



Martin Luther im Kreise seiner Familie.

Why Learn A Christian Catechism?

Part 1

By

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Guess when this was written?

How pitiable, so help me God, were the things I saw: the common man, especially in the villages, knows practically nothing of Christian doctrine, and many of the pastors are almost entirely incompetent and unable to teach.

You might think someone wrote that this week. but it was written almost 500 years ago. It's part of the Preface to Martin Luther's *Short Catechism*.

Oh, you bishops! How will you ever answer to Christ for letting the people carry on so disgracefully and not attending to the duties of your office even for a moment? One can only hope judgment does not strike you! You command the Sacrament in one kind only, insist on the observance of your human ways, and yet are unconcerned whether the people know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, or indeed any of God's Word. Woe, woe to you forever! Martin Luther, [Small Catechism Preface](#)

Luther held pastors responsible for the people they shepherded, as well he should. That's nothing new. Read through the Bible and you'll see that God holds the spiritual leaders of His people responsible for what they believe and how well they live their lives based on what they believe.

We like to introduce a new Bible-based series at the beginning of each year. We pray *Why Learn A Christian Catechism* will be helpful to you and your family.

Why a Catechism?

Catechisms are a series of questions and answers that teach Christian doctrine (teachings) to children and adults. God gave the responsibility of teaching His Word to children to their parents and catechisms are one way to do that.

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. Deuteronomy 6:7

What is the “them” that parents should diligently teach their children, and talk about them as they sat in their houses, walked by the way, when they “lie down” and when they “rise up”? Look at the verses that proceed Deuteronomy 6:7 and you’ll see that Moses was referring to the commandments God gave to the people of Israel – specifically the Ten Commandments (see Deuteronomy 5 for context).

Therefore you shall be careful to do as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess. Deuteronomy 5:32-33

The Ten Commandments was a type of early catechism.

Therefore you shall keep every commandment which I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and possess the land which you cross over to possess, ⁹ and that you may prolong your days in the land which the Lord ^[d]swore to give your fathers, to them and their descendants, ‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’ ... Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and

when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth.

Deuteronomy 11:8-9, 18-21

The process of fathers and mothers teaching their children God's Word has a history that goes back thousands of years. Children were wise to hear and heed the instruction of their parents.

My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother; For they will be a graceful ornament on your head, And chains about your neck. Proverbs 1:8-9

What Is A Catechism?

A “catechesis” is a method of instructing children or new converts. The earliest catechisms were based on teachings from the Bible. The Hebrew *Shema* is based on first hearing (שְׁמָע *shâmaʾ*) God’s Word, then memorizing the words they heard.

*She-ma yisrael, adonai eloheinu, adonai echad – Hear,
O Israel: The Lord our God,
the Lord is one! Deuteronomy 6:4*

Children memorized Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments as part of their learning. Many scholars believe the Apostle Paul quoted from a very early catechism taught to the followers of Christ soon after Pentecost:

*Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and
that He was buried, and that He rose again the third
day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen.
1 Corinthians 15:3-5*

Catechism comes from the Greek word *katécheó*, which means “to instruct orally, teach by word of mouth.” The idea was that a person learned through **meaningful repetition** (*katá ēxéō*). Here are a few examples of where the word was used in the New Testament:

... that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed. Luke 1:4

This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. Acts 18:25

... yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. 1 Corinthians 14:19

Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Galatians 6:6

The question for this series is “Why learn a Christian catechism?” Can’t Christians grown strong in faith and action without learning a catechism? Yes, they can, but are they growing? Are Christian children, teens, and young people learning solid Christian doctrine and applying that knowledge to their lives? Are parents and preachers discipling children and teens well? Are children and teens growing up and continuing to follow Christ the rest of their lives?

Look around and tell me what you see in Christianity today? Unfortunately, a majority of Christians (young and old) know very little about what the Bible teaches. Their instruction in the basics of Christian doctrine seems lacking. They rarely share the Gospel with family and friends and often get confused when a non-Christian challenges what they believe.

Another problem is that many Christians believe the wrong things. What they believe about the Bible often doesn’t agree with what the Bible teaches. That’s a big problem that has led to many problems in churches and families.

As we've reported on our *GraceLife* and *Faith & Self Defense* blogs through the years, many young people raised in Christian families and churches are denouncing Christianity as untrue. They are “[deconstructing and deconverting](#).” Pew Research estimates that while about 40 million people will convert to Christianity worldwide in the next 30 years, about 106 million people will leave Christianity during that same time period – most of them becoming religiously unaffiliated. That's a **net loss** of 66 million Christians around the world in the next 30 years from ‘deconversion’. Christianity is already a minority in many countries where it used to be the majority religion. Christianity in the United States is estimated to become a minority religion within 20-30 years. What religion will take the place of Christianity in the US?

Depending on whether religious switching continues at recent rates, speeds up or stops entirely, the projections show Christians of all ages shrinking from 64% to between a little more than half (54%) and just above one-third (35%) of all Americans by 2070. Over that same period, “nones” would rise from the current

30% to somewhere between 34% and 52% of the U.S. population. [Pew Research](#)

A “None” is someone who has no religious affiliation. When asked by Pew and other research companies about their religious affiliation, Nones answer “none of the above.” **Nones** are the fastest-growing group of young adults in the U.S., Latin America, and Western Europe. Think about that for a minute. Young people who have no interest in God or religion will soon outnumber Christians in the countries where Christianity once flourished and dominated. The religious landscape is changing quickly and it doesn’t look good for Christian families and churches.

So, what are Christians to do in the face of this challenge? We need to return to knowing and loving God. We need to return to solid biblical preaching and teaching. We need to tell “Nones” about Jesus Christ. Most of them know little if anything about the King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus Christ the Savior.. Whose fault is that? Theirs? I don’t think so.

