

# Meet Martin Luther Leader Leaflet



*Exploring Luther's Small Catechism*

This course is recommended for Grades 3-4.

## INTRODUCTION

This course provides third and fourth graders a window on the life and times of the great church leader and reformer Martin Luther, whose discovery of God's free gift of grace changed the history of the Christian church. Learning about the often dangerous and exciting events of Luther's life and his relentless search for truth as it is revealed in Scripture can make him a hero to the children. You may want to read a brief biography of Luther before you begin to teach.

This course is a biographical study. It helps learners get to know the person whose faith and life story ultimately led to the writing of the Catechism. The course will also help children understand that Luther believed that it is very important for parents to teach basic Christian truths in the home. In fact, he wrote the Small Catechism for that very purpose.

The course presents Luther as a real—not perfect—human being, but it also presents him as a person who risked his life to witness to the cause of truth and church reform when these were sorely needed. In an era when all too often “anything goes,” it is good for children to see that there were and are Christian men and women who face great opposition to be faithful to God and the truths of Scripture. Martin Luther was one of those people. As you teach, help the learners understand that Christians today try to work together and honor one another's right to worship and believe as they are led by faith.

## SESSION 1

### FROM FEAR TO FAITH

#### LEARNING FOCUS

The Bible assured Martin Luther that we do not have to earn God's forgiveness but only accept it by faith as a free gift.

#### BACKGROUND

In this session, the learners will look at a number of the key events in Luther's early life and ministry—particularly his struggle for freedom from a fear of an angry and condemning God. It also includes a look at Luther's dawning awareness of problems in the church that needed reform and his first attempts to address them. The children will discover, like Luther, that we are saved not by our efforts, but by God's grace through faith.

Third and fourth graders are beginning to set standards for themselves and imagine an ideal self. Learning about heroic Christian leaders, such as Luther, can help form that image. Their developing sense of right and wrong will help them grasp the drama of Luther's fears about sin and forgiveness. They have developed skills in using art media and they enjoy dramatic play, so the variety of learning activities in this course will invite and hold their interest.

Display colorful pictures and posters to make your class area welcoming. Decide where you can hide “treasures” in the “Everything Changed” part of the session.

## HEART OF THE LEARNING

These activities form the heart of the session and will take about 45 minutes to complete.

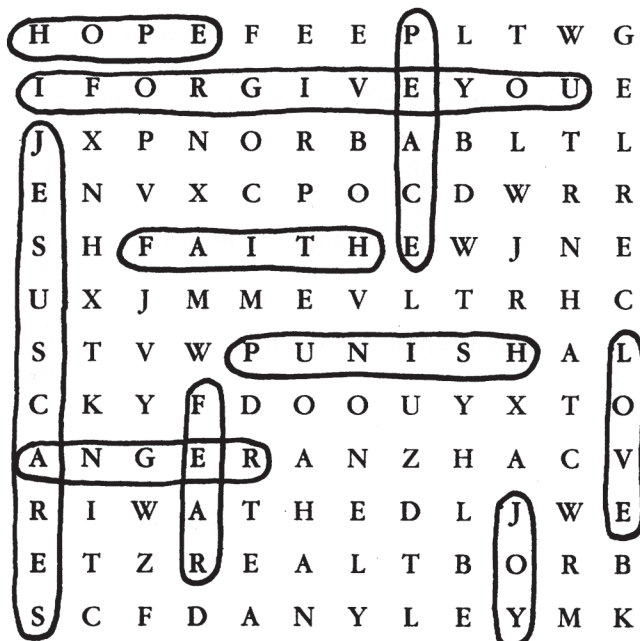
## Changes and Fears

**Preparation:** Have learner resources (LR) and pencils ready. Make and post “I AGREE” and “I DISAGREE” signs at opposite sides of the room. Make a list of common fears, such as: dogs, heights, ghosts, bullies, being unable to please God, and having God get angry with me.

- Welcome learners warmly.
- Do an inventory about fears. As you read each fear on your list, have learners move to stand under either the “I AGREE” or “I DISAGREE” sign.
- Have volunteers read page 2 (LR) to the class. Then do the puzzle on page 3 (LR). Say, “Everyone is afraid sometimes, but fears and superstitions ruled people’s lives in Luther’s time.”

