means to place their trust and confidence in someone. This game will help them to understand what it means to trust in Jesus Christ.<sup>117</sup>

Before the class an obstacle course will be set up. It will be arranged through a room of the church with chairs setting the course. There will be chairs and other obstacles in the middle of the course that the students need to go through to reach the finish. There will be a reward at the end for any student who can complete the course without knocking anything over while trying. The students will be blindfolded while going through the course. There will also be punishments set for anyone who tries to complete the course but knocks something over or does not complete it successfully.

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<sup>116</sup> Mike Nappa, ed. *The Youth Worker's Encyclopedia of Bible-Teaching Ideas: Old Testament* (Loveland: Group Publishing Inc., 1994), 241-242.

<sup>117</sup> This game was developed at a Sunday School teacher's workshop that was led by Dr. John Oberdeck. The workshop was held on October 30, 2004 at Concordia Lutheran Church in Geneseo, Illinois. It was attended by Sunday School teachers from the Rock Island Circuit of the Central Illinois District.

After explaining the rules, I will ask for volunteers to try to walk through the course. The punishment for any failed attempts will discourage any volunteers. I will then tell the students that they can pick anyone in the room, including me, to lead them through the course blindfolded. I will then ask for volunteers.

After someone completes the course successfully, I will ask them why they chose the person they did to help them through the course. I will ask them how they felt about being totally dependent on the person who was leading them through the course. I will ask them what would have happened if they had chosen someone who was not reliable to lead them and why it was important to have the right person to lead them. The students will then be asked to explain how the game compares to trusting in Jesus Christ.

### **The Third Article**

The idea behind this game will be to illustrate forensic justification to the students. This game will be used when I was gone the previous Wednesday and the vicar filled in for me. I will tell the students that I had received a bad report from the vicar, and I will give each of them a piece of paper with a string by which they can hang it around their necks. I will tell them to write down on the paper one thing that they did wrong while I was gone. I will choose two students in advance to serve as lawyers, and I will tell the students that they will be put on trial for what they did wrong. There will be various punishments that will correspond to the various infractions. Talking out of turn in the class would get them a five hundred word essay. A failure to have turned in homework would result in fifteen minutes after class and so forth.

The two lawyers will be instructed to come up with a defense for their clients. One will use the defense that yes they were guilty, but others in the class had done far

worse things than them. The other lawyer will argue that they were guilty, but they had done a lot of other good things that should offset their bad behaviors. I will serve as the judge. To the one group that uses the defense of having done all sorts of other good works, I will respond by using Isaiah sixty four six. To the other group that uses the defense of being better than other people, I will respond by using Romans three verses twenty two and twenty three.

I will declare the students guilty and ask them to come forward and receive the sentence for their crime. As they come forward, I will take the papers hanging around their necks and put them around my neck and tell them that their crime is taken away. I will then ask the students to discuss the game after having read Romans three verses twenty two through verse twenty six. They will be asked how they felt as they were coming forward and how this illustrates what Jesus has done for them.<sup>118</sup>

### **First Petition of the Lord's Prayer**

The students will be asked to read the following story that has been altered (the italic portions are incorrect; the correct facts are in brackets): On *Halloween* [Christmas] night in 1776, *Colonel* [General] George Washington made a daring decision that helped the United States win the *Second World* [Revolutionary] War. In the middle of the *summer* [winter], Washington led his *sun-burned* [frost-bitten] troops across the Delaware River in a sneak attack against the *Russians* [Hessians/British] stationed in Trenton, *Minnesota* [New Jersey]. The enemy troops were so surprised to see Washington's men that they immediately *invited them in for supper* [surrendered]. As a

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

result, the Americans grew confident that they could defeat the British *soccer team* [army] and gain independence.<sup>119</sup>

After reading the story, the students will be asked if changing the facts of the story made it more entertaining. The students will then be asked what difference changing the facts make. They will be asked whether or not they would be likely to believe the false story was true if that was the only one they had available. They will be asked to explain how this compares to false teachers and preachers who mix familiar Biblical teachings with false doctrine. They will be asked to explain, based on The First Petition why it is important to hold to correct doctrine.