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!' Romans 10:14-15

I have never attended a church that used a catechism, but I can see its benefits. Even as Martin Luther blamed much of the problems in the churches he visited almost 500 years ago on pastors, we can do the same today. However, that does not let parents off the hook. Parents should never depend on pastors and teachers at church for the spiritual education of their children. God holds parents primarily responsible. Pastors and teachers should support what parents do with their children. Unfortunately, too many parents and pastors have neglected their responsibilities.

At present, the practice of catechesis, particularly among adults, has been almost completely lost. Modern discipleship programs concentrate on practices such as Bible study, prayer, fellowship, and evangelism and can at times be superficial when it comes to doctrine. In contrast, the classic catechisms take students through the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer—a perfect balance of biblical theology, practical ethics, and spiritual experience. Also, the catechetical discipline of memorization drives concepts deeper into the heart and naturally holds students more accountable to master the material than do typical discipleship courses. Finally, the practice of question-answer recitation brings instructors and students into a naturally interactive, dialogical process of learning.

Because we have lost the practice of catechesis today, “superficial smatterings of truth, blurry notions about God and godliness, and thoughtlessness about the issues of living—career-wise, community-wise, family-wise, and church-wise—are all too often the marks of

evangelical congregations today.” [New City Catechism Introduction](#)

Choosing a Catechism

Choosing a catechism to use with your children or in your church depends to some extent on what you believe. Some of the catechisms differ only slightly in teaching. However, some of them differ more. If your church already uses a catechism and you are comfortable with its teaching, it makes sense as a parent to use that catechism with your children. That way you are supporting what they're learning at church and the church is supporting what you are teaching your children at home. If your church does not use a catechism or uses one you are not comfortable with teaching, then we may be able to help you in choosing the best one for your family.

We will look at ten catechisms in this series. There are more than ten, but these are some of the best-known catechisms among Christian churches and denominations.

Early Church Catechisms

1. Luther's Catechism, Small and Large
2. Calvin's Catechism
3. Heidelberg Catechism
4. Westminster Catechism, Shorter and Longer
5. Keach's Catechism (aka The Baptist Catechism)
6. A Puritan Catechism
7. Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer
8. Wesleyan Catechism
9. New City Catechism

Though I see benefit in learning longer catechisms as an adult, you may find it better to teach your children a shorter version. Short (small) versions are easier for them to learn, memorize, understand, and follow.

Important LOVE Note

One of the keys to teaching children and teens is that they know you LOVE them. Getting kids to memorize a catechism is only helpful if we teach and lead them in a spirit of love. If children feel loved and protected within the home, the home is the best place for them to learn about God's love for them.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 1 Corinthians 13:1

... speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— Ephesians 4:15

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4

Catechisms in the Early Church

We know from the Gospels, Book of Acts, and Apostolic Letters how the early Church taught Christians doctrine and practice. Jesus Christ is the best example of how to teach, followed by His apostles who were led and inspired by the Holy Spirit given to them by Christ. The thousands of people who believed Peter's preaching on Pentecost were baptized and then "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). They walked "in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit" and multiplied in number (Acts 9:31b). The apostles established churches and selected men to serve as pastors and deacons (1 Timothy 3; Titus). Their ministry was to teach and train "faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). Their primary training document was the Scripture because it "*is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

My own preference for a type of personal catechism through the years has been memorizing Scripture and repeating the verses in a particular order. I usually repeat them upon waking in the morning and before going to bed at night. Any Christian can do something similar. Speaking and praying Scripture is a wonderful way of hearing from God and speaking to God based on absolute Truth – God’s Word. That would be one type of early Church catechism.

The apostles were persecuted for their ministries and most were martyred. They trained men to teach and guide the Christians who lived in many countries. How did they do it? They preached, taught, and wrote:

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 2 Timothy 2:2

You can read more about how Jesus Christ, His apostles, the Apostolic Fathers, and Church Fathers did this in our special series:

- [A Reading Plan for Christian Apologists Part 1](#)
- [A Reading Plan for Christian Apologists Part 2](#)
- [A Reading Plan for Christian Apologists Part 3](#)

Jesus Christ gave special gifts to Christian men for the purpose of leading and guiding the Church. The purpose was for preaching the Gospel, making disciples, and leading Christians to be unified around correct doctrine and practice in the Church.

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the

stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:11-16

We can look to the ministries of the Apostolic Fathers (disciples of the apostles) and Early Church Fathers (disciples of the disciples of the apostles) to see how they preached and taught (evangelists, pastor-teachers) and defended Christianity against spiritual attacks (apologists). One of the methods they used was a type of catechism.

The early church was painfully familiar with the apostasy of professing Christians. Persecution and the continued power of heathen worship practices caused many to lapse and prompted the early church to

develop methods of instructing apparent converts before baptism. The period of instruction and catechizing served two purposes: it allowed the candidate (catechumenate) to decide if he still wanted to submit to Christian baptism and gave the church opportunity to discern (as far as human observation can do these kinds of things) the genuineness of his, or her, conversion. Then, after engaging in a period of fasting and prayer with the church, the candidates were baptized. This use of catechisms served as a safeguard for the purity of the church. Men such as Tertullian and Augustine served as catechists within the church. Julian the Apostate (ca. 360) so feared the effectiveness of this enterprise that he closed all Christian schools and places of public literature and forbade the instructing of youth. [An Encouragement to Use Catechisms](#)

The earliest catechism of the Church other than the Bible may have been the *Didache*. It's also known as the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. Many scholars believe it was written during the 1st century AD. If true, the *Didache* gives us a fascinating window into how Christians were taught to believe and behave. Athanasius of Alexandria, a 4th century church leader, described the *Didache* as “appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who with for instruction in the word of goodness” (Festal Letter 39:7).

Teachings in the Didache

The *Didache* has 16 sections. I'm going to share some of the verses from each section so you can get an idea of what early Christians viewed as important to know and do. You can read the entire *Didache* from the following translators:

- [J.B. Lightfoot](#)
- [Roberts-Donaldson](#)
- [Charles Hoole](#)
- [Kirsopp Lake](#)

Here are several highlights from the first section. It deals with the “Two Ways.” You will notice that some of the lines are similar to the sayings of Jesus in the Gospels.

