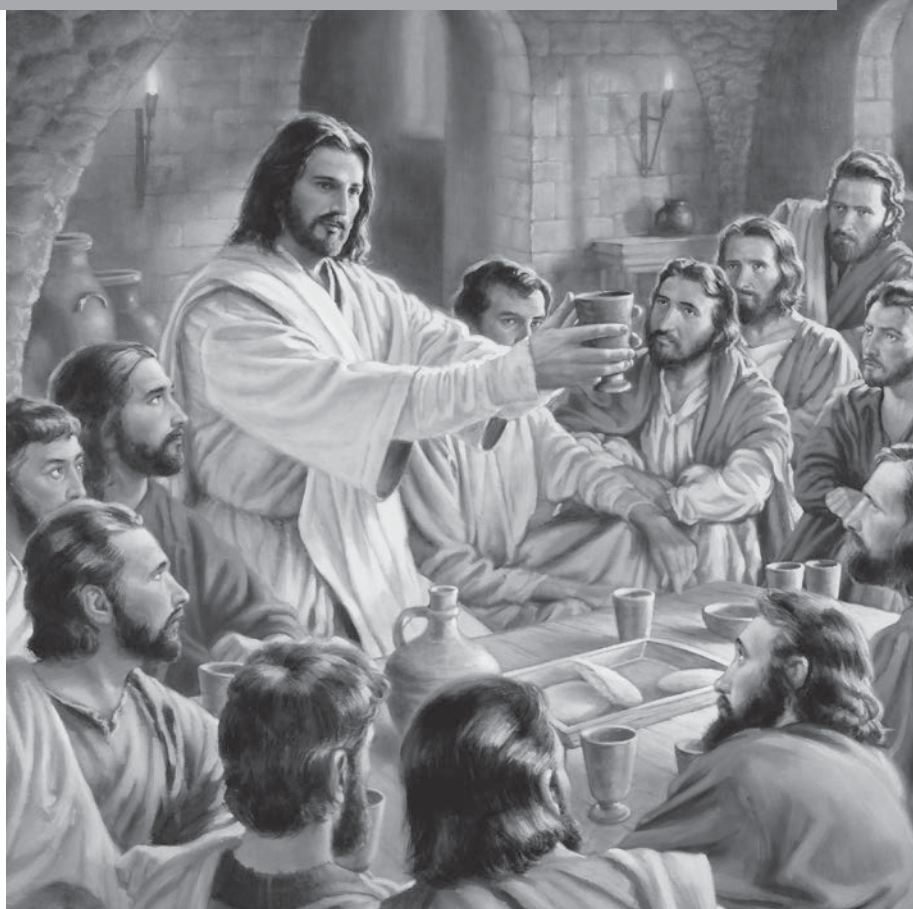


This Is the Feast

Preparing for the Lord's Supper



Teacher Book

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Introduction

For many Lutherans, their first Holy Communion may create a most lasting and meaningful memory. The taste of the bread, the scent of the wine, and the public character of the meal add up to an unforgettable moment. Yet none of these factors get at the essence of what happens in the Lord's Supper—a meal of forgiveness, unity, and peace through the body and blood of Christ.

Because the Lord's Supper is more than a memorable ceremony, the Lord calls us to special preparation. For example, Jesus carefully taught His disciples before He gave them the Sacrament. The apostle Paul admonished, "Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28–29). First Communion embraces more than a moment. It begins a lifetime of communion with Christ and His people.

This Is the Feast: Preparing for the Lord's Supper introduces young Christians, as early as fifth grade, to Communion and lays the foundation for a life of devotion. The sessions may be taught as freestanding classes but are best offered as part of confirmation instruction. To properly prepare for the Sacrament, students and their parents will survey both the Lord's Supper and Christian doctrine as a whole: the Law, the Gospel, prayer and worship, Baptism, and Confession and Absolution (see Luther's shorter preface to the Large Catechism, paragraph 2).

