The Eighth Commandment:

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

What does this mean? We are to fear and love God so that we do not tell lies against our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations, but instead we are to rise to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light.

Have I taken part in "shaming" someone? Have I instigated or participated in bullying, vilifying, or abusing someone? Have I told, or repeated lies, or said things about someone I do not know that hurts their reputation? Have I enjoyed watching—or sat passively by while—someone was being slandered, demeaned, ridiculed, or being "made fun of"? Have I regarded my neighbor with hostility, suspicion, or attributed their actions to the "worst possible light"?

The Ninth Commandment:

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

What does this mean? 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 we are to be of help to them in keeping what is theirs.

Have I been discontented with my place in life? Have I wanted "to be someone else"? Have I cursed "who I am" because I hate myself or my family? Have I portrayed myself as something, or someone, that I am not so that people would "like me more" or "respect" me?

The Tenth Commandment:

You shall not covet your neighbor's spouse, male or female servant, ox, donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What does this mean? 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.

Have I tried to "lure away" or seduce someone else's spouse, "significant other," friends, or employees? Have I tried to lure away people who already go to another Church to "my Church" instead of making disciples of those who do not go to any Church? Have I tried to hire away a competitor's employees so as to harm their business? And on the reverse, have I been faithful to my spouse, employer, family, friends, etc…? Have I been so consumed with "what I do NOT have," that I have failed to give thanks and praise to God for what he has given me?

An Examination of Conscience

Based upon *The Small Catechism* of Martin Luther



"The Return of the Prodigal Son" by Rembrandt

"What sins is a person to confess? Before God, one is to acknowledge the guilt for all sins, even those of which we are not aware, as we do in the Lord's Prayer. However, before the Pastor, we are to confess only those sins of which we are aware and which trouble us.

What sins are these? Here reflect on your place in life in light of the Ten Commandments: whether you are father or mother, son or daughter, employer or employee; whether you have been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy; whether you have stolen, neglected, wasted, or injured anything."

(Martin Luther, "On Confession" from the Small Catechism)

These questions are NOT meant to be exhaustive, but to assist you as you examine your conscience as you prepare to make your Confession. Other issues may come to your mind as you reflect on the Commandments and their meanings. When you make your Confession, it is helpful to know which Commandment you have transgressed and how you have either broken the Commandment (**Sins of Commission**) or failed to keep the Commandment (**Sins of Omission**).

The First Commandment:
You shall have no other Gods.

What does this mean? We are to fear love and trust God above all things.

Have I feared, loved, or placed my trust in something other than God? If so, what, exactly have I placed before God? Have I allowed concerns or objects to be more important than God in my life?

The Second Commandment:
You shall not make wrongful use of the Name of the Lord, your God.

What does this mean? We are to fear and love God so that do not curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God's Name, but instead use that very Name in every time of need to pray to, praise, and give thanks to God.

Have I used God's Holy Name wrongfully: using that Name as a **curse** (to wish evil upon someone/something), **swear** (to make an oath), **practice magic** (to use God's name superstitiously and for personal gain), **lie**, or **deceive** (to use God's name to perpetrate a falsehood)? Have I *FAILED* to call upon God's Name to **pray to**, **give praise to**, or to **give thanks** to God?

The Third Commandment:
Remember the Sabbath Day, and keep it holy.

What does this mean? We are to fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching or God's Word, but instead keep that Word holy, and gladly hear and learn it.

Have I neglected my relationship with God by failing to come to worship diligently and enthusiastically? Have I neglected God's Word by not reading Holy Scripture or making time to hear it proclaimed? Have I failed to keep God's Word holy by neglecting my own Christian education, Spiritual Direction, or by failing to challenge my own spiritual growth? Have I failed, by my own example or by my actions, to show the importance of Spiritual Growth in my family and friends?

The Fourth Commandment:
Honor your father and your mother.

What does this mean? We are to fear and love God so that we neither despise nor anger our parents or others in authority, but instead honor, serve, love, and obey them.

Have I failed to show honor to my parents or others who are in authority over me? (*If you are a parent*) Have I shown honor and respect to my children? (*If you are a superior at work or in society*) Have I shown honor and humility to those who have been entrusted to my supervision and conducted my affairs towards them honorably?

The Fifth Commandment:
You shall not murder.

What does this mean? We are to fear and love God so that we do not endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life's needs.

Have I acted in ways that has jeopardized or hurt the lives of others? Have I exercised diligence and care in driving? Have I said or done something that has hurt someone else or hurt their wellbeing? Have I been indifferent to the lives and needs of those around me?

The Sixth Commandment:
You shall not commit adultery.

What does this mean? We are to fear and love God so that we live pure and chaste lives in word and in deed, and each of us honors his or her spouse.

Have I engaged in speech or actions that have cheapened or demeaned sex, and/or objectified another person? Have I engaged in speech or actions that show disdain for, contempt towards, or otherwise hurts my spouse? Have I engaged in activities that violate a person's body, privacy, or dignity (viewing pornography, visiting "strip" bars, viewing or reading sexually explicit material, touching or making other unwanted or unsolicited physical contact towards another)? Have I engaged in emotional and/or physical relationships outside of marriage that should be reserved for my spouse? (*If you are single*) Have I striven for chastity and celibacy in my life?

The Seventh Commandment:
You shall not steal.

What does this mean? We are to fear and love God so that we neither take our neighbor's money or property nor acquire them by using shoddy merchandise or crooked deals, but instead help them to improve and protect their property and income.

Have I taken something that is not mine? Have I enabled someone else's theft by "looking away" or "keeping silent"? Have I rejoiced or taken pleasure (*schadenfreude*) in someone else losing their money, property, income, or good name? (*If you are in business*) Have I conducted my business affairs equitably and justly or have I engaged in unfair or unjust business practices to benefit myself?