- 1:1 There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two ways.
- 1:3 First of all, {thou shalt love the God} that made thee;
- 1:4 secondly, {thy neighbour as thyself.}
- 1:10 {If any man give thee a blow on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also,} and thou shalt be perfect;
- 1:11 {if a man impress thee to go with him, one mile, go with him twain;
- 1:12 if a man take away thy cloak, give him thy coat also;
- 1:13 if a man take away from thee that which is thine own, ask it not back,} for neither art thou able.
- 2:1 And this is the second commandment of the teaching.

- 2:2 {Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery,} thou shalt not corrupt boys, thou shalt not commit fornication, {thou shalt not steal,} thou shalt not deal in magic, thou shalt do no sorcery, thou shalt not murder a child by abortion nor kill them when born, {thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods, thou shalt not perjure thyself, thou shalt not bear false witness,} thou shalt not speak evil, thou shalt not cherish a grudge, thou shalt not be double-minded nor double-tongued;
- 2:3 for the double tongue is a snare of death.
- 3:1 My child, flee from every evil and everything that resembleth it.
- 3:2 Be not angry, for anger leadeth to murder, nor jealous nor contentious nor wrathful;
- 3:3 for of all these things murders are engendered.
- 4:1 My child, {thou shalt remember him that speaketh unto thee the word of God} night and day, and shalt honour him as the Lord;

- 4:2 for whencesoever the Lordship speaketh, there is the Lord.
- 4:17 Thou shalt never forsake the commandments of the Lord;
- 4:18 but shalt keep those things which thou hast received, neither adding to them nor taking away from them.
- 4:19 In church thou shalt confess thy transgressions, and shalt not betake thyself to prayer with an evil conscience.
- 4:20 This is the way of life.
- 5:1 But the way of death is this.
- 5:2 First of all, it is evil and full of a curse murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magical arts, witchcrafts, plunderings, false witnessings, hypocrisies, doubleness of heart, treachery, pride, malice, stubbornness, covetousness, foul-speaking, jealousy, boldness, exaltation, boastfulness;

- 5:3 persecutors of good men, hating truth, loving a lie, not perceiving the reward of righteousness, not {cleaving to the good} nor to righteous judgment, wakeful not for that which is good but for that which is evil;
- 5:4 from whom gentleness and forbearance stand aloof;
- 5:5 loving vain things, pursuing a recompense, not pitying the poor man, not toiling for him that is oppressed with toil, not recognizing Him that made them, murderers of children, corrupters of the creatures of God, turning away from him that is in want, oppressing him that is afflicted, advocates of the wealthy, unjust judges of the poor, altogether sinful.
- 5:6 May ye be delivered, my children, from all these things.
- 6:1 See lest any man lead you astray from this way of righteousness, for he teacheth thee apart from God.
- 6:2 For if thou art able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, thou shalt be perfect;

- 6:3 but if thou art not able, do that which thou art able.
- 6:4 But concerning eating, bear that which thou art able;
- 6:5 yet abstain by all means from meat sacrificed to idols;
- 6:6 for it is the worship of dead gods.

The second section focuses on Church liturgical practices (Chapters 7-10).

- 7:1 But concerning baptism, thus shall ye baptize.
- 7:2 Having first recited all these things, baptize {in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit} in living (running) water.
- 7:3 But if thou hast not living water, then baptize in other water;
- 7:4 and if thou art not able in cold, then in warm.

- 7:5 But if thou hast neither, then pour water on the head thrice in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- 7:6 But before the baptism let him that baptizeth and him that is baptized fast, and any others also who are able;
- 7:7 and thou shalt order him that is baptized to fast a day or two before.
- 8:1 And let not your fastings be with the hypocrites, for they fast on the second and the fifth day of the week;
- 8:2 but do ye keep your fast on the fourth and on the preparation (the sixth) day.
- 8:3 Neither pray ye {as the hypocrites,} but as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, {thus pray ye.
- 8:4 Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;
- 8:5 Thy kingdom come;
- 8:6 Thy will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth;
- 8:7 give us this day our daily bread;

- 8:8 and forgive us our debt, as we also forgive our debtors;
- 8:9 and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one;}
- 8:10 for Thine is the power and the glory for ever and ever.8:11 Three times in the day pray ye so.
- 9:1 But as touching the eucharistic thanksgiving give ye thanks thus.
- 9:2 First, as regards the cup:\
- 9:3 We give Thee thanks, O our Father, for the holy vine of Thy son David, which Thou madest known unto us through Thy Son Jesus;
- 9:4 Thine is the glory for ever and ever.
- 10:4 Thou, Almighty Master, didst create all things for Thy name's sake, and didst give food and drink unto men for enjoyment, that they might render thanks to Thee;
- 10:5 but didst bestow upon us spiritual food and drink and eternal life through Thy Son.

- 10:6 Before all things we give Thee thanks that Thou art powerful;
- 10:7 Thine is the glory for ever and ever.

The third section includes instructions about how to receive traveling apostles and prophets (Chapters 11-15).

- 11:1 Whosoever therefore shall come and teach you all these things that have been said before, receive him;
- 11:2 but if the teacher himself be perverted and teach a different doctrine to the destruction thereof, hear him not;
- 11:3 but if to the increase of righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord.
- 11:4 But concerning the apostles and prophets, so do ye according to the ordinance of the Gospel.
- 11:12 Yet not every one that speaketh in the Spirit is a prophet, but only if he have the ways of the Lord.

