

## THE LARGE CATECHISM



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## WHAT IS THE CATECHISM?

- **A Confession**
  - Responds in faith to what God teaches
  - Describes, restates, and applies God's Word
  - Always an authoritative summary of Scripture
- **A Book of Instruction**
- **More Doctrinal than Devotional**
- **A Resource for All Christians**

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## THE NATURE OF CATECHESIS

1. **Instruction** and **application**
2. **Application** marked by "What does this mean?"
3. **Ongoing** – never a one-time event
4. Based on the **Word of God**
5. **Memorization** is key
6. Meant for the **Family**

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EXAMPLES FROM SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:1-4 Many have undertaken to compile a narrative about the events that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed them down to us. 3 It also seemed good to me, since I have carefully investigated everything from the very first, to write to you in an orderly sequence, most honorable Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things about which you have been instructed.

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EXAMPLES FROM SCRIPTURE

Acts 18:24-25 A Jew named Apollos, a native Alexandrian, an eloquent man who was powerful in the use of the Scriptures, arrived in Ephesus. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught the things about Jesus accurately, although he knew only John's baptism.

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EXAMPLES FROM SCRIPTURE

Acts 21:20-21 When they heard it, they glorified God and said, "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law. 21 But they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, by telling them not to circumcise their children or to walk in our customs.

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EXAMPLES FROM SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 14:18-20 I thank God that I speak in other languages more than all of you; 19 yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, in order to teach others also, than 10,000 words in another language. 20 Brothers, don't be childish in your thinking, but be infants in regard to evil and adult in your thinking.

Galatians 6:6 The one who is taught the message must share all his good things with the teacher.

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CATECHESIS AMONG EARLY CHRISTIANS

Four Eras

1. Apostolic Era (33-180 AD)
2. Developed Catechesis Era (180-325 AD)
3. Golden Age of Catechesis (325-450 AD)
4. Decline and Decay of Catechesis (450-600 AD)

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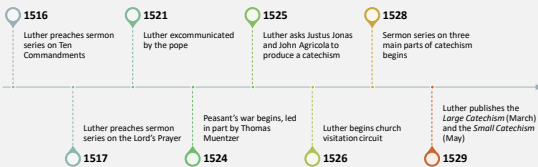
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TIMELINE



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**SPIRITUAL LIFE AT LUTHER'S TIME**

"The deplorable miserable condition which I discovered lately when I, too, was a visitor, has forced and urged me to prepare this Catechism, or Christian doctrine, in this small, plain, simple form. Mercy! Good God! what manifold misery I beheld! The common people, especially in the villages, have no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine, and, alas! many pastors are altogether incapable, and incompetent to teach. Nevertheless, all maintain that they are Christians, all have been baptized and receive the holy Sacrament. Yet they cannot recite either the Lord's Prayer, or the Creed, or the Ten Commandments, they live like dumb brutes and irrational swine; and yet now that the Gospel has come, they have nicely learned to abuse all liberty like experts.

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**SPIRITUAL LIFE AT LUTHER'S TIME**

"Moreover, conditions in the congregations everywhere are pitiable, inasmuch as the peasants learn nothing, know nothing, never pray, do nothing but abuse their liberty, make no confession, receive no communion, as if they had been altogether emancipated from religion."

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**SPIRITUAL LIFE AT LUTHER'S TIME**

"I endeavored to renew the instruction, once well known among all churches, which, however, not only recently, but long ago (I do not know to whose stupidity, negligence, or ignorance this was due) was altogether forgotten, not without lamentable loss to the catholic religion." (Frederic Nausea)

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**SPIRITUAL LIFE AT LUTHER'S TIME**

“What else are such proud, arrogant saints doing who are unwilling to read and study the catechism daily? They think they are much more learned than God Himself with all His saints, angels, prophets, apostles, and all Christians. God Himself is not ashamed to teach these things daily. He knows nothing better to teach. He always keeps teaching the same thing and does not take up anything new or different. All the saints know nothing better or different to learn and cannot finish learning this.”

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**SPIRITUAL LIFE AT LUTHER'S TIME**

“Are we not the finest of all fellows to imagine that if we have once read or heard the catechism, we know it all and have no further need to read or learn? Can we finish learning in one hour what God Himself cannot finish teaching? He is engaged in teaching this from the beginning to the end of the world. All prophets, together with all saints, have been busy learning it, have ever remained students, and must continue to be students.”

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**PASTORAL DUTY**

O ye bishops! what will ye ever answer to Christ for having so shamefully neglected the people and never for a moment discharged your office? May all misfortune flee you! You command the Sacrament in one form and insist on your human laws, and yet at the same time you do not care in the least whether the people know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, or any part of the Word of God. Woe, woe, unto you forever!”

