



# Applying Luther's Catechism



**TEACHER GUIDE**



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Dear Partners in the Faith,

In 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul writes, “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” How wonderful and mysterious are the ways in which God has worked and continues to work in the course of human history.

The greatest marvel of all is the manner in which God chose to save fallen humanity, sending His Son to become one of us so that He might live and die in our place. His resurrection from the dead assures us of the completeness of the victory over sin, death, and all that would lead us to lose saving faith.

God has chosen ordinary people—Paul, Augustine, Martin Luther, and contemporary Christians like you and me—to be His redeemed people. As the Holy Spirit works through God’s Holy Word, He continues to nurture the saving gift of faith in our hearts and empowers us as we bring the message of forgiveness, new life, and salvation to others.

As a teacher of the Christian faith, you have the unique opportunity to share God’s Good News with the young people in your class. God has promised to do wonderful things through you as His Word is witnessed and taught.

You are in our prayers. May God bless your ministry to the young people you teach.

Your Partners in Ministry,  
The Editors

# Introduction

## About Christian Education

*Applying Luther's Catechism* has been designed to assist those teaching in Christian classrooms so that, through the Word and the Spirit of God, people of all ages may

- know God, especially His seeking and forgiving love in Christ;
- respond in faith and grow up into Christian maturity;
- see themselves as reconciled, redeemed children of God and individual members of Christ's Body, the Church;
- live happily in peace with God, themselves, and their fellow human beings;
- express their joy in worship of God and in loving service to others;
- value all of God's creative work in His world and the Church;
- witness openly to Christ as the Savior of all people;
- participate actively in God's mission to the Church and the world; and
- live in Christian hope with the blessed assurance of eternal life in heaven through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

To focus on these goals, *Applying Luther's Catechism* is Christ centered so that students will have optimal opportunity to grow in their relationships of faith and life with God. "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

## About Your Students

As you begin planning to teach middle school students, you are probably wondering what people this age are like. Consider some of the common physical/social/psychological, intellectual, and faith-development characteristics of young people around the ages of eleven to thirteen. Although a middle school student may not exhibit all of the following characteristics, educators and psychologists agree that these characteristics are common among young people as they enter their teenage years.

### Physical/Social/Psychological Characteristics

Your students will

- know a lot about the world;
- feel concerned about what other people think of them—especially peers;
- seek ways to make friends and get along with family and friends;
- desire increasing independence from their family and friends;

- demonstrate interest in the opposite sex;
- have anxiety over their personal appearance;
- be preoccupied with self;
- wonder or worry about their body's physical changes or the lack of physical changes;
- shift moods rapidly;
- be physically awkward at times (especially boys);
- embarrass easily; and
- be self-conscious.

### Intellectual Characteristics

Your students will

- show concern about complex social issues such as gay marriage and teen suicide;
- imagine themselves in the place or circumstances of others;
- develop problem-solving strategies;
- think through possible solutions to a problem before reaching a conclusion;
- respect a teacher who says "I don't know" more than a teacher who tries to fake an answer;
- commit themselves to a worthwhile cause in order to experience a sense of self-worth;
- act indifferent to conversations initiated by a teacher because of fear of peer rejection while enjoying the teacher's attention;
- enjoy working in small groups and have the skills necessary to do so successfully; and
- learn best when the teacher uses a variety of teaching methods.

### Faith-Development Characteristics

Your students will

- think in present tense, not future (e.g., "How can I apply this biblical information to my life, right now?");
- question their faith;
- make decisions concerning the importance of a faith relationship with God;
- question ideas learned in childhood;
- have difficulty comprehending God's unchanging love for them, which is not dependent on how good or bad they are;
- show interest in discussing social issues (e.g., drugs, divorce, suicide);
- recognize and point out inconsistencies in the lifestyles and values of people, especially adults;
- need assurance that they are significant to Christ and His Church; and
- respond positively to adults who genuinely care for them, try to understand their feelings, and accept them as valuable persons.





## About Applying Luther's Catechism

*Applying Luther's Catechism* consists of sixty lessons, each of which may be taught in 35–45 minutes. *Applying Luther's Catechism* has been designed primarily to assist you in preparing seventh and eighth graders for the rite of confirmation, covering the Six Chief Parts of Christian Doctrine as found in Luther's Small Catechism.

In order to use the Student Book and Teacher Guide effectively, be sure to have the following available:

- Bibles
- *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*
- pens, pencils, markers
- copies of hymnals or songbooks such as *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)* and *All God's People Sing! (AGPS)* (one per student)
- computer and a projector (for Web-based tools)

*Applying Luther's Catechism* provides students continuous opportunities to explore the teachings of the Lutheran Church as they are derived from God's Word, continual references to the questions and answers of the Catechism, tools for biblical study and opportunities to use those tools, activities designed to assist students in applying God's Word to their lives, ideas for integrating the concepts of the lesson throughout the rest of the school day, and suggestions for extending the lesson theme into their homes.

