

What Does This Mean?

The Continuing Importance of Luther's Small Catechism

Lesson 1: Introduction and Background

Why Do We Have a Catechism?



Prayer and Introduction.

- 1. List three things you remember about Luther's Small Catechism?**
(If you have never had a copy of Luther's Small Catechism, can you list three things you know about it?)
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
- 2. In your own words, why did you study Luther's Catechism?**
(If you did not study Luther's Catechism, what motivated you to join this discussion?)
- 3. When was the last time you read any part of the Catechism**
(exclude those times you spoke or read portions in worship)?

- 4. The following list includes some of the points of the presentation. Use the space provided to identify what you learned about them in the course of the next few minutes.** (If you are working in a group, designate one person to identify one important idea from the presentation.)

Part One:

Priests were to preach 4 times a year on the Catechism, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. The Ave Maria was also a part of their reaching.

1500: *A Fruitful Mirror or Small Handbook for Christians* by Dietrich Kolde

Contents:

Penance:

a.

b.

c.

Theology of "musts" (Theology of glory)

"To trust in works, which one ought to do in fear, is equivalent to giving oneself the honor and taking it from God, to whom fear is due in connection with every work." (AE 31:46)

- 5. Pause to review this part of the presentation and share what you learned with the others in your group.** The person chosen to identify one important idea can start, but others in your group may add to the discussion.

Part Two:

Luther and 1516 work in Wittenberg

Luther's Personal Prayer Book 1522

Contents:

“These books are puffed up with promises of indulgences and come out with decorations in red ink and pretty titles...These books need a basic and thorough reformation if not total extermination...But I just don't have the time to undertake such a reformation: it is too much for me alone. So until God gives me more time and grace, I will limit myself to the exhortation in this book” (AE 31:11,12)

Theology of Christ (Theology of the Cross)

“Now it is not sufficient for anyone, and it does him no good to recognize God in his glory and majesty, unless he recognized him in the humility and shame of the cross...true theology and recognition of God are in the crucified Christ” (AE 31:52,53)

Nicholas Hausman (Zwickau) 1525

Diet of Speyer 1526: The religion of the prince is the religion of the territory.

Visitations:

Large and Small Catechism: 1529 (Large Catechism April; Small Catechism May)

6. Pause to review this part of the presentation and share what you learned with the others in your group. The person chosen to identify one important idea can start, but others in your group may add to the discussion.

7. Luther's Small Catechism represented a dramatic shift in thinking and theology. Contrast the approach of Dietrich Kolde and Martin Luther. List at least two differences.

1.

2.

8. Taking it Home: Read Luther's First Chief Part: The Ten Commandments.

You may simply read what Luther wrote or you may also read the explanation of the Ten Commandments that we have also included in our catechisms. Use the Catechism you used in confirmation instructions.

For Question #7 Presentation after exercise.

Personal Prayer Book (Martin Luther)

It was not unintended in God's particular ordering of things that lowly Christian people who might be able to read the Bible should nevertheless be obligated to learn and know the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. Indeed, the total content of Scripture and preaching and everything Christians need to know is quite fully and adequately comprehended in these three items. They summarize everything with such brevity and clarity that people can complain or make any excuse that the things necessary for their salvation are too complicated or difficult for them to remember.

Three things we must know in order to be saved. First we must know what to do and what to leave undone. Second, when we realize that we cannot measure up to what we should do or leave undone, we need to know where to go to find the strength we require. Third, we must know how to seek and obtain that strength. It is just like sick people who first have to determine the nature of their sickness, then find out what to do or to leave undone. After that they have to know where to get the medicine which will help them do or leave undone what is right for a healthy person. Third we have to desire to search for this medicine and to obtain it or have it brought to us.

Thus the commandments teach all to recognize their sickness, enabling them to perceive what they must do or refrain from doing, consent to or refuse, and so they will recognize themselves to be sinful and wicked people. The Creed will teach and show them where to find the medicine—grace—which will help them to become devout and keep the commandments. The Creed points them to God and his mercy, given and made plain to them in Christ. Finally, the Lord's Prayer teaches all this, namely through the fulfillment of God's commandments everything will be given them. In these three are the essentials of the entire Bible. (AE 43, 13-14)