### **The Second Petition**

The students will be taken into a large room in the church. All but two of the students will be blindfolded. The blindfolded students will be placed in the middle of the room. The students without blindfolds will be placed on opposite sides of the room. I will explain to the students that one student will play the role of the devil and the other will be a missionary. The goal of the missionary is to free everyone from their blindness. When the missionary removes a person's blindfold, that person may go to the safe area, but the devil may catch them before they get there. He can then put the blindfold back on the person. That person will then wander in the darkness once again. The game will be played all the way through once and then started again. The second time through the students will be told that once a person has their blindfold removed they can remove someone else's blindfold (the missionary's job should get easier with the help of others).

When the activity is over, I will gather the students together and read Colossians 1:13-14 to them and invite the students to interpret the game in light of the passage. I

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<sup>119</sup> Kammrath and Engelbrecht, 33.

will then ask them how the goal of the game relates to what they pray for in The Second Petition.<sup>120</sup>

### **The Third Petition**

The students will be given different pairs of sunglasses with strange tints. They will be asked to try them on and look through them. They will then be asked to describe what happens when they wear them. It is expected that they will say that when you look through shades you see everything through that shade or color. I will explain to them that sometimes when we are in the midst of suffering or trials we see life in a different color—usually very negatively. All we can see at such times are our trials and problems.<sup>121</sup>

I will ask the students to read The Third Petition and explain what is really happening when those who believe in Jesus experience pain or suffering. The students will be asked to explain what comfort and encouragement they are given in The Third Article.

### **The Fourth Petition**

The students will be given three sheets of paper each. The students will be asked to write the last three days of the week on each sheet. They will then be asked to list what they had to eat on each of those days. They will then be asked to pick out their favorite food. They will be asked, “What does it take to produce this food?” They will then be asked, “Why is receiving our food each day such a complex matter? How does this complexity help us to understand the fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer?”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup>Ibid, 41.

<sup>121</sup> Kenneth C. Wagener, ed. *Jesus Company: Worship* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 17.

<sup>122</sup> Kammrath and Engelbrecht, 45.



### **The Fifth Petition**

Two students will be the accused. The rest of the students will serve as the jury. A courtroom scene will be set up where the accused will be charged with something that they did in the previous class and for which they are clearly guilty. The accused will be given an opportunity to explain their actions. The jury will then be asked to give a verdict (they will be instructed in advance to give a guilty verdict). The judge will be asked to then give the final verdict. The judge will announce that even though the students are guilty that they have been forgiven.<sup>123</sup>

The Fifth Petition will then be read, and the students will be asked to explain how the courtroom drama is like the message of the petition. The accused will be asked what comfort they found in being forgiven even though they knew they were guilty. The students will be asked to explain how the courtroom scene illustrates the message of the petition.

### **The Sixth Petition**

I will read The Sixth Petition to the students. I will then divide them into three groups and tell each group to come up with a temptation that everyone has to battle. After a minute or two, they will be asked to create a “spontaneous sculpture” that illustrates the temptation. The students will be told that a spontaneous sculpture is created using materials found in or around the classroom-books, chairs, people, pens, etc. After three minutes, the groups will be asked to present their sculpture, and the other groups will be asked to guess what it represents. The group that guesses will then be

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<sup>123</sup> Nappa, 245-246.

asked to illustrate an escape hatch from the temptation.<sup>124</sup> The students will then be asked to discuss how God protects us from temptation in our lives based on The Sixth Petition.

### **The Seventh Petition**

The students will stand in two lines facing each other. The students in the lines will be armed with confetti, squirt guns, and noise makers. The first person in line will be told to walk down the middle of the gauntlet while all the other kids use their squirt guns and other things. I will tell the person walking through the gauntlet that all they have to do is yell “help” and someone will help them. When they yell “help,” someone else will rescue them by covering them with an umbrella or raincoat. Each student will take a turn walking through the gauntlet.<sup>125</sup>

Afterwards, I will read The Seventh Petition to them. The students will be asked what it was like for them to walk through the gauntlet. They will be asked what it was like for them to know that they could ask for help and be shielded from the attack. They will then be asked how the game relates to the ways that God shields us from attacks in our lives. They will be asked about when and where they can call on God for help and how He answers those calls.