- 11:13 From his ways therefore the false prophet and the prophet shall be recognized.
- 11:14 And no prophet when he ordereth a table in the Spirit shall eat of it;
- 11:15 otherwise he is a false prophet.
- 11:16 And every prophet teaching the truth, if he doeth not what he teacheth, is a false prophet.
- 12:1 But let every one {that cometh in the name of the Lord} be received;
- 12:2 and then when ye have tested him ye shall know him, for ye shall have understanding on the right hand and on the left.
- 13:1 But every true prophet desiring to settle among you {is worthy of his food.}
- 13:2 In like manner a true teacher {is} also {worthy,} like {the workman, of his food.}
- 13:3 Every firstfruit then of the produce of the wine-vat and of the threshing-floor, of thy oxen and of thy sheep, thou shalt take and give as the firstfruit to the prophets;

- 13:4 for they are your chief-priests.
- 14:1 And on the Lord's own day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks, first confessing your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure.
- 15:1 Appoint for yourselves therefore bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are meek and not lovers of money, and true and approved;
- 15:2 for unto you they also perform the service of the prophets and teachers.
- 15:3 Therefore despise them not;
- 15:4 for they are your honourable men along with the prophets and teachers.

The fourth section is a short apocalypse (Chapter 16).

- 16:1 {Be watchful} for your life;
- 16:2 {let your lamps not be quenched and your loins not ungirded, but be ye ready;
- 16:3 for ye know not the hour in which our Lord cometh.}16:16 {The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him.
- 16:17 Then shall} the world {see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.}

Other Early Church Catechisms

Early Church catechisms are also known as ancient Church Orders. They were written by Church leaders in the 2nd thru 5th centuries AD for the purpose of guiding people who came to Christ from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds (especially the Gentile converts). Here are some of the better-known instructional manuals from the early Church.

[This list is for historical purposes. I recommend caution with Church documents written after the Apostolic period.]

The Apostolic Tradition (also known as the Egyptian Church Order)

The Didascalia

The Apostolic Church Order

The Apostolic Constitutions

The Apostolic Canons

The Epitome

The Testament of Our Lord

The Canons of Hippolytus

Sarapion's Prayers

Luther's Catechisms

Martin Luther was born in Germany in 1483. His parents were from a lower class and hoped their son would become a lawyer. However, Martin chose to become an Augustinian monk. He was a smart and devout, but troubled Catholic priest in Wittenberg, Germany. Luther earned a doctoral degree in 1512 and became Chair of the Bible at the University of Wittenberg.

Through his studies in Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Luther came to better understand God's nature, the truth of the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the primacy of Scripture over the teachings of the Church. He struggled with many of the policies of the Catholic Church, but especially the sale of indulgences. Though Luther's desire in publishing his 95 Theses in 1517 was to begin a conversation that might help reform the Catholic Church and bring it back to the primacy of Scripture, he was excommunicated from the Church in 1521. That led Luther to starting what became known as the Protestant Reformation.

Luther and some of his friends visited churches in Saxony in 1528 and were appalled at what they saw.

Oh, you bishops! How will you ever answer to Christ for letting the people carry on so disgracefully and not attending to the duties of your office even for a moment? One can only hope judgment does not strike you! You command the Sacrament in one kind only, insist on the observance of your human ways, and yet are unconcerned whether the people know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, or indeed any of God's Word. Woe, woe to you forever! Martin Luther, [Small Catechism Preface](#)

That visit led Luther to work with colleagues to prepare a basic catechism to help pastors and their people learn teachings of the Bible. Luther published his Large Catechism in April, 1529, and Small Catechism a month later. The catechisms were based on sermons Luther had preached on the Ten Commandments, the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments of the Church. The Large Catechism was primarily for pastors and other Christian leaders. The Small Catechism was for laypeople.

Luther's Small Catechism

Since the primary purpose of this series is to help parents choose a catechism appropriate to teach their children, we'll look at Luther's Small Catechism. Some groups divide it into four sections; some into six parts. The purpose is to help you as a parent decide which catechism you agree with and would want to use with your children.

1. Section One: The Ten Commandments, The Creed, The Lord's Prayer, The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, Confession, The Sacrament of the Altar
2. Section Two: Daily Prayers
3. Section Three: Table of Duties
4. Section Four: Christian Questions with Their Answers
 1. Part One: The Ten Commandments
 2. Part Two: The Apostle's Creed
 3. Part Three: The Lord's Prayer
 4. Part Four: Baptism

5. Part Five: The Office of the Keys and Confession
6. Part Six: The Lord's Supper

It also includes: Prayers for Daily Use, Table of Duties, and Christian Questions and Answers.

Here are some highlights from the Sections (Parts). You can read the entire *Small Catechism* [here](#), [here](#), or [here](#).

- **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

- The First Commandment
- You shall have no other gods.
- What is this? or What does this mean?
- We are to fear, love, and trust God above all things.
- The Second Commandment
- You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God.
- What is this? or What does this mean?
- We are to fear and love God, so that we 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 call on, pray to, praise, and give thanks to God.
- The Third Commandment
- Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.
- What is this? or 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.

- What then does God say about all these commandments?
- God says the following: “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.”
- What is this? or What does this mean?
- God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore we are to fear his wrath and not disobey these commandments. However, God promises grace and every good thing to all those who keep these commandments. Therefore we also are to love and trust him and gladly act according to his commands.

- **THE CREED**

- The First Article: On Creation

- I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

- What is this? or What does this mean?

- I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties. In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property—along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life. God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.

- The Second Article: On Redemption

- I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead [or, "he descended into hell," another translation of this text in widespread use]. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
- What is this? or What does this mean?
- I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and also a true human being, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned human being. He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. He has done all this in order that I may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness,

just as he is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.

- The Third Article: On Being Made Holy
- I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
- What is this? or What does this mean?
- I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith. Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins—mine and those of all believers. On the last day the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.