## A Storm and a Search

Have volunteers read this section and do the word find (LR, page 4). The positive words show us that God loves and wants to forgive us. A solved puzzle is here for reference.



## Martin Tries to Make Changes

- Read the opening paragraph (LR, page 5). Have learners choose parts and do the skit. Emphasize the role of the printing press in making many people aware of the need for change in the church.

## Everything Changed

**Preparation:** Before class, hide small candies or trinkets, one per learner, in the room.

- Have volunteers read the first three paragraphs in this section (LR, page 7). Then have learners hunt for the treasures. Next have them sit and close their eyes. Say you want to hide more treasure. Move about, but place the items on the table within easy reach. Have them look for and take the items.
- Discuss how they felt having to search hard for some treasures while having the other easily available. Explain how this is like being sure of God’s love instead of not being sure of it.
- Read the Bible verse together, and help the learners write sentence prayers.

## Prayer Time

- Have learners pray the sentence prayers they wrote in the previous activity. Close the prayer by saying, “We praise you, God, for your great love. Amen.”

## RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Choose from these activities to complete your session as time allows.

## Puppet Performance

**Preparation:** Provide lunch bags, yarn (if desired), glue, scissors, markers, and a tension rod and blanket or curtain for the puppet theater. See Figure A on page 3.



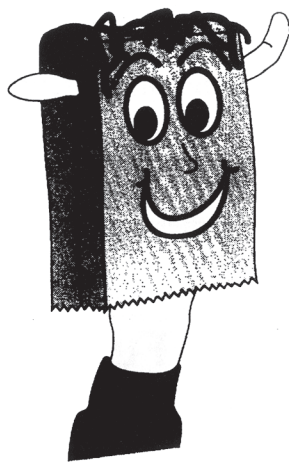


Figure A

- Make puppets to reenact the skit (LR, pages 5-6). Consider adding a scene retelling Luther's discovery in "Everything Changed" (LR, page 7).
- Decide who will make which characters.
- Distribute lunch bags and draw puppet faces. Cut holes in the bags for fingers. Glue yarn on the top of the bags for hair.
- Set up a puppet theater by placing a tension rod in a doorway and draping a blanket or curtain over it. (Or you may simply have learners crouch behind the table in your room.)
- Perform the skit. Arrange for the group to perform the skit for another group.

## Good News Pop-Up Cards

**Preparation:** Provide half sheets of brightly colored copier paper, drawing paper,  $\frac{1}{2}$ " x  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " strips of paper, pencils, markers, and glue. Make a sample card. See Figure B.

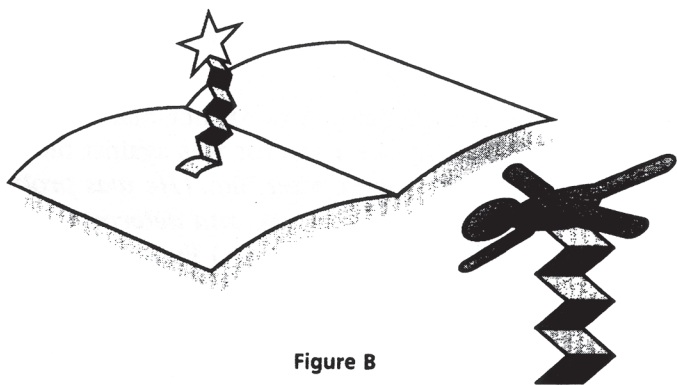


Figure B

- Invite learners to make bright, joyful, pop-up cards to share with others the good news Martin Luther discovered—God loves them!
- Distribute half sheets of copier paper and markers. Fold the sheets in half to make cards and print words on the front, such as GOOD NEWS, GUESS WHAT? or BE JOYFUL! Inside the card, print something like GOD LOVES YOU or JESUS IS OUR

**FRIEND**—something that tells the truth about God's love that Luther discovered.

- Invite learners to make one or more shapes that symbolize our joy or God's love. These might be: hearts, stars, or people with arms raised joyfully. Color and cut out the shapes. (These will pop up when the card is opened.)
- Accordion-fold the paper strips. Glue one end to the shape and the other end to the card.
- Learners may decorate the outside of the cards with other cutout shapes or by drawing bright shapes and designs.
- Talk about who they will give the cards to and how important it is to make sure people know God loves and forgives us freely.



