

The Festival of the Reformation

Middle School · Parent Edition

For the parent: Read each part aloud and work through the questions together. Your answers are printed in blue italics, so no preparation is needed. Your child uses the Student Edition.

Step 1 Understand the Collect

Most collects follow a five-part pattern: the **address** (the One to whom we pray), the **reason** (what God has done or promised), the **petition** (what we ask), the **purpose** (what we hope will result), and the **ending** (the closing that names the Trinity).

Almighty and gracious Lord, pour out Your Holy Spirit on Your faithful people. Keep us steadfast in Your grace and truth, protect and deliver us in times of temptation, defend us against all enemies, and grant to Your Church Your saving peace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

1. Mark each part of the collect. How is this collect built?

***Answer:** Address: "Almighty and gracious Lord." Then a chain of petitions: pour out Your Holy Spirit; keep us steadfast; protect and deliver us; defend us; grant Your Church Your saving peace. Ending: "through Jesus Christ..." The reason and purpose are missing. It is almost all petition, a Church praying under pressure.*

2. The collect asks to be kept steadfast in God's "grace and truth." Why both?

***Answer:** Grace is God's undeserved favor; truth is the pure teaching of His Word. Lose either one and you lose the Gospel. The Reformation was about recovering the true teaching of grace.*

3. Which petitions show that the Church is under attack?

***Answer:** "Protect and deliver us in times of temptation" and "defend us against all enemies."*

Step 2 Understand the Gospel

Read the Gospel on your own.

Matthew 11:12-19

12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. **13** For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, **14** and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. **15** He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

16 "But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates, **17** 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.' **18** For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' **19** The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."

Also read. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:23-24)

1. Jesus says the kingdom "has suffered violence" (v. 12). What violence had John suffered?

***Answer:** Herod had thrown him into prison, and he would later be executed. God's kingdom meets opposition.*

2. What is Jesus' point with the children's game (vv. 16-17)?

***Answer:** That generation rejected both John's call to repentance, the sad song, and Jesus' joyful good news, the flute. Whatever God sent, they objected.*

3. People meant "friend of tax collectors and sinners" as an insult (v. 19). Why is it true and good?

***Answer:** Jesus really does welcome sinners and eat with them. That is the Gospel.*

4. What does "wisdom is justified by her deeds" (v. 19) mean?

***Answer:** God's wisdom proves itself by its results. Through John and Jesus sinners repented and were saved, whatever the critics said.*

Step 3 Find the Collect in the Gospel

1. Find at least two places where the collect's words appear in the Gospel. Explain each one.

***Answer:** "Defend us against all enemies" matches "the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence" (v. 12). "Steadfast in Your grace" matches Jesus as "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (v. 19). "Truth" matches "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (v. 15) and "wisdom is justified by her deeds" (v. 19). Any two, well explained, are enough.*

2. Today's Epistle says, "For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (Romans 3:28). How does this verse explain why Jesus could be the friend of sinners?

***Answer:** God declares sinners righteous through faith, not by their works. Jesus did not wait for sinners to clean themselves up before He welcomed them.*

Step 4 The Small Catechism

The Third Article. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen. **What does this mean?** I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. **In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.** On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

Cross-reference. "Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people." (Revelation 14:6)

1. Luther says the Holy Spirit "daily and richly forgives all my sins." How does that match Romans 3:24?

***Answer:** Forgiveness is a gift of grace, not earned. Romans says we are justified "by his grace as a gift," and Luther says it comes daily and richly.*

2. Luther says, "I cannot by my own reason or strength believe." How does that fit Jesus' words about "this generation" (vv. 16-19)?

***Answer:** People heard both John and Jesus and still refused. Faith is not our achievement. The Holy Spirit calls us by the Gospel.*

3. The collect asks God to keep us "steadfast." Which words in the Third Article say the same thing?

***Answer:** "Sanctified and kept me in the true faith" and "keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith."*

Parent note: the question they may ask. "Is Reformation Day about Lutherans beating Catholics?" No. Luther did not set out to start a new church; he called the whole Church

back to the Gospel. We celebrate that God's Word was preached clearly again: sinners are justified by grace through faith in Christ. We confess that truth plainly, and we pray for all Christians, as the collect prays for "Your Church."

Step 5 Wrap It All Up

1. Write a short collect of your own for this day. Use all five parts.

Answer: *Answers will vary. Example: "Almighty God, through Your servant Martin Luther You brought the Gospel to light again. Keep us steadfast in Your Word, that we may confess Christ boldly and rest in His grace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."*

Pray today's collect together. Then answer:

2. What does Jesus do for you as the friend of sinners?

Answer: *He welcomes me, forgives all my sins as a gift, and keeps me in His grace.*