- **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

- Introduction
- Our Father in heaven.
- What is this? or What does this mean?
- With these words God wants to attract us, so that we come to believe he is truly our Father and we are truly his children, in order that we may ask him boldly and with complete confidence, just as loving children ask their loving father.
- The First Petition
- Hallowed be your name.
- What is this? or What does this mean?
- It is true that God's name is holy in itself, but we ask in this prayer that it may also become holy in and among us. How does this come about? Whenever the word of God is taught clearly and purely and we, as God's children, also live holy lives according to it. To this end help us, dear Father in heaven! However, whoever teaches and lives otherwise than the word of God

teaches, dishonors the name of God among us. Preserve us from this, heavenly Father!

- The Second Petition
- Your kingdom come.
- What is this? or What does this mean? I
- In fact, God's kingdom comes on its own without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come to us. How does this come about? Whenever our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that through the Holy Spirit's grace we believe God's holy word and live godly lives here in time and hereafter in eternity.
- The Third Petition
- Your will be done on earth as in heaven.
- What is this? or What does this mean?
- In fact, God's good and gracious will comes about without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come about in and among us. How does this come about? Whenever God breaks and hinders every evil scheme and will—as are present in the will of the devil,

the world, and our flesh—that would not allow us to hallow God’s name and would prevent the coming of his kingdom, and instead whenever God strengthens us and keeps us steadfast in his word and in faith until the end of our lives. This is God’s gracious and good will.

- **THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM**

- What is baptism?
- Baptism is not simply plain water. Instead, it is water used according to God’s command and connected with God’s word.
- What then is this word of God? Where our Lord Christ says in Matthew 28, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
- What gifts or benefits does baptism grant?
- It brings about forgiveness of sins, redeems from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe it, as the words and promise of God declare.
- What are these words and promise of God?

- Where our Lord Christ says in Mark 16, “The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned.”
- How can water do such great things?
- Clearly the water does not do it, but the word of God, which is with and alongside the water, and faith, which trusts this word of God in the water. For without the word of God the water is plain water and not a baptism, but with the word of God it is a baptism, that is, a grace-filled water of life and a “bath of the new birth in the Holy Spirit,” as St. Paul says to Titus in chapter 3, “through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is sure.”

- **How people are to be taught to confess**
- What is confession?
- Confession consists of two parts. One is that we confess our sins. The other is that we receive the absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God himself and by no means doubt but firmly believe that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven.
- Which 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.
- Which sins are these?
- Here reflect on your walk of life in light of the Ten Commandments: whether you are father, mother, son, daughter, master, mistress, servant; whether you have been disobedient, unfaithful, lazy, whether you have

harmed anyone by word or deed; whether you have stolen, neglected, wasted, or injured anything.

- **THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR**

- What is the Sacrament of the Altar?
- It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ himself for us Christians to eat and to drink.
- Where is this written?
- The holy evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and St. Paul write thus: “In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.”
- What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?

- The words “given for you” and “shed for you for the forgiveness of sin” show us that forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation are given to us in the sacrament through these words, because where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation.
- **THE MORNING BLESSING**
- In the morning, as soon as you get out of bed, you are to make the sign of the holy cross and say: “God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit watch over me. Amen.”
- Then, kneeling or standing, say the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. If you wish, you may in addition recite this little prayer as well: “I give thanks to you, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have protected me through the night from all harm and danger. I ask that you would also protect me today from sin and all evil, so that my life and actions may please you. Into your hands I commend myself: my body, my soul, and all that is mine. Let your holy angel be with me, so that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.”

- After singing a hymn perhaps (for example, one on the Ten Commandments) or whatever else may serve your devotion, you are to go to your work joyfully.
- **THE EVENING BLESSING**
- In the evening, when you go to bed, you are to make the sign of the holy cross and say: “God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit watch over me. Amen.”
- Then, kneeling or standing, say the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. If you wish, you may in addition recite this little prayer as well: “I give thanks to you, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have graciously protected me today. I ask you to forgive me all my sins, where I have done wrong, and graciously to protect me tonight. Into your hands I commend myself: my body, my soul, and all that is mine. Let your holy angel be with me, so that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.”
- Then you are to go to sleep quickly and cheerfully

- **TABLE BLESSINGS**

- The children and the members of the household are to come devoutly to the table, fold their hands, and recite: “The eyes of all wait upon you, O Lord, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living creature.”
- Then they are to recite the Lord’s Prayer and the following prayer: “Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”
- Similarly, after eating they should in the same manner fold their hands and recite devoutly: “Give thanks to the Lord, for the Lord is good, for God’s mercy endures forever. God provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they cry. God is not impressed by the might of a horse, and has no pleasure in the speed of a runner, but finds pleasure in those who fear the Lord, in those who await God’s steadfast love.”

- Then recite the Lord's Prayer and the following prayer:
"We give thanks to you, Lord God our Father, through

John Calvin

John Calvin was about 26 years younger than Martin Luther. Luther was born in 1483 in Germany. Calvin was born in 1509 in France. Like Luther, Calvin was raised in a Roman Catholic family. However, Calvin grew up in a higher class family where his classmates and friends were aristocratic. Though Luther's teachings were known about in France, Calvin continued to be close to the Catholic Church. However, Calvin developed friendships that eventually led him toward the Reformed faith. Because of his friends' opposition to the Catholic Church, Calvin had to leave Paris. He was [converted about 1533](#). Calvin went on to become a leader in the early days of the Reformation, especially in Geneva.

Calvin was a theologian and author. He may be best known for his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, *Calvin's Sermons*, *Calvin's Commentaries* on Books of the Bible, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, *The Genevan Psalter*, and *A Treatise on Relics*. Calvin was also known for writing the *Catechism of The Church of Geneva*. He published it in French in 1537 and Latin in 1538. It continues to be used by many Reformed churches.

I found it interesting that Calvin included this statement in his introduction to the Geneva Catechism:

Wherefore, those who publish Catechisms ought to be the more carefully on their guard, by producing anything rashly, they may not for the present only, but in regard to posterity also, do grievous harm to piety, and inflict a deadly wound on the Church. [Catechism of the Church of Geneva](#)

This is good advice to parents today. We should be careful and wise in choosing a catechism for our children. Here are some highlights from *Calvin's Catechism*.

