

## How to Use this Book

This book is designed to be read by a mentor who is or who will be in relationship to someone newer to the faith. Our first idea was that parents and their confirmation-aged children would use these short lessons to begin really interesting conversations at home, maybe around the supper table, about the most basic markers of their faith. Then we thought about godparents and sponsors and grandparents and mentors and leaders and guides and all of the other faith-sharing adults who work with young people. This book is for them, too.

And then we began to think that the conversation partners of these sharing mentors might easily be adults new to the Christian faith. Persons who are exploring the Lutheran witness to the gospel might be interested in having conversations with persons who are a little more experienced. This book is for them, too.

The instructions are simple. Read a lesson. Close your eyes and lean back in prayer. Ask God to open your imagination. Then play with what you've read. Ask your own questions. Finally, try on the questions that follow that lesson. Think about the answers that come to you (or don't).

When it's time to meet with your person who is new to the faith, pray together for the Holy Spirit's presence as you spend this time, and pray for real freedom of conversation to take place. Share what you've read and invite them gently to imagine and play with those ideas with you. Then talk together about it. Lower their anxiety, experiment together with words and pictures, and above all, float together in conversation. Grow together in faith.

# The Ten Commandments

Luther says time and time again that the commandments are *both* law and promise. They sum up both words of God. Behind the commandments God has hidden two things: a discipline of the godly life and the promise of life in Jesus Christ. Both a hidden discipline and a hidden promise.

Here is how to find the hidden discipline.

Each of the commandments reveal the hidden discipline when they drive us back to the first commandment (each of Luther's explanations do so, too: "We should fear and love God . . .").

The root of a godly life is living daily out of fear, love, and trust in God above everything else. It is to

live each moment counting on the grace of God. It is to take nothing for granted but to delight in the gift of life. It is to delight in the presence of the Lord and see the hand of a gracious Creator in every breath we breathe and every fellow creature we meet.



Such a life trusts God and believes that God is building a trustworthy world. Further, out of our fear, love, and trust in God, such a life creates a trustworthy world. The life of the godly person is filled with this hidden discipline. It is a life led out of trust in God. It works every day to build a trustworthy world for our fellow creatures.

Now here is how to find the hidden promise.

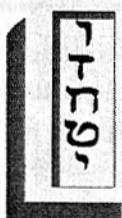
Interestingly, the hidden promise in each commandment also goes back to the first commandment. The painful, horrible fact is that we cannot live our lives fully out of fear, love, and trust

in God. In fact, we continuously turn to alternative objects of fear, love, and trust.

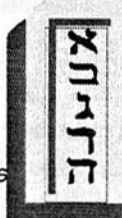
We trust our spouse more than God. We trust ourselves more than God. We trust our religion more than God. We trust our ideas more than God. We trust our military more than God. We trust what our friends say about us more than we trust what God says to us. People that we know may put us down, and we allow their put-downs to cause us to fear them.

In contrast to trusting the words God said at the end of each day of creation, "Good, very good," we cower in the bushes, accepting others' desire to shame us. Or, out of our shame, we retaliate with equally shaming remarks about them. We feel exposed and naked.

But here is the beauty of the hidden promise of the commandments: God gives



God  
gives  
what  
God  
demands



what God demands. In Jesus Christ, the crucified and resurrected one, God takes our shame upon himself and gives us Christ's glory; in Jesus, God takes our sin upon himself and

gives us Christ's holiness; in Jesus, God takes our cowering heart and gives us a heart filled with praise and joy in the Lord of heaven and earth. In Jesus, God takes our sins of stealing from our neighbor and replaces them with a generous spirit born out of the abundance of a gracious God. And so with each commandment.

So behind each of the commandments is a hidden discipline and a hidden promise. Without the discipline we have no roots for the godly life, and without the promise we have only condemnation for our failures to live the godly life, and we

strive after an endless set of expectations that leads to either despair or pride.

Here is the most interesting part of all.

With the promise comes the joy of the hidden discipline. That is because living in the promise gives us the power to freely seek the godly life.

a hidden discipline  
and a hidden promise:  
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God demands

*How is God creating a trustworthy world today?*

*How are you building trustworthiness in God's world?*

*Think of a commandment that is easy to break.*

*In Jesus, what sin does God take from you and what are you given in return?*



*Could you share this example with another person?*

*Would it help that person to understand forgiveness?*