Unit Three
Living Spiritually
The Lord’s Prayer

Session One
To Pray Is to Act

Prayer and Spirituality
The Introduction and The First Petition of the Lord’s Prayer

PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES
- Understand the relationship of prayer to spiritual growth.
- Remember that prayer provides the foundation of our daily lives.
- Face the fears and doubts each of us has about prayer and praying.
- Hold in awe how prayer is our communication with God.
- Pray more frequently and more fully.
- Expand the names for and ways of addressing God in prayer.

Introduction
In the two catechisms, Luther explores the depths of our relationship with God. This unit focuses on one element of that relationship — prayer — and on the Lord’s Prayer.

The Lord’s Prayer is probably the most familiar prayer for all Christians. It is prayed at nearly every worship service; it is used at ecumenical and even some secular gatherings. It is also one of the richest of all prayers for believers. It is the foundation of our growing in faith. This unit will help participants take a fresh look at this wonderful prayer and come to appreciate all it offers.

This opening sets the tone for the session. Participants may read this online before they gather for the session or the leader or a participant may read it at the beginning of the session. This material can also be shared with the broader faith community as a way to keep them connected to the activities of this Connections group.

Participants can reflect upon this material before and between sessions face-to-face or through electronic communication. Look to the participant resource for the specific focus for this session.

Use the material in this section of the participant resource to begin the session. The activity described there provides an opportunity for group members to be reacquainted in an enjoyable way.

Introduce the activity by noting some of your thoughts about the importance of names to people, perhaps connecting to participants’ lives with an anecdote from your own life.

Have participants pair with persons they know less well. Ask members of the pairs to introduce themselves to each other, using the questions in the participant resource.

Ask the pairs to rejoin the group and have each person introduce his or her partner, telling a bit about the other person’s full name. Allow about a minute for each introduction. As a whole group discuss the question, “Why are names important?”

Special Note
The subject of the Lord’s Prayer is enclosed within the wider matter of prayer itself. You will find in these six sessions more than enough material to examine either subject at great depth, and with great personal meaning for participants. In each of the first three sessions you will find a special segment, “Exploring the Meaning of Prayer.” This material consists of selected writings about prayer and helpful questions for personal meditation or group discussion. You can insert parts of this segment into the session as you wish, or consider using the entire segment as an enrichment time for participants. This option is particularly well-suited for prayer retreats, extended courses and between-session classes.
Ask all who selected the first description to go to a designated corner of (or place in) the room. Designate corners (or places) for each of the other descriptions, and ask participants to go to those places with others who chose the same description.

As people move to different corners of the room, watch to see if there are corners with only one person. If so, you or your co-leader could join that person for the discussion.

Have participants ask others in their group why they made the selection they did and to talk about their view of spirituality. Allow about five minutes for this conversation, then, while remaining in these places of the room, each group can summarize its discussion briefly for the other groups. What similarities and differences did each group find among its members? What similarities and differences are there among the groups?

Discussion on the foundations of the Christian faith during this part of the session can be deep and invigorating. The Small Catechism section can be read in the session by one person or all together as prelude to The Large Catechism and the questions.

- Have one or more people read The Large Catechism aloud.
- Use the reflection questions to stimulate discussion.
- Refer back to words from the catechisms during the session to connect in additional ways.

What’s in a Name?

Our being named and called by our name(s) is an important element in our self-identification — even our self-worth. In the Lord’s Prayer, we are reminded of both God’s name(s) and our own. Because we derive all of our blessings from God’s own creating hand, our names, too, are a sign of God’s blessing. Our given names — our “Christian” names — come to us with the meaning of the lives of those who named us.

There are many names for God in Scripture. By calling forth God’s name(s), we ask and answer questions such as, “Who, then, is God?” In our addressing God by name, we bring honor to God and find in God both awesome power and gracious love.

This learning experience invites participants to expand their concepts of God and God’s activity in the world by moving away from exclusively male pronouns for God to nouns and verbs of Scripture that encompass God’s nature more fully. Use the questions in the participant resource to talk in pairs about the names and tones of voice people use to address them and about how the way we name God affects our perceptions of and relationship with God.

