

CONTENTS

<i>This Book Belongs To</i>	10
<i>About My Congregation</i>	11
Preface	12

Church Stuff 15

How to Get to Know Your Pastor	16
How to Survive for One Hour in an Un-Air-Conditioned Church	18
How to Respond When Someone Sits in Your Pew	20
How to Use a Worship Bulletin	21
How to Sing a Hymn	24
How to Sing a Praise Song	26
How to Listen to a Sermon	28
How to Respond to a Disruption during Worship	31
The Anatomy of a Baptism	34
How to Receive Communion	36
How to Pass the Plate	41
How to Share the Peace in Church	44
How to Stay Alert in Church	46
What to Bring to a Church Potluck (by Region)	48
Five Important Things the Lutheran Reformers Wrote (or Translated) and Why They're Still Important Today	52
Seven Important Things Luther Said (and One Funny One) and What They Meant	55

Five Things You Should Know about the Lutheran Reformation	58
Five Facts about Life in Medieval Times	60
History's Six Most Notorious Heretics	62
How to Avoid Getting Burned at the Stake	64

Charts and Diagrams

• World Religions	67
• Comparative Religions	68
• Family Tree of Christianity	70
• U.S. Christian Denominations	71
• Comparative Denominations: Liturgical Churches	72
• Comparative Denominations: Non-Liturgical Churches	74
• The Seasons of the Church Year and What They Mean	76
• The Seasons of the Church Year (diagram)	78
• Martin Luther (portrait)	80
• Luther's Germany (map)	81
• Luther's Seal	82

Everyday Stuff 85

How to Tell the Difference Between the Law and the Gospel	86
How to Share Your Faith with Someone	89
How to Pray	91
How to Work for Peace and Justice on Behalf of People Who Are Poor and Oppressed	93
How to Identify a Genuine Miracle	96
Three Essential Personal Spiritual Rituals	98
How to Forgive Someone	101

How to Confess Your Sins and Receive Forgiveness	103
• How to Make the Sign of the Cross (diagram)	104
How to Defend Your Faith against Attack	105
How to Resist Temptation	107
How to Care for the Sick	110
How to Identify and Avoid Evil	112
How to Avoid Gossip	114
How to Bless Someone	116
How to Resolve Interpersonal Conflict	118
How to Console Someone	120
How to Cope with Loss and Grief	121
The Top 10 Attributes to Look for in a Spouse	123
How to Banish the Devil from Your Presence	126
How to Be Saved (by Grace through Faith and Not by Your Good Works)	128
How to Reform the Church When It Strays from the Gospel	131
• How to Tell a Sinner from a Saint (diagram)	133
How to Encounter the Holy Trinity as One God in Three Persons	134
How to Become a Theologian of the Cross (and Avoid Being a Theologian of Glory)	136
 Bible Stuff	 139
Common Translations of the Bible	140
60 Essential Bible Stories	142
How to Read the Bible	145
How to Memorize a Bible Verse	147

The Top 10 Bible Villains	150
The Top 10 Bible Heroes	153
The Three Most Rebellious Things Jesus Did	156
The Seven Funniest Bible Stories	157
The Five Grossest Bible Stories	160
Five Facts about Life in Old Testament Times	162
Ten Important Things that Happened between the Old and New Testaments	163
Five Facts about Life in New Testament Times	166
The Five Biggest Misconceptions about the Bible	168
Jesus' Twelve Apostles (Plus Judas and Paul)	170
The Five Weirdest Laws in the Old Testament	173
The Top 10 Bible Miracles and What They Mean	175

Maps and Diagrams

• The Exodus	177
• The Holy Land—Old Testament Times	178
• The Holy Land—New Testament Times	179
• Paul's Journeys	180
• Jerusalem in Jesus' Time	182
• Noah's Ark	183
• The Ark of the Covenant	184
• Solomon's Temple	185
• The Armor of God	186
• The Passion and Crucifixion	187

Luther's Small Catechism	195
The Ten Commandments	196
The Apostles' Creed	202
The Lord's Prayer	206
The Sacrament of Holy Baptism	214
Confession	217
The Sacrament of Holy Communion	222
Morning and Evening Prayer	224
Blessings at Meals	226
<i>Notes & Stuff</i>	228

HOW TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

Discerning law from gospel is a critical skill for Christians and the hallmark of Lutheranism. Law and gospel are always connected to God's word. God brings them to you in the Bible, in preaching, in the sacraments, and in all kinds of daily activity. If you listen closely, you'll hear God speaking both law and gospel.

The Law

Martin Luther suggested that the law has two uses: First, to point out and condemn sin. Second, to drive the sinner toward the grace and mercy revealed in Jesus Christ and his cross.

1 Listen for the "should."

God uses the law to tell us what we ought to do so we maintain an orderly, peaceful, and secure world. It therefore always sounds like a demand. Words such as *should*, *ought to*, *must*, *have to*, and *shall* are a dead giveaway that the law is around somewhere.