Through classroom participation and the "Taking It Home" sections, parents and guardians will learn alongside their children. Although parents may certainly ask questions and provide answers, they should not dominate class discussion. Parents should serve as mentors, support the class leader, and encourage their children to participate. This intergenerational approach affirms the primary role of family as the agent of Christian education (Deuteronomy 6:6–9) but keeps the focus on the children as learners.

Though *This Is the Feast* is designed as an eight-week course, you may use the materials for a weekend retreat. So as not to overwhelm the learners, schedule no fewer than two weekends of activity. That way, parents and guardians and their children will have adequate time to discuss the material for each session.

Congregations with larger classes may decide to divide their class into small groups of six to eight parents and children. Questions and answers could be discussed in small groups.

Session Structure

Each session in *This Is the Feast* follows the same structure. Here are the components you will find and the processes you may use:

Arrival Activity: In the sidebar, find activities to encourage families to participate in lesson-related activities as they arrive.

Prayer: Be sure to ask for prayer requests from the families present.

Key Verse: Following prayer, set the focus of the session by having a student read aloud the key verse.

Drama: Before class, assign the roles for the drama to class members. That way they will be better prepared to participate. Each drama includes a part for an adult, who can take responsibility for any rehearsals. (As an option, you could form a drama team to present all eight dramas for the course.) Questions for discussion follow each drama script. The leader may ask students and parents for their responses. If the class is large, you may want to divide into small groups for discussion.

Looking for Answers: Each session has questions that will be discussed by the class. This guide provides the answer to each question. You may wish to put each question and its answer into a presentation for computer or similar projection. You may wish to personalize the answers with narratives and illustrations.

What Do You See?: Have students look at the artwork and reflect on what they see. Use the discussion questions to guide them.

Taking It Home: Before dismissing students and their parents, remind them to use Taking It Home.

Listen to Memory Work: A memorization suggestion is included in many sessions. These may be recited or written at home for parents, with students reporting their completion of each assignment to the instructor.

Guidelines for Leading the Class

Be patient with children as they find Scripture passages and complete their notes. Invite parents to help. Everyone having the same version and edition of the Bible will allow the leader to give page numbers for passages cited.

Avoid turning the classes into lectures. As a leader, you should provide narratives and illustrations that not only clarify the truths being communicated from God's Word but also invite the learners to participate in communicating those truths. A basic guideline here: don't just tell students the truth of God's Word; through the drama and discussion, show them and then invite them to show you what they have learned.

Leaders should place a high value on keeping the children as the primary learners in the class. It may be easy to focus on adults and their questions. They're learning too! Some may grasp the beauty and deeper meanings of the Lord's Supper for the first time. Yet the class is designed for the children. Show caution, therefore, in responding too often to adult issues and concerns. And, again, encourage adults to allow the students to ask and to answer questions.

By all means, enjoy your teaching. You are privileged to welcome children into a fuller appreciation of God's sacramental grace, culminating in their first participation in Holy Communion. Be genuine with the class. Present these timeless truths with experiences and stories of your own. Your attitude as a leader will no doubt shape the attitudes of your class.

The Law and Giving Myself a Test

Key Verse

Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 1 Corinthians 11:28

Ask, **What do you think mirrors have to do with examining yourself before you receive the Lord's Supper?** Accept all responses. Then say, **Today we will answer that question. To begin our study today and each session, we will experience a drama. The drama today is entitled "If Mirrors Could Talk." After we experience the drama, we will discuss it.**

Have students and parents (or the assigned drama team) act out the play.

Drama

If Mirrors Could Talk

(NARRATOR [N] stands Stage R. Three players [M1, M2, M3] stand Stage L, facing the audience, each holding a large mirror. GIRL stands Center Stage.)

N: Once there was a girl who had three mirrors. These were not ordinary mirrors. These mirrors talked. The girl loved the mirrors because they always said something that made her feel good. When she didn't like how she looked, she went to her first mirror and asked,

GIRL: *(Moves to M1; stands in front of it)* Tell me, mirror, what do you see?

M1: I see a very pretty person.

GIRL: Pretty, you say?

M1: The prettiest of all.

