INTRODUCTION

This course is designed to give fifth and sixth grade learners an overview of the Ten Commandments and Martin Luther’s explanations of them in the Small Catechism. The first session is an introduction. The second session explores how to love God, while the third session looks at how we are to love our neighbors. The fourth session provides time for summary and review.

The goals of the course are reflected in the Learning Focus sentences for each session. Keep those sentences in mind as you are teaching. The stories, Bible study, Small Catechism selections, and session activities are designed to help you develop that one focus with your learners.

Your learners

Fifth and sixth graders are beginning to think abstractly. However, concepts such as obedience, confession, forgiveness, grace, and other abstract ideas can be understood best when concrete examples are used, and real-life situations are described.

This course is designed to encourage your learners to visualize and practice community. Give the learners opportunities to work cooperatively and see themselves as part of the larger family of faith.

The learning setting

Your class environment is very important in creating a positive, fun, and inviting atmosphere for learning. Arrive early to make sure the room and supplies are ready for use. Decorate the walls and bulletin boards. Build a warm and friendly place.

The ideal class area has tables and chairs which provide flexibility for small groups to move into areas for study and activity. An informal seating area is helpful. Use carpet squares or a small rug. Be creative. Make arrangements to occasionally move to large areas for games or noisy activities.

Getting ready

Prepare each session carefully. Read the materials completely and select the response activities which will fit in your time and space. Read through the session in the Learner Resource. Not all of the Learner Resource pages and all of the activities need to be done during class time. And you may want to consider working through this course in more than four sessions. Make the course fit the needs of your learners, your congregation, and yourself.

Pray before you teach. “Lord give me the wisdom to share from my heart the faith you have given to me. Amen.”

SESSION 1

GOD’S LAW

LEARNING FOCUS

Rules are necessary to make life work for the benefit of all.
BACKGROUND

This session explores the concept of life without rules and studies the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses and the people of Israel as recorded in Exodus 19–20. While other religions have similar sets of laws and rules, only God's law has no conditions attached. They are absolute requirements and are meant for those people who claim to be children of God. Because God's people know forgiveness through Jesus Christ, we receive them as gifts, therefore, and not burdens. We are freed from the punishment which failure requires, and are given redemption through the grace of God.

Fifth and sixth graders are very familiar with rules. However, they may have trouble understanding the Ten Commandments as a gift, something for which they can be thankful. Emphasize the love of God who, while expecting complete obedience, willingly forgives and loves us even when we fail.

HEART OF THE LEARNING

These activities form the heart of the session and will take about 45 minutes to complete.

Gather: a Learner Resource (LR) for each student, Bibles, chart paper, pencils, and markers.

Preparation: Gather several simple children's games like checkers or Go Fish. Have available Bibles, pencils, a mural-sized sheet of paper, markers, crayons or colored chalk, and a copy of the Learner Resource (LR) for each student.

- As they arrive, invite the learners to play the games you have set out. Have them play first according to the rules. Then announce that they should play without any rules!
- After a few minutes ask, "Was this fun? When did it stop being fun? Why are rules necessary?"
- Ask volunteers to read aloud page 3 (LR). If time permits, let the learners try playing tic-tac-toe without rules.
- Have the learners work with partners to solve the rebus story page 4 (LR). (Answers: Egypt, bricks, Moses, Sinai, cloud, thunder, lightning, trumpet, ten, commandments, stone.)
- Divide the learners into four work groups. (If your class is small, have individual learners work on the mural sections.) Give each group one of these texts to read: Exodus 19:1-6; Exodus 19:9-14; Exodus 19:16-19; Exodus 20:18-21.
- Have each group illustrate their part of the story on one section of the mural. Circulate to make sure that each learner participates in planning and drawing.
- Discuss together the headlines on page 5 (LR), noting the rules or laws that were broken and imagining together the consequences.
- Ask the learners to share stories from their own lives when disregarding a rule was harmful to them or someone else.
- Read aloud the opening paragraphs of "Obey with Joy" on page 6. Then have the learners work as partners to complete the verses, checking their answers by using their Bibles.
- Ask, "How can these writers feel so happy about obeying rules and laws?" Give the learners opportunities to tell how they feel about having to obey rules in their own lives.
- Read aloud "Jesus Teaches about the Commandments" on page 7 (LR) and have pairs of learners work on summarizing Jesus' words. Have them solve the riddle on page 7 (LR) as well.
- Read Psalm 19:7-10 as an echo psalm, having the learners repeat each line after you; or as a responsive reading with two groups alternating verses.