Connecting With Daily Life

Exploring the Meaning of Prayer

This segment occurs in the first three sessions of this unit, and provides you with the opportunity to delve deeper into the matter of prayer itself. Like spirituality, prayer means different things to different people. Its importance cannot be overestimated in daily living.

Ask participants to read the quotations describing prayer in the participant resource and to select the one that most nearly matches their perspective on prayer at this moment.

Ask participants in the small groups to reflect quietly on the past week and to identify a particular incident in which they prayed from the perspective of the meaning they selected. Then have them talk about this incident and prayer in the group.
The Psalms are poetry — the song book of the Hebrew people. As you read or pray psalms, you feel the poetry, not in rhyme or the rhythm with which many of us are familiar, but in the poetry of parallelism. When the psalm-writer repeats a phrase, watch for it. You may hear parallelism expressed in one of three ways:

- **Analogous.** Almost the same thought is expressed in different words (the most often used type). An example is Psalm 5:8: “Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness. … make your way straight before me.”

- **Progressive.** The thought is repeated, but this time enlarged or deepened. An example is Psalm 5:1: “Give ear to my words, O Lord; give heed to my sighing.”

- **Antithetical.** One hears an echo, but this time it is the opposite of the first phrase. An example is Psalm 3:5: “I lie down and sleep; I wake again. …”

If you will use this section as an additional activity, you might consider exploring Psalm 121, which uses all three of these parallelisms in an easily identifiable way.

Have each participant identify someone to think about in terms of the questions listed. Encourage them to pray for that person at least twice during the week, and to remember the time, place and circumstances of that time of prayer.

Use the material in the participant resource to guide this devotional time which provides a conclusion to this session. Participants may want to share leadership for this part of the session. The more integrated spiritual growth becomes to the experiences of the session, the more participants will connect daily life with faith and worship.

The more integrated spiritual growth becomes to the experiences of the session, the more participants will connect daily life with faith and worship.
Session Two

God’s Will and Grace

Power and Control
The Second and Third Petitions of the Lord’s Prayer

PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES

- Examine more deeply why they pray.
- Understand more fully God’s will and the Kingdom of God.
- Identify and articulate worldviews they hold.
- Explore the various worldviews that influence their understanding of the connections between faith and life.
- Appreciate worldviews not their own.
- Find ways in which to act in the light of their personal world view.

This opening sets the tone for the session. Participants may read this online before they gather for the session or the leader or a participant may read it at the beginning of the session. This material can also be shared with the broader faith community as a way to keep them connected to the activities of this Connections group. Participants can reflect upon this material before and between sessions face-to-face or through electronic communication. Look to the participant resource for the specific focus for this session.

When all participants have arrived, ask them to talk about the individuals they kept in mind during the last week (as suggested in last session’s “Experiencing until Next Time”). Spend a few minutes talking about the experience, using the questions in the participant resource.

Discussion on the foundations of the Christian faith during this part of the session can be deep and invigorating. The Small Catechism section can be read in the session by one person or all together as prelude to The Large Catechism and the questions.

- Have one or more people read The Large Catechism aloud.
- Use the reflection questions to stimulate discussion.
- Refer back to words from the catechisms during the session to connect in additional ways.
The major content of this section is an exploration of the various world views as H. Richard Niebuhr described them in his book *Christ and Culture*. Niebuhr’s approach is an excellent way to compare and contrast the various relationships between Christ and culture, and to recognize one’s own views of these relationships. Niebuhr’s original thoughts were summarized as “Five Answers to the Enduring Question of the Relationship Between Christ and Culture.” For the purposes of this session, that idea has been summarized into the typology shown in the chart on pages 10 and 11.

Ask participants to read the descriptions of the five world views carefully. Ask them to think about what each means and how each might be expressed in someone’s perspective on Christian life and the world.

With participants, review the participant resource example of the approach to television as a cultural medium, from the perspective of each of the world views. Talk with them about their understanding of each of the views. Ask them to circle the world view type that comes closest to describing their own view of television. Remind participants that this is not a debate about a “Christian view” of television, but an easily understood example of various world views regarding this familiar element of contemporary culture.