### **Conclusion to the Lord’s Prayer**

I will have the students split into pairs and blindfold one person in each pair. Each person who isn’t blindfolded will be given a piece of candy. I will tell the blindfolded students that their partner is going to put something into their mouths without giving them any information about what it is or whether or not it is even edible. They

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<sup>124</sup> Nappa *The Youth Workers Encyclopedia of Bible Teaching Ideas: New Testament*, 221-222.

<sup>125</sup> Nappa, *The Youth Workers Encyclopedia of Bible Teaching Ideas: Old Testament*, 207.

will simply be encouraged to trust their partners to give them something their going to like. I will then have the partner with the candy put the candy in the blindfolded person's mouth and then take off the blindfolds.<sup>126</sup>

Those who were blindfolded will be asked what they thought they were going to get. They will be asked if it was difficult to trust their partner and what factors affected their ability to trust. They will be asked why trust is important to a relationship. The students will then be asked to explain the importance of trust in connection to The Conclusion to the Lord's Prayer and its meaning. They will be asked to explain why they can trust that God hears them when they pray the Lord's Prayer.

### **Baptism**

Ahead of class, I will blow up several balloons and write various messages on them with marker such as: photogenic face, clever wit, fashionable, intelligence, fabulous car, right friends. I will use a twist tie to close each balloon and then drop the balloons in a tub of water. I will ask the students to see how many balloons they can hold under the water at one time. I will explain to the students afterwards that the activity illustrates how difficult it is to drown our selfish thoughts and desires. When they rise to the top in our lives, they can create problems for us spiritually. Focusing on intelligence alone can lead us to rely on our own wisdom and cause to lose trust in God. Focusing on any of the things listed alone can cause us to take our focus away from where it should be. I will tell the students that the qualities written on the balloons are not wrong of themselves.

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<sup>126</sup> Kelli B. Trujillo, ed. *5-Minute Devotions for Youth Ministry* (Loveland: Group Publishing, Inc., 2003), 24-25.

But if we focus on them, we can blow them out of proportion and they rise to the top in our lives.<sup>127</sup>

I will explain to them that God's Word teaches us to drown our overblown thoughts and desires and to deflate ourselves. I will explain to them that this is something that we cannot do on our own. I will explain that we receive the Holy Spirit in Baptism, and He drowns our sinful human nature. He continues to come to us and work in our hearts daily so that our sinful human nature is drowned daily.

### **Confession and Church Discipline**

I will take a bag of cotton balls and have a student remove one and dip it in mustard. I will ask the class what would happen if he were to put the cotton ball back into the bag with the others. I will have the student put the cotton ball back into the bag with the others and then shake the bag and show the students the mess that is spreading. I will explain to the students that this is what happens when we tolerate the sins of others and do not call them to repentance. Sin spreads among us. I will then ask the students why they think God would want us to practice excommunication. I will then ask them if a person who has been excommunicated can be restored to the congregation and ask them what they think it would take to restore an excommunicated person to the congregation. I will then have one of the students wash the cotton ball off and place it in a bag with clean cotton balls and explain that through Jesus' forgiveness God restores us to communion with Him and with one another.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Kammrath and Engelbrecht, 54.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 59.

## Sacrament of the Altar

Before class, I will tie a rope waist high in a maze through a large area in the narthex. I will tell the students that I am going to verbally lead them through a maze. I will tell them that there is a string on their right side that they can lightly touch whenever they need to. I will blindfold them and take them through the maze with only a few verbal directions. After we return to the classroom, I will ask them how many times they needed to touch the string, and I will ask them if touching it helped them. I will ask them what comfort and help being able to touch the string gave to them even though they had my words to guide them through the maze. I will then explain to them that when they receive the physical elements in the Lord's Supper they also receive the forgiveness of sins. I will tell the students that through His Word God has promised us the forgiveness of sins. I will ask them why they think that God would also give us the Lord's Supper and how the game they just played helps illustrate this to them and what comfort they might receive from coming to the Sacrament often.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 63.