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PASTORAL DUTY

“The devil is called the master of a thousand arts. But what shall we call God’s Word, which drives away and brings to nothing this master of a thousand arts with all his arts and power? The Word must indeed be the master of more than a hundred thousand arts. And shall we easily despise such power, profit, strength, fruit – we, especially, who claim to be pastors and preachers? If so, not only should we have nothing given us to eat, but we should also be driven out, baited with dogs, and pelted with dung.” (Large Catechism)

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Luther declared on November 29, 1528: “Think not, ye housefathers, that you are freed from the care of your household when you say: ‘Oh, if they are unwilling to go [to Catechism instruction], why should I force them? I am not in need of it. ‘You have been appointed their bishop and housepastor; beware lest you neglect your duty toward them!’”

PARENTAL DUTY

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“Hence it is the duty of every father of a family to question and examine his children and servants at least once a week, and to ascertain what they know of it, or are learning, and, if they do not know it, to keep them faithfully at it.” (Large Catechism)

PARENTAL DUTY

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THE CATECHETICAL GOAL

1. Teach the 10 Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer
2. Once the text is learned well, teach the meaning.
3. "In the third place, after you have thus taught them this Short Catechism, then take up the Large Catechism, and give them also a richer and fuller knowledge. Here explain at length every commandment, petition, and part with its various works, uses, benefits, dangers, and injuries as you find these abundantly stated in many books written about these matters." (*Small Catechism*)

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THE CATECHETICAL GOAL

"...until they comprehend with their hearts the entire sum of Christian knowledge in two parts, as in two sacks, which are faith and love. Let faith's sack have two pockets; into the one pocket put the part according to which we believe that we are altogether corrupted by Adam's sin, are sinners and condemned, Rom. 5:12 and Ps. 51:7. Into the other pocket put the part telling us that by Jesus Christ we have all been redeemed from such corrupt, sinful, condemned condition, Rom. 5:18 and John 3:16. Let love's sack also have two pockets. Into the one put this part, that we should serve, and do good to, every one, even as Christ did unto us, Rom. 13. Into the other put the part that we should gladly suffer and endure all manner of evil."

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DOES THEOLOGICAL TRUTH MATTER?

- [Exodus 18:19-20](#) Now listen to me; I will give you some advice, and God be with you. You be the one to represent the people before God and bring their cases to Him. 20 Instruct them about the statutes and laws, and teach them the way to live and what they must do.
- [Deuteronomy 11:19](#) Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.
- [Deuteronomy 20:17-18](#) You must completely destroy them-- the Hittite, Amorite, Canaanite, Perizzite, Hivite, and Jebusite-- as the LORD your God has commanded you, 18 so that they won't teach you to do all the detestable things they do for their gods, and you sin against the LORD your God.

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IS DOCTRINE IMPORTANT TO FAITH?

- Psalm 25:4 Make Your ways known to me, LORD; teach me Your paths.
- Psalm 51:6, 12-15 Surely You desire integrity in the inner self, and You teach me wisdom deep within. 12 Restore the joy of Your salvation to me, and give me a willing spirit. 13 Then I will teach the rebellious Your ways, and sinners will return to You. 14 Save me from the guilt of bloodshed, God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing of Your righteousness. 15 Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise.
- Psalm 86:11 Teach me Your way, Yahweh, and I will live by Your truth. Give me an undivided mind to fear Your name.
- Proverbs 8:10 Accept my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than pure gold.

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FAITH IS NOT ABOUT WHAT YOU KNOW, BUT WHAT YOU DO

Isaiah 29:13-14 The Lord said: Because these people approach Me with their mouths to honor Me with lip-service-- yet their hearts are far from Me, and their worship consists of man-made rules learned by rote-- 14 therefore I will again confound these people with wonder after wonder. The wisdom of their wise men will vanish, and the understanding of the perceptive will be hidden.

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JESUS DID NOT PREACH AT PEOPLE

Matthew 4:23 Jesus was going all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

Mark 1:22 They were astonished at His teaching because, unlike the scribes, He was teaching them as one having authority.

John 7:16-18 Jesus answered them, "My teaching isn't Mine but is from the One who sent Me. 17 If anyone wants to do His will, he will understand whether the teaching is from God or if I am speaking on My own. 18 The one who speaks for himself seeks his own glory. But He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

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FAITH IS NOT ABOUT A BOOK

- **Romans 10:17** So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.
- **Colossians 3:16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
- **2 Timothy 3:16** All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness.
- **Titus 1:7-9** For an overseer, as God's administrator, must be blameless, not arrogant, not hot-tempered, not addicted to wine, not a bully, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, righteous, holy, self-controlled, 9 holding to the faithful message as taught, so that he will be able both to encourage with sound teaching and to refute those who contradict it.