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Choose from these activities to complete your session as time allows.

 Cooperative drawing

Preparation: Find a small, colorful picture from an old Sunday school leaflet, preferably one of Moses at Mt. Sinai. Have scissors, ruler, pencil, markers, crayons or colored chalk available. Use a ruler and pencil and divide the Sunday school picture into 1" squares. Number the squares on the back. Draw 9" squares on a large sheet of chart paper. With pencil, lightly number these squares to correspond with the position of the squares on the picture. Cut the small picture into the 1" squares. Cut the large sheet into the 9" squares.

- Give each learner one of the 1" squares and the 9" square with the matching number.
- Ask learners to copy the portion of the picture they see on the 1" square onto the 9" square.
- Reassemble the drawing and place on display.
**Bread and honey**

**Preparation:** Have available a mixing bowl, measuring spoons, fork, mixing spoon, and cookie sheets. Gather ingredients: white flour, whole wheat flour, salt, baking soda, shortening, honey and water.

- Remember the flight of the Israelites from Egypt, and the psalmist describing the law as “sweeter than honey,” with this flat bread and honey treat.
- Mix 1½ cups white flour, ½ cup whole wheat flour, 1 teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon baking soda.
- Cut in 2 tablespoons shortening.
- Gradually add ½ cup water mixed with 1½ teaspoons honey. Mix and form a ball.
- Divide the dough into four parts and knead each one.
- Roll each one into a circle about ¾ inch thick.
- Place the circles on a lightly greased cookie sheet.
- Use the tines of a fork to make dotted lines on each circle so it will break into pieces when baked.
- Bake for 10 minutes at 350 degrees. Use a fork to prick any air bubbles that may have formed.
- Cool and spread with honey. Break into pieces and eat!

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**SESSION 2**

**LOVE GOD**

**LEARNING FOCUS**

The first three Commandments tell us how to love and respect God.

**BACKGROUND**

God’s name is the focus for this session. God begins the dialog with Moses and the people by stating that Yahweh (the Lord) is the one who has brought them out of Egypt. This divine name is used hereafter to speak of God as the personal “I AM” of the people. The First Commandment acknowledges that other gods exist, but the Lord God alone is to be worshiped. The carving of idols or images of God is also forbidden. The Second Commandment prohibits the wrongful use of God’s name. It is to be kept pure and holy. The Third Commandment instructs us to remember the loving acts of God by having a day of rest and worship.
HEART OF THE LEARNING

These activities form the heart of the session and will take about 45 minutes to complete. Gather: a Learner Resource (LR) for each student, Bibles, chart paper, pencils, and markers.

Preparation: Have available Bibles, index cards, pencils, markers or crayons, drawing paper, and a copy of the Learner Resource (LR) for each student. Choose from these Bible texts and print one for each student on an index card: Genesis 15:1, Psalm 23:1, Psalm 27:1, Psalm 71:3, Psalm 121:5, Isaiah 64:8, Isaiah 66:13, Jeremiah 17:13, Hosea 14:5, Matthew 23:37, John 15:5, John 6:35.

- Give each learner a blank index card and a pencil. Choose partners and have them face one another. Say, “Place the index card on your forehead and hold it in place with one hand. Use the pencil to draw the image of your partner without removing the card from your forehead!” Share together some of the hilarious results.
- Say, “Image is important to most of us. We want others to think well of us, and we like feeling accepted. We may work hard on how we look and what we say. Today we will see that the first three Commandments tell us how to treat God’s image with love and respect.”
- Read aloud “The Only God” page 8 (LR) and ask learners to work with a partner to complete the puzzle.

![Puzzle Image]

(The message from the remaining letters is: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your mind and all your strength.)

