



## **Connections: God's Story/Your Story Class Syllabus**

### What will we be doing?

1. Learning the story and the basics of the Christian faith
2. Connecting your story to God's story of salvation
3. Exposing you to Lutheran thought and practice
4. Sharing Holy Trinity's story: Past, present, and future
5. Inviting you to become a part of Holy Trinity's future story

Our journey will take us through ten sessions. Each session consists of a video and a worksheet for you to fill out as you listen to the video. After you have completed all of the videos, you will have an opportunity to meet with Pr. Longman to review the material we've covered, ask any questions you may have, and talk about the process of becoming a member at Holy Trinity if you so desire.

The sessions include the following:

1. Introduction/ Who is God? How did this world get started? (God the Creator, the Trinity) Where did it all go wrong? (The Fall, Sin, Consequences) Why so many rules? (The Law, the 10 Commandments)
2. God's plan of salvation. Who is Jesus? (God the Redeemer, States of Humiliation and Exaltation, Justification)
3. How do we become part of God's Story? Who is the Holy Spirit? (God the Holy Spirit, Faith, Means of Grace) What does "by grace alone" mean? (The problems with Decision Theology and Works Righteousness)
4. Means of Grace (Word of God, Law and Gospel, Baptism)
5. Means of Grace (The Lord's Supper, Real Presence, The Church)
6. Now What? (Love God, Love Others; Bible Study)
7. Holy Trinity's History (Boards and Teams, How to become a member)

### Ground Rules and Expectations

1. Don't take my word for anything. Your eternal salvation does not depend on the opinions of any man; God's Word is the only reliable guide.

2. Complete every session. There may be circumstances that prevent this, but it's best to take in all the material so that you are well informed. Since this is primarily an online, self-paced, video-based class, you can set your own schedule and work through the material at your own pace.
3. Do the homework. Yes, there is a small amount of homework in this class! But don't worry, it will mostly consist of some memorization and some reading. This is mainly so that I can make sure you have a firm grasp of what is being taught.
4. Ask questions if you have them! If I can answer, I will. If I can't, I will admit it and try to find out. I want you to feel comfortable asking questions and raising objections if you have them. You can email me with any question that may come up, or else make a note of your questions and we will work through them in our one-on-one session. Remember, this class is for you!
5. Make an effort to attend a worship service every week here at Holy Trinity, either in person or via livestream. A huge part of figuring out who we are and what we believe is by worshipping with us! In worship, Jesus comes down to speak to us through His Word to strengthen and nourish our faith. There is nothing more important a Christian can do!

## Our Textbooks: The Bible and Martin Luther's Small Catechism

We will provide you with a copy of the Small Catechism in your class packet, but you will need to supply a Bible. A note about that: There are several different translations available, and you may be wondering, "which is the best?" There is no easy answer to that question. Each translation has strengths and weaknesses, things that may recommend it, and things of which you should be cautious. Here at Holy Trinity, our "standard" translation is the **English Standard Version**. It strikes a good balance between being readable and staying very close to the original languages. Other good, readable translations include the **Christian Standard Bible** and the **New International Version** (especially the pre-2011 version). If you want a *very* literal (but wooden!) translation, **New American Standard Bible** would fit the bill. If you have questions about a particular translation, I'm happy to share my thoughts.

## About Pastor Longman

Rev. Eric Longman has been the Senior Pastor at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Rogers, Arkansas since July, 2019. Previously he served as Associate Pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Jackson, Missouri from 2015-2019. He holds a Master of Divinity from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. He is a second-career pastor, having spent more than 25 years in the technology world as the owner of a company that provided web hosting and software development services. Pr. Longman has been married to Donna for nearly 30 years, and they have two children. Their daughter Emily serves as a Lutheran schoolteacher in Maryland. Her husband is a Director of Christian Education at a Lutheran church in the same area. Pastor and Donna's son Christopher is a forester in Mississippi, whose wife works as a dietician in a local hospital.

## Session 1: Who is God?

Introduction: Four questions every religion/worldview/philosophy seeks to answer...

1. \_\_\_\_\_ are we? (What is the nature of the world around us?)
2. \_\_\_\_\_ are we? (What is the essential nature of humanity?)
3. What's gone \_\_\_\_\_? (Why is the world such a mess?)
4. What is the \_\_\_\_\_? (What can we do about it?)

In this class, you will hear the story of the world according to the Christian worldview as revealed in God's Word.

*Revelation 21:1-4: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

1. How do we know that God exists?
  - a. The bad news: There are many things about God that we \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. The good news: We know that God \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. Every single human being has a \_\_\_\_\_ knowledge of God (Psalm 19:1, Romans 1:19-20). We call this \_\_\_\_\_ revelation.
  - d. God has chosen to reveal Himself to us through \_\_\_\_\_. We call this \_\_\_\_\_ revelation.

## 2. The Apostles' Creed

- a. The Apostles' Creed is a \_\_\_\_\_ of Christian beliefs.
- b. The First Article of the Apostles' Creed says, "I believe in \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_, maker of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_."
- c. We believe, teach, and confess that "God has \_\_\_\_\_ me and all creatures; that he has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, and still \_\_\_\_\_ of them."
- d. Our purpose is to reflect God's love and care to the rest of creation and return \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to Him alone.

## 3. The Fall into Sin

- a. The sin that Adam and Eve committed has been passed down from generation to generation and is known as \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Original sin is not an \_\_\_\_\_, it's just reality.
- c. The root of our problem is our \_\_\_\_\_ desire that there not be a \_\_\_\_\_ so we can be the "captains of our own souls."
- d. The consequence of our sin is that there is \_\_\_\_\_ where there once was \_\_\_\_\_.
- e. We all know that something is not right with the world and with ourselves. Our stories are our own attempts to \_\_\_\_\_ what is \_\_\_\_\_.

#### 4. God's Law

- a. With His Law, God describes how we should live in \_\_\_\_\_ with Him and others.
- b. The Law functions in three different ways: as a \_\_\_\_\_, as a \_\_\_\_\_, and as a \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. We find three different types of Law in Scripture: \_\_\_\_\_ Laws governed Israel as a nation; \_\_\_\_\_ Laws governed the worship life of Israel; and the \_\_\_\_\_ Law governs Israel's relationship to God and to one another. The third type is summed up in the \_\_\_\_\_ and was re-affirmed by Jesus.
- d. The Ten Commandments are generally broken into two sections, or "tables." The First Table includes the first \_\_\_\_\_ commandments, and they cover our "vertical" relationship with God. The Second table includes the final \_\_\_\_\_ commandments which cover our "horizontal" relationships with one another.
- e. Unfortunately, because of our sinful and idolatrous nature, we \_\_\_\_\_ keep God's Law and live up to His standards.
- f. The Law cannot save us. Rather, it \_\_\_\_\_ and our need for a \_\_\_\_\_.

**Conclusion:** All that God created was very good. Human beings lived in a perfect relationship to God, to each other, and to the world around them. It was good. It was perfect. But not for long...

**Assignment:** Memorize the 1st Article of the Apostles' Creed and the 1st paragraph of the meaning (*page 6 in your Small Catechism*)