

# Living in the Joy of Our Baptism!



## A First Catechism

Learning simple answers to simple questions!

"Change and become like little children!" Matthew 18:3



## The Care of Baptized Children

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Durham, NC

*Mission Statement:* Baptism is a Sacrament of God's Word and Grace in which He calls us by name, assures us of our salvation, and knits us into the Body of Christ. He binds us to the cross of Christ so that we may know the fullness of His love through His forgiving grace, and He gives us His Holy Spirit that we may serve Him and others through the wisdom and strength which He alone provides.

As witnesses of God's saving action and as fellow believers who share the core identity of being forgiven sinners, chosen saints, and beloved children, we pledge to pray for these children as they grow in faith, and for their parents as they teach the lessons of Christian faith in the home.

The Care of Baptized Children provides a place for congregational celebrations of faith life milestones, which includes the presentation of supportive gifts and age-appropriate resources for parents to use in home worship and teaching.

Dimensions of this supportive/connective ministry include:

- 1) Grace-ing Babies: Birth – 1½; Baptism; Grace Friends; First year Baptism birthday celebration on Easter Sunday; Teaching resources for parents.
- 2) Pictures that Teach: Age 2 - Presentation of Picture Bible; Visual teaching resources for parents.
- 3) Learning to Pray: Age 4 – Presentation of Resources for Family Prayer/Devotions.
- 4) Words from God: Age 6 – Presentation of Children's Bible; Teaching resources for parents.
- 5) Joyful Servants: Age 8 – Presentation of Towel & Basin; Home-centered serving activities.
- 6) Disciple Life: Age 10 – Presentation of First Catechism; Home teaching resources for parents.

## Disciple Life: Teaching Resources for Parents

The following are suggestions for encouraging your child to embrace the life of discipleship that Christ makes possible, as He gives us love and strength through our Baptism:

As your child grows in faith, we celebrate that the faith we receive from Christ is simple, so that even babes and children may trust His love and grace! Your child is now asking more complicated questions and beginning to use more sophisticated language. While honoring their intellectual growth, it remains important to speak of our faith in simple terms, so that both you and your child rejoice in the solid ground of simple answers to simple questions. This is Luther's counsel in the Small Catechism to parents, "as the head of the family should teach ***in a simple way*** to his household!"

This booklet serves as a type of first Catechism (a word that simply means, "teaching"), and blesses you, the parent, as a teacher of faith to your child. For this teaching, you do not need to prepare lectures or handouts but only to invite your child to join you in simple questions and answers.

This is a great age for you to discuss simple questions with your child! Let them know that these are great questions to ask, and that the simple answers are helpful to us throughout our lives, when doubts and temptations shake us. There will always be things that we do not understand. The simple truth of God's Word is our rock and anchor in every storm!

### **When?**

These are questions to ask your child on many occasions. Here are a few suggestions:

- On the way to or from church
- Following a Baptism
- In Holy Seasons
- At mealtime
- At bedtime
- During time of family crisis (sickness, death, etc.)

### **How?**

It is great for you as a parent to both ask the simple questions and to answer with the simple answers. After you have modeled this, ask your child the question, and let them give the simple answer. Then encourage your child to ask you the question, so that you may model that this simple answer is indeed sufficient and helpful!

## **Simple Questions of the Christian Faith:**

**Format:** These are helpful simple questions. The simple answers are not for memorization, but to get at the heart of the matter. Don't demand what might be termed "the fullest explanation." Bless the simple answer! These answers hint at what that simple answer might be.

### **Who is God?**

**Simple answer: Our Creator, Savior, and Teacher!**

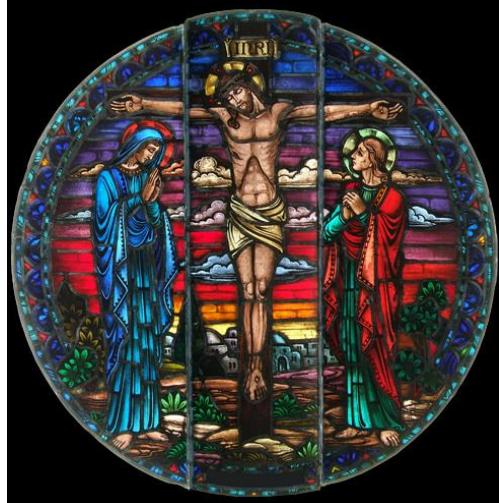
*Other simple thoughts:* God made everything that is out of nothing! He is the One and only God! We do not find out about God, but God tells us about Himself! He tells us that He is truly One God and truly three persons: that He is God our Father; that He is Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, and that He is the Holy Spirit, who is our Teacher, Counselor, and Comforter!



### **How do we know that there is a God?**

**Simple answer: The Bible tells us so!**

*Other simple thoughts:* We can know this by seeing the world around us, but we really know that there is a God because we hear Him speaking to us through His Word! The Holy Spirit helps us to hear Him and trust Him!