### SESSION 2

## GOD GIVES US COURAGE

### LEARNING FOCUS

God gave Luther courage to stand for what he believed was right, and God will give us courage to do the same.

### BACKGROUND

This session is about God giving us the courage to stand for what is right in the face of opposition. Luther faced censure for his beliefs and was put on trial for them. Luther needed great courage to stand against the hierarchy of the Catholic church and defend his opposing beliefs. But Luther was convinced of the rightness of his beliefs by what he had read in Scripture. He chose to defend them regardless of the consequences.

Children also face situations that require courage. Use the role plays, the ongoing story of Luther, and the other activities in the session plan to help learners see that God is with them in difficult times. God offers them help in standing for what is right, just like God helped Martin Luther.

Children of this age want to know what is right and wrong. They are idealistic about believing they can do what is right. Encourage this idealism using Luther as an example. Emphasize that they can always ask God for help.

## HEART OF THE LEARNING

These activities form the heart of the session and will take about 45 minutes to complete.

### It Takes Courage

**Preparation:** Distribute the learner resources (LR).

- Welcome the learners warmly. Have learners turn to this section (LR, page 8), and ask a volunteer to read the opening paragraph.
- Allow children to choose parts and role-play the situations and solutions. After each one is completed, talk about why learners chose to solve it the way they did. Emphasize that doing what is right is not always easy. That is why it takes courage.

### Luther Needed Courage Too

**Preparation:** Distribute pencils.

- Have volunteers read page 9 (LR).
- Allow time for learners to unscramble these words: *PRAYER, FRIENDS, BIBLE, and JESUS*. Discuss how each can give them courage to do what is right. Point out that these adults can also help them: parents, pastors, teachers.

### On Trial!

**Preparation:** Distribute Bibles.

- Have volunteers read the story on page 10 of the learner resource. Look up and read the verses after doing the decoding puzzle.

### Let's Pray

- Say that the "Let's Pray" activity will help the children see that we are connected by Jesus' love to encourage one another to stand for what is right.
- Read the directions (LR, page 11). Allow time to finish the sentence at the bottom of the page. (*Ideas might be: speak the truth, avoid cheating, stand for what they believe.*)
- Sit in a circle on the floor. Begin by looping one end of the yarn around your wrist. Pray your prayer. (*Example: "God, help me encourage others to come to church."*) Then roll the yarn to someone in the circle. As each person prays, he or she loops the yarn around his or her wrist and rolls it to someone else. When everyone is

finished and a web is formed, close by saying: "Thanks, God, for the ways you help us encourage one another to be faithful to you. Amen."

## RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Choose from these activities to complete your session as time allows.

### Flashlight Fun

**Preparation:** Provide paper for drawing heart shapes, large sheets of construction paper (12" x 14") or legal-size copier paper, plastic drinking straws, scissors, pencils, markers, crayons, and several flashlights (one for every two learners).

- For each learner, cut a half-inch slit in one end of a straw.
- Read this section to the class (LR, page 12), and pair the learners.
- Distribute paper for making hearts. Show learners how to fold paper in half, draw half a heart on the fold, and cut out the folded shape. Hearts should not be more than 3½" high.
- Show partners how one can hold the flashlight as the other holds the heart shape and traces (LR, page 12). Allow some time for learners to experiment with moving the light or the shape around to get different effects before tracing.
- Suggest that learners display the posters at home as reminders to "take heart" and trust God to give them courage in difficult situations.

