
LUTHERAN CHURCH–CANADA

CTCR



Bible Study guide accompanying CTCR document: “A Lutheran Response”

1. What are some of the new challenges brought on by COVID-19 for all Canadians? For Churches? For individual Christians? Which have had the greatest impact on you?

Responses will vary. Listen carefully and support, but don't spend the whole time on this.

Regarding the ordering of priorities for Christians

2. Carefully read Matthew 22:36-40.

- What does Jesus say is the greatest of the commandments (and the second greatest)?
- What do these have to do with us in these days?
- What does 1 Peter 2:17 add about God's goals for Christians?

Jesus was asked (as a trap) about the greatest of the commandments. His response was to love God first, and our neighbour “as we love ourselves” (an assumption). God desires that we love in both directions.

Regarding the Luther's Estates: Church, State, and Home/Family

3. Review Luther's Small Catechism portion called the Table of Duties. Note that therein, Luther talks about three estates: the Church, the State, and the Home (with the workplace as an extension of the society). Each estate is a unique vocation (calling) with distinct roles and responsibilities for leaders and members.

- What do you see as the key interplay within each estate?
- What do you see with the interacting relationships with and among each other.
- How do you see these estates functioning in these COVID-19 times?

This is a difficult concept in some ways, and can be misunderstood. God has an idea of order and authority, but desires that it be expressed in service and love reflecting Christ. God does not want tyrants or abusive autocrats.

Regarding the Family

4. What does the Bible say about His design for marriage in these passages?

- Genesis 2:18-25
- Matthew 19:1-12
- Ephesians 5:21-33

God designed marriage as the relationship of one woman and one man. Sin ruined the perfect ideal, but God still desires that the relationships be healthy, reflecting His love for His Church, serving, sacrificing, obeying for good.

5. What does the Bible say about the role of parents and children?

- Genesis 1:26-28
- Ephesians 6:1-4
- Matthew 12:46-50
- John 13:34-35

Here also, God's design is that parents have authority in the home, representing God in that realm. There should be sacrificial love, nurturing care, forgiveness, service, mutual respect, and responsibility reflecting Him.

Regarding the Two Realms of Church and State

6. Although not addressed specifically here (these deal more with Christian duties within each realm), Luther observed the conflict between Pope and Emperor over who had ultimate authority, and he specifically describes the tensions created by overlapping responsibilities, most notably between the two realms of Church and State.

This age-old tension created significant angst and even bloodshed before Luther's time. God set up each realm to serve in His place: the Church and her leaders providing Spiritual care; the State and her leaders providing safety and wellbeing for the good of all, that they may lead quiet and peaceable lives.

7. Review Luther's Small Catechism on the Fourth Commandment. What does it say about civil authority? In relation to God's authority?

Christians ought to care for and respect civil authorities as an extension of His order and care for humanity in all societies, like the family provides nurture in the home. Christians should obey, pay taxes, and pray for leaders.

8. What do these passages say about the realm of civil government and a Christian's duty?

- Romans 13:1-7
- Matthew 22:15-22
- 1 Timothy 2:1-2

Since God has established civil governments and authorities, they are accountable to Him and His ideals. They have authority that He gives, and are not to misuse it for their own good, for evil ends, or against the Church.

9. Because the discussion connects with the role of the Church, what do these passages say about the role of Christian leaders ...

- John 21:15-17
- Acts 20:18-21, 26-35
- Matthew 20:25-28

They are always to live in relationship with God and His Word, obeying and respecting God's revealed will and using good common sense to work toward the best solution that provides care and protection for all equally.

... and members in Christ's Church?

- John 13:35
- Acts 4:16-18
- Hebrews 13:1-9, 17

They also, especially, are deeply responsible to God in matters relating to spiritual wellbeing of all people; those within the Church and those outside of her (through mission and witness and humanitarian works of mercy).

10. What does this passage say that addresses both the civil and the spiritual realms?

- 1 Timothy 2:1-8

God wills that all leaders serve and obey Him, and citizens of both realms see God as head and pray.

11. If there is a tension, what does this passage say about who holds the higher authority?

- Acts 5:29

Clearly, if an absolute conflict exists, each Christian should obey God rather than human powers.