**APPENDIX C**

**TAKE HOME ASSIGNMENTS:**

**ACTIVITIES FOR INVOLVING PARENTS IN AIDING MEMORIZATION**

Family Activity  
Due September 1, 2004

**Confirmation Program Goals**

**Activity 1**

1. Ask your parent(s) or guardian(s) to tell you their goals for your confirmation program:

M: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

F: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Together establish 1 or 2 goals to help your confirmation program to be successful (i.e. 15 min. per evening study time, drilling on memory work, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials \_\_\_\_\_

Family Activity  
Due September 8, 2004

### The First Commandment

#### Activity 1

1. Write the first commandment and its meaning on the lines provided.

#### The First Commandment

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#### What does this mean?

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2. Recite the commandment and meaning to parent.
3. Select a TV sit-com or drama to watch with a parent. Write the title on the line provided.

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4. As you watch the program, note below any instances when characters broke the commandment and did not fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

In whom or in what did the characters put their trust? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Dictate a short one or two sentence summary of how the breaking of the first commandment related to the plot while a parent records the summary on the lines provided.

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_



**Activity 2**

1. Recite the first commandment and meaning to your parents.
2. Brainstorm with a parent three ideas to keep God number one in your family. Record these on the lines provided.<sup>130</sup>

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3. Record below an example of a time this week when you or your family used one of the ideas listed above.

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>130</sup> Jeffrey Kunze, Gregory Sawyer, Wayne Schroeder, Roger Sonnenberg, Timothy Weseman, *Partners in Learning: a family confirmation approach* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2001), 9.

Family Activity  
Due September 15, 2004

## The Second Commandment

### Activity 1

1. Write the second commandment and its meaning on the lines provided.

#### The Second Commandment

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#### What does this mean?

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2. Recite the commandment and meaning to parent.
3. Select a TV sit-com or drama to watch, or a selection from a CD, to listen to with a parent. Write the title on the line provided.  

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4. As you watch the program, or listen to the CD, note below any instances when God's name is misused.
  - a. 

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  - b. 

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  - c. 

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  - d. 

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5. If a TV program was watched, dictate a short one or two sentence summary of how the breaking of the second commandment related to the plot while a parent records the summary on the lines provided.  

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

## Activity 2

1. Ask a parent to briefly describe the meaning of your name (or meaning of other family names). Record these below.<sup>131</sup>

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2. With a parent, read Exodus 3:12-15. What name does God use for Himself? \_\_\_\_\_  
What does this name say about God? \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 11.

Family Activity  
Due September 22, 2004

### **The Third Commandment**

#### **Activity 1**

1. With your family, design a poster promoting church attendance. You may include times of worship services, location, etc. of Concordia, but you must include why you and your family attend; why attendance of worship services is so important based on the third commandment.

#### **Activity 2**

1. Write the third commandment and its meaning on the lines provided.

##### **The Third Commandment**

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##### **What does this mean?**

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2. Recite the commandment and meaning to parent.
3. Discuss with your parents or grandparents why attending worship services is so important to them. Have a parent or grandparent record their feelings on the lines below.

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Activity (Do 2 out of the 4 activities)  
Due September 29, 2004

### The Fourth and Fifth Commandments

#### Activity 1

1. Write the third commandment and its meaning on the lines provided.

##### The Fourth Commandment

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What does this mean?

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##### The Fifth Commandment

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What does this mean?

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2. Recite the commandment and meaning to parent.
3. Select a TV sit-com or drama to watch with a parent. Write the title on the line provided. \_\_\_\_\_
4. As you watch the program, note below any instances when characters broke the fourth or fifth (you choose) commandment.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Summarize how the breaking of the fourth or fifth commandment related to the plot.

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**Activity 2**

1. Think about a time a parent gave you extra help out of love (with homework, a hobby, sport, etc.).<sup>132</sup>
2. Now do something extra special for your parents without being told to (housework, yardwork, babysitting, or just take the time to tell them how much you love them).
3. Describe what you did on the lines provided below.

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4. Have your parent describe what your kindness meant to them.

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5. Recite the fourth commandment and meaning to a parent.

**Activity 3**

1. With your family, create a poster that celebrates God's gift of life, as explained in the Fifth Commandment.
2. Recite the Fifth Commandment and meaning to a parent.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 13.