- Ask pairs of students to read “A Holy Name” on page 9 (LR) and “Keeping God’s Name Holy” on page 10 (LR) to each other. As a class, read aloud in unison the section from the Small Catechism on page 9 (LR). Ask the learners to tell about the challenges of keeping God’s name holy in their daily lives.
- Bible verse. Read Matthew 5:33-37. Say, “Here Jesus explains that keeping the law is more than simply fulfilling a legal requirement. Image is more than what we see on the outside! It’s a matter of the heart.”
- Explore the many images of God. Give each learner an index card with one of the Bible texts. Ask him or her to draw a picture or symbol describing the image of God from that text and then tell how this image helps us understand God better.
- As time allows, ask partners to work together on page 10 (LR) to find the names for God used in the Psalms.
- Ask volunteers to read aloud “A Special Day” on page 11 (LR). Describe how our faith is nourished by our worship with others. Work as a class to create a list of helpful hints for “Time for God” on page 11 (LR).
- Read aloud Psalm 122:1, then ask learners to read “Where Do You Stand?” silently and respond to the question. Discuss the learners’ responses and think about how church could be more inviting. Share your list with your pastor and worship committee.
- As a class, write a “Celebrate!” prayer on page 13 (LR), thanking God and asking for help in keeping God’s image holy. Pray this prayer aloud for your closing.

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Choose from these activities to complete your session as time allows.

Amazing worship

Preparation: Have available drawing paper, rulers, and pencils.

- Have students work with a partner to complete the maze on page 12 (LR), using their Bibles to check their work.
- Provide paper, pencils, and rulers for pairs of students to create letter mazes for other pairs. Suggest they use one of the Ten Commandments as the solution. You may want to photocopy some
of their mazes to share with other Sunday school and confirmation classes.

**Ten Commandments mural**

**Preparation:** Gather one thin sponge per learner, a large sheet of white paper (a paper tablecloth is ideal), construction paper, large scissors, markers, tempera paint, glue, and foil pie pans for the paint. Cover the work area with newspaper.

- Give each learner a sponge. Have half the learners use markers to draw a heart on their sponge and the other half to trace their hand on their sponge. Comment on how these remind us of loving and serving God and others as the Ten Commandments teach us to do.
- Cut the sponges with a large pair of scissors.
- Put several colors of tempera paints in pie pans and place them on one end of the work area. Lay the mural paper on the other.
- Dip the sponge printing blocks in the paint. Point out that it will print best when not too much paint is on the sponge.
- Press the sponges on the paper and to design a mural. Title it “The Ten Commandments: Using Hearts and Hands to Serve God and Others.”
- As the paint dries, assign learners commandments to copy onto construction paper shapes. Glue the commandment shapes to the dried mural and display in a hallway or entryway of your church.

**SESSION 3**

**LOVE OTHERS**

**Learning Focus**

Loving and obeying God leads us to loving and caring for people as God does.

**Background**

While the first three Commandments focus on showing love to God, the last seven tell us how to show love to our neighbors. Jesus speaks of two great commandments in Matthew 22:37-39 as a summary of God’s law, and indeed, they are. These seven commandments cover all aspects of our relationships with others, beginning with our duties and responsibilities toward our parents and others in authority. We are taught to love, protect, and care for others by refusing to harm them in any way and by treating them with honor and respect.

Your fifth and sixth graders may interpret kind and loving actions as a sign of weakness or meekness. Our society often promotes and encourages power and assertiveness instead of “servant” behavior. Help your learners understand that true concern for others comes from strength of character, not from weakness.

**HEART OF THE LEARNING**

These activities form the heart of the session and will take about 45 minutes to complete.

**Gather:** a Learner Resource (LR) for each student, Bibles, chart paper, pencils, and markers.

**Preparation:** Cut apart and flatten several cardboard boxes to make squares of different sizes. Have one or two small squares (2’ x 2’) and tape some boxes together to form larger ones. Have available Bibles, pencils, markers, and a copy of the Learner Resource (LR) for each learner. A cassette player and a cassette of Christian songs also are needed.

- Place the cardboard squares on the floor in a large area. Say, “God asks us to love our neighbor. Sometimes that is difficult to do. Getting to know one another is often a good way to appreciate and understand others, and helps us learn to do loving things as God asks.”
- Play the music and have the learners walk among the squares. When you stop the music, each person must quickly get on a square, but there must be at least two people on an occupied square. Some squares may be empty.
- Read one of these topics for the small group on each square to discuss. Make sure each person in each small group has a chance to answer. Topics to share: what you had for breakfast; your favorite game or hobby; who else lives in your house; your favorite book; how you feel when a friend hurts you; how stealing hurts others; if TV promotes violence.
- Play the music again. Ask the learners to move until you stop the music. Read another topic for discussion by the small group on each square. Play as time permits.
- Ask volunteers to read aloud “Someone to Care” on page 14 (LR). Discuss how it might feel to have someone disregard your warnings.
- Read aloud in unison the Section of the Small Catechism on page 14 (LR). Ask, “Who does Luther include in addition to parents? (Others in
authority.) Why do you think he did?” Allow time for discussion about when it is easy to obey and when it is not.