Application discussion:

- Under what circumstances might a Christian or a congregation choose to show civil disobedience for matters of conscience? What are the limits or exclusions? What must a Christian or a congregation be willing to accept as a consequence for civil disobedience?

Responses may vary from persecution in other lands to restrictions here in Canada. One of the key questions is whether restrictions are clearly against Christians distinctly and if they prevent Christianity. However, limits to the free exercise of religious freedom is a challenge for Christians living in a free and (ideally) tolerant state.

12. In what ways is obedience to God the same—and different from—obedience to the Church? In what ways might it be different? Why does this matter?

At times sinful rulers and leaders in both church and state have misused power and authority. It may be necessary for faithful Christians to follow Christ first, even if it means disobeying God's leaders.

Application discussion:

- What does God's Word say to guide believers if the state suspends the right of the church to meet for public worship?
- What does God's Word say to guide the Church's action if the state restricts or regulates things like worship attendance, forbidding singing, or placing limits on communion distribution?
- Do the circumstances change under a pandemic (note all of these passages, but especially Romans 13:1-7 and Acts 5:29)
- To what degree might the fifth commandment apply to Christian care for neighbour in times of pandemic?

The Bible is not addressed to specific cases in our lives, but gives guiding principles about behaviours that we attempt to heed and follow. Each province, city, or municipality may be different and the situations will likely change rapidly; each congregation may make distinct decisions, but first seek an obedient and respectful "trilemma" (an alternative that can honour all aspects), prayerfully and carefully implementing guidelines.

Regarding Two Kinds of Righteousness

13. The first kind of righteousness is that God considers someone righteous on the basis of faith.

- Genesis 15:6
- Romans 4
- Hebrews 11:1-12:3

As these passages show, God “credits” people with righteousness, credits them as perfect, counts them as precious children in spite of the realities – all on the basis of faith, or sincere relational trust in His promises.

14. The second kind of righteousness is the way God desires a believer to act and live in faith because the person is a child of God.

- Ephesians 4:17-5:21
- Galatians 5:22-24
- 1 John 4:7-5:5

There is an idea that we are saved either by works or by faith. True faith is **both** trusting in the promises and striving to live in a way that is closer to the way God sees us. How we live matters, but doesn’t save us. We do good works because it is part of our life with God on our way to heaven, not in order to get His love or salvation.

Regarding Christian Freedom

15. Christian freedom is always held in tension with Christian responsibilities. What do each of these passages say about Christian freedom? What do these passages say about each Christian exercising freedom in any culture?

- John 8:31-38
- Galatians 5:1, 13-26
- 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (in the context of 1 Corinthians 8-9)

Through faith in Christ, we receive forgiveness and are set free from the burden and debt of sin, the obligation to make ourselves right, fix our own life, or make the world right. But our freedom is also lived in light of willing and joyful responsibilities to serve God and to love and serve our neighbour as ourselves.

Regarding the Sanctity of Human Life

16. What does the Bible say about the origin of human life?

- Genesis 1:26-27, 5:1-2
- Psalm 139:13-16

God created all human life to be unique and distinct and knows each person intimately.

17. Review Luther's Small Catechism on the First Article as well as the Fifth Commandment. What does it say about the sanctity of human life.

Human life is created by God, granted and accompanied by God, and is only to be taken by God in His time.

18. Who holds each person in the palm of His hand?

- Psalm 31:15
- Acts 17:28
- Psalm 71:18

God holds each person in His care, regardless of how difficult life is in a broken and fallen world.

19. Who alone has the right to end life?

- 1 Samuel 2:6
- Deuteronomy 32:39
- Job 1:21

Our times are in God's hands ... He alone can end life. (But ... we shouldn't make life or health an idol that we preserve at all costs when it would normally end; nor is death something that a Christian need fear in Christ.

Application discussion:

- **What does the Bible suggest as a way to guide a Christian who might desire an early end to life, or for anyone in conversation who is considering a MAID choice?**

God promises to be with us always, our strength when we are weak, our hope in times of difficulty.

Regarding Human Sexuality

20. Review Luther's Small Catechism on the Sixth Commandment. What does it say about sexual identity?

Sexual identity in Luther's words is a simple assumption of male and female, with blessing upon appropriate sexual expression within the context of marriage. Luther's culture didn't face quite the same challenges as ours, but even in his era, sin's hold on a broken world means there were likely people struggling.

