

HOW TO USE MY SMALL CATECHISM

The Fourth Commandment

Honor your father and your mother.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

The Central Thought

God gives parents a unique task that serves the well-being of all society.

What makes parents unique among all other people in our lives?

Read **John 19:25–27**. Note how Jesus honored His mother as He was dying.

✚ *As Christians, we give parents special honor as God's representatives on earth—gifts of God through whom He gave us the gift of life.*

How can I show that I honor and cherish my parents as gifts of God and as His representatives on earth?

A Closer Reading of the Small Catechism

54. *Why does this commandment focus on parents and other authorities?*

A. A mother and father uniquely serve as God's representatives through whom He bestows and nurtures human life on earth.

B. Other authorities (legal guardians, pastors, teachers, employers, government officials) also serve as God's representatives for the support and protection of our life on earth.

55. *How do we fear and love God in keeping the Fourth Commandment?*

We fear and love God by *not despising* our parents, guardians, or other authorities. *Despising* means

A. looking down upon them or making fun of them;

142 **Proverbs 23:22** Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

B. disobeying or rebelling against their God-given authority.

143 **Proverbs 15:20** A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish man despises his mother.

Read **Deuteronomy 21:18–21**; **1 Samuel 2:12–25**; and **2 Samuel 15:10–11**.

We fear and love God by *receiving and recognizing* parents and authorities as His representatives. We do this by

A. honoring them;

Read **Mark 7:10–12**, where Jesus condemns those who used man-made religious traditions as an excuse for not honoring their father and mother.

B. serving and coming to the aid of our parents;

144 **John 19:25–27** Standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

Read **Genesis 47:11–12**, about how Joseph cared for his father and brothers.

C. obeying our parents, pastors, teachers, employers, and government authorities;

145 **Ephesians 6:1–3** Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

146 **Hebrews 13:17** Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will

- Get a little familiar with your table of contents at the front of your *Small Catechism*. You'll notice:
 - The first 42 pages are the actual *Small Catechism*. This Martin Luther's original catechism. It is a summary of basic Christian teachings. He also included questions so that the head of the household could teach his family what it meant to be Christians through these central teachings.
 - The rest of the book is what we call the "Explanation to the *Small Catechism*." Over time, we've added Bible verses, notes, and references next to the original *Small Catechism* as a way to reinforce what we've been taught in the Bible and what we believe as Christians. You'll spend most of your time in this section of the catechism.
- Within the Explanation portion of the catechism, you'll find three subheadings for each section:
 - *The Central Thought* guides you through simple Bible study and reflection questions
 - *A Closer Reading of the Small Catechism* helps you dig deeper into the wording of the Small Catechism.
 - *Connections and Applications* relates Scripture to important issues in today's culture.
- You'll also notice that the entire Catechism is divided into **questions**. Notice the red arrows pointing to those numbers in the picture above. Those are referring to questions 54 and 55. Whenever your journal asks you to look up a question in the *Small Catechism*, you are looking for these maroon numbers. There are a total of 374 questions, so don't get worried if the numbers seem high as you're looking them up!

HOW TO USE MY BIBLE

- The Bible is actually a collection of **books** rather than one book (you'll learn more about this in Unit 1). When you open your Bible to its table of contents, you'll see a list of all of those books. This is a good place to go when you aren't sure where to find a book. It will give you the page number where it starts!
- Once you turn to a book of the Bible, you'll notice that it's broken down into **chapters**. You can tell when a chapter begins and ends because there will be large numbers that tell you which chapter you're in. For instance, below you will see a picture of the book of 2 Timothy (pronounced "Second Timothy") and you'll notice there are two chapters: chapter 1 and chapter 2.
- Within each chapter, we have **verses**. Verses are indicated by smaller numbers at the beginning of a sentence. This helps us when we need to quickly reference a certain part of the Bible. For example, if I wanted to find 2 Timothy 1:2, that means turning to the book of "2 Timothy," looking for the first chapter (1), and the second verse (2). There I find these words, "To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."

Here's a quick reference guide if you ever find yourself confused:

BOOK
The first part tells me the book.
Sometimes it has numbers,
sometimes it doesn't.

CHAPTER

The number on this side
of the colon tells me
what chapter to look for.

VERSE

The number on this side
tells me what verse (or
verses) to find.

2 Timothy 1:2

