

Summary: Background and history of Luther's Small Catechism Text Deuteronomy 6:5-7

Everyone has an identity. Often time our real identity; who we are, what we feel, it doesn't often match our names. For many today, names are arbitrary. The day you were born your parents thought long and hard about the name you would carry. They may have even given you two middle name along with your first and last name. Sometimes they are thinking of bible characters and you get a bible name. Sometimes they are thinking of a long loved relative and you get an old name on your new body.

On October 31, 1517 an obscure German monk named Martin Luther, desiring to spark theological discussion over the medieval practice of selling indulgences, nailed his 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. Since that Day we have been called Lutheran Christians. It is a unique identity within the larger World Wide Christian faith.

This study is about our identity. This series is not about how to find peace with God...It does help us understand why Christian values and behaviors are important. We are going to be thinking the things of God."

The first question that I believe we need to look at is how do you make sense of the Bible? The Bible contains sixty-six books and letters, bound together, forming one book. **In reality it has one author and one plan.** It reveals God's plan for offer you and me the gift of forgiveness and eternal life. **And yet to try to read the Bible like a novel...cover to cover is difficult. What am I supposed to do with what I just read? How do I make sense of the entire book?**

You have heard over and over again and again that Martin Luther was born in 1483 and died in 1546. The Reformation begin in his heart in 1505 -1517 as he read and taught the Bible. Martin Luther did not want to start a new religion. **He wanted to see the Roman Catholic Church renewed. He did not intend on people leaving the church in droves, even whole communities."**

But as they did, and as monks left monasteries to become the first pastors, Luther was worried about the lack of knowledge of God's true gospel, the lack of bibles and educational material for church and home.

Martin Luther wrote the Small and Large Catechism in 1527 to explain the core concepts of the Bible.

Other religions focus on people doing things to appease God; to make Him happy. In doing the "right" things it is hope that God will keep those people from eternal damnation, which is eternal separation from Him. This is not the message of the bible.

The bible was written to tell us about God's love. The Ten Commandments were given so that people, societies and cultures could live in peace and community.

In the 1500's there was no easy access to the Bible. **Luther published hundreds of pamphlets, monthly. He was a publishers dream. His books and pamphlets sold. He wrote the Small Catechism so that parents could teach the fundamentals of Christianity. The Small Catechism has 6 chief parts.**

The Ten Commandments, with explanation.

The Apostle's Creed, with explanation.

The Lord's Prayer.

The Sacrament of Baptism.

Confession and the Office of the Keys.

The Sacrament of the Altar. These will serve as our topics for the upcoming sermons. If you have a small catechism at home dust it off and review it with me. I hope you take time to renew your identity.

If you do not know your past then you may not know who you are. **Why is there such an interest in discovering your "ancestry" DNA? People want to know. The same is true with your faith.**

When you were born, **Satan put his identity on you with the tattoo of sin. He claimed us for life. The only way our identity could be changed was to have that tattoo removed.** This was the work of God in Jesus. It was a painful suffering that Jesus went through to remove that tattoo of sin to give us His new identity. **His suffering and death on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins and His resurrection from the dead was the only way the tattoo of sin could be removed. In our baptism, Jesus gave us that new identity.**

Jesus removed our tattoo of sin by taking the pain of removal upon Himself. The Apostle Paul writes it this way: **"For "God" made "Jesus" to be sin for us, Jesus who was "perfect" without sin, took our sins to the cross so that we might become the righteousness of God ...by faith in Jesus."** (II Corinthians 5:21) It is called transference.

Who is Jesus? That was the question in the 1st century, and still remains to be answered by everyone today. **“Who do you say Jesus is?”** Christians in the 21st century kept this question at the forefront of life. The teachings of the early church said it this way:

“There are two ways, one of life and one of death, There is a great difference between the two ways.”

Remember two weeks ago our reading from John, Jesus said: **“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.”** (14:6)

Let's be honest about some things in our lives. Have you ever wanted a **“do over”**? Have you ever had one? You would be a most unusual person if you didn't have a few do over days in your history. Think back. Come on. Be honest. I'm talking about those times when you knew things could possibly get worse, and they did.

Parents, do you wish you had some do overs with your children.

How about things you never should have said?

Maybe you let a friend or family member pass away, and you never spoke the words of love that were in your heart. Don't you wish you could get that opportunity back?

Did you ever, in kindness begin a conversation with an intended complement that well..... needed a do over?

Here's sort of an ultimate do over. A man was listening to his city's road report when he heard about a car that was going the wrong direction on the freeway. Knowing his wife was on that freeway, the man became concerned and called her on her cell phone. She answered and he said, **“Dear, be careful there's one car going in the wrong direction on the freeway.”** She exclaimed, **“One Car? There's hundreds of them!”**

All of us have things we wish we could do over.

All of us have things we would like, if we were given the chance to do over. Some of those do overs are pretty inconsequential. But there are other do overs that are more serious, have lasting and even eternal consequences.

Moses knew that. That is why he told his people and us: ‘Take these commandments. Impress them on your children. Values that help you live in peace, in safety, in community with neighbors and with God. Would you like a “do over” for yourself, your children?.

Luther knew this truth as well. He wrote the Small Catechism to help parents and children memorize God's words of truth. There is one “do over” that you will not be able to have. **When your time on earth is ended and you appear before God's judgment seatit will not work to say: “God, can I have a do over.” It's not going to happen. Judgment Day is too late for a do over.**

Do Overs. Jesus makes people different. To make people different is why Jesus was born. Jesus came and lived a perfect life so that sinners like you and me, people who could never keep God's laws, might have a divine heaven sent substitute, one who in love transfers his holiness to each believer. Jesus resisted all temptations that trip us up, so that God might declare us holy. His death and resurrection, your baptism into Jesus has removed Satan's tattoo.