21. What does the Bible say about sexual identity and autonomy?

- Genesis 1:26-27
- Genesis 2:18-25
- Genesis 5:1-2
- Romans 1:21-32
- Deuteronomy 22:5

Sexual identity is part of God's created design, as male and female. However, the Bible mentions things like homosexuality, cross dressing, animal fetishes, male mutilation (eunuchs) as an outcome of sin. In Romans 1, there is a suggestion that though not God's perfect design, the broken world is "given over" to imperfection.

Application discussion:

- **What do these passages suggest about the argument that there may be more than the original perfect creation of two genders: male and female?**
- **What do these passages suggest about the concept that humans should be able to choose and manipulate their gender identity?**

The Bible clearly teaches that there were only two genders in God's original and perfectly designed creation. But sin has broken health, DNA and genetics, bring all forms of imperfections and challenges. But this does not endorse them.

22. What does the Bible say about the importance of parenting in raising their children?

- Proverbs 22:6
- Luke 2:51-52
- Ephesians 6:1-4

Parents are part of God's design for the nurture and raising of children. Parents are authorized by God to nurture, support, teach, guide, model, and discipline. God has established parents, not others, as primary influencers on the raising of children.

Application discussion:

- How might these passages (as well as those in the discussion of family) guide a Christian parent to Biblically respond to a child who struggles with gender identity and expresses a wish for a sex change or to identify as a different gender?
- How might the Church assist and support parents in this scenario?

Often this can be heart-breaking for a parent as well as a child. Ideally, parents and children would gain credible medical, psychological, and spiritual guidance over many conversations. Church leaders and pastors should ideally be allowed to speak to the issues biblically but also sensitively, balancing Law and Gospel in truth, mercy, and grace.

Regarding the Theology of the Cross

23. How do the following passages from Scripture articulate the "Theology of the Cross?"

- 1 Corinthians 1:18-31
- 2 Corinthians 12:1-10
- Galatians 6:14
- Philippians 3:4-16
- Romans 5:3-5

A theology of glory approach sees God primarily as a giver of good things to those whom God loves; in contrast, the theology of the cross sees in the Bible a message that Christians should expect struggle, testing and trial, even temptation, through which God works to support, strength, forgive, and bless in a life of faith.

24. How does a theology of the cross help guide a Christian in living his or her life and bring hope and encouragement to those struggling with sexual temptation, identity or dysphoria?

The theology of the cross provides insight for Christians when facing challenges by reminding them that God disciplines those He loves, even as Christ foretold all believers that faithfully following Jesus means "taking up the cross daily"

Regarding Original sin, Temptation, and Actual Sin

25. What does the Bible say about the difference between original sin and actual sin?

- Genesis 8:21
- Romans 8:7

- Matthew 15:19
- James 1:15
- Matthew 7:17
- Galatians 5:19

Original sin is not to be confused with human nature. It began with Adam and Eve, but is passed along to every human (except Jesus Christ). It is a reminder that the human being is born spiritually blind, dead, and an enemy of God, without a spark or way to reach out to God. It leads to actual sin; its power is defeated by Baptism.

26. What does the Bible say about temptation and sin?

- Matthew 4:1-11
- Hebrews 4:14-16
- 2 Timothy 2:22-24
- 1 Corinthians 10:13
- 1 Peter 5:8

Temptation is not the same as sin: Jesus was tempted in every way but did not sin. Temptation is the result of Satan's demonic forces attacking humans. However, unaddressed temptations often end in sinful behaviour.

27. What does the Bible say about those who are sinners?

- Romans 1:16
- Romans 10:4
- Colossians 1:13-14

Every person is a sinner; every sinner on earth is loved by God, for God so loved the world that He sent Jesus to suffer and die; while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Sinners will be condemned unless they are called to faith and believe in God, trusting on the promises of Christ in faith to forgive and save the sinner. Jesus came to save sinners.

28. What is the role of the Child of God, personally, in His Church, and within society in these days?

Each day, the child of God strives to walk as a disciple, remembering that "the old Adam" has been drowned and died (the original sinner) in the waters of baptism, so that a believer is a new creation in Christ Jesus, a child of the Heavenly Father, enabled in faith to live in love toward God and others in this life.