



A Course for Lutheran Early Childhood Educators

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Discussion Guide - *Session 2 Law and Gospel*



Session 2: Law and Gospel

Session Objectives:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

Opening Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

We pray that you would help us to correctly distinguish Law and Gospel so that we do not have false confidence in our works nor despair in our sin but always look to the cross of our Savior, Jesus Christ, for forgiveness, hope, life and salvation. We thank you for this free gift of grace that you have given us and ask that the Holy Spirit might embolden us to share this Good News with those that we serve in our Lutheran Schools in order that He might create, sustain, and strengthen saving faith in them. Amen.



Lutheran History and Readings:

Luther's *Small Catechism with Explanation* shares the following on Law and Gospel:

What basic distinction must we keep in mind in order to understand the Bible?

We must sharply distinguish between the Law and the Gospel in the Bible.

John 1:17 *The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

2 Corinthians 3:6 *The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

What does God teach and do in the Law?

In the Law God commands good works of thought, word, and deed and condemns and punishes sin.

Mark 12:30-31 *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. ... Love your neighbor as yourself.*

John 5:45 *Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set.*

Romans 3:20 *Through the law we become conscious of sin.*

What does God teach and do in the Gospel?

In the Gospel, the good news of our salvation in Jesus Christ, God gives forgiveness, faith, life, and the power to please Him with good works.

John 3:16 *God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

John 6:63 *The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.*

Romans 1:16 *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.*

Colossians 1:6 *All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.*

What are the Ten Commandments?

The Ten Commandments are the Law of God.

Note: God gave them in this order but did not number them (**Deuteronomy 5:6-21; Exodus 20:1-17**).

How did God give His Law?

When God created people, He wrote the Law on their hearts. Later he arranged the Law in Ten Commandments, wrote it on two tables of stone, and made it known through Moses.

Romans 2:14-15 *Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.*



*Bible narrative: God wrote His commandments directly for the Israelites (**Exodus 19-20; 31:18**). There are three kinds of laws in the Old Testament: the moral law, which tells all people their duty toward God and other people; the ceremonial law, which regulated the religious practices in the Old Testament; and the political law, which was the state law of the Israelites. Only the moral law was written into the human heart.*

What is the summary of commandments 1-3 (First Table)?

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (**Matthew 22:37**; see **Deuteronomy 6:5**).

What is the summary of commandments 4-10 (Second Table)?

"And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself" (**Matthew 22:39**; see **Leviticus 19:18**).

What is the summary of all the commandments?

Love is the summary of all the commandments.

Romans 13:10 *Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

The Fulfillment of the Law

How carefully does God want us to keep His commandments?

God wants us to keep His commandments perfectly in thoughts, desires, words, and deeds.

Leviticus 19:2 *Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.*

James 2:10 *Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.*

What prevents us from keeping God's commandments perfectly?

Our sinful nature makes it impossible.

Psalms 14:3 *All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

Ecclesiastes 7:20 *There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.*

Isaiah 64:6 *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.*

1 John 1:8 *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

*Bible narrative: The apostle Paul grieved over his failure to keep the Law (**Romans 7:15-20**).*

Can anyone, then, be saved by the Law?

No; the Law condemns everyone.



Galatians 3:10-11 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written:
"Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."
Clearly no one is justified before God by the law.

The Purposes of the Law

What purposes does the Law then serve?

A. First, the Law helps to control violent outbursts of sin and keeps order in the world (a curb).

1 Timothy 1:9 We also know that law is made not for the righteous [good people] but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers.

Romans 2:14-15 Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

B. Second, the Law accuses us and shows us our sin (a mirror).

Romans 3:20 Through the law we become conscious of sin.

Romans 7:7 I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."

C. Third, the Law teaches us Christians what we should and should not do to lead a God-pleasing life (a guide). The power to live according to the Law comes from the Gospel.

Psalms 119:9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your word.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

1 John 4:9, 11 This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him.... Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Note: See **Luke 10:27**.

Sin

What is sin?

Sin is every thought, desire, word, and deed which is contrary to God's Law.

1 John 3:4 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

Note: Other names for sin are disobedience (**Romans 5:19**); debts (**Matthew 6:12**); wickedness, rebellion (**Exodus 34:7**); fault (**Matthew 18:15**); trespass (**Romans 5:17**); wickedness (**Romans 6:13**); and wrong (**Colossians 3:25**).



Who brought sin into the world?

The devil brought sin into the world by tempting Adam and Eve, who of their own free will yielded to the temptation.

1 John 3:8 *He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning.*

Romans 5:12 *Sin entered the world through one man.*

Bible narrative: The fall of humanity (**Genesis 3:1-7**).

How many kinds of sin are there?

There are two kinds of sin: original sin and actual.

What is original sin?

Original sin is that total corruption of our whole human nature which we have inherited from Adam through our parents.

Psalms 51:5 *I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*

John 3:6 *Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.*

Romans 5:12 *Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.*

Ephesians 4:22 *Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.*

What has original sin done to human nature?