### "Test Your Courage" Tag

**Preparation:** Arrange to use and mark off a large square as a play area.

- Ask learners to imagine how Luther must have felt at times knowing the emperor was against him and some people were after him. (*He was probably afraid, but courageous, and determined to do what he believed was right.*) Explain that this tag game is a fun way to try being courageous or brave when someone is "after" you.
- Choose a volunteer to be the emperor and stand inside the square. Say, "The rest of you are Martin Luther. Any of you can step in the square and face the emperor whenever you have the courage! You can step in and out of the square whenever you want. But if you are in the square and the emperor tags you, you are out!"
- After a few minutes, call time, choose a new emperor, and begin again.



- Allow time after the game to talk about how it felt to step inside the square. Did it take some courage? Did you often step out for a time to feel safe? Do you think Luther ever backed out in some situations to be safe?
- Ask: “When it comes to having courage, how is real life the same or different from playing this game?”



### SESSION 3

## HELPING PEOPLE KNOW GOD’S LOVE

### LEARNING FOCUS

God shows love for us in the Bible and in Luther’s Small Catechism, which helps us understand many things in the Bible.

### BACKGROUND

This session shows learners ways in which Luther tried to help the people of his time become aware of and familiar with the truths of Scripture. It will also help them see how his contributions are still helpful for them as growing Christians.

The Catholic church of Luther’s time taught that the Bible was not the only source of Christian truth, nor was the Bible regarded as the index by which all others must be measured. Luther became convinced that all Christian belief must be based in Scripture—not in authoritative human statements or church tradition. Consequently, he worked tirelessly to bring these truths to adults and children in ways they could understand.

Learners will look at three of these ways:

- translating the Bible into simple German;
- writing hymns to teach biblical truths; and
- writing the Small Catechism.

Seeing Martin Luther as a hero of faith should continue to be the focus of your activities. As part of the Christian community, the learners will be encouraged to consider the Bible to be an important part of their lives.

### HEART OF THE LEARNING

These activities form the heart of the session and will take about 45 minutes to complete.

## Kidnapped!

**Preparation:** Distribute the learner resources (LR).

- Welcome the learners and have a volunteer read this section (LR, page 13).
- Ask them to imagine how afraid Luther probably was, then how relieved and thankful he was to learn his “captors” were his friends!
- Encourage the learners to fill the windows, and then invite volunteers to tell about their drawings.

## The Bible

**Preparation:** Distribute Bibles and pencils.

- Have volunteers read the section to the class (LR, page 14).
- Do the “Try It Out” game (LR, page 15). The puzzle answers are:
  - *Say hi to each other.*
  - *Trade one shoe with each other.*
  - *Hop around the room once.*
  - *Look up Psalm 119:103. Write it here.*
- Explain that the verse means that God’s word is good—like a special treat. God’s love makes us feel good inside—like honey makes our taste buds feel good.

## Share God’s Love with a Song

- Read the section (LR, page 16).
- Help learners brainstorm ideas and words that rhyme. (They may enjoy working in pairs or small groups.)

## A Very Special Book

**Preparation:** Provide Small Catechisms and two balloons for each person.

- Have volunteers read the first three paragraphs of this section to the class (LR, page 17).
- Distribute copies of the Small Catechism and look through them together. Point out the three main sections: the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Apostles’ Creed.
- Read the final paragraph.
- Have each child inflate and tie two balloons. Then carefully print phrases on each one with fine-point markers. (*Some phrases to use might be: GOD CARES FOR YOU or GOD’S LOVE IS GOOD NEWS.*)

## Prayer Time

- Have each child hold both balloons from the previous activity and stand in a circle.
- Say: "Thank you, God, for loving us. Thank you that we can tell others about your love." Then have each child in turn hold up the balloons and say what is on them.
- Close by shouting together: "Amen!"

## RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Choose from these activities to complete your session as time allows.

### Make a Reminder

**Preparation:** Distribute chalked tracing paper, a tailor's tracing wheel, scissors, markers or fabric paints, glitter, gummed stars, and 2" x 12" lengths of brightly colored ribbon. See *Figure C*.

