

## How Do I, a Sinner, Honor God as a Father or Mother?

You can first be a 'good parent' to your child when you yourself become 'a good child of God,' that is, when you become a good member of God's household, the church; when you begin to heed God's anger for your sins and stand in line with your fellow sinners to receive his grace in the church. Taking communion, even every day, will not help you improve as a Christian or parent, if you do not engage and know and confess your struggle against sins still living in your flesh that would separate you and God. Communion only helps when you confess to your heavenly Father your need to be sanctified, your need to still learn from God, to grow and improve, your struggle against your sinful flesh, the world and the devil, and your total dependance upon your Father's grace and Biblical guidance. Only when you become God's child and heed your Father's voice, will God's voice speak in your parenting. Only then will you be an instrument in his hands for your child, and you will always be able to depend on him even as you remain imperfect, in need of his grace, sanctification and help.

So what does this mean? How do I honor God as a sinner who is also the parent of a child of God? What must I do?

- Admit my sins and failings as a parent, and confess them..
- Learn to love the truth and what is good and hate what is a lie and evil in both doctrine and life.
- Receive absolution from the pastor as from God for the sins, also parental sins, that I know and feel in my heart.
- Having confessed and being absolved, receive holy Communion often for my improvement/sanctification without which I won't ever become holy and see God.
- Recognize I won't grow in faith or love without Christ and his Wisdom found only in God's Word, the Bible.
- Ask God for a desire to learn, so I can also teach my children
- Recognize I need help in teaching my children the faith and **seek the help of godly teachers in our Grade- and Sunday School** who will affirm the good example I want to set for my children.
- Teach by word and example that the Word of God is the treasure of heaven that will not pass away, to be valued above all things, even life itself; that rejecting God's Word is rejecting God himself.

So we most honor God when we recognize our sins harm our children, we learn and confess our sins and failings as parents, and trust in God's grace to forgive us and correct our failings as only God, **our Father**, can.

## Church Membership:

## What Does This Mean?



With Appendix:

## Christian Parenthood: What does this mean?

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## What does “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6.4) Mean ?

In the rite of Baptism, children are given Baptism. Christ has appointed that as the means by which children, born to us sinners as sinners, are born again by the power of Christ’s death and resurrection. Through water and the Word, water and the Spirit, God makes them his children. As such God becomes their Father and the church their mother and they become part of the household of faith, God’s family. In that rite, the path of God’s children’s ‘nurture and admonition’ is described for sponsors, who are to help and remind parents of their responsibility, as follows:

**In the Evangelical Lutheran Church sponsors are to confess the faith expressed in the Apostles’ Creed and taught in the Small Catechism. They are, whenever possible, to witness the Baptism of those they sponsor. They are to pray for them, support them in their ongoing instruction and nurture in the Christian faith, and encourage them toward the faithful reception of the Lord’s Supper. They are at all times to be examples to them of the holy life of faith in Christ and love for the neighbor. (LSB 269)**

So to repeat and summarize, it is a parents’ responsibility, in “bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” to . . .

- speak the faith to his child,
- remind him of his baptism (he belongs to God, not the parent)
- see that he grows in faith by instruction in the Bible/Catechism.
- teach him unto worthy, **life long reception of Holy Communion**, the means of his child’s future sanctification found only in the church, without which he will not see God.
- **himself be an example in being sanctified**, growing in faith to God and in love for the neighbor, possible only by God’s grace.

**Do you intend to bring up your child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord -or- to teach him the path away from God, his Father??**

## What is a Christian?

A Christian is:

- a sinner. . .
- who is saved by grace through faith.

As a sinner in this fallen world, the Christian daily. . .

- recognizes and despises his sinful flesh.
- knows he will be tempted by the devil and the world.
- knows he can fall from faith and God’s grace.
- knows he must die and fears most dying an unbeliever.
- acknowledges/prays in his need for Christ’s grace.
- craves to receive and depends upon Christ and his grace.
- wants to arm himself with God’s Word for defense.

As a believer in the church, the Christian daily. . .

- loves and depends upon God for temporal/eternal gifts.
- seeks to please God through obedience to his law.
- stands as God’s child against all that is evil in the world.
- values his identity as a child of God and shows it in his life.
- desires to grow in faith and usefulness in God’s kingdom.
- values gathering publicly in church with God’s family to share and eat of the Bread of life in Word and Sacraments.
- follows Christ’s path and goals for himself and others.

**So, are YOU a Christian?**

ignore. You are saying of God who's been so kind to you "to hell with him." Know that although our great God loves you and has done everything to save you through the blood of his dear Son and his victorious resurrection, you will reap the consequences of your obstinance and you will certainly spend eternity with your father, the devil, the father of lies. For God has told you the truth and you have treated him as if you could stand as his judge to write him off as a ranting liar. In the end, on judgement day, it will be apparent who's the Judge and who's the liar. God loves you and you reject him every time you turn up your snout (Mt. 7.6) at his Gospel and his Sacraments in the church and say, "We're sick of this miserable food."