Calvin's Catechism

Calvin's Catechism, also known as the *Catechism of the Church of Geneva*, is long – 373 questions and answers. That is, in my opinion, too long for a child to learn and memorize. If you would like to use Calvin's Catechism with your children, I recommend selecting the Q&A that best fits their spiritual needs now. You can always add more Q&A as your children become older.

CATECHISM OF THE CHURCH OF GENEVA

I: OF FAITH

II: OF LAW, THAT IS THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOD

III: OF PRAYER

IV: OF THE WORD OF GOD

V: OF THE SACREMENTS

Question1 Master. — What is the chief end of human life?

Scholar. — To know God by whom men were created.

Q2 M. What reason have you for saying so?

S. Because he created us and placed us in this world to be glorified in us. And it is indeed right that our life, of which himself is the beginning, should be devoted to his glory.

Q3 M. What is the highest good of man?

S. The very same thing.

Q4 M. Why do you hold that to be the highest good?

S. Because without it our condition is worse than that of the brutes.

Q5 M. Hence, then, we clearly see that nothing worse can happen to a man than not to live to God.

S. It is so.

Q6 M. What is the true and right knowledge of God?

S. When he is so known that due honour is paid to him.

Q7 M. What is the method, of honouring him duly?

S. To place our whole confidence in him; to study to serve him during our whole life by obeying his will; to call upon him in all our necessities, seeking salvation and every good thing that can be desired in him; lastly, to acknowledge him both with heart and lips, as the sole Author of all blessings.

Q8 M. To consider these points in their order, and explain them more fully — what is the first head in this division of yours?

S. To place our whole confidence in God.

Q9 M. How shall we do so?

S. When we know him to be Almighty and perfectly good.

Q10 M. Is this enough?

S. Far from it.

Q11 M. Wherefore?

S. Because, we are unworthy that he should exert his power in helping us, and show how good he is by saving us.

Q12 M. What more then is needful?

S. That each of us should set it down in his mind that God loves him, and is willing to be a Father, and the author of salvation to him.

Q13 M. But whence will this appear?

S. From his word, in which he explains his mercy to us in Christ, and testifies of his love towards us.

Q14 M. Then the foundation and beginning of confidence in God is to know him in Christ?

S. Entirely so.

Q131 M. What is the rule of life which he has given us?

S. His law.

Q132 M. What does it contain?

S. It consists of two parts; the former of which contains four commandments, the latter six. Thus the whole law consists of Ten Commandments in all.

Q133 M. Who is the author of this division?

S. God himself, who delivered it to Moses written on two tables, and afterwards declared that it was reduced into ten sentences. ([Exodus 24:12](#); [32:15](#); [34:1](#); [Deuteronomy 4:13](#); [10:4](#).)

Q134 M. What is the subject of the first table?

S. The offices of piety towards God.

Q135 M. Of the second?

S. How we are to act towards men, and what we owe them.

Q136 M. Repeat the first commandment or head.

S. Hear, O Israel, I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Q137 M. Now explain the meaning of the words.

S. At first he makes a kind of preface to the whole law. For when he calls himself Jehovah, he claims right and authority to command. Then in order to procure favour for his law, he adds, that he is our God. These words have the same force as if he had called himself our Preserver. Now as he

bestows this favour upon us, it is meet that we should in our turn show ourselves to be an obedient people.

Q143 M. Let us pass to the second head.

S. Thou shalt not sculpture to thyself the image, or form any of those things which are either in heaven above or on the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore nor serve them.

Q144 M. Does it entirely prohibit us from sculpturing or painting any resemblance?

S. No; it only forbids, us to make any resemblances for the sake of representing or worshipping God.

Q145 M. Why is it. unlawful to represent God by a visible shape?

S. Because there is no resemblance between him who is an eternal Spirit and incomprehensible, and a corporeal,

corruptible, and lifeless figure. ([Deuteronomy 4:15](#); [Acts 17:29](#); [Romans 1:23](#).)

Q146 M. You think then that an insult is offered to his majesty when he is represented in this way?

S. Such is my belief.

Q147 M. What kind of worship is here condemned?

S. When we turn to a statue or image intending to pray, we prostrate ourselves before it: when we pay honour to it by the bending of our knees, or other signs, as if God were there representing himself to us.

Q148 M. We are not to understand then that simply any kind of picture or sculpture is condemned by these words. We are only prohibited from making images for the purpose of seeking or worshipping God in them, or which is the same thing, for the purpose of worshipping them in honour of God, or abusing them in any way to superstition and idolatry.

S. True.

Q233 M. As the second part of Divine Worship, which consists in service and obedience, has been sufficiently discussed, let us now proceed to the, third part.

S. We said it was revocation, by which we flee to God in any necessity.

Q234 M. Do you think that he alone is to be invoked?

S. Certainly; for he requires this as the proper worship of his Divinity.

Q235 M. If it is so, how can we beseech men to assist us?

S. There is a great, difference between the two things. For when we invoke God, we testify that we expect no good from any other quarter, and that we place our whole defence in no other, and yet we ask the assistance of men, as far as he permits, and has bestowed on them the power of giving it.

Q236 M. You say, then, that in having recourse to the faith and help of men, there, is nothing that interferes with our invocation of God, seeing that our reliance is not fixed on them, and we beseech them on no other ground, than just because God, by furnishing them with the means of well-doing, has in a manner destined them to be the ministers of his beneficence, and is pleased by their hands to assist us, and draw out, on our account, the resources which he has deposited with them?

S. Such is my view. And, accordingly, whatever benefits we receive from them, we should regard as coming from God, as in truth it is he alone who bestows all these things upon us by their instrumentality.