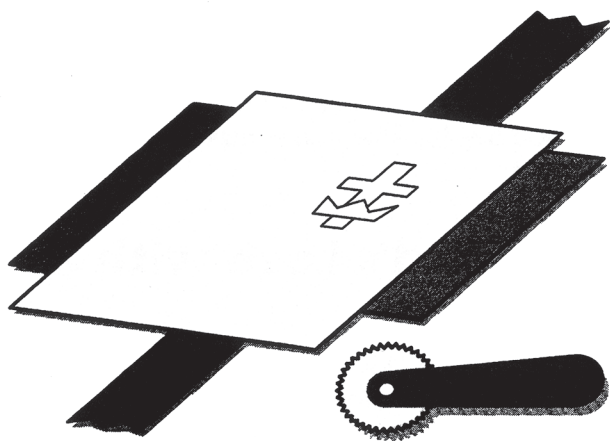


Figure C

- Ask a volunteer to read the instructions aloud (LR, page 18).
- Talk briefly about the shapes and how each one reminds us of the Bible's message: cross = Jesus' love for us; cross and crown = Jesus' victory over death; honey jar = God's love is sweeter than honey; oil lamp = God's word is a light showing us the way; Bible = a reminder of where we can learn about God.
- Invite learners to choose three shapes. Help each one use the tracing wheel and paper to make a chalk imprint of the shapes on a ribbon. Show them how to position the tracing paper between the learner resource page and the ribbon and trace the shape. Then invite learners to decorate the shapes.
- Talk about where they will place their reminders when they are finished.

## "Sweeter than Honey" Bible Treats

**Preparation:** Locate a roomy, easy-to-clean work area. Make a bowl of powdered sugar icing: add small amounts of water to two cups of powdered sugar and stir. Put some white icing in a small plastic bag. Cut a small hole in one corner of the bag. Make a bowl of chocolate icing: add chocolate syrup and water to one cup of powdered sugar. Set out for each learner: a paper plate, two graham cracker squares, and a table knife.

- Have each learner spread white icing on one cracker to make the pages of the Bible and then place the other cracker on top and spread chocolate icing on it to make a Bible cover.
- Have each learner squeeze white icing through the hole in the small plastic bag to make a cross on top of the Bible they have made.
- While eating these treats, remind learners of their earlier talk about God's Word being sweet to our hearts. Say, "This treat reminds us of how good it is to have God's Word in our hearts."



## SESSION 4

# LUTHER AND THE NEW CHURCH

## LEARNING FOCUS

Martin Luther began a church that continues to share God's love today, and we can take part in that sharing.

## BACKGROUND

This session will look briefly at Luther's later life and the beginning of the Lutheran church and then review the events of Luther's life. It will look at the Lutheran church today on a global and congregational level, including ways children can be involved in the life of their congregation.

As third and fourth graders, the learners can understand the need for courage to stand for one's beliefs and for the ideal of Christian cooperation and unity. Make every effort to emphasize that today Lutherans and others are working hard to bring Christians together in every way possible. The learners want to belong, and they are increasingly



able to work together. They want to be involved in their congregations, but they may feel they are too young to do anything meaningful.

Be realistic about what they can contribute to the ministry of your congregation and about what your congregation will accept from children. But also encourage your learners to think creatively about ways they can serve.

## HEART OF THE LEARNING

These activities form the heart of the session and will take about 45 minutes to complete.

## Changes and a New Church

**Preparation:** Invite a pastor or lay leaders from your congregation to attend this session. Distribute the learner resources (LR) and pencils.

- Have volunteers read this section (LR, page 19). Invite learners to work on this activity in pairs.
- Discuss their answers. (*Point out that God could and did help Luther, sometimes through the love and support of his friends and other believers.*)
- Discuss changes in the learners' lives. Remind them that, as their parents, friends, and pastor can help them, so, too, can God.

## "Luther's Life" Board Game

**Preparation:** Supply paper, markers, and scissors to make playing pieces.

- Use this game as a fun review of this course.
- Follow the directions (LR, pages 20-21).