2 Listen for the First Commandment.

"You shall have no other gods," is what all other law rises from. The law's goal is to force sinners to act as though God's will is more important than our own.

3 Discern who's in charge.

Demands always require you to do something to fulfill them. If you're being urged to act a certain way to make something happen, it's the law talking.

4 Be alert to death lurking in the shadows.

When you feel like the demands of life are just about killing you, you can be pretty sure it's God's law nipping at your heels.

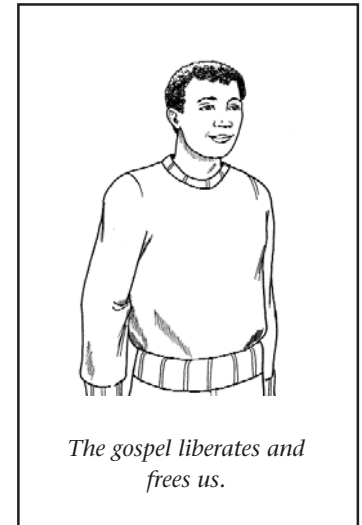
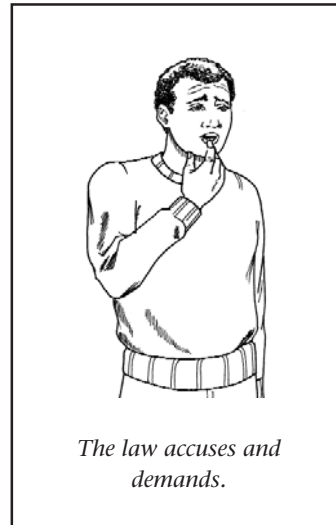
The Gospel

1 Listen for the promise.

If what you're hearing tells you what Christ promises you—without any action on your part—then the gospel is present.

2 Expect a radical surprise from Jesus.

We sinners should never expect the good news; we should only expect God's judgment. Instead, the gospel brings sinners mercy and life from Jesus.



THE FIVE GROSSEST BIBLE STORIES

1 Eglon and Ehud (Judges 3:12-30).

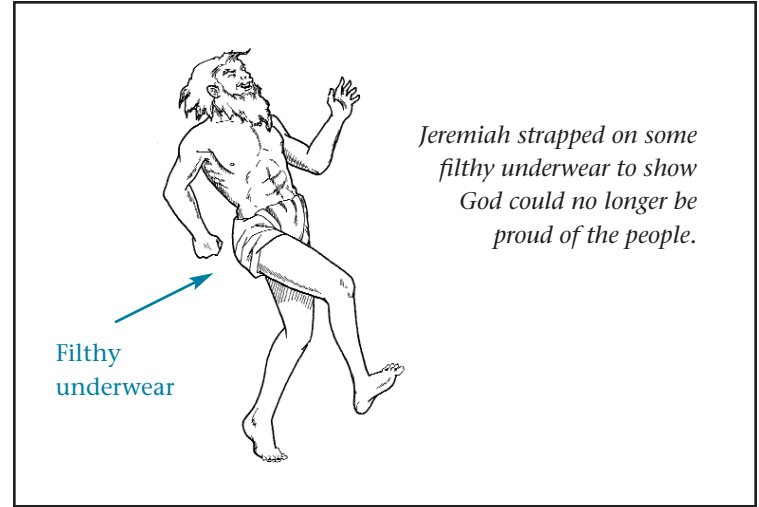
Before kings reigned over Israel, judges ruled the people. At that time, a very overweight king named Eglon conquered Israel and demanded money. A man named Ehud brought the payment to Eglon while he was perched on his “throne” (meaning “toilet”). Along with the money, Ehud handed over a little something extra—his sword, which he buried so far in Eglon’s belly that the sword disappeared into the king’s fat and, as the Bible says, “the dirt came out” (v. 22).

2 Job’s sores (Job 2:1-10).

Job lived a righteous life yet he suffered anyway. He had oozing sores from the bald spot on top of his head clear down to the soft spot on the bottom of his foot. Job used a broken piece of pottery to scrape away the pus that leaked from his sores.

3 The naked prophet (Isaiah 20).

God’s prophets went to great lengths to get God’s message across to the people. Isaiah was no exception. God’s people planned a war, but God gave it the thumbs down. Isaiah marched around Jerusalem naked *for three years* as a sign of what would happen if the people went to war.



4 The almost-naked prophet (Jeremiah 13:1-11).

God sent Jeremiah to announce that God could no longer be proud of the people. To make the point, Jeremiah bought a new pair of underclothes, wore them every day without washing them, then buried them in the wet river sand. Later, he dug them up, strapped them on and shouted that this is what has happened to the people who were God’s pride!

5 Spilling your guts (Matthew 27:1-8; Acts 1:16-19).

Judas betrayed Jesus and sold him out for 30 pieces of silver. He bought a field with the ill-gotten loot. Guilt-stricken, Judas walked out to the field, his belly swelled up until it burst, and his intestines spilled out on to the ground.