### **What does the cross mean?**

**Simple answer: The fullness of God's love!**

*Other simple thoughts:* The cross means that there are forces in our world that do not like God and are opposed to Him. The cross means that in places that look scary and evil, the love of God is present and at work for us! The cross shows us that sin leads only to death, and that the love of Jesus is greater than all our sins!

The cross teaches us that the greatest love is the forgiveness which God gives us each day!

## **How are we saved?**

### **Simple answer: By trusting what Jesus has done for us!**

*Other simple thoughts:* We are not saved by what we do but by what Jesus does for us! We don't even know that we need to be saved until God helps us understand that we have sinned against Him.

## **Why do we worship God?**

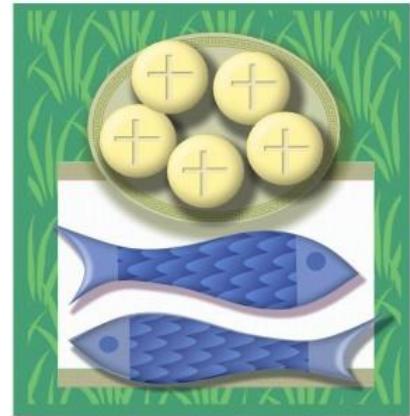
### **Simple answer: To grow in faith!**

*Other simple thoughts:* Worship is not mostly what we do for God, but what God does for us! He strengthens our weak faith; He teaches us the truth of His Word, and He gathers us as fellow believers to love and encourage each other!

## **What is faith?**

### **Simple answer: Trusting in God!**

*Other simple thoughts:* In the Bible, the word for faith also means "trust" and "believe." We can make up our own false faith, about what and who we trust. True faith is a gift, which we cannot get on our own, but which we receive from God. He gives us this faith, to trust that He loves us and that He will not treat us as we deserve but rather, that He will treat us as He loves us! This is called "grace!" Because we listen to ourselves and the world around us, our faith gets weak. God is always strengthening our weak faith through the promises of our Baptism and our daily repentance, through worship and prayer, and through the support and encouragement of other Christians. This true faith is trusting that Jesus saves us from our sins, to live with Him now and forever!



## **Why are we Christian?**

### **Simple answer: Because we belong to Christ!**

*Other simple thoughts:* We are Christian not because we chose Christ, but because He chose us! We did not first love Him, but He first loved us! He made us and we belong to Him, so His name is on us, like the label of a maker on clothing. In Holy Baptism, Jesus gave His name to us, and we are glad to be called by His name!

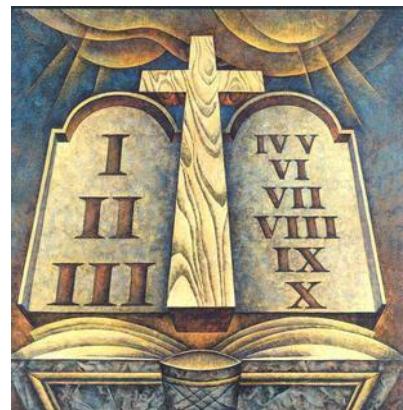
## **Why do we read the Bible?**

### **Simple answer: To listen to God!**

*Other simple thoughts:* When we read the Bible, the Holy Spirit, Who was given to us in our Baptism, helps us hear God speaking to us in two different ways. First, He tells us what He wants us to do. He calls this kind of speaking "Law" or "Commandments." Then He tells us what He has done, is doing, and will do for us! He calls this kind of speaking "Good News" or the "Gospel"! God's Law is good, but we don't do it, so it shows us our sin. God's Gospel is what God does to save us, so hearing it shows us our Savior!

What is God's Law:      **Live**

**According to My  
Will**



What is the Gospel?      **God so loved the world, that He gave His**

**Only begotten  
Son, that whosoever believes in Him, shall not  
Perish, but have  
Everlasting  
Life! (John 3:16)**



## **Why do we go to a Lutheran Church?**

### **Simple answer: To hear God's Word and to gather with others to thank God for what He alone has done for us!**

*Other simple thoughts:* We do not go because of Martin Luther, but because like people before him and people after him, Luther saw that the Church is always tempted to put more trust in what we do for God than in what God does for us. Luther and others urged believers to listen to the Bible, and believe that we are saved by grace through faith. God does everything to save us: He gives us grace, faith, and Christ, and we learn all of this from His Word!

## **How do we follow Christ?**

**Simple answer: He helps us to love Him and trust Him!**

*Other simple thoughts:* We do not follow in our own strength, trying harder to please God, or by using our reason, trying to do what we think is good and to avoid what we think is bad. A disciple is a student and a follower, and our Teacher and Leader is always present to guide us! We follow Christ by prayer, by listening to His Word, by going where He sends us, and by trusting that He is always with us!



**What does it mean to be baptized?**

**Simple answer: To become God's child forever!**

*Other simple thoughts:* It means to be chosen by God! Jesus Christ baptizes us, using Pastors or other believers as His messengers. He assures us that we are His beloved children, forgiven of our sins, and promised everlasting life with Him in heaven! He gives us faith! He puts His mark on us, which is the sign of the cross! He gives us His Holy Spirit, to teach and counsel us every day! He uses water in Baptism to teach us that in our sin we drown and die, but in forgiveness, we are raised to new life, to trust that God is full of grace and mercy. This helps us to live everyday as baptized children, dying and rising with Christ!