Participants might also focus on another element of contemporary society of their choosing. The ‘World Views’ Chart which follows adds additional detail to Niebuhr’s insight. You might provide participants with copies of this, too.

The Lutheran Church most generally fits Type 4, but one may find individuals holding all five world views in any given congregation.

**The World View of Chris Kline**

Save time to consider in some depth how participants’ own world views can be summarized in these five types.

Highlight the suggestions given in this section in the participant resource. Suggest that participants might want to pair with another participant to attend or watch a session of a governing body such as those suggested in the participant resource.

Inform participants about the workplace visit scheduled for the next session. Give all the details and arrangements.

Use the material in the participant resource to guide this devotional time which provides a conclusion to this session. Participants may want to share leadership for this part of the session. The more integrated spiritual growth becomes to the experiences of the session, the more participants will connect daily life with faith and worship.

Use the participant resource for the specific passages from St. John’s Gospel, the Book of Romans and the Psalm. The questions there help participants connect their Bible readings to the themes of this session. Refer back to the Introduction for various ways to use “Connecting with Scriptures.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type/Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Opposition</strong></td>
<td>Christ Against Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of Christ</strong></td>
<td>Jesus is lawgiver. Christians judge the world and avoid it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Christians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture Is...</strong></td>
<td>Culture is inherently evil — to be avoided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problems</strong></td>
<td>Christians can’t totally withdraw from culture. Difficult to discern the actual lines between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christ’s holiness and the world’s sinfulness, and between me and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contributions</strong></td>
<td>Monasticism, in turning away from the world, became one of the great conservers and transmitters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Agreement</strong></td>
<td>Christ In Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of Christ</strong></td>
<td>Christ is the great enlightener and educator. Christians accommodate to the world in order to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Christians</td>
<td>harmonize Christ and culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture Is...</strong></td>
<td>There is no great tension between Christ and culture. Culture needs to be inspired and improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problems</strong></td>
<td>The radical nature of sin is lost. Recasting of Jesus to make him more acceptable. One can “sell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>out” or be co-opted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contributions</strong></td>
<td>Christians influence the whole world, not just a small band of people like them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Fulfillment</strong></td>
<td>Christ Above Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of Christ</strong></td>
<td>Jesus is Lord. Jesus fulfills the Law. Christians obey God, are good persons, do acts of Christian love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Christians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture Is...</strong></td>
<td>Culture is part of God’s creation. God is greater than culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problems</strong></td>
<td>Judging or grading of Christians is based on good works. Institutionalization of Christ and gospel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contributions</strong></td>
<td>The good works Christians do as they move toward God also affect the world positively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Tension</strong></td>
<td>Christ and Culture in Paradox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of Christ</strong></td>
<td>God is gracious through Christ. Forgiven Christians are to face the world, living as sinners and saints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Christians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture Is...</strong></td>
<td>Human beings are sinful and live in God’s carefully created but now sinful world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problems</strong></td>
<td>There is ambiguity in living paradoxically. Although poised for action, Christians can become culturally conservative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contributions</strong></td>
<td>Christians are able to see the world clearly, with all its problems, yet free to act with power of forgiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Conversion</strong></td>
<td>Christ the Transformer of Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of Christ</strong></td>
<td>Christ is Redeemer, Helper. Christians live with people in their distress and help change their condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Christians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture Is...</strong></td>
<td>Good nature has become corrupted. Hopeful of change in culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problems</strong></td>
<td>Christians become discouraged when culture does not change, or when new problems arise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contributions</strong></td>
<td>Christians have a deep involvement in the world, in helping ways.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Session Three**

**God Cares for Us**

**Bread and the Body**

**The Fourth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer**

**PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES**

- Know where and when to pray: at all times and in all places.
- Explore how prayer becomes the warp and woof of their daily lives.
- Appreciate how God provides daily bread each day.
- Empathize with those who do not have enough daily bread.
- Find ways to respond to God’s grace in giving them daily bread.
- Advocate for others who lack daily bread.