N: And the girl smiled, thinking herself to be the prettiest girl of all. *(Girl moves to M2, standing in front of it.)* When the girl was feeling very guilty about having done something wrong, she said,

GIRL: I feel terrible. I shouldn't have done it.

N: And she looked into her second mirror with all her guilt, and the mirror said,

M2: Don't feel bad. You're a good person.

GIRL: Good, you say?

*Before the session begins, place a large mirror in the front of the room. Or, if finances permit, purchase a small mirror for each student. Welcome participants as they arrive. Ask parents and their children to look into the mirror and write down what they see. When everyone has arrived, invite volunteers to share what they saw when they looked into the mirror. Accept all responses. You may want to say **Tell me more** after a student has shared what he or she saw in the mirror. This will increase the quality and quantity of the students' responses.*

Pray that the Holy Spirit would strengthen the faith of the parents and children as they study together the truth found in God's Word. Then invite a volunteer to read aloud the key verse for today's session.

M2: The very best of all.

N: And the girl smiled, thinking herself to be very good, even though she had done something bad. (*GIRL moves to M3, standing in front of it.*) When the girl doubted herself, when she wondered if she could do what she had to do, she thought,

GIRL: I don't think I can do this. I am too weak. I'll never be able to do it.

N: She looked into her third mirror with all her doubt, and the mirror said,

M3: Yes, you can. You can do it. You're strong.

GIRL: Strong, you say?

M3: The strongest of all.

N: The girl loved her mirrors, all right. They made her feel pretty and good and strong. Yet something inside of her made her wonder if she could trust these mirrors that always told her what she wanted to hear. (*GIRL moves to M1.*)

M1: The prettiest. (*GIRL moves to M2.*)

M2: The best. (*GIRL moves to M3.*)

M3: The strongest.

N: She wondered about the mirrors that talked and if they could be trusted.

Discuss:

1. **Why do you think the girl loved her mirrors?** The mirrors told the girl only what she wanted to hear about herself. She loved to hear what they said because they affirmed her.
2. **Why do you think she wondered if they could be trusted?** The mirrors told the girl only what she wanted to hear. How could she trust whether they were telling the truth?
3. **What's wrong with only looking at the good in us and never seeing the bad?** Answers will vary, but may include that we will never know what we need to change; we will be led to believe that things are okay, when really they are not; it is not honest.
4. **How do you know if you've done something wrong?** First, we know from God's Word that we are all sinners. Second, we know we have done specific wrongs if someone corrects us or if our conscience bothers us concerning something we have done. Conclude by telling the students that God's Law acts like a mirror that shows our sins. Unlike the mirrors in the drama, the Law answers with brutal honesty.

Looking for Answers

This section lets students and parents explore what Scripture has to say about the concepts developed in the lesson. Studying Scripture and the chief doctrines associated with the Lord's Supper will prepare students to receive Holy Communion.

1. **Describe the three ways the Law of God functions in our lives. How is each important?**

Curb—1 Timothy 1:9. The Law acts like a curb. It curbs outbursts of violent behavior.

Mirror—Romans 3:20. The Law shows us our sin and that we are sinners.

Rule—Psalm 119:105. For Christians, the Law acts as a guide for appropriate, God-pleasing behavior.

2. **Because God is holy and just, what does He require of every person? Read Matthew 5:48. How well have you lived up to God's standard?** God demands perfection. Jesus says, "Be perfect." Answers will vary. If honest, we each must admit that we are not perfect.

3. **If honest, what must we confess? See 1 John 1:8.** That we are sinners.

4. **What do we deserve because of our sin? Read Romans 6:23.** Eternal death because of our sin.