#### Activity 4

1. With a parent create a poster using an acrostic (when you put a word down the side of the page and each letter stands for something that has to do with that word) using the word, R-E-S-P-E-C-T, considering how we are to respect authorities God has placed over us, especially in our church and also in the government.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Activity (Do one out of the first two activities ALONG with activity 3)  
Due October 6, 2004

### The Sixth and Seventh Commandments

#### Activity 1

1. Ask your parents to describe the story of how they first met and fell in love. What place does God's love have in their relationship? Summarize the story on the lines provided below.<sup>133</sup>

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#### Activity 2

1. With a parent, watch the local evening news or read the local news from the newspaper every evening this week. Record examples of people breaking the Seventh Commandment by attempting to acquire someone else's possessions in dishonest ways. Record the examples below, or clip examples from the newspaper and attach to this page.

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#### Activity 3

1. Write the seventh commandment and its meaning on the lines provided.

##### The Seventh Commandment

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##### What does this mean?

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Recite the commandment and meaning to parent.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 19.



Family Activity  
Due October 13, 2004

## The Eighth and Ninth Commandments

### Activity 1

1. On a sheet of notebook paper, have each family member come up with three compliments for a neighbor, co-worker, or classmate. Attach the sheets of compliments to this page.

Sometime this week, have family members share at least one of the compliments with a neighbor, co-worker, or classmate. Have at least one family member record the reaction below.

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2. Write the Eighth commandment and its meaning on the lines provided.

#### The Eighth Commandment

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What does this mean?

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3. Recite the commandment and meaning to parent.

### Activity 2 (Ninth Commandment)

1. In the movie, "A Christmas Story", Ralphie, a young boy, goes to great lengths to get all he really wants for Christmas, a Red Ryder air rifle. Record a time when you really wanted something and didn't get it (e.g., a Christmas present). Discuss with a parent the lengths you went through to get what you wanted. How might you see things differently now, in light of the commandments? Have a parent record the experience below.<sup>134</sup>

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 27.

Family Activity  
Due October 20, 2004

### **The Tenth Commandment**

#### **Activity 1**

1. Ask your parent(s) to explain your family's stewardship with you. You may wish to discuss the household budget, regular expenses, and contributions to the Lord's work at Concordia. Discuss the wisdom, or lack thereof, of some of the ways the family manages its God-given gifts. If you receive an allowance or have a part-time job, ask for guidance in developing your own stewardship plan. By learning how to manage wisely what God provides, you will learn about Christian Stewardship. Briefly describe what your family discussed.

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Activity  
Due October 27, 2004

### The Close of the Commandments

#### Activity 1

1. With a parent, look up the word “desensitize” in a dictionary. Discuss with a parent how we sometimes become *desensitized* to what does on in the world around us. Make a comparison of how the world was portrayed in TV programs your parents or grandparents watched, such as *The Andy Griffith Show* or *The Cosby Show* and TV programs that are aired today, such as *Friends* or *Will and Grace*. Discuss why it is important to stay connected to God’s Word so we don’t become desensitized to sin.

Have a parent record details or your discussion here.

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent’s initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Activity  
Due November 3, 2004

### The First Article

#### Activity 1 (Choose one of the following)

Family members will consider God's many blessings, and write a litany of thanks together, such as the litany below. You may also find the Book of Psalms very helpful for this activity. Write your family litany of thanks on the following page.

Parent: God created man in His own image...male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

Sibling: God has made me, the breath of the Almighty gives me life (Job 33:4)

Parent: All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

You: But God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believed in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

All: Jesus loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

Parent: In Jesus, you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit. (Ephesians 2:22)

You: God is the builder of everything. (Hebrews 3:4)

All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the Beginning, is now, and will Be forever. Amen.

#### Activity 2

Ask your parents to respond to the two questions following questions regarding faith:

1. What do you think faith is?
2. What is one word that would describe your faith?

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

# My Family Litany of Thanks

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Activity  
Due November 10, 2004

### **The First Article**

#### **Activity 1**

1. Keep a family blessings diary for the week. Each day, as a family, the blessings of the day will be discussed and will be categorized and recorded according to the First Article – our bodies, material needs (and wants!), and protection.
2. Family members will recite the First Article and meaning together.