**Connecting With the Faith**

Discussion on the foundations of the Christian faith during this part of the session can be deep and invigorating. *The Small Catechism* section can be read in the session by one person or all together as prelude to *The Large Catechism* and the questions.

- Have one or more people read *The Large Catechism* aloud.
- Use the reflection questions to stimulate discussion.
- Refer back to words from the catechisms during the session to connect in additional ways.

**Beginning Where We Are**

Take a few minutes now to talk about the past week. Invite participants to share events, concerns, learnings or other reflections from their daily lives. Ask especially about the world views they noticed as they attended or viewed meetings of governing boards or legislative bodies. What did they observe? What world views were expressed? What did participants notice about their own view of the world?

Ask participants to think about the past week and recall any event or incident that involved a justice issue. This might be a personal issue related to occupation, or a community or global issue such as racism, ecology or economics.

This question can elicit lively conversation. At its root can be the question of God’s power and control: If God is all-powerful and in control, then why is there injustice? This conversation will continue the discussion of the second and third petitions and lead into this session’s focus.

**Going to the Heart of the Matter**

This opening sets the tone for the session. Participants may read this online before they gather for the session or the leader or a participant may read it at the beginning of the session. This material can also be shared with the broader faith community as a way to keep them connected to the activities of this Connections group.

Participants can reflect upon this material before and between sessions face-to-face or through electronic communication. Look to the participant resource for the specific focus for this session.
Connecting With Daily Life

Two activities are included in this section in the participant resource. If you will make a visit during this session, you may need to eliminate the second activity. If so, invite participants to read the activity and reflect on the questions after the session. They might do this with another Connections participant during the week.

Activity One:
A Visit to a World of a Participant

Follow the information and suggestions in the introduction to this leader guide to arrange and prepare for the visit. During the visit, help participants focus on the connections between faith and life. Some may be tempted to talk about easier subjects, especially since the visits offer so many conversation starters. The value of the visit is not just in being present in the host’s world, but being present there in the company of the faith. Be sure to include the questions in the participant resource in the visit conversation.

The illustration in the participant resource suggests another form of visit—a media presentation that portrays the world of one of the group members. This option should be used only when that place is inaccessible, such as a retirement home in another state, and the reasons for “visiting” it are compelling (for example, the host spends considerable time there, or its location or situation afford an excellent connection to the subject of a session).

Activity Two:
Seeing Gifts of Daily Bread in Daily Life

The procedure for this activity is described in the participant resource. Have participants read each of the scenarios, then select several to discuss in depth. Use the questions in the participant resource. Share reflections in the total group.

The suggestion in this section is that participants go to a food kitchen, homeless shelter or other facility for those in need and, if possible, spend some time working there. Encourage people to select a place now and perhaps arrange to go with another participant or a member of your congregation already engaged in this kind of volunteer service.

Use the material in the participant resource to guide this devotional time which provides a conclusion to this session. Participants may want to share leadership for this part of the session. The more integrated spiritual growth becomes to the experiences of the session, the more participants will connect daily life with faith and worship.

Use the participant resource for the specific passages from St. John’s Gospel, the Book of Romans and the Psalm. The questions there help participants connect their Bible readings to the themes of this session. Refer back to the Introduction for various ways to use “Connecting with Scriptures.”
Session Four

Making Excuses

Living and Forgiving
The Sixth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer

PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES

- Acknowledge their deep need for forgiveness.
- Know God as the God of forgiveness.
- Recognize how difficult it is to give and to accept forgiveness.
- Feel release as they experience freedom in Christ.
- Be able to forgive more fully and more often.
- Be able to discern and talk about the complex issues of relationships in films and plays in regard to forgiveness.

Preparing for the Session

The major activity in this session is viewing a film or local play.

Inform participants of an anticipated extension of the session time. You might want to limit the activities in this session to a very brief review of the focus of the session, the showing of the film and the discussion following the experience.

Encourage participants to read through the rest of the material in their participant resource before the next session.