## Student Book

The sixty two-page lessons contain thought-provoking information, life-related activities, and memory selections to help students learn more about God's love for them through Jesus Christ and will assist them in applying biblical truths to their lives.

## Teacher Guide

Each of the sixty lessons is presented on a two-page spread with student material reductions provided, complete with answers to the questions. All lessons follow the same easy-to-teach pattern. Sidebars frame each lesson, providing a Law/Gospel focus, objectives, materials list, background information helpful for teaching the lesson, worship ideas, suggestions for extending the lesson, and ideas for involving the family in teaching and reinforcing lesson concepts.

## Unit Overview

Review this section as you begin your planning for each unit. In addition to providing helpful information about the topic the students are about to explore, this two-page spread includes the following unit applications:

- *Worship Connections*: activities for applying unit concepts to

some aspect of Christian worship

- *Community Building*: games and activities to help you and your students celebrate the oneness God's Spirit desires to build in us through Christ Jesus, our Lord
- *Tools for Witness*: craft projects that may be undertaken to create a reminder of God's grace and can be used to assist in sharing the faith with family and friends
- *Service Projects*: activity suggestions to help young people demonstrate their faith in acts of kindness toward others
- *Reaching Every Individual*: suggestions or strategies aimed at addressing individual needs and challenges
- *Tests and Answer Key*: Unit tests and answers to the unit tests found in the back of the Teacher Guide
- *Integrating the Faith*: suggestions for extending unit themes and concepts into language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, fine arts, and technology displayed on a concept map to equip and inspire you as you look for ways to extend and apply the teachings of God's Word in every aspect of your curriculum

## Lesson Overview

*Law/Gospel Focus*: This section will help you to focus on the two main aspects of the lesson theme. You will want students to hear, in each session, a word of accusation (in the Law), a word of forgiveness (in the Gospel), and a word of guidance (by the power of the Holy Spirit). You will want them to experience this Law-and-Gospel relationship not only in the religion period but throughout the day.

*Objectives*: Lesson goals are included in each session. You may choose to read them to students at the beginning of the lesson or refer to them at the lesson's conclusion.

*Materials*: Check this section for extra items needed to teach the lesson. Bibles, pens or pencils, and Student Books are assumed to be needed for every lesson and are not listed.

*Background*: This section provides helpful support information or insightful or high-interest facts that may be helpful in presenting and discussing the lesson.

*Devotions*: Includes lesson-specific suggestions to choose from to help make worship a natural part of the class session.

*Confirmation Builder*: Each lesson references a section or sections of this online confirmation resource that can be used in conjunction with the lesson.

*The Lesson*: This portion is the core of the lesson. All lessons follow the same easy-to-teach format, dividing the lesson into three distinct parts: Introduce ("Into the Lesson"), Develop ("Into the Word"), and Respond ("Into Our lives"). The "Into the Lesson" section sets the stage for the lesson, engaging students' interest in the information about to be presented. The "Into the Word" section provides the lesson content. The final section, "Into Our Lives," encourages students to react to and apply the concepts they have learned during the lesson presentation. One reproducible activity sheet for each lesson can be found in the back of this guide. You will need to make

copies of each lesson's activity sheet before the class session.

*Extending the Lesson:* Extension activities are suggested at the end of each lesson to review or extend the concepts taught. The variety of activities included allows you to choose those that are appropriate for your students. Vary the type of enrichment or reinforcement activities you choose on a lesson-by-lesson basis.

*Involving the Family:* All Christian education begins in the home. You assist in helping youth grow in their faith; however, parents are still the first teachers of their children. Look for meaningful ways to involve parents in confirmation as much as possible. Consider even the possibility of inviting (or requiring, if possible) parents to attend confirmation class with students. When this is common, students and parents naturally have conversation points to talk about.

*Unit Tests:* Tests have been developed for use at the conclusion of each unit. These tests include a variety of types of questions and may be reproduced from the back of this guide.





## UNIT 1

# God's Will (Law and Gospel; the Ten Commandments)

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## Unit Overview

God always has the best in mind for those who belong to Him. In His Law, He tells us the best way to live and to relate both to God and to one another. Under the Law, however, we recognize our failure to love and serve God and others. To those who recognize our lost and desperate condition before a holy and just God, He offers freely the Good News that Jesus, our Savior, has lived a sinless life, died an atoning death, and defeated the grave itself to earn our forgiveness, new life, and eternal salvation. To those who love and trust in Him, Jesus gives His Holy Spirit. As the Spirit works through the Means of Grace, the Word and the Sacraments, He motivates and empowers us to live according to God's Law as He has written it for us in the Ten Commandments.