A. Original sin has brought guilt and condemnation to all people;

Romans 5:19 *Through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners.*

Ephesians 2:3 *Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.*

B. has left everyone without true fear and love of God, that is, spiritually blind, dead, and enemies of God;

Genesis 8:21 *Every inclination of his [man's] heart is evil from childhood.*

1 Corinthians 2:14 *The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

Ephesians 2:1 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.*

Romans 8:7 *The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.*

C. causes everyone to commit all kinds of actual sins.

Matthew 7:17 *Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.*



Galatians 5:19-21a *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.*

What is actual sin?

Actual sin is every act against a commandment of God in thoughts, desires, words, or deeds.

Matthew 15:19 *Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.*

James 1:15 *After desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin. (Sins of commission)*

James 4:17 *Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins. (Sins of omission)*

Law and Gospel

Where alone does God offer the forgiveness of sins?

God offers the forgiveness of sins only in the Gospel, the good news that we are freed from the guilt, the punishment, and the power of sin, and are saved eternally because of Christ's keeping the Law and His suffering and death for us.

John 3:16 *God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

Romans 1:16 *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.*

Romans 10:4 *Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

Galatians 3:13 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."*

Colossians 1:13-14 *He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

What is the difference between the Law and the Gospel?

- A. The Law teaches what we are to do and not to do; the Gospel teaches what God has done, and still does, for our salvation.
- B. The Law shows us our sin and the wrath of God; the Gospel shows us our Savior and the grace of God.
- C. The Law must be proclaimed to all people, but especially to impenitent sinners; the Gospel must be proclaimed to sinners who are troubled in their minds because of their sins.

CFW Walther, the first synod president of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, in his *Thesis on Law and Gospel* shows us the importance of the proper use of Law and Gospel:



Thesis II: Only he is an orthodox teacher who not only presents all the articles of faith in accordance with Scripture, but also rightly distinguishes from each other the Law and the Gospel.

Thesis VIII: . . . the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Law is preached to those who are already in terror on account of their sins, or the Gospel to those who live securely in their sins.

Thesis IX: . . . the Word of God is not rightly divided when sinners who have been struck down and terrified by the Law are directed, not to the Word and Sacraments, but to their own prayers and wrestlings with God in order that they may win their way into a state of grace . . .

Thesis XXV: . . . the Word of God is not rightly divided when the person teaching it does not allow the Gospel to have a general predominance in his teaching.

Reflect:

- How can you attempt to determine the Law and the Gospel in a Bible story?
- Why is using Law and Gospel in Bible stories so important?
- Why is using the ideas of Law and Gospel in personal application important?
- How can you determine whether a child needs to hear the Law or the Gospel when disciplining children? Would there ever be a time when you would share the Law without the Gospel message or vice versa?
- Why is it said that a Christian is 100% saint and 100% sinner?
- Why is it important for children to be in the habit of apologizing and saying "I forgive you" as opposed to "it's okay"?
- You ask a child how they can be certain that they are going to heaven and they respond, "I'm a pretty good person." How is this an improper use of Law and Gospel?
- We continue to be under the moral law and our own civil/political laws but why do the Old Testament ceremonial laws no longer apply? (See **Colossians 2:16-17**; **Hebrews 8:13**.)
- For each of these scenarios choose whether the Law is being used as a curb, a mirror, or a guide:
 - A child is afraid that the teacher will take away her toy, so she keeps it in her cubby until it's time to share.
 - A child is sad that she took a toy from another child and broke it.
 - A teacher in a Lutheran school hears that one of her students is in the hospital so she arranges meals to help the family.
- What should I do if I need to make a decision that there is no law for as it was not forbidden nor commanded by God?
- Could a teacher in a public preschool effectively share Law and Gospel with her class?



Respond:

- Using the Law and Gospel Exercise pdf, select a Bible story and create a lesson plan.
- Practice teaching the words of Law and Gospel to two children during conflict resolution as follows:
 - Ask the victim, "Did you like it when Johnny pushed you?" Model an assertive voice and have the victim tell Johnny, "I didn't like it when you pushed me, next time say "please move."
 - Next let the perpetrator (Johnny) know that hitting is not okay, hitting hurts. Model the words of confession to Johnny "I'm sorry for pushing you, next time I will use my words and ask you to move."
 - Model for the victim the words of absolution (Gospel) explaining that Jesus died on the cross for all of the things that we do wrong and we can show Jesus' love to others with the words, "I forgive you."

Closing Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

We thank You for creating us and sending Your Son to save us as only a loving, merciful, and gracious Father would do. We ask that as Your children you would strengthen us to be imitators of You following Your commands in loving response to the Gospel for the benefit of our neighbor, ourselves, and to Your Glory. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Additional Resources:

Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation

<https://www.cph.org/p-32272-luthers-small-catechism-with-explanation-2017-edition.aspx>

For further study on *God's Law*:

<https://www.lhm.org/godconnects/topicguide.asp?ID=24046>

What About...The Gospel:

<https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs>