This session may be a good one to which guests or prospective group members are invited. The theme — forgiveness — is close to most Christians’ daily experience.

Going to the Heart of the Matter

This opening sets the tone for the session.

Participants may read this online before they gather for the session or the leader or a participant may read it at the beginning of the session. This material can also be shared with the broader faith community as a way to keep them connected to the activities of this Connections group.

Participants can reflect upon this material before and between sessions face-to-face or through electronic communication. Look to the participant resource for the specific focus for this session.

When all have arrived, invite several participants to tell about their experience in a food pantry or homeless shelter. Use the questions in the participant resource to engage everyone in the conversation.

Introduce the session’s focus by reading the words of the fifth petition of the Lord’s Prayer. Ask, “Which do you think is harder, forgiving someone else or accepting forgiveness from another person?”

Ask participants to write down the names of three persons with whom they are intimately connected. These might be family members, coworkers, friends, or neighbors. Encourage them to name persons from three different areas of their life.

Read the questions in the participant resource, then ask participants to jot down their responses in the space provided. Have participants share their responses in pairs or groups of three.
A number of films are suggested in the Introduction of the Leader Guide and the procedures for this section are suggested in the participant resource. Before viewing the film, go over the questions listed in the participant resource. Note any particular issues or themes that you and your co-leader have identified as important to the focus of this session or other faith-life connections. Don’t give details about the film that would spoil the film for those who have never seen it.

If possible, you and your co-leader should watch the film at least once before the session. Plan together anything you want to highlight.

After the film, take about 30 minutes to talk about it, using the questions in the participant resource as a guide.

The more integrated spiritual growth becomes to the experiences of the session, the more participants will connect daily life with faith and worship.

Discussion on the foundations of the Christian faith during this part of the session can be deep and invigorating. The Small Catechism section can be read in the session by one person or all together as prelude to The Large Catechism and the questions.

- Have one or more people read The Large Catechism aloud.
- Use the reflection questions to stimulate discussion.
- Refer back to words from the catechisms during the session to connect in additional ways.

Use the directions in the participant resource. The purpose of this activity is to give participants a tangible experience in the act of forgiving and to recognize in it God’s forgiveness.

Use the material in the participant resource to guide this devotional time which provides a conclusion to this session. Participants may want to share leadership for this part of the session.

Growing Together

Use the participant resource for the specific passages from St. John’s Gospel, the Book of Romans and the Psalm. The questions there help participants connect their Bible readings to the themes of this session. Refer back to the Introduction for various ways to use “Connecting with Scriptures.”

Living Spiritually, Session Four
Session Five

Tempted and Tried

Dealing With Dilemmas
The Sixth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer

**PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES**

- Understand the meaning of temptation.
- Explore how prayer helps them to meet temptation.
- Feel the power and influence of temptation.
- Trust that God will be with them even in temptation.
- Face temptation with God’s help.
- Grow in faith as they place their lives in God’s hands.

**Going to the Heart of the Matter**

This opening sets the tone for the session. Participants may read this online before they gather for the session or the leader or a participant may read it at the beginning of the session. This material can also be shared with the broader faith community as a way to keep them connected to the activities of this Connections group. Participants can reflect upon this material before and between sessions face-to-face or through electronic communication. Look to the participant resource for the specific focus for this session.

After all have arrived, invite participants to talk about the past week. What experiences did they have with forgiveness, both offering it and receiving it? Invite those who wish to do so to tell about their experience of sending a message concerning forgiveness. They need not talk about the content or the person, just the feelings and thoughts they had when they prepared the message. How did they discern whether or not to send the message?

Have participants turn to the questions in this section of the participant resource and jot down some notes in response to the questions. Invite them to talk about their responses with one other person.

**Connecting With the Faith**

Discussion on the foundations of the Christian faith during this part of the session can be deep and invigorating. The Small Catechism section can be read in the session by one person or all together as prelude to The Large Catechism and the questions.