- Have the learners in pairs to complete the activity on page 15 (LR) to discover the missing words: honor, serve, obey, love and respect.
- Read aloud “Help, Don’t Hurt” on page 16 (LR), again reading the Small Catechism section in unison. Divide the class into two groups for a debate. One side should take the position that Carly did break the Fifth Commandment. The other side should take the position that she did not. Be sure to give the sides time to list some reasons. Give each side time to speak.
- Ask volunteers to read aloud “Loving as God Loves” on page 18 (LR). Read the commandments printed there in unison.
- Assign pairs of students one of the commandments on page 18 (LR) and have them write or draw an example of words or actions that follow the teaching of the commandment. They can look at page 17 (LR) if they need help with the meanings.
- Give the partners one helping word from the puzzle on page 19 (LR). Ask them to write a onesentence prayer using the word. Gather in a circle and link arms. Have the partners read their prayers aloud as you go around the circle. After each sentence, respond with “Help us, Lord.”

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Choose from these activities to complete your session as time allows.

Foot washing

Preparation: Set chairs in a circle. Place a roll of paper towel and a dishpan of water near the circle. Have available a Bible, drawing paper, a disposable pie plate, and tempera paint.

- Gather the learners in the circle. Have everyone remove the shoe and sock from their right foot.
- Say, “Jesus’ ministry gave us many examples of how to show love to others. Near the end of his life, Jesus showed the disciples that anyone wishing to be his followers must be willing to become a servant.”
- Read aloud John 13:3-17. Then say, “As Jesus says, ‘I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you.’” John 13:15
- Begin by washing the foot of the first person and drying it with a paper towel. That person then washes the foot of the person sitting next to them. Continue around the circle until the last person washes your foot.
- Put tempera paint in the pie plate.
- Place a sheet of drawing paper on the floor in front of each learner. Have each person put their foot in the paint, and press on the drawing paper. Rinse foot in dishpan with clear water. Dry with paper towel.
- Explain that they now have a permanent reminder that they, too, are servants of God. When the paint is dry, have learners copy a shortened version of John 13:15—“Do just what I have done for you”—and add as a title to their footprint page.
- Conclude this activity with a prayer: “Lord, teach us to serve others by our loving words and deeds. Amen.”

Words

Preparation: Have available a Bible, two sheets of poster board, markers or crayons, scissors, glue, and a stack of old magazines and newspapers.

- Ask learners to tell how words can either hurt or help someone.
- Ask volunteers to read aloud Colossians 3:12-17. As a class, point out some of the words in this passage that show others we love God.
- Divide the class into two groups. Invite one group to illustrate some words that hurt with drawings, magazine pictures, newspaper articles, and letters cut out to create words. Glue to one poster board and title it “Words that Hurt.”
- Ask the second group to prepare their poster using the same techniques to show how words help to show love to others. Post these in your class area.

Following Jesus

Preparation: Have available large sheets of drawing paper or newsprint, pencils, and an assortment of old crayons.

- Say, “We can learn to obey the Commandments by following Jesus.”
- Have each learner trace his or her footprints on a sheet of drawing paper using a pencil or marker.
- Peel the paper from old crayons.
- Place the paper with the traced footprints over a variety of textured objects and rub with the sides of pieces of crayon. Look for unusual surfaces. Use different textures and colors for each footprint.
(Go outside if possible to find additional textures such as brick walls or tree trunks.)
• Have learners create appropriate titles for their footprint pictures, such as “I will follow Jesus” or “Following Jesus.”

"Following Jesus" drawing

SESSION 4
LIVING IN GOD’S LOVE

LEARNING FOCUS

Obeying the Ten Commandments is a loving response to God’s love for us.

BACKGROUND

One of the most consistently difficult Christian concepts for persons to accept is that we cannot be saved by our good works. Justification by faith is challenging for most people to accept. Most of us do not give up easily the notion that we are able to contribute to our own salvation.

This session points to the futility of that belief. God demands perfect obedience. People cannot obey perfectly, therefore cannot help with their own salvation in any way. The good news is Jesus Christ. He fulfilled the law, and his death has brought us salvation. Then why obey? In response to such great love, God’s people want to live in obedience to God, knowing that when they fail, God is willing to forgive.