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THE 1<sup>ST</sup> COMMANDMENT

"You shall have no other gods"

- **What does it mean to have a god?**  
 "Answer: A god means that from which we are to expect all good and in which we are to take refuge in all distress .... Now, I say that whatever you set your heart on and put your trust in is truly your god."

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CURSES AND BLESSINGS

**Exodus 20:5-6** You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

*What is God speaking about with...*

- Jealousy
- Visiting iniquity
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generations

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IDENTITY

"The assumption of the modern world is that we are sovereign – that each individual has the right to act independently and do what they want. Related to this is the belief that happiness only comes when we're free from any constraints upon us: free from want, from authority, from societal norms, from expectations. It's this belief that lies behind the old saying to 'live and let live,' and its more modern equivalent 'You do you.' To be happy, I must be free to choose where I live and what I do; free to love whoever I want and in whatever way I want; free from friends who drag me down or from family who place undue expectations on me. Essentially, I must be sovereign over all areas of my life – and to say otherwise is not just considered strange, but, increasingly, immoral."

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10 IMPORTANT THINGS ABOUT BEING CREATION

#1 – There is a God I am not Him.

In what ways do we unintentionally support the "Ever-lie?"

*"Some religions are built on rage and attack. Others float like butterflies on the breeze of stretching exercises and oxygen highs. But all of them root and twist their way back to the Ever-Lie so that the little line between average you and the almighty God isn't nearly so definite as the one in our picture. Atheism to Eastern mysticism, the New Age to Mormonism, crass paganism to those that bear the name 'Christianity' but are not – all these on the surface appear to be diverse theories about who God is and how to get to Him. 'I am God' is not something that many religions are honest enough to teach out loud, although a few do. But at their core, they are all teachings about how to get to God, how to be like God, how to join God, how to be on God's level."*

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Q&A

- What did Luther call "the most common idol?"
- What are some direct statements, beliefs, or accusations you've heard against the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment?

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THE 2<sup>ND</sup> COMMANDMENT

"You shall not take the name of the LORD, your God, in vain."

"Now you understand what it means to take God's name in vain. In sum it means (a) to use His name simply for purposes of falsehood, (b) to assert in God's name something that is not true, or (c) to curse, swear, use spells, and, in short, to practice whatever wickedness one may."

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WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Luther writes, "The world is worse than it has ever been, and there is no government, no obedience, no loyalty, no faith, but only daring, unbridled people. No teaching or reproof helps them. All this is God's wrath and punishment for such lewd contempt of this commandment."

*What do you think about Luther's assertion about direct forms of punishment from God when this commandment is violated?*

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HOW DO WE HONOR GOD'S NAME?

Psalm 50:15 Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.

James 3:10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

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HOW DO WE HONOR GOD'S NAME?

James 5:12 But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

John 17:6 I have revealed Your name to the men You gave Me from the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

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10 IMPORTANT THINGS ABOUT BEING CREATION

#2 – God has a name.

Can you think any false teachings that came from "trying to figure God out?"

*"Everyone has trouble with this. The Bible is filled with people who wanted to understand God, who wanted to see God, who tried to ascend to God, to figure God out, or even to control Him. Through all of it, God deftly turns aside every attempt to reach Him and consistently hands out the Second Important Thing about Being Creation instead: God has a name."*

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THE 3<sup>RD</sup> COMMANDMENT

"You shall sanctify the holy day."

"Whenever God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read, or meditated upon, then the person, day, and work are sanctified. This is not because of the outward work, but because of the Word, which makes saints of us all. Therefore, I constantly say that all our life and work must be guided by God's Word, if it is to be God-pleasing or holy. Where this is done, this commandment is in force and being fulfilled."

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NOT ABOUT THE DAY

Romans 14:5-6 One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. (ESV)

Colossians 2:16-17 Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. 17 These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. (ESV)

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Seven horizontal lines for writing.

Q&A

- Can you think of some proper times to swear by God’s name?
- Why is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment an excellent proof for the Biblical creation account?
- What did Luther call the “mortal sin” against the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment?

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Seven horizontal lines for writing.

10 IMPORTANT THINGS ABOUT BEING CREATION

#3 – God speaks.

Can you think of a Bible passage that speaks about the effectiveness of God’s Word?

“... a wide and seemingly easy path beckons you to discard what has surely been spoken by God, and to turn and run off looking for something new, something to convince you that your words are more powerful than they really are. The old man will look for God in every crevice and corner, every shadow and penumbra of fluttering thought and emotion, in the clouds and the sunshine, in signs and wonders. But he will never look for the real God because he will never look for a God who actually speaks.

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Seven horizontal lines for writing.