- Have one or more people read The Large Catechism aloud.
- Use the reflection questions to stimulate discussion.
- Refer back to words from the catechisms during the session to connect in additional ways.
Activity Two: A Visit to a World of a Participant

Follow the suggestions in the participant resource for this visit. Review with participants the purpose of the visits (see Leader Guide, Unit Three, Session Three). After the visit, talk about the questions in the participant resource.

Allow some time for this conversation, then ask, “What are the deep evils here?” In the discussion of the Lord’s Prayer, this question may elicit significant connections. The question offers an opportunity for discussing systemic evils. Systemic sins are assumptions built into a culture which operate over time unquestioned, for example systemic racism, sexism and classism. Until such systemic sin is challenged, it keeps both oppressor and oppressed in bondage.

In The Large Catechism, Luther again and again speaks of sin, death and the devil. This is Luther’s way of saying that evil is more than personal immorality; it is our bondage to the evil in the structures of society — an evil that is greater than any one person.

Invite the host to describe some of the compromises in which he or she is trapped. This lets the group know that such situations are not uncommon. Luther understood this all too well. He was battling systemic evil in the church itself.

The evil from which we ask to be delivered in the next petition may be much more intense than the trials from which we ask to be saved. You and the participants may easily be caught in a discussion of temptations to immorality, which are destructive enough in themselves, but which may not compare to the death that systemic evil can bring to a world.

This discussion of evil brings a realistic approach to social concerns. Instead of starting with global issues (hunger, racism, war and peace), the visits start with the local situation and examine the ethical dilemmas of that situation. You and the other participants begin by hearing the host’s first-person perception of a problem rather than a theoretical analysis. Sometimes you will see how the problem stems from difficulties in the company, community, nation or world. Most local problems have global connections. All have connections with the cosmic powers of sin, death and the devil.

Activity One: Noticing Ordinary, Everyday Temptations

Summarize the instructions in the participant resource for this activity. Encourage participants to add words to the list in the participant resource. Especially encourage them to have fun with the activity.

Participants may get off track here, looking for evidences of sins instead of evidences of temptation. In this activity you are not looking for evil or sin, but places where readers are invited to engage in sin. As you listen to participant conversations during the activity, point out this subtle difference.

Give participants about 10 minutes to collect examples, then have them share their findings in small groups or in the total group. If there is time, make a montage (or several) of the items by cutting out and pasting together on posterboard the clippings that cluster around various kinds of temptation.

Use the participant resource to guide this devotional time which provides a conclusion to this session. Participants may want to share leadership for this part of the session. The more integrated spiritual growth becomes to the experiences of the session, the more participants will connect daily life with faith and worship.

Use the participant resource for the specific passages from St. John’s Gospel, the Book of Romans and the Psalm. The questions there help participants connect their Bible readings to the themes of this session. Refer back to the Introduction for various ways to use “Connecting with Scriptures.”
Evil — D(evil) — Live
The Seventh Petition, the Doxology and Amen of the Lord’s Prayer

**PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES**
- Recognize sin and systemic evil.
- Integrate the meaning of evil with the understanding of the Doxology and Amen of the Lord’s Prayer.
- Accept joyfully the fact that all is in God’s hands.
- Trust joyfully that their lives are in God’s hands.
- Hold in awe the gift of silence.
- Pray Amen to God, “yes, it shall be so.”

**Beginning Where We Are**

When all participants have arrived, ask them to talk about the visit they made last session and their reflections on it since then. Move to shared reflection on the questions in the participant resource.

Continue with the material on common expressions about the devil. Point out those in the participant resource, then ask for other sayings or colloquialisms. In the total group, talk about the questions in the participant resource.

**Discussion on the foundations of the Christian faith during this part of the session can be deep and invigorating. The Small Catechism section can be read in the session by one person or all together as prelude to The Large Catechism and the questions.**

- Have one or more people read The Large Catechism aloud.
- Use the reflection questions to stimulate discussion.
- Refer back to words from the catechisms during the session to connect in additional ways.

**Connecting With Daily Life**

**Your Situation**

Using the paragraph and questions in the participant resource, invite people to think about situations in their own lives. From among the participants invite someone in the group to tell his or her story and turn it into a role play.