5. **What does God teach us in His Word concerning sin?**

a. **1 John 3:4**—Everyone who breaks the Law sins.

b. **Psalm 51:5**—We were sinful from birth, sinful from our conception. We

call this inherited sinfulness *original sin*.

c. **Romans 8:7**—The sinful mind is hostile to God. We sinners cannot and will not please God.

d. **Galatians 5:19–21**—The acts of the sinful nature are sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity (hatred), strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

6. **Why is using the Law as a mirror so important as we prepare to receive the Lord's Supper?** We

need to recognize that we are poor, miserable sinners in order to realize our need for the forgiveness Jesus won for us on the cross. If we do not admit sin, we lie to ourselves and to God. If we confess our sins, God forgives our sins for Jesus' sake. Because we are sinners, we need to receive the body and blood of Jesus, through which we receive the forgiveness of sins.

7. **What does using the Law as a mirror show me about myself?**

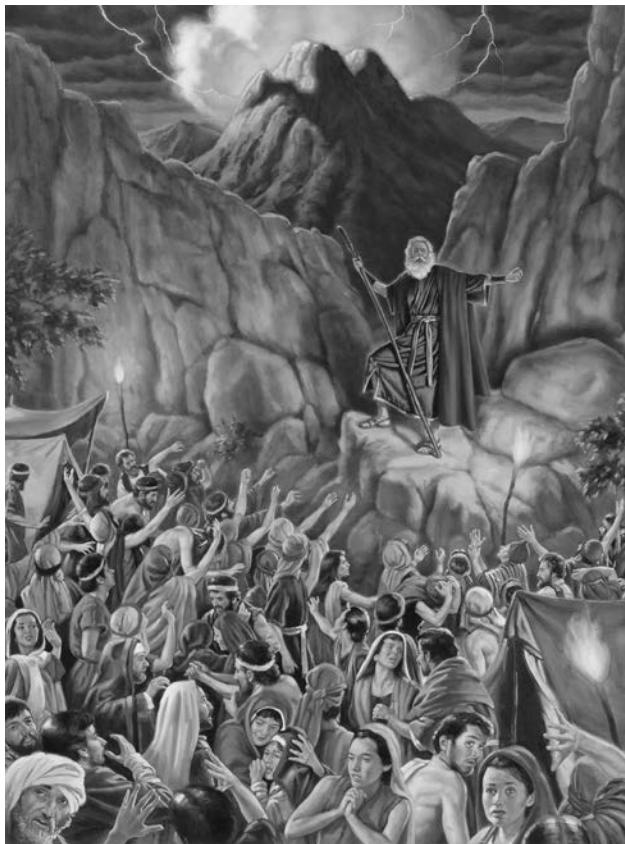
Answers will vary. If honest, we must admit that the Law shows us our sin and our need for a Savior.

8. **What do you conclude about yourself as you look into the mirror of God's Law?** That I am a sinner.

9. **Considering your conclusion, why is it important for you to receive the Lord's Supper? See Matthew 26:26–28.** In the Lord's Supper, Jesus provides us His true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

What Do You See?

1. **What elements of this work of art indicate God's presence? See also Exodus 19:17–19.** God is too great and holy to be approached by man. In the Bible and biblical art, clouds, fire, and smoke often signify the barrier between Holy God and sinful man.
2. **What emotion are the people expressing in this picture? See Exodus 20:18.** The people were afraid in the presence of the holy and righteous God.
3. **Note the position of Moses in the picture, standing as the intermediary between God and His people. How does Moses in this picture remind us of Jesus?** Jesus is the ultimate intermediary between God and humanity. He came to keep God's Law perfectly in our place and to suffer and die to make us righteous before God.



The Ten Commandments

Taking It Home

Urge parents and students to spend at least 10 minutes during the next week discussing the following questions in order to personalize what was taught in the session. The study of Luther's Small Catechism will reinforce what students have learned from Scripture.

1. How is God's Law important to you?
2. How do you prepare for the Lord's Supper?
3. What do you receive from God when you eat His body and drink His blood in the Lord's Supper?
4. Share a time when going to the Lord's Supper was especially important to you.

Before the next session, students and their parents should review together Questions 74–78 in *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*. This will provide an opportunity to review what God's Word says about His Law and prepare them to study what God's Word has to say about His Gospel.

Close with a prayer thanking God for His Law, which shows us our sin and our need for our Savior.