Q237 M. But are we not to feel grateful to men whenever they have conferred any kindness upon us. This the mere equity of nature and law of humanity dictates?

S. Certainly we are; and were it only for the reason that God honours them by sending to us, through their hands, as

rivulets, the blessings which flow from the inexhaustible fountain of his liberality. In this way he lays us under obligation to them, and wishes us to acknowledge it. He, therefore, who does not show himself grateful to them by so doing, betrays his ingratitude to God.

Q238 M. Are we hence at liberty to infer, that it is wrong to invoke angels and holy servants of the Lord who have departed this life?

S. We are not at liberty; for God does not assign to saints the office of assisting us. And in regard to angels, though he uses their labour for our salvation, he does not wish us to ask them for it.

Q296 M. The order already adopted by us requires that we now consider the fourth part of divine worship.

S. We said that this consists in acknowledging God as the author of all good, and in extolling his goodness, justice, wisdom, and power with praise and thanksgiving, that thus the glory of all good may remain entirely with him.

Q297 M. Has he prescribed no rule as to this part?

S. All the praises extant in Scripture ought to be our rule.

Q298 M. Has the Lord's Prayer nothing? which applies here?

S. Yes. When we pray that his name may be hallowed, we pray that he may be duly glorified in his works — that he may be regarded, whether in pardoning sinners, as merciful; or in exercising vengeance, as just; or in performing his praises, as true: in short, that whatever of his works we see may excite us to glorify him. This is indeed to ascribe to him the praise of all that is good.

Q299 M. What shall we infer from these heads which have hitherto been considered, by us?

S. What truth itself teaches, and was stated at the outset, viz., that this is eternal life to know one true God the Father, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, ([John 17:3](#),) — to know him, I say, in order that we may pay due honour and

worship to him, that he may be not only our Lord but also our Father and Saviour, and we be in turn his children and servants, and accordingly devote our lives to the illustration of his glory.

Q300 M. How can we attain to such blessedness?

S. For this end God has left us his holy word; for spiritual doctrine is a kind of door by which we enter his heavenly kingdom.

Q301 M. Where are we to seek for this word?

S. In the Holy Scriptures, in which it is contained.

Q302 M. How are you to use it in order to profit by it?

S. By embracing it with entire heartfelt persuasion, as certain truth come down from heaven — by being docile, and subjecting our minds and wills in obedience to it — by loving it sincerely — by having it once for all engraved on our hearts, and there rooted so as to produce fruit in our life

— finally, by being formed after its rule. Then shall it turn to our salvation, as it was intended.

Q303 M. Are all these things put in our own power?

S. None of them at all; but everything which I have mentioned it belongs to God only to effect in us by the gift of his Spirit.

Q304 M. But are we not to use diligence, and zealously strive to profit in it by reading, hearing, and meditating?

S. Yea, verily: seeing that every one ought to exercise himself in the daily reading of it, and all should be especially careful to attend the sermons when the doctrine of salvation is expounded in the assembly of the faithful.

Q305 M. You affirm then that it is not enough for each to read privately at home, and that all ought to meet in common to hear the same doctrine?

S. They must meet when they can — that is, when an opportunity is given.

Q309 M. Is there no other medium, as it is called, than the Word by which God may communicate himself to us?

S. To the preaching of the Word he has added the Sacraments.

Q310 M. What is a Sacrament?

S. An outward attestation of the divine benevolence towards us, which, by a visible sign, figures spiritual grace, to seal the promises of God on our hearts, and thereby better confirm their truth to us.

Q311 M. Is there such virtue in a visible sign that it can establish our consciences in a full assurance of salvation?

S. This virtue it has not of itself, but by the will of God, because it was instituted for this end.

Q312 M. Seeing it is the proper office of the Holy Spirit to seal the promises of God on our minds, how do you attribute this to the sacraments?

S. There is a wide difference between him and them. To move and affect the heart, to enlighten the mind, to render the conscience sure and tranquil, truly belongs to the Spirit alone; so that it ought to be regarded as wholly his work, and be ascribed to him alone, that no other may have the praise; but this does not at all prevent God from employing the sacraments as secondary instruments, and applying them to what use he deems proper, without derogating in any respect from the agency of the Spirit.

Q313 M. You think, then. that the power and efficacy of a sacrament is not contained in the outward element, but flows entirely from the Spirit of God?

S. I think so; viz., that the Lord hath been pleased to exert his energy by his instruments, this being the purpose to which he destined them: this he does without detracting in any respect from the virtue of his Spirit.

Q314 M. Can you give me a reason why he so acts?

S. In this way he consults our weakness. If we were wholly spiritual, we might, like the angels, spiritually behold both him and his grace; but as we are surrounded with this body of clay, we need figures or mirrors to exhibit a view of spiritual and heavenly things in a kind of earthly manner; for we could not otherwise attain to them. At the same time, it is our interest to have all our senses exercised in the promises of God, that they may be the better confirmed to us.

Q315 M. If it is true that the sacraments were instituted by God to be helps to our necessity, is it not arrogance for anyone to hold that he can dispense with them as unnecessary?

S. It certainly is; and hence, if any one of his own accord abstains from the use of them, as if he had no need of them, he contemns Christ, spurns his grace, and quenches the Spirit.

Q316 M. But what confidence can there be in the sacraments as a means of establishing the conscience, and what certain security can be conceived from things which the good and bad use indiscriminately?

S. Although the wicked: so to speak, annihilate the gifts of God offered in the sacraments in so far as regards themselves, they do not thereby? deprive the sacraments of their nature and virtue.

Q317 M. How, then, and when does the effect follow the use of the sacraments?

S. When we receive them in faith, seeking Christ alone and his grace in them.

Q318 M. Why do you say that Christ is to be sought in them?

S. I mean that we are not to cleave to the visible signs so as to seek salvation from them, or imagine that the power of conferring grace is either fixed or included in them, but rather that the sign is to be used as a help, by which, when seeking salvation and complete felicity, we are pointed directly to Christ.