Ask the person telling the story to describe the situation in as much detail as possible (without revealing names or confidential information). Invite other participants to act out the story.

(Participants should be invited, not coaxed, to take part in the role-play.) The person telling the story should not be one of the “actors,” but help the participants understand the dimensions of the story and how they might be played out. After the role-play, ask the storyteller to respond and others to contribute their observations, feelings and insights. Allow time (at least 20 minutes) for the discussion following the role-play.

**A Situation Study**

The participant resource also includes an extensive description of a situation from daily life. You can engage in this situation study with the material in the participant resource, or adapt what you read to fit a real-life situation — perhaps one that comes from a participant’s own life.

Read the situation to participants and ask for questions and comments. The participant resource provides space for adding thoughts about the dilemmas and evil that are evident in this situation, as well as the space for reflecting on similar situations.
This optional storytelling and role-play addresses both personal sin and systemic evil. Often we concentrate so much on personal sin that systemic evil is ignored. For example, we are taught to confess the thoughts, words and deeds which we have done and left undone, but we are taught to tolerate the evils of nation, church, company or community, because to be too critical of these would be disloyal or unpatriotic.

Growing Together

1. After a few minutes of preliminary discussion of items in the participant resource, dim the lights in the room slightly and after a few moments of silence offer these thoughts and directions:

   Why is it that many of us fear the pause — the silence — in our lives? We are often embarrassed by it, we fidget and twist in our too-tight mental underwear because we have never learned to see silence as other than nothingness. We live with a fear of gaps.

   In the next few minutes we will use the blessing of silence as a way of praying together. Although our usual experience of group prayer occurs with spoken words, or in singing together the prayers we find in hymns, during this time together we will be joined together in silence as well.

2. Direct participants to relax and breathe deeply for a few moments. They can close their eyes, look out a window or focus their eyes on a particular spot in the room.

3. The experience will consist of your offering “prayer prompts,” including those of your own choosing and the short readings here, to which participants can join themselves through a period of silent prayer or thought.

   - How rare to find a soul still enough to hear God speak. (Attributed to Feneln, a French spiritual leader)
   - We have a tendency to hang up the phone after we talk to God. Don’t just hang up when you’re done talking. Stay on the line so God can speak to you. (From Receptive Prayer, by Grace Adolphsen Brame, as quoted in The Lutheran, May 1992, page 14.)
   - To pray means to open your hands before God. It means slowly relaxing the tension which squeezes your hands together. Above all, prayer is a way of life which allows you to find a stillness in the midst of the world where you open your hands to God’s promises. (From With Open Hands, by Henri Nouwen, page 154.)

   - Let us pray for:
     - Quiet times in the middle of busy days
     - Grace under pressure
     - Courage to withstand temptation
     - Forgiveness for imagined inferiorities
     - A grateful attitude about life
     - Wisdom and cunning to battle evil
     - Joy and humor in ordinary things
     - Challenges that are new and bold

   - Let us bless God for:
     - The gift of constant forgiveness
     - Surprising grace from others
     - People who love us undeservedly
     - This moment, this day, this week
     - Faithfulness of others around us
     - People who encourage our growth

4. Possible readings and prompts include:

5. Close this period of time with the Lord’s Prayer, in this format: You pray each section or petition, participants repeat that section or petition, you restate the words once again, and allow moments of silence before repeating the process on the next section or petition.

   When the Lord’s Prayer is finished, allow a few more moments of silence before dismissing group members quietly. If there is time, celebrate the experiences you shared together during this unit.

   Remind participants of the Scripture passages at the end of the session, and their utility as end-of-unit experiences. This unit concludes by challenging evil and considering God’s almighty power in the face of evil. These passages help cement that reality into participants’ lives.

   The reading of John, Romans and the Psalms will continue in Unit Four.

Connecting With Scriptures

Use the participant resource for the specific passages from St. John’s Gospel, the Book of Romans and the Psalm. The questions there help participants connect their Bible readings to the themes of this session. Refer back to the Introduction for various ways to use “Connecting with Scriptures.”