

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Abiding Savior Free Lutheran Church Confirmation

### *The Third Commandment*

After completing the lesson, the student will be able to:

- Know what the 3rd Commandment is.
- Know what the 3rd Commandment means for our lives.
- Know what the term “Sabbath” means.
- Know what it is to ‘despise’ the Sabbath.
- Understand how the concept of “work” applies to the Sabbath and worship.
- Know ways in which we rightly honor and keep the Sabbath holy today.

#### **THE THIRD COMMANDMENT**

1. Use your catechism to write in the following information about the Third Commandment. Please copy it word for word below.

*What is the Third Commandment?*

*What does this mean?*

Many folks read the Third Commandment and immediately think it means to simply avoid all labor on Sunday. Although there is truth in that, there is also so much more we should consider. Interestingly, when Martin Luther translated the word “Sabbath”, he used the German word that meant “a day rest or a day of ceasing” which is a translation of what the word meant in the original Hebrew language. The word “remember” in Exodus 20:8 means “to recall, ponder, and consider”—we are to ponder, consider, and participate in the Sabbath as we honor this command. The phrase “to keep it holy” adds to the idea of remembering, for we rightly ‘remember’ as we ‘keep it holy’.

Do you know what this means for us? Very simply, to ‘keep holy’ means to set it apart, to make it distinct from the other days. The Sabbath is to be a day like no other during the week. Exodus 20: 9-11 details what this looks like. In six days man is to labor, but on one day, the Sabbath, he is to rest from his labors. His attention is not to be upon the things of this life (work or play) but upon the God who made the heavens and the earth. In fact, it is God’s example of Creation that is the backdrop of this command—as God labored six days, and rested on the seventh, so too is man to do the same (Genesis 2:2).

Yet, this does not mean we are only to think of God one day a week, but rather, that one day of our week should be devoted to reflection, worship, and communication with Him as our Father and our Creator. This is to be a day where one can be reminded and reflect upon God's greatness not only in Creation, but also in His care of His people. It also shows God's concern for the welfare of His creation—no person or no animals can labor day after day with no rest, and to do so is to one's harm. It is to be a day of joyful delight and reflection in the might, holiness, majesty, and grace of the God Almighty.

2. What does the word "Sabbath" mean?

3. What does 'to keep holy' mean?

4. What is the example the Bible gives us that we are to follow regarding the Sabbath? (Exodus 20:11)

A question naturally arises as we talk of the Sabbath command that asks, "Does God require Christians to observe the Sabbath and other holy days of the Old Testament?" Interestingly, in the Old Testament times, the Sabbath was actually on Saturday. In addition, they also had other days in their year that were considered Sabbaths. Even so, we commonly hold Sunday as the Sabbath day. The early church celebrated the resurrection of Jesus weekly on the day it occurred: that is Sunday, the first day of the week. By common practice, Sunday took the place of the Old Testament Sabbath, and from then on has been a day for worship and for rest. Yet, the question remains—does God demand we hold Sunday as our Sabbath?

5. Looking to the following Bible passages, note what each says about the day of rest and how a Sabbath (or any special day) applies to us now:

Matthew 12:8

Acts 20:7

Colossians 2:16-17

6. What did the believers of Bible times do on the Sabbath? Review the following passages as you answer:

Leviticus 23:3

Numbers 28:9-10

Luke 4:16

It is of interest to note that as we look to the Bible we see that the main thing in the Commandment is the 'sanctifying' of it, that is, the setting apart as a day different than others. In fact, it is not in the day nor in the resting, for the right observance of the Sabbath will involve the 'work' of worship! A little known fact about one of the Hebrew words for "worship" in the Bible is that it is also the same Hebrew word for 'work' and to 'serve'! This is good proof for us that our worship of the Lord is to involve 'work' and that we are not intended to merely sit back and be entertained in our worship!

7. How should we keep the day of rest holy? (Catechism, page 44)

8. Are these days of rest to be used only for the reading and study of God's Word? (Catechism, page 45)

Many folks break the Third Commandment by neglecting to listen to the preaching and teaching of God's word when they have opportunity. Again, this does not mean that we are to neglect His word the other 6 days, but that especially on the 7th day we are to seek out quality time in worship and in listening to His word. Many people sleep in on Sundays or allow their schedule to be filled with things of enjoyment, pleasure, hobby or sport, thereby breaking the Third Commandment. Everyone who considers God's Word to be holy will desire not only to read it regularly, but also to hear it preached regularly. All of this is included when we speak of 'remembering the Sabbath'.

9. List ways in which the Sabbath command is commonly broken.

It is important for us to know that Sunday itself is no holier than any other day, nor is it kept holy by merely not going into work, by sitting around with the paper or watching football, or by taking the family to the movie. Martin Luther observes, "the force and power of this Commandment lies not in the resting but in the sanctifying."

The Bible tells us a thing is sanctified (set apart) by the Word of God and by prayer (1 Timothy 4:4-5), thus any day and any hour we spend in prayer and in hearing or pondering God's word is sanctified. Yet, it is vitally important for believers to meet together to encourage and support one another, and the Sabbath permits us this opportunity by our public worship. To willfully neglect this opportunity to worship is to break the Sabbath and the Third Commandment.

Obviously, some occupations are required to work on Sundays, and we are grateful that firemen, police officers, pastors, doctors, nurses, and the like who are on the job even on Sundays. For them, it is necessary to arrange another time for public worship and for rest unto the Lord. It is also important to see that works of love are not prohibited on the Sabbath. In fact, a great way to spend some of our time on the Sabbath would be helping and assisting those less fortunate.

10. What do the following Scriptures teach us regarding the Sabbath?

Isaiah 58:13

Mark 2:27

Luke 14:1-6

Hebrews 10:24-25

11. Read the following Scriptures and note how we are to receive God's Word and His teachings.

Joshua 1:8

Luke 11:28

Acts 2:42

Colossians 3:16

The right use of the Sabbath is that it is to be a day set apart from the others. As good as work is, rest is required as well, and the Sabbath permits a rest from our daily labors. Yet, the Sabbath is not about slothful inactivity, but about spiritual encouragement and building up. We are to spend special time with the Lord in His Word and in worship, and are to be involved in works of love and care for others.

We despise His word and the Sabbath when we are inattentive, indifferent, or uninterested in worship, or when we lack devotion and reverence for His word. We despise His word and the Sabbath when we are absent from church services, or occupy our time on the Lord's Day with all types of worldly entertainments, hobbies, sports, and thoughtless and meaningless pleasures, or when we regard Sunday as just another day of work.

On the other hand, we set apart and make holy the Sabbath when we regularly attend worship and gladly and earnestly listen and learn from His Word. We remember the Sabbath when it is a day set apart for activities such as prayer, Scripture study, and the giving of oneself unto the blessing of others, and when we meet the spiritual needs of those around us. We also remember the Sabbath when we rest our souls in the Lord, and rest our mind and body from the tensions and anxiety of our daily work.

**Student & Parent Questions:** *for the student and a parent to discuss and answer together*

1. Review the 3rd Commandment from Luther's Small Catechism. Is there anything on your calendar that prevents you from "remembering the Sabbath day"?
2. What are some things your family can do... or even remove from your schedule... to make sure you can "remember the Sabbath day" and "deem [God's Word] holy and gladly hear and learn it."?

**STUDENT & PARENT SIGNATURE:**

*By signing below, we affirm (1) this lesson is complete and that (2) we completed the “Student & Parent Questions” section together*

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*Student Signature:* \_\_\_\_\_