## **What is grace?**

### **Simple answer: God's love for sinners!**

God loves us while we are sinners! God forgives us, even though we have disobeyed Him! God gives us every good thing when we don't deserve it!



## **What is repentance?**

### **Simple answer: Turning from our sin to God's grace!**

*Other simple thoughts:* Repent means "to turn," and God turns us to see the truth of our sin – that it is ugly and deadly, and then He turns us to see His wonderful forgiveness! We usually turn in to ourselves, to listen to what we think and what we want. Sometimes we turn to listen to others to please them. Repentance is when the Holy Spirit helps us turn to listen to the best voice of all, the One who always speaks the truth that helps us: the voice of God our Savior!

## **Simple Questions from Luther's Small Catechism**

### **Who am I in God's eyes?**

### **Simple answer: A Saint and A Sinner!**

*Other simple thoughts:* We are made by God and loved by God! We were created for a purpose: to love and serve our God, and to love and serve one another! We were made for this holy purpose, and anyone who has a holy purpose is called a "saint!"



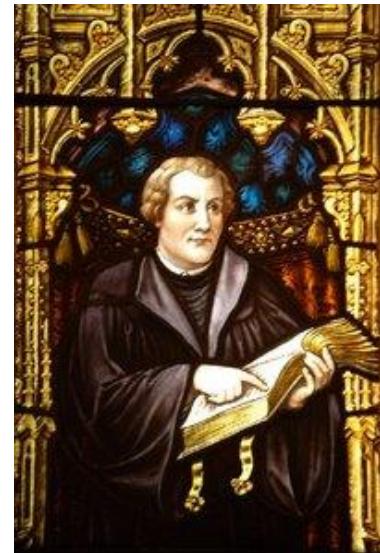
However, not only do we forget this blessing, but like every child, we disobey our Father, we disrespect Him, and we are not grateful for the many ways He cares for us. This disobedience and disrespect is called "sin," and so along with everyone else, we are truly called a "sinner!"

At the very same time, then, we are loved by God and in need of His forgiveness because we have turned away from His love. We are both "saint" and "sinner!"

## **How can I know my disease?**

**Simple answer: God's Law shows us our sin (SOS)!**

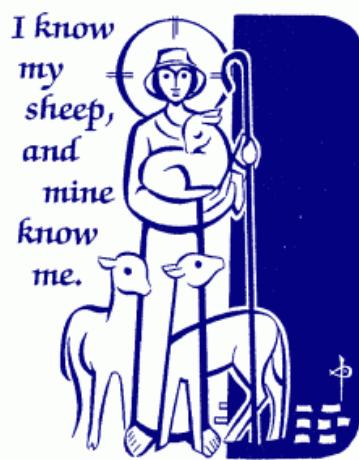
*Other simple thoughts:* God tells us clearly what He wants us to do in His Law. The most well-known part of His Law is the 10 Commandments. We can pretend that we are keeping these laws, but the Holy Spirit helps us understand that we are not being obedient, and that we cannot be obedient. We have a disease, a weakness, which keeps us from loving and trusting God and doing His will. This disease is sin! Yikes! What can we do?



## **Where can I find the medicine I need?**

**Simple answer: God's Gospel shows us our Savior (SOS)!**

*Other simple thoughts:* If we can't make ourselves better (and we can't!), where can we find help? Is there a cure for our sins? Yes! Jesus has come to bring that medicine, which pours from His cross, which pours into us through Baptism and repentance, through worship and hearing the Word of the Gospel! Since we can't do what God asks us to do, He does everything we need! In His love for us, He forgives us and saves us! Jesus dies for us and rises to lead us into true and everlasting life! What good news! "Good news" is the meaning of this word: "Gospel!"



## **Who will help me?**

**Simple answer: Jesus, our Good Shepherd!**

*Other simple thoughts:* God will! The Father will! Jesus will! The Holy Spirit will! God hears our prayers and answers us! He gives us what we need every day: love and forgiveness, family and friends, food and clothing, ways to serve Him and to help others! He delivers us from evil, and He keeps us from temptation! God is with us to help us every day!

## **How can I trust God?**

**Simple answer: God will help me trust Him!**

*Other simple thoughts:* On our own, we don't trust God. We either trust ourselves, or we put our trust in a false god. Only with the help of the Holy Spirit do we trust God, and He is glad to help us every day!



**The Sign of the Cross:** Encourage your child to make the sign of the cross as a prayer, to remember and give thanks that they are baptized children of God! He loves and cherishes them, and He is present with them to help them at all times! Disciples are students who continue to learn these wonderful lessons every day: Trust in God, not in ourselves or the voices of this world! Learn from Christ how to love, how to pray, and how to serve! Follow the way of the Cross, for this is the way of truth and life! Give thanks for grace, for this is the ocean of God's love and compassion for us!





Christ leads us through the  
waters of Holy Baptism  
into the life of joyful Disciples!

**Sin = Death**

**Forgiveness = Life!**



