

## Discovery Worksheet: Lesson 10

*Read this portion of Luther's Small Catechism and answer the following questions.*

### The Office of the Keys and Confession

As the head of the family should teach them in the simplest way to those in his household.

*Note: This section speaks of the "keys" because of Jesus' words to his disciples, "I give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven."*

#### THE KEYS

*First: What is the use of the Keys?*

The use of the Keys is that special power and right which Christ gave to his church on earth, to forgive the sins of penitent sinners but to refuse forgiveness to the impenitent as long as they do not repent.

*Where is this written?*

The holy Evangelist John writes in chapter 20, "Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'"

#### THE PUBLIC USE OF THE KEYS

*Second: How does a Christian congregation use the Keys?*

A Christian congregation with its called servant of Christ uses the Keys in accordance with Christ's command by forgiving those who repent of their sin and are willing to amend, and by excluding from the congregation those who are plainly impenitent that they may repent. I believe that, when this is done, it is as valid and certain in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us himself.

*Where is this written?*

Jesus says in Matthew, chapter 18, "Whatever you bind (*tie to them*) on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose (*release them from*) on earth will be loosed in heaven."

#### CONFESSION

*First: What is Confession?*

Confession has two parts. The one is that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution or forgiveness from the pastor\* as from God himself, not doubting but firmly believing that our sins are thus forgiven before God in heaven.

*Second: What sins should we confess?*

Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's Prayer. But before the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts.

*Third: How can we recognize these sins?*

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments. Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, employer or employee? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you hurt anyone by word or deed? Have you been dishonest, careless, wasteful, or done other wrong?

*Fourth: How will the pastor assure a penitent sinner of forgiveness?*

He will say, "By the authority of Christ, I forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

\*The German term is best translated as "confessor," that is, the person who hears the confession.

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In Jesus' words quoted here, he is commanding the church to carry each other's spiritual burdens. When someone sins, don't let him bear it alone; go to him and help him.

1. How can fellow Christians help the person who is feeling guilty because they have sinned?
2. How can fellow Christians help the person who is not feeling guilty because they're not repenting of their sins?
3. God says we must confess our sins to God to be forgiven; we may confess our sins to a pastor or other Christian. When and why might we do that?
4. To bind sins against someone is to "tie them up" so they can't escape the guilt of their sin. In practice, this is called "excommunication," that is, to exclude them from the community of Christianity and declare them headed to eternal death. Why would the church ever say such a harsh thing to anyone?
5. How should the church react if someone who was excommunicated later comes back, confesses their sin and asks for forgiveness?