



# Hunger Catechism: Ninth & Tenth Commandments

**BIG IDEA:** A mindset of abundance & sharing | **Reading:** Galatians 3:26–28

## Purpose

This Hunger Catechism lesson will discuss the Ninth and Tenth Commandments, Martin Luther’s interpretation and how we can live out these commandments with our neighbor. Also, this lesson covers how hunger and poverty are related to the Ninth and Tenth Commandments and their relationship to how we as Christians are called to include everyone as the body of Christ.

## Commandment and focus

**NINTH COMMANDMENT:** “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.”

**TENTH COMMANDMENT:** “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

**FOCUS QUESTION:** How can having a mindset of abundance change how we view our neighbor?

### Luther’s lens (*Small Catechism*)

**NINTH COMMANDMENT:** “We are to fear and love God so that we do not try to trick our neighbors out of their inheritance or property, or try to get it for ourselves by claiming to have a legal right to it and the like, but instead be of help and service to them in keeping what is theirs.”

**TENTH COMMANDMENT:** “We are to fear and love God, so that we do not entice, force, or steal away from our neighbors their spouses, household workers, or livestock, but instead urge them to stay and fulfill their responsibilities to our neighbors.”

### Luther’s explanation (*Large Catechism*)

“Thus these commandments are especially directed against envy and miserable avarice, God wishing to remove all causes and sources whence arises everything by which we do injury to our neighbor, and therefore He expresses it in plain words: Thou shalt not covet, etc. For He would especially have the heart pure, although we shall never attain to that as long as we live here; so that this commandment will remain, like all the rest, one that will constantly accuse us and show how godly we are in the sight of God!”

## Going further

While the other commandments tend to focus on actions toward our neighbors, the Ninth and Tenth focus on our internal attitudes toward our neighbors and the relationships we have with them. We are called to relationships that are just and loving. The commandments prohibit relationships that are driven by greed and competition and instead call us to relationships where we support our neighbors and help protect their property and well-being.

It is common for us to compare what we have to what our peers have. But these comparisons often drive greed, envy or conceit,

and those feelings can manifest into something worse. Eventually, we are so focused on what we want from our neighbor that we forget to see the relationship that we share as siblings in Christ. Faith calls us to see our relationships with others in a different light. Instead of a “scarcity mindset” that makes us believe that when one person gains another loses, faith calls us to a mindset of abundance.



**READING**

**Galatians 3:26–28**

*“For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”*



**ELCA World Hunger**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God’s work. Our hands.

Abundance mindset	Scarcity mindset
Everyone has gifts to offer	Only some people are “gifted”
God loves everyone equally	God loves some more than others
Everyone can have enough	If one person has more, other people have less

## Points to ponder

- + What kinds of relationships does a scarcity mindset create? What about relationships built on an abundance mindset?
- + Why is Luther so focused on protecting and supporting neighbors and their property?
- + Paul writes that, through baptism, Christians have “clothed yourselves with Christ.” What does it mean to be “clothed with Christ”?
- + What message is Paul trying to convey in the last verse of this reading?

## The facts

- + In 2016, **13.4 percent of women** in the United States were living in poverty compared to 9.4 percent of men.<sup>1</sup>
- + The **poverty gap** between men and women is larger than it was in **1968**, despite women having a larger share of the workforce.
- + On average, **women earn less than men in all industries** (construction, retail, manufacturing, sales, management, etc.).
- + The U.S. unemployment rate for members of the LGBTQ+ community is **three times higher** than the rest of the population.<sup>2</sup>

## Make it matter

In the ELCA, we believe that humanity is created in God’s image, and because of this, every person has inherent integrity, value and dignity. This means that all God’s people should have equal access to the abundant world that God has created. As we see, though, many groups face unjust barriers to opportunities for employment, compensation and treatment in schools and workplaces that deny them of the fullness of their God-given dignity.

Even Luther, in his discussion of the Ninth and Tenth Commandments, ran into this problem. Because the commandments include not coveting the neighbor’s wife, along with their possessions, Luther seems to suggest that the commandment only concerns how men relate to each other and not how women are called to be leaders and neighbors in their communities. But we also know that Holy Scripture is filled with stories of women called by God and serving as faithful leaders in the community. Having an abundance mindset that protects and defends the neighbor

means recognizing that all our neighbors—regardless of gender identity—have important gifts to offer the community.

As Lutherans, we are called to respond to and defend our neighbors when their lives are not being shown the same value as others. When relations between people of different genders are guided by justice and equality and affirm the dignity of every person, the whole community benefits.

## Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton (Three Sides Podcast)



Listen to this clip of Bishop Eaton on the ELCA’s podcast: **9:25–10:19, 13:28–14:12** [livinglutheran.org/podcast/welcome-to-the-three-sides-podcast](https://livinglutheran.org/podcast/welcome-to-the-three-sides-podcast)

## Diving deeper

- + How did Bishop Eaton respond to fellow clergy when they discounted her call to lead the church?
- + What are some of the obstacles leaders might face because of discrimination against their gender, race, ethnicity or age?
- + How do we all benefit as a community of faith when everyone is seen as a leader in the church?



**PRAY**

**OUR COMMON IDENTITY**

*Give thanks for the common identity that we share in God’s creation. Pray for an end to division, inequality and oppression in order to make space for a world built on love and sharing with our siblings in Christ.*

## Brewing questions

What questions come to mind that haven’t been talked about yet?

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2017, September 8). Historical Poverty Tables: People and Families—1959 to 2016.

Retrieved from Census.gov: <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-people.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Bellis, R. (Nov. 8, 2017). LGBTQ workers still face higher unemployment rates. Retrieved from FastCompany.com: <https://www.fastcompany.com/40493319/lgbtq-workers-still-face-higher-unemployment-rates>.