#### **Activity 2**

With your family, brainstorm as many symbols of the Trinity as you can think of. Create a poster that includes these symbols.<sup>135</sup>

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 33.

Family Activity  
Due November 17, 2004

### The Second Article

#### Activity 1

1. Family members will read aloud an account of the Crucifixion from the Bible from one of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John and discuss the suffering Jesus went through for us. Recite the Second Article together.

What account did you read? \_\_\_\_\_

What types of suffering did Jesus endure?

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2. Recite the Second Article and meaning to a parent.

#### Activity 2

Many in the news media consider Christians as being intolerant of some individuals or groups. Once dictionary defines intolerant as not willing to let others do and think as they choose. Interview a parent concerning these questions:

1. Do you think Christians are intolerant?

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2. Why do you think the media accuses Christians of being intolerant?

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3. Should Christians be intolerant of some of the ideals promoted by some individuals or groups?

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Activity  
Due November 24, 2004

## **The Second Article**

### **Activity 1**

1. Recite the Second Article and meaning to a parent.
2. With a parent, write a poem explaining who Jesus is according to the Bible and as explained in the Second Article. Attach the poem to this page or use the space provided below.

### **Activity 2**

1. Meditate on the words of Luther's explanation to the Second Article. Then think of one or two ways you can respond to Jesus' love for you by serving someone in your home this week. Discuss your plan for service with your parent(s), and explain below.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_



Family Activity  
Due December 1, 2004

### The Third Article

#### Activity 1

1. Read the Third Article together with a parent.
2. According to the Bible, as stated in the Third Article, "I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me..."

Watch a "TV preacher" together with a parent and look for distortions or contradictions of this truth. Note and distortions or contradictions ("What must I DO to be saved?") below:

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Name of the pastor or church represented?

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#### Activity 2

1. Recite the Third Article and meaning to a parent.
2. With a parent create a poster that highlights the work of the Holy Spirit.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Activity  
Due December 8, 2004

**The Third Article**

**Activity 1**

1. As a family discuss some of your best memories about church, and some of the people of the congregation who encourage or inspire you the most. Share some of the reasons that you believe it is important to be an active member of the congregation.

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Activity  
Due December 15, 2004

**Introduction to the Lord's Prayer**

**Activity 1**

1. Recite the Introduction and meaning to a parent.

**Activity 2**

1. List five words that describe a father and discuss them with a parent. How do they apply to the heavenly Father? Record the discussion below.<sup>136</sup>

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ |          |

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2. Close by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 47.

Family Activity  
Due December 22, 2004

**First and Second Petitions of the Lord's Prayer**

**Activity 1**

1. Recite the First and Second Petitions and meaning to a parent.

**Activity 2**

1. With a parent, brainstorm as many synonyms (words that mean the same or nearly the same) for **hallowed** as you can think of. Use a dictionary or thesaurus for help.
2. Record some of the synonyms below.

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Activity  
Due January 5, 2005

**Third and Fourth Petitions of the Lord's Prayer**

**Activity 1**

1. Recite the Third and Fourth Petitions and meaning to a parent.

**Activity 2 (Do one of the following, 1 or 2)**

1. Discuss with a parent or grandparent a time when they questioned God's will. Record below how God used that time for His glory or write a poem about it.

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2. With a parent list three plans that you have for the future, distinguish between long-term plans, and short-term plans. Look critically at your plans for your life based on the Third Petition. Answer the following questions: How do your plans fit into God's plans? When we pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," what does this have to do with your plans for your life?

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity 3**

1. Recite the Third and Fourth Petitions and meanings to a parent.
2. Recall with a parent a memorable Thanksgiving. Write a Thanksgiving prayer together. Have your parent record the prayer below.

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**Activity 4**

1. Recite the Third and Fourth Petitions and meanings to a parent.
2. With a parent create a collage of pictures from old magazines of examples of what is meant by daily bread according to the Bible and as stated in the Fourth Petition.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Activity  
Due January 12, 2005

**Fifth and Sixth Petitions of the Lord's Prayer**

**Activity 1**

1. Recite the Fifth and Sixth Petitions and meaning to a parent.

**Activity 2**

1. Recite the Fifth and Sixth Petitions and meaning to a parent.
2. Recall the worst thing that anyone has ever done to you. Have you forgiven the person or persons involved? Talk with your family about God's forgiveness for all sins through Christ.