You can read the entire Geneva Catechism [here](#) or [here](#).

Why should parents consider teaching their children a Christian catechism? Catechisms were designed to instruct people in the basics of Christianity. Unfortunately, the majority of young people from Christian families and churches know little about the basics of the Christian faith. That's based on numerous surveys done during the past 20 years to gauge the knowledge of young people who identify as Christians.

The fastest growing group of young people in the United States identifies as “none,” meaning they do not affiliate with any religion.

About a third of U.S. teens (32%) say they are religiously unaffiliated, including 6% who describe themselves as atheists, 4% who are agnostics and 23% who say their religion is “nothing in particular.” [Pew Research](#)

The United States is going through a “secularizing shift,” meaning that less people identify as religious (of any kind) and more people identify as religiously unaffiliated. Young people are leading the way in this dramatic change. Hundreds of thousands of teenagers and young adults are deconstructing and deconverting every year. It will not be long before Christianity will be a minority religion in America.

Those all appear good reasons for Christian parents to search for alternatives to the type of instruction their children are receiving at church and at home. If you have not read previous parts of this series, we invite you to start with the Introduction and work your way through those catechisms we’ve looked at so far.

The Heidelberg Catechism

Our next catechism is known as *The Heidelberg Catechism*. It was written in Heidelberg, Germany in 1563. This was about 34 years after Martin Luther's Catechism, and 26 years after Calvin's Geneva Catechism.

The Heidelberg Catechism has 129 questions and answers designed to be used over a period of 52 Sundays. The topics covered include:

1. Our Sin and Misery
2. Our Deliverance
3. Our Thankfulness

Here are some examples from *The Heidelberg Catechism* for your consideration.

LORD'S DAY 1

Q. What is your only comfort in life and death?

A. That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.³ He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil. He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation. Therefore, by his Holy Spirit he also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for him.¹⁰

1 Cor 6:19, 20; Rom 14:7-9; 1 Cor 3:23; Tit 2:14

LORD'S DAY 2

Q. From where do you know your sins and misery?

A. From the law of God.

Rom 3:20; 7:7-25

Q. What does God's law require of us?

A. Christ teaches us this in a summary in Matthew 22:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18.

Q. Can you keep all this perfectly?

A. No, I am inclined by nature to hate God and my neighbour.

Rom 3:10, 23; 1 Jn 1:8, 10; Gen 6:5; 8:21; Jer 17:9; Rom 7:23; 8:7; Eph 2:3; Tit 3:3

LORD'S DAY 5

Q. According to God's righteous judgment we deserve punishment both now and in eternity: how then can we escape this punishment and return to God's favor?

A. God requires that his justice be satisfied. Therefore the claims of this justice must be paid in full, either by ourselves or by another.

Ex. 23:7; Rom. 2:1-11; Isa. 53:11; Rom. 8:3-4

Q. Can we make this payment ourselves?

A. Certainly not. Actually, we increase our debt every day.

Matt. 6:12; Rom. 2:4-5

LORD'S DAY 6

Q. Why must the mediator be a true and righteous human?

A. God's justice demands that human nature, which has sinned, must pay for sin; but a sinful human could never pay for others.

1 Rom. 5:12, 15; 1 Cor. 15:21; Heb. 2:14-16 2 Heb. 7:26-27;
1 Pet. 3:18

Q. Then who is this mediator— true God and at the same time a true and righteous human?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was given to us to completely deliver us and make us right with God.

1 Matt. 1:21-23; Luke 2:11; 1 Tim. 2:5 2 1 Cor. 1:30

LORD'S DAY 16

Q. Why did Christ have to suffer death?

A. Because God's justice and truth require it: nothing else could pay for our sins except the death of the Son of God.

Gen. 2:17; Rom. 8:3-4; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 2:9

LORD'S DAY 29

Q. Do the bread and wine become the real body and blood of Christ?

A. No. Just as the water of baptism is not changed into Christ's blood and does not itself wash away sins but is simply a divine sign and assurance of these things, so too the holy bread of the Lord's Supper does not become the actual body of Christ, even though it is called the body of Christ in keeping with the nature and language of sacraments.

Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:5; Matt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:26-28; Gen. 17:10-11; Ex. 12:11, 13; 1 Cor. 10:1-4

LORD'S DAY 34

Q. What does the Lord require in the first commandment?

A. That I, not wanting to endanger my own salvation, avoid and shun all idolatry,¹ sorcery, superstitious rites, and prayer to saints or to other creatures. That I rightly know the only true God, trust him alone, and look to God for every good thing humbly and patiently, and love, fear, and honor God with all my heart. In short, that I give up anything rather than go against God's will in any way.

1 Cor. 6:9-10; 10:5-14; 1 John 5:21; Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:9-12; Matt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9; John 17:3; Jer. 17:5, 7; Ps. 104:27-28; James 1:17; 1 Pet. 5:5-6; Col. 1:11; Heb. 10:36; Matt. 22:37 (Deut. 6:5); Prov. 9:10; 1 Pet. 1:17; Matt. 4:10 (Deut. 6:13) 12 Matt. 5:29-30; 10:37-39

LORD'S DAY 45

Q. Why do Christians need to pray?

A. Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us. And also because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking God for them.

Ps. 50:14-15; 116:12-19; 1 Thess. 5:16-18 2 Matt. 7:7-8;
Luke 11:9-13

LORD'S DAY 52

Q. What does your conclusion to this prayer mean?

A. "For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever" means: We have made all these petitions of you because, as our all-powerful king, you are both willing and able to give us all that is good; and because your holy

name, and not we ourselves,
should receive all the praise, forever.

1 Rom. 10:11-13; 2 Pet. 2:9 2 Ps. 115:1; John 14:13

You can read the entire *Heidelberg Catechism* [here](#) and [here](#).

We will share other catechisms with you in Part 2 of this special eBook series.

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