By God's grace, your students will come to a greater understanding of the role of both Law and Gospel in their lives. Through the Spirit's power, they will learn rightly to both divide and apply the Law and the Gospel in their lives.

## Unit Applications

As you prepare to teach this unit, consider the following projects and activities. Plan some activities to extend over several sessions or over the entire unit. Repeat those activities students especially enjoy.

## Worship Connections

- Use various hymnals to compare and contrast variations of Confession and Absolution. Emphasize that all variations include the sinner's honest repentance and the pronouncement of forgiveness given through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.
- Have students identify Law and Gospel in hymns. Encourage them to write their own Law-and-Gospel hymns or songs, using a meter found in the hymnal. (See *LSB* 577–589, *Lutheran Worship (LW)* 328–44, or *The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH)* 282–97 for examples of hymns specifically about Law and Gospel.)

## Community Building

- As a class, compose a list of classroom rules and consequences. Ask the students to identify the purpose of these rules. Compare students' answers with Catechism Question 77 concerning the purposes of the Law.
- Divide the class into teams. Using a Scripture quote, ask the teams to identify whether the verse is primarily Law or Gospel. The team to correctly identify the verse as Law or Gospel gets to pick the next passage for the other team (or teams) to look up.

## Tools for Witness

- Design cartoons illustrating proper and improper use of Law and Gospel. For example, students may wish to draw a horse and a cart. What is the proper order of the horse and cart? What does it look like when the cart comes before the horse or if the horse gets inside the cart? Help students make the connection that the horse-and-cart scenarios are like confusing and mingling Law and Gospel—understood and applied improperly, neither works as God intends it.
- Create bookmarks with the Ten Commandments and meanings on them. These may be for students' personal use or as gifts to younger students.



## Service Projects

- Talk with students about how those without the Good News of Jesus remain in the prison of sin. Support congregation or district prison ministries.
- Consider the possibility of requiring students to earn service points throughout the year in order to encourage congregational participation and service. Points could be given for attending youth group events, helping with VBS or children's programs, assisting in the church nursery, and so on. At the end of the year, have a party to recognize the efforts of the students.

## Reaching Every Individual

- In order to help students begin to navigate the books of the Bible, begin each lesson with a potpourri of Bible references. Give prizes to the students who find each passage the fastest. Throw in a couple of fake verses (e.g., Hezekiah 2:32 or 3 Timothy 3:1), and give a prize to whoever first realizes the book doesn't exist. Good verses to start with are John 3:16 and Genesis 3:15.
- Make memory work fun by learning portions of the catechism or Bible verses as a class. Challenge groups of students to memorize together and then recite verses or portions of the catechism to parents or one another.
- Invite a law-enforcement official to visit the class to discuss the benefits of civil laws.

## Integrating the Faith

### Social Studies

- Many political campaigns are based on breaking the Eighth Commandment. Discuss possible Gospel-motivated responses to smear tactics intended to ruin another candidate's reputation.
- Study the functions of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government in regard to civil laws. Talk about how God blesses us through each branch.
- Research school rules and disciplinary actions used by previous generations.

### Science

- Study heart disease. A helpful resource may include the American Heart Association's Web site: [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org). Compare the effects of heart disease with the effects of our spiritual heart disease, original sin. What means are there to cure heart disease? Is there a cure for original sin?
- Discuss the role of modern science in supporting and protecting life, but also in eliminating or diminishing respect for God's gift of human life.

## Mathematics

- As part of a study of the Ninth and Tenth Commandments, survey the number of TVs, DVD players, computers, and phones in each household. Graph the number of these objects for the entire class. Do the students have enough? How does this compare with the standard of living in the rest of the world?
- The Ten Commandments are perhaps the best-known "10" in the Bible. Have students search the Scriptures to find other 10s, including multiples of 10.

## Language Arts

- Write creative stories about a game in which there are no rules.
- Read Corrie ten Boom's book *The Hiding Place*. Talk about God's gift of contentment to His people.
- Write stories on the theme of forgiveness, rather than commands, motivating someone to perform acts of obedience.

## Fine Arts

- Design "WANTED" posters that include an illustration of a person and a description of the wrongful action. Make a "WANTED" poster that has a mirror in place of the illustration. Include both Law and Gospel in the text.
- Dramatize student-written humorous situations in which every time a person does something wrong, an alarm or buzzer sounds. Discuss the frustration and embarrassment that would result. Thank God for our silent alarm (our conscience) and for His saving grace, which enables us to be His people.

## Technology

- Search the Internet for differing Scripture translations.
- Invite students to work in groups to develop a radio play in which the plot they write, practice, and record shows the proper use of Law and Gospel.

