

# THE *illuminated* CATECHISM



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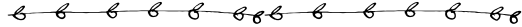
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Special thanks to my son, Ben,  
who helped make this illustrated  
catechism possible.

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THIS CATECHISM ILLUMINATED  
BY



## FOREWORD

Instruction in the basics of the Christian faith plays a vital role in creating a grounded, resilient Christian community. A well-educated Christian is able to share the faith with those outside the Church as well as defend the faith from attacks and confusion. Over the years, the method of basic instruction in the faith has included personal tutoring; sermons; and—with the advent of the printing press—posters, pamphlets, and books, such as the Small Catechism. Many early printed catechisms contained beautiful woodcuts that illustrated the catechism's content.

Martin Luther's Small Catechism follows in the Church's rich tradition of Christian instruction. Luther first wrote his Small Catechism in 1529. He designed the brief work to be used in the home as a tool to strengthen the faith of Christian families. Luther believed the Small Catechism contained the basics of the Christian faith. He divided his Small Catechism into Six Chief Parts: The Ten Commandments, The Creed, The Lord's Prayer, The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, Confession, and The Sacrament of the Altar. The text followed a question and answer format that when spoken aloud created a back and forth conversation between the parent and the child.

Even though Luther's catechism is small in size, the depth of its material provides for a lifetime of reflection and serves as a faithful companion for all ages.

# welcome

Traditionally, illuminated manuscripts were the result of countless hours of work by an artist who would beautifully illustrate pages of Scripture or a devotional text with decorative lettering, borders, and drawings. These colorful additions to the text enticed the eye and sparked the imagination, but above all, they focused the reader to meditate on the sacred texts. The majority of illuminated manuscripts stem from the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Creating them was a complex and costly process reserved for the wealthy; thus they were, and continue to be, available to very few.

However, this *Illuminated Catechism* is yours. The words printed on these pages comprise only part of the work. While you will find selections from Luther's Small Catechism, Bible passages, and short devotional thoughts, there is also empty space—space for your doodling, journaling, and reflection. Each portion of this catechism includes an illustration designed to provide additional “space” for reflection on the catechetical teaching. As you color each illustration, take time to contemplate and pray about what you read. Before you know it, you will have spent many relaxing hours reflecting on God's grace, praying, and deepening your understanding of the Christian faith. You will become the artist of a unique and beautifully illuminated manuscript, but the time spent in devotional reflection is the true work of art.

*“You should meditate, that is, not only in your heart, but also externally, by actually repeating and comparing oral speech and literal words of the book, reading and rereading them with diligent attention and reflection, so that you may see what the Holy Spirit means by them.”* —LUTHER (AE 34:286)

Regarding the book itself, the paper was selected to allow you to color the illustrations, record your reflections, and doodle in the margins. Feel free to use the artistic tools that best fit your style. If you select a water-based medium or artistic markers, test the ink to see if it bleeds through the page. My personal preference is to use blendable colored pencils. However, while I offer these suggestions on how to use this catechism, there is no one right way. The best way is to make it your own.

Blessings on your journey,

Tony Cook



THE CLOSE OF THE COMMANDMENTS

What new insights did you gain from reflecting on the Ten Commandments?

**What does God say about all these commandments?**

HE SAYS, "I, THE LORD YOUR GOD, AM A JEALOUS GOD, PUNISHING THE CHILDREN FOR THE SIN OF THE FATHERS TO THE THIRD AND FOURTH GENERATION OF THOSE WHO HATE ME, BUT SHOWING LOVE TO A THOUSAND GENERATIONS OF THOSE WHO LOVE ME AND KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS." (EX. 20:5-6)

**What does this mean?** God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should also love and trust in Him and gladly do what He commands.