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**Activity 3**

1. Recite the Fifth and Sixth Petitions and meaning to a parent.
2. We are daily bombarded by sin. Ephesians 6:10-18 talks about putting on the full armor of God. With a parent, read the verses in Ephesians. Draw a picture of yourself equipped with the full armor of God as described in Ephesians. Explain to a parent what each means.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Activity  
Due January 19, 2005

**Seventh Petition and Conclusion of the Lord's Prayer**

**Activity 1**

1. Recite the Seventh Petition and Conclusion of the Lord's Prayer and meaning to a parent.

**Activity 2**

1. Recite the Seventh Petition and Conclusion of the Lord's Prayer and meaning to a parent.
2. Discuss with your parents the following statement: "Every religion is the same. Each one just has a little different way to heaven." Then, with your parents, find a verse from the Bible that shows the previous statement to be false. Write the verse and scripture reference below.

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_



Family Activity  
Due January 26, 2005

**The Nature of Baptism – Part I**  
**The Blessings of Baptism – Part II**

**Activity 1**

1. Recite Part I and Part II of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism to a parent.

**Activity 2**

1. Recite Part I and Part II of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism to a parent.
2. Write a letter to your sponsor stating what your baptism and faith mean to you and turn in a copy of it.

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**Activity 3**

1. Recite Part I and Part II of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism to a parent.
2. Talk to your parents about how you can live the faith of your baptism, so that others can see you belong to Christ. Record some of your suggestions below:

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Activity  
Due February 2, 2005

**The Power of Baptism – Part III**

**Activity 1**

1. Recite Part III of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism to a parent.

**Activity 2**

1. Recite Part III of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism to a parent.
2. Read through the Rite of Baptism on page 199 of Lutheran Worship. Get out your pictures of your Baptism Day. Discuss this day with your parents.

**Activity 3**

1. Recite Part III of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism to a parent.
2. Talk to your parents about how your baptism, and the sponsors they may have chosen for you. Discuss why they wanted you to be baptized, and how they think your Confirmation relates to Baptism.

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Activity  
Due February 9, 2005

**What Baptism Indicates – Part IV**

**Activity 1**

1. Recite Part IV of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and Confession to a parent.

**Activity 2**

1. Recite Part IV of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and Confession to a parent.
2. With a parent, create a Baptism poster including date, sponsors, pictures, etc.

**Activity 3**

1. Recite Part IV of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and Confession to a parent.
2. With a parent, read Psalm 103: 8-14. Notice particularly verse 12. Then complete the following statement with a parent. When I admit I've done wrong...

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Activity  
Due February 16, 2005

### The Office of the Keys

#### Activity 1

1. Recite What is the Office of the Keys, Where is this written, and What do you believe according to these words to a parent.

#### Activity 2

1. Recite What is the Office of the Keys, Where is this written, and What do you believe according to these words to a parent.
2. Ask your parent to describe a time when he or she was locked out (*e.g.*, from your home or car). Did the experience cause a change in the way they did things in this future? Who had the key? Discuss how this is like the Office of the Keys. Have your parent record this below.<sup>137</sup>

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 71.

Family Activity  
Due February 23, 2005

**The Nature of the Sacrament of the Altar**

**Activity 1**

1. Recite Nature of the Sacrament of the Altar to a parent.
2. Talk to your parents about special meals that you have during the year as a family to celebrate something. Ask them how they see the Lord's Supper being like one of these meals.

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**Activity 2**

1. Recite Nature of the Sacrament of the Altar to a parent.
2. Ask your parent to tell you why the Sacrament is special to them, and when their desire to receive it is the strongest.

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Activity  
Due March 9, 2005

**The Power of the Sacrament of the Altar and How to Receive this Sacrament  
worthily**

**Activity 1**

1. Recite memory work to a parent.
2. With a parent, write a prayer that you could play before taking communion. Use Lutheran Worship, page 128 for examples.

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

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