Most fifth and sixth graders are filled from time to time with self-doubt and fear of failure as they enter adolescence. Emphasize the fact that God’s love is unconditional. God does not judge us when we fail to live up to the demands of the Ten Commandments, but willingly forgives. The great power of that love gives us encouragement to try again each day, believing and trusting that God is present to help us.

HEART OF THE LEARNING

These activities form the heart of the session and will take about 45 minutes to complete.
Gather: a Learner Resource (LR) for each student, Bibles, chart paper, pencils, and markers.

Preparation: Cut construction paper into 4” x 6” pieces, then cut each piece in half using irregular lines like a puzzle. Make sure each set is slightly different. Print these sets of words on pieces that match up: egg-chicken, acorn-oak tree; tadpole-frog; seed-plant; caterpillar-butterfly; blossom-fruit; coal-diamond; kernel-popcorn. Put these pieces in a basket. Have available Bibles, pencils, markers, and a Learner Resource (LR) for each student.

• As they arrive, invite learners to pick a puzzle piece from the basket and find the person with the matching piece. Ask, “How are the words on your puzzle related?” (They begin as one thing and change to the other!)
• Tell how this session will help all of you explore how God’s love has the power to change us.
• Ask volunteers to read aloud “Looking in the Mirror” page 20 (LR), pausing to let learners draw their portraits. Be sure to do one yourself. Do not pressure anyone to share his or her drawing.
• Read aloud page 21 (LR). Say, “No one keeps the law perfectly. The good news gives us a reason to change! Draw the person God loves and forgives!”
• Pause to make certain that learners understand this important concept: The Commandments are important. They make our life here on earth work. And there may be consequences to pay when we break them. No one can keep them perfectly. The good news is that God forgives us freely when we fail.
• Read aloud John 15:9-11. Ask, “What change comes to people who abide in God’s love?” (They have joy. We seek to keep the commandments because of God’s love for us.)
• Divide the students into pairs. Ask them to look at each statement in “Help Is on the Way” on page 22 (LR). Tell them they are to be the editors and rewrite these short stories so that they are examples of people obeying the Ten Commandments. If you prefer, assign each pair one of the statements to rewrite. Allow time for sharing solutions with the entire class.

7
Read aloud “Obey for Love” on page 23 (LR). If your students enjoy word activities, allow time for them to write a cinquain as directed.

Move to the chancel area of your church and close with a prayer of confession from the worship book your church uses. Then say, “With joy I remind you that God forgives us all our sins and gives us new hearts of love!”

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Choose from these activities to complete your session as time allows.

Ask the question

• On page 24 (LR) there is a review game for this course. Explain that the goal of the game is to ask the right question! Divide the learners into two teams. Teams take turns choosing a category and an answer statement. Team members work together to ask the right question. When correct, the team receives the score as noted. If incorrect, the other team may attempt to ask the correct question.

• If your class enjoys games such as this, make up additional “answers” to add to the categories.

• (Answers to “Commandment number?”: What is the [Fourth, Second, Sixth, Eighth, Ninth and/or Tenth] Commandment? Answers to “Which commandment is disobeyed?”: What is the [Fifth, First, Eighth, Seventh, Third]? Answers to “Missing words”: What is [Sabbath, name, murder or steal, covet, false witness]?)

Melted crayon cards

Preparation: Cover a food-warming tray with aluminum foil. Have available old and broken crayons, white construction paper, aluminum foil, paper towels, oven mitts, scissors, glue, 9” x 12” sheets of colored construction paper.

• Demonstrate how to draw a design on the aluminum foil as it sits on the food warming tray. (Words must be written backwards.) The crayon melts as you draw. Choose rainbows, hearts and other simple symbols for designs.

• Place a piece of white construction paper carefully over the design. Put on oven mitts and gently smooth the paper down. Lift off carefully.

• Wipe the aluminum foil with a paper towel. A new print can be started. The foil will have to be changed after several prints. You will notice a waxy build-up on the foil.

• Cut and glue the printed design on folded colored construction paper to make cards.

• Write messages on the cards, sharing the good news of God’s great love for us. Send these to homebound church members and/or residents of adult care facilities.

The Ten Commandments
Exploring Luther’s Small Catechism
Leader Leaflet

This Leader Leaflet has a corresponding Learner Resource.

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