## Luther's Church Today

- Have a volunteer read the facts after you have read the introductory paragraph (LR, page 22).
- Invite learners to fill in the blanks. (*Answers are: 1—65,000,000; 2—TRUTH; 3—POVERTY, HUNGER; 4—MISSIONARIES; 5—WOMEN, MEN; 6—UNITE.*)
- Ask your guest to tell the group about some of the ways the Lutheran church shares the gospel and helps people. (*Lutheran World Relief, global and local mission work, ecumenical efforts, and the ELCA Hunger Appeal are a few suggested examples.*)

## Me and My Lutheran Church

- Read the opening paragraph (LR, page 23). Have learners fill in the first three blanks. Talk about what they like about your congregation.
- Discuss the remaining sections. Have your guest explain your congregation's ministry.
- Ask the guest to suggest meaningful ways children can be actively involved in the congregation.

## Prayer Time

- Form a circle. Have learners think silently for a moment about the truth Luther discovered: God's free gift of love in Jesus.
- Have them join hands and say, "Thank you, God, for Jesus, your wonderful gift of love! We will share this love with others. Amen."

## RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Choose from among these activities to complete your session as time allows.

## A Special Sign

**Preparation:** Distribute learner resources; gold, red, and blue crayons or markers; lots of old newspapers; light cardboard or poster board circles about 3" in diameter; aluminum foil; white glue; water; cellophane tape; safety pins; spoons for engraving on foil. See *Figure D* on page 8.

- Read this section (LR, page 24) and color the seal.
- Brainstorm ideas for seal designs. (*Suggest crosses, stars, fish, hearts, churches, or a figure with arms raised.*) Keep them simple.
- Give each learner two 3" cardboard circles.
- Have learners stack 12 to 15 sheets of newspaper to make a cushion for the foil etching; place one circle on top; trace around it, and cut.
- Dilute glue with water and use plenty of glue water to glue paper circles into a pad.
- Give each learner a 7" sheet of foil. Place the circle cushion in the center of the foil and fold it around the circle. Keep the foil smooth.
- Glue the cardboard circle to back of foil.
- Use the blunt end of a spoon to etch the design on foil. *Press gently or the foil will tear!*
- Glue another cardboard circle to back of foil.
- Tape a safety pin to the back. Wear as a badge.

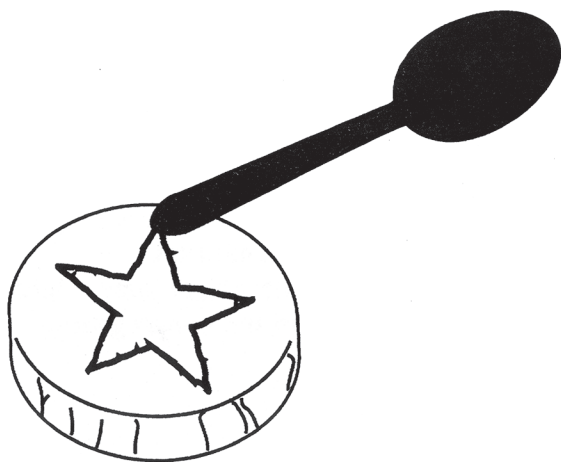


Figure D

## "We Can Serve" Graffiti Sheet

**Preparation:** Spread a flat, white, twin-size bed sheet on a newspaper-covered table. Provide another work area with permanent markers, paper, and pencils to practice drawings and newspapers to protect the work surface.

- Ask each learner to think of a way she or he would like to serve in the congregation. (*Suggest activities such as: singing in choir, being a greeter, working on a food drive, reading a Bible lesson in church. Brainstorm others.*)
- Explain that a *graffiti sheet* is a place where people can draw or write things that express their feelings or ideas about something. Explain that

they will use this one to express how they would like to help in your church.

- Have learners practice drawings on paper first.
- Have a volunteer print across the top of the fabric: WE CAN SERVE.
- Have learners choose a part of the sheet to work on. They may also write words in various places, such as: SING, PRAY, TELL OF GOD'S LOVE, FEED THE HUNGRY. Drawings and words should be placed irregularly around the sheet.
- Display the sheet where church members will see it. Ask congregational leaders to invite the learners to serve in these ways.



### Meet Martin Luther Exploring Luther's Small Catechism Leader Leaflet

This Leader Leaflet has a corresponding Learner Resource.

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