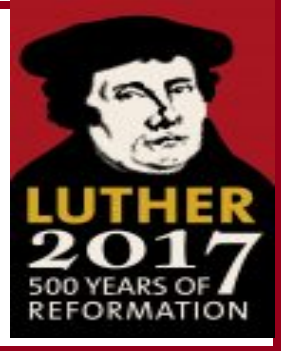


# Devotional Life

Joshua 1:7-9 Deuteronomy 6:1-9 Luke 11:27-28

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One of the first things Martin Luther faced after breaking away from the Roman Catholic church was **untrained and poorly equipped clergy**. Once the Reformation movement got on its feet, Luther traveled throughout the region visiting churches, testing the clergy, and talking to the people. **He was appalled at what he discovered**. Neither the clergy nor the people knew the most basic truths of Holy Scripture. They did not know the 10 Commandments, the Apostle's Creed, nor the Lord's Prayer. In addition, they were living immoral lives. The people thought that they were set free from the Roman Catholic Church so that they could live any way they pleased. Rebellion and Immorality were rampant ... IN THE CHURCH! **Martin Luther discovered that both clergy and people alike were biblically illiterate and doctrinally unsound.** ☹

In response to this sad state of affairs, Luther wrote the **SMALL CATECHISM** for parents and the **LARGE CATECHISM** for pastors and teachers. The word **catechism** comes from a New Testament word for "echo"; and it is a teaching method using **questions and answers** -- back and forth, like an "echo" --- to teach Holy Scripture. Martin Luther's Small and Large Catechisms are short summaries of the key teachings in the Bible.

In the **Catechisms**, we learn about God, His Word and His Kingdom. The "6 chief parts" are the Ten Commandments, the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, and the Office of the Keys.

**The Catechisms are summaries of Holy Scripture.**

† We learn that we are sinful and separated from God, we are lost and helpless in our sin and guilt, and we will die in our sins.

- † We learn that God the Father sent His Son Jesus to redeem us, that His death and resurrection leads us to repentance and the forgiveness of sins.
- † We learn that God the Holy Spirit sanctifies us through the Gospel (the “good news” of eternal salvation in Christ); and the Holy Spirit creates faith, forgives sins and gives us eternal life.
- † We learn that as God’s Baptized people, we now hallow His Name, seek His Kingdom, and strive to do His Will as He feeds us His Body and Blood in the bread and wine of Holy Communion.

***The Catechisms teach us all these things . . . and more! The Catechisms are concise summaries of the entire Christian faith and life!***

The *Small Catechism* in particular is meant for us to study and learn throughout our lives. The **SMALL CATECHISM** is not just for children, **it is really for all of us throughout our lives!** Here is what Luther said:

I am a doctor and a preacher, yes, as learned and experienced as all the people . . . Yet I am as a child who is being taught the Catechism. Every morning, and whenever I have time, I read and say, word for word, the 10 Commandments, the Creed, the Lords Prayer, the Psalms, and such. I must still read and study them daily. Yet I cannot master the Catechism as I wish. But I must remain a child and student of the catechism, and I’m glad to remain so. Large Catechism, 7

Of course, all of this echoes what Jesus had already taught us. In many and various ways, Jesus teaches us the importance of **studying** His Holy Word; of committing it to **memory** so that it fills our heart and mind; of **hearing** and **obeying** His Word and Commands.

Jesus said, “**Blessed** are those who hear and obey the word of God.” LUKE 11:28  
 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; **meditate on it day and night**, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. JOSHUA 1:8  
 I have **hidden Your word in my heart** that I might not sin against YOU. PSALM 119:11

All of these verses, and 100s of other ones, teach us to fill our hearts and minds with God’s Holy Word. We are to be thinking about it, mediating on it, memorizing it, talking about it, and applying it to our lives. **God’s Holy Word is the power of God to forgive your sins, strengthen your faith, and empower you to live holy and godly lives!** The *Small Catechism* is one easy way to keep God’s Holy Word in front of you each day!

One benefit of filling your heart and mind with God's Holy Word each day is that it **chases the devil away!** The devil is a liar; his entire purpose is to lie and deceive you so that you will abandon the teachings of Holy Scripture and turn your back on the Holy Trinity. Jesus warns us that *the devil was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* Rather than listen and obey Satan's lies, fill your heart and your mind with the truth of God's Holy Word!

**RESIST THE DEVIL, AND HE WILL FLEE FROM YOU.**

When you fill your heart and mind with God's Holy Word,  
*then you are resisting the devil!*

Here is how Martin Luther wrote about it in the *Large Catechism*:

It is an exceedingly effectual help against the devil, the world, and the flesh and all evil thoughts to **be occupied with the Word of God**, and to speak of it, and to meditate upon it . . . Undoubtedly, you will not start a stronger incense or other fumigation against the devil than by being engaged upon God's commandments and words, and speaking, singing, or thinking of them. For this is indeed the true holy water and holy sign from which the devil flees, and by which he may be driven away. **Now, for this reason alone you ought gladly to read, speak, think and treat of these things, if you had no other profit and fruit from them than that by doing so you can drive away the devil and evil thoughts.** . . . Yea, indeed, [the Word of God is the] power of God which gives the devil burning pain, and strengthens, comforts, and helps us beyond measure. [LARGE CATECHISM](#) Preface 10-11

**RESIST THE DEVIL, AND HE WILL FLEE FROM YOU.**

When you fill your heart and mind with God's Holy Word,  
*then you are resisting the devil!*

*So think about your life.*

What are you doing to **fill** your heart and mind with God's Holy Word? Do you still **study** the Catechism? Have you committed to **memory** the 6

chief parts of the Catechism, and the supporting Bible verses? Do you **mediate** on God and His Word “*night and day*”?

Most of you have gone through our **BASICS** class here at Trinity. When you went through the **BASICS** class and joined our congregation, we gave you a **Small Catechism**. We did not give that Catechism to you for it to sit on your shelf and collect dust! It is meant to be studied each day! ***The Catechism is a concise summary of Holy Scripture; it teaches us the entire Christian faith and life!*** If you do not have a ***Small Catechism***, I will give you a abbreviated copy for free today after the service! Look for it in the entryway. If you already have a ***Small Catechism***, get it out and start studying it! Studying the ***Small Catechism*** is an easy way to keep God’s Word in front of you each day.

### **One other thing.**

Today we are giving the first graders in Trinity Lutheran School a Bible. In our school, the children learn the value of the Word of God, they learn that everything in Holy Scripture points to the Lord Jesus Christ and His work of salvation. His death and resurrection leads us to repentance and the forgiveness of sins. They learn morals, values, and ethics based on God’s Ten Commandments; and they learn to love their neighbors as themselves. Holy Scripture teaches the students in our school to **lead, inspire, serve.**



The first graders today remind us that studying the Word of God is a **lifelong pursuit**. Each year is to bring more knowledge, wisdom, understanding and maturity to your life. The more you study God’s Holy Word, the more you have a hunger and thirst for it.

Jesus teaches us to meditate on His Word; we are to hear and obey it; His Word is to fill our hearts and minds. Martin Luther has made that easy by writing the **SMALL CATECHISM**. May you make time each day for God’s Holy Word! Amen!