

Week 1: The 10 Commandments

Overview of the 10 Commandments

- Two tables:
 - First three are about your relationship with God
 - The last seven are about your relationship with one another, beginning with your most intimate relationships and broadening.
- Numbering is slightly different for Catholics and Lutherans than for other denominations (we combine first two, others combine last two).
- Luther frames the 10 Commandments not only in terms of what we should NOT do, but what we should do *instead*.

Look at explanations:

- “We are to fear and love God, so that...”
 - In practical terms, what does this mean?
 - Why does each commandment start with this?

Refer to 10 Comm. Table or dos and don'ts.

- Have each person read Luther's explanation, then what they pulled out as dos and don'ts. Come up with one example.

Using 10 Commandments as a way to weave a “garland of prayer”

- “If I have had time and opportunity to go through the Lord's Prayer, I do the same with the Ten Commandments. I take one part after another and free myself as much as possible from distractions in order to pray. I divide each commandment into four parts, thereby fashioning a garland of four strands. That is, I think of each commandment as, first, instruction, which is really what it is intended to be, and consider what the Lord God demands of me so earnestly. Second, I turn it into a thanksgiving; third, a confession; and fourth, a prayer.”
 - Luther uses this method for the parts of the Catechism as well as a devotional way to read scripture.
 - For example, try it with this:
 - *“You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” (Psalm 91:1-4)*
 - Now try with a commandment (you pick!).
 - Give people 5 minutes to work on this, using Small Catechism explanation as a guide.

In closing:

- Are the commandments a cause of terror, a means of grace, or both?
- Do you experience God's law primarily as a “wrathful threat” or “a friendly promise”?
- Is it possible to have a heart that “trusts” in God alone? If so, how is such a heart developed and nurtured? If not, why not?