But - **if** - you yearn and desire to be born again, be of good cheer! The Holy Spirit must already have begun his good work in you! You couldn't even desire such a thing unless the Holy Spirit had convinced you it's a good thing, desirable! Only ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of your sin by showing you how good God's been to you, how well he's provided for you in Christ, and how ungrateful and indifferent you've been to him. See your poverty of spirit and the misery that stubborn sin has brought you by your seeking treasures in the world and its pleasures and relationships and in your comfort, while despising God's eternal treasures won for you in Christ. The Holy Spirit must convict you of what you deserve from God for that, and of your fearful peril of losing God. Come and confess your sin to God. Speak your sin to your pastor. Christ will forgive you through him. In that relief from your burden of guilt, you will surely experience why you must treasure your church. And the Holy Spirit will bring you Christ and his fullness, more and more, so you bear God-pleasing fruit, fruits of a penitent sinner who's been given God's undeserved love in Christ through faith.

*Be ye faithful until death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Rev. 2.10*



## Why Must a Christian Belong to a Church?

Jesus said:

- "He that is not with me is against me; and **he that gathereth not with me scattereth.**" Luke 11. 23
- ...and... "**Teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you,** and lo, I am with you always, even to the ends of the earth." Matthew 28.20.

And the writer to the Hebrews says:

**"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,** as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. Hebrews 10. 25-27

The Third Commandment:

**Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.** What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do **not despise preaching and his Word,** but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

A Christian must, therefore, belong to a church because he:

- is commanded by Christ, his Lord, to receive these Means of Grace that bestow his grace in the church (the 'all things' in Mt. 28).
- not only agrees the Gospel is true, but receives it from Christ through Christ's Word and Sacraments (same reference).
- is not saved alone, but commanded by Christ to gather with brothers and sisters, to share his love and benefits (Luke 11).
- knows he will be left out of salvation if he rejects or avoids Christ's grace, won and bestowed to him there. Willfully rejecting his Means of Grace, he can only expect God's judgement (Heb. 10).
- knows he must be better than he is to get to heaven and the means for that sanctification is Christ in his Means of Grace, especially Holy Communion and its proper reception (Heb. 10).
- is not satisfied with the state of his faith but knows it can only grow through learning God's Word, also by being served by the pastor who holds the teaching office in the church (Heb. 10).
- must be part of Christ's mystical body, the church, and her public confession of the Gospel proclaimed there.

## What is my Stewardship of the Church's Gospel?

5. As a child of God I do not need a pastor to teach me anything... or only pastors need to grow in their knowledge of Christ.

*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: **Till we all** come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children. Eph. 4.11f.*

*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. Heb. 13.17*

6. I can participate in the church or her school as a child and despise Christ and his church the rest of my life and consider myself saved.

***Be thou faithful unto death,** and I will give thee a crown of life. Rev. 2.10*

7. My sin is none of the church's business, it's enough that I consider myself forgiven.

*...but **if he neglect to hear the church,** let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Mt. 18.17-18*

8. I don't need to gather with the church if I have faith.

*"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." Luke 11. 23*

1. **Purity of the Gospel:** As a child of God you have been given the Holy Ghost and the whole Word of God in Christ and in Scripture. Having been given those things, you are responsible for their right use. It's a distinctively Biblical teaching of the Lutheran church that sheep judge their shepherd. So if false doctrine is taught, you bear responsibility in your church to point it out and to correct it, and to leave that Church if she refuses to heed our Shepherd's voice. Luther is famous for saying that the Pope must obey the 9-year-old miller's daughter if she rightly uses God's Word and corrects him. So you are not only responsible to hear the Word and learn Christ's doctrine, but to use it rightly to correct what's wrong. And if a Church is wrong and it is Christ's church, a single member will be heeded and thanked if he Biblically corrects the pastor or the congregation. It is also your duty to do your part to make sure that false teachers are not elected and called to be a pastor of your congregation.

Congregations must be also warned (and you must be wary) that worship is soul care, the personal application of Christ's forgiveness by the power of the cross; 'worship' that is merely pleasant entertainment while ignoring sin and grace is a misuse or abuse of the Gospel as it is being ignored.

2. **Right use of the Sacrament:** God doesn't use the Lord's Supper to convert unbelievers nor to correct false faith. If unbelievers or those holding a false faith (members of Churches holding false doctrine) are communed at your church (Open Communion), instead of sanctifying, communion is being abused to affirm sin that only instruction in the Word (not Communion) can correct. The apostle also warns (1 Cor. 11. 31) that without proper personal examination, not judging our own sin, those who commune there receive judgement from God instead of grace. Even when you visit a sister (LCMS) congregation you must ask "Do you commune any baptized Christian wanting to commune here?" and if they say "yes" you **must** refrain from communing there and **tell them why. They abuse the Sacrament Christ gave also to YOU!** You're also responsible for its use.

3. **Support of the Gospel Ministry:** The church needs a portion (percentage) of your income to support servants in the church. You must value what Christ does through those servants enough to support them. You're not buying God's grace by your tithe, no one has that much money, Christ paid his life for it. But you show gratitude and love to Christ in the servants of the church by feeding and clothing them. If you don't have faith to love them that way, you must confess you value your money more than Christ and his service to you. That's idolatry!