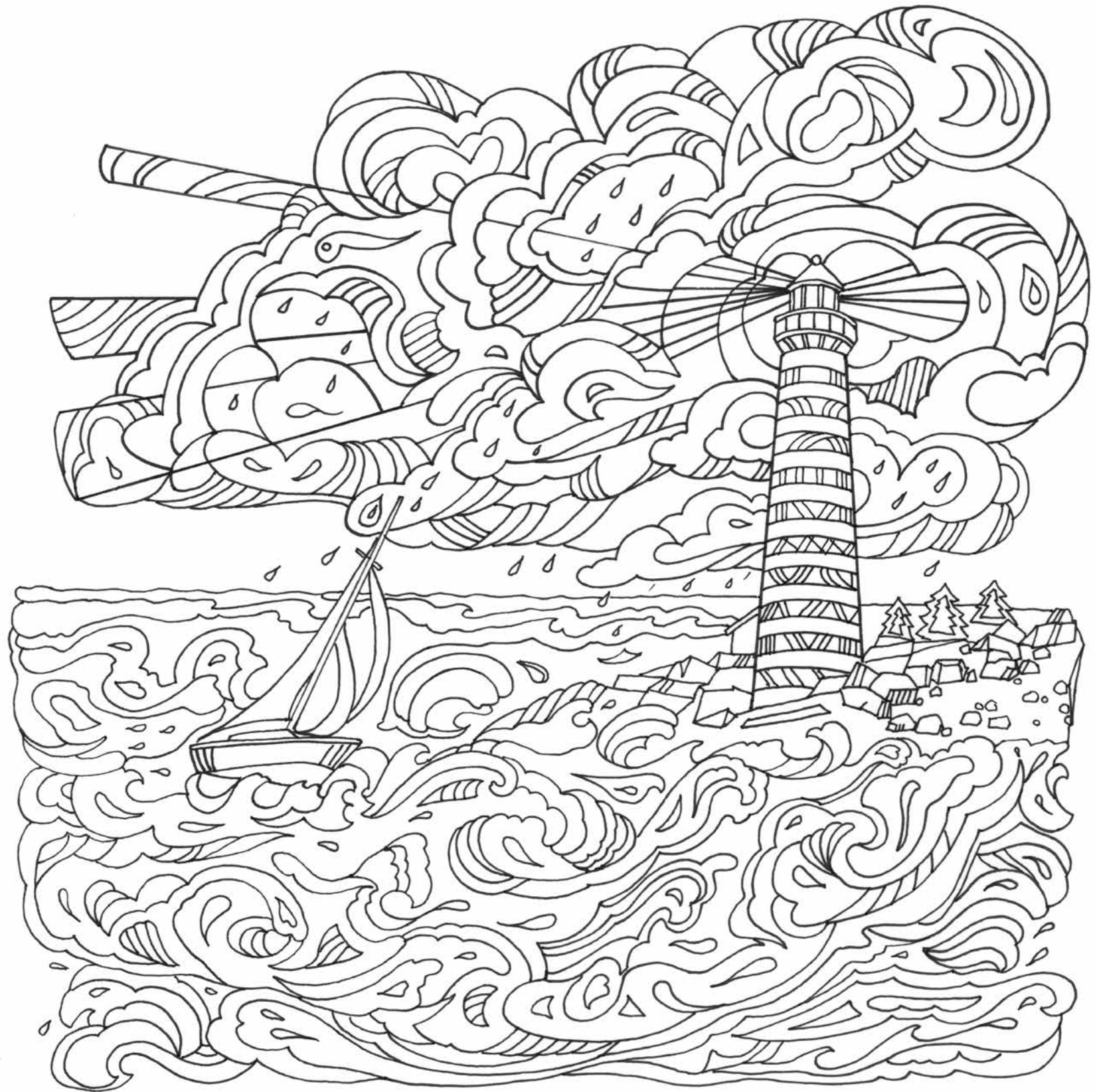
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All of God's commandments flow from the First Commandment. By striving to follow the other commandments, we are also fulfilling the first—You shall have no other gods. The promises connected to the Ten Commandments illustrate God's deep desire to see His creation flourish. Honor, respect, and love for God and His creation underscores all that God commands. While many focus on the punishments connected with each command, Luther helps us realize that God's goal is not to punish us, but to fulfill the promises that are attached to each commandment. The Ten Commandments are worthy of our meditation, memory, and practice.

The Close of the Ten Commandments teaches us that God desires to bless those who keep His commandments. His commandments are kept when we express our faith through love for God and our neighbor. The commandments illustrate the two relationships common to all people. The vertical relationship that we have with God is described in the first three commandments, and the horizontal relationship we have with our neighbors is in the last seven. In striving to fulfill God's commandments, our relationship with Him is strengthened and our neighbors are provided for in a manner that is pleasing to our Creator.

*Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness: for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. (1 TIMOTHY 4:7-8)*

IT SHOWS WHAT DEEDS ARE HIS DELIGHT AND SHOULD BE DONE AS GOOD AND RIGHT. (ELH 492:3)

TO THOSE WHO HELP IN CHRIST HAVE FOUND AND WOULD IN WORKS OF LOVE AROUND



*What does it mean for you to cling, cleave, and trust in God?*

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

### THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

## YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS.

**What does this mean?** We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

The heart is a clinging vine—persistently creeping, seeking a sustaining source. When the source is found, it clings—attaching itself with bonds of trust and devotion. God desires to be our sustaining source, an eternal fountain gushing forth nothing but good. “Whatever you lack,” God says, “expect it of Me.” “Cling to Me and I will provide.” “Do not let your heart cling to another.” The desire of God’s heart is that our heart’s desires be found in Him and Him alone.

The First Commandment teaches us about God’s promise of provision; it is a covenant between the source of all good things and the creation God made. It is a call to trust in God alone. It is a call to seek His blessings, to seek them in and through His creation, in and through His creatures, but to never confuse the good we receive with the source of all that is good. In this commandment, God invites us to cling, cleave, and trust in Him, to securely attach ourselves with all our heart to Him, the trustworthy source.

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. (JAMES 1:17)*

STREAMS OF MERCY, NEVER CEASING, CALL FOR SONGS OF LOUDEST PRAISE. (LSB 686:1)

