

The New City Catechism^e

The New City Catechism

52 Questions
& Answers
for Our Hearts
& Minds

Introduction by
Kathy Keller

 **CROSSWAY**[®]

WHEATON, ILLINOIS

*The New City Catechism:
52 Questions and Answers for Our
Hearts and Minds*

Copyright © 2017 by The Gospel
Coalition and Redeemer Presbyterian
Church

Published by
Crossway
1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this
publication may be reproduced, stored
in a retrieval system, or transmitted
in any form by any means, electronic,
mechanical, photocopy, recording,
or otherwise, without the prior
permission of the publisher, except
as provided for by USA copyright law.
Crossway® is a registered trademark
in the United States of America.

This publication was made possible
through the support of a grant from
the John Templeton Foundation.
The opinions expressed in this
publication are those of the publisher
and do not necessarily reflect
the views of the John Templeton
Foundation.

Design:
Matthew Wahl

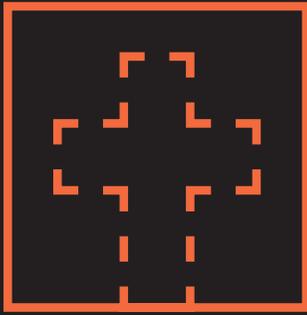
First printing 2017
Printed in China

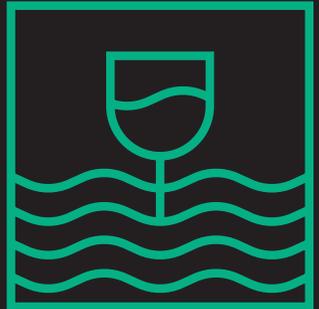
Scripture quotations are from the
ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English
Standard Version®), copyright © 2001
by Crossway, a publishing ministry
of Good News Publishers. Used by
permission. All rights reserved.

Trade paperback ISBN:
978-1-4335-5507-7
ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-5510-7
PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-5508-4
Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-5509-1

Crossway is a publishing ministry of
Good News Publishers.

RRDS 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1





Introduction by Kathy Keller

“Catechism – with *our* kids?” Years ago that was my response when someone suggested that we begin doing a catechism with our very young, very active boys. But, to my amazement, it was a truly wonderful experience.

We used the *Catechism for Young Children*, a highly simplified version based on the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*. The first questions are very easy, and the answers so short that even an eighteen-month-old can answer triumphantly “God!” when asked “Who made you?” and “Everything” to the second question, “What else did God make?” We discovered that our kids loved the question/answer dynamic; to them it was almost a game, through which they could experience a legitimate sense of achievement.

My first encounter with teaching a catechism to children was even more counterintuitive. As a seminary student I spent one summer working for a church in a gang-infested part of Philadelphia. There I heard of a young pastor in an even more troubled area of the city who had developed a very successful ministry to children. It met on Saturdays and attracted hundreds of elementary and middle school kids. I decided to go see the program in action.

I'm not sure what I expected – warm-hearted volunteers dispensing Kool-Aid, hugs, and Jesus stories? What I found, to my slack-jawed amazement, was a building with more than two hundred

kids in it, divided by age group, learning the catechism! I must admit that very few things have surprised me more. I had never given a thought to the catechism as a modern-day teaching tool, and even if I had, it would not have occurred to me to use it in these circumstances.

The pastor was used to the shocked disbelief and surprised questions: “Why on earth are you having them memorize a catechism? Don't they need the basic gospel message? When do you get to that?” I have still not forgotten his answer:

These kids know nothing whatsoever about God, or Jesus, or sin. They've never even heard the words, except as curse words. We're building a framework in their minds of words and ideas and concepts, so that when we do tell them about sin and the Savior who came to die for it, there is a way for them to understand what we are saying.

I went away chastened, but not entirely convinced. Maybe so, but it still seemed so, so *medieval* to have children memorizing the catechism, no matter how deprived their spiritual education had been. A few weeks later I changed my mind.

I had developed a mentor relationship with a twelve-year-old girl from the neighborhood, and I was sharing the gospel with her, or so I thought. Waxing eloquent, I said, “Do you know what Easter means?” She thought seriously for a moment, and then answered, “It was either when that guy was born or when he died, I forget.” I realized she had no framework to understand my words. I wish I'd started her on a catechism instead.

One last personal story from my family. Jonathan, our youngest, was waiting for me to pick him up at his babysitter's house. As he stared pensively out the window, she asked him, "What are you thinking about?" Unbeknownst to her, this triggered the adult-asks-a-question-and-I-provide-an-answer part of his brain, so his answer was (taken from the pages of the catechism) "God." "What are you thinking about God?" she responded in surprise, and got the even more surprising answer (comprising the second and third catechism answers): "How he made all things for his own glory." She almost fell over – she thought she was in the presence of a prodigy. Really, it was just the catechism.

Time and Commitment

Stories aside, how do people in the real world, with real twenty-first-century families, find the time or commitment to do something like a catechism? It's a challenge. Most families, on their own, stop and restart several times. (We did, too.) It is so much easier if there is a church-sponsored program, or small group accountability, where each week the next question and answer will be memorized for recitation. One mother at our church wrote:

We have several ways that catechism has fit into our family lives . . . some more successful than others, but we do feel it is very important. We've used a catechism for bed-time devotionals with our children. We have started and stopped memorizing catechisms as a family several times. And I taught it as a

class at church for 4th/5th-graders. The positive effect catechesis has had on our family is: summarizing God's truths into digestible questions and answers so that as our children experience life and the world around them, they are able to understand how God has worked through time and history, how he will work in their lives and in the future of this world and mankind. As we walk through the difficult questions in life, the catechism is often the guide to which we are able to direct our children to the truths in Scripture.

The key is becoming convinced that you are furnishing your child with the mental foundation on which the rest of his or her spiritual life will be built. Or, to switch metaphors, you are laying the kindling and the logs in the fireplace, so that when the spark of the Holy Spirit ignites your child's heart, there will be a steady, mature blaze.

Memorization Tips

- Read the question and answer out loud, and repeat, repeat, repeat.
- Read the question and answer out loud, then try to repeat them without looking. Repeat.
- Read aloud all part 1 questions and answers (then part 2, then part 3) while physically moving about. The combination of movement and speech strengthens a person's ability to recall text.
- Record yourself saying all part 1 questions and answers (then part 2, then part 3) and listen to them during everyday activities such as workouts, chores, and so on.
- Write the questions and answers on cards and tape them in a conspicuous area. Read them aloud every time you see them.
- Make flash cards with the question on one side and the answer on the other, and test yourself. Children can color these in and draw pictures on them.
- Review the question and answer at night and in the morning. For children spend a few minutes at bedtime helping them remember the answer, then repeat at breakfast the next morning.
- Write out the question and answer. Repeat. The process of writing helps a person's ability to recall text.
- Drill the questions and answers with another person as often as possible.
- Visit **www.newcitycatechism.com** to find songs and other resources to help with learning *The New City Catechism*.

Our Response to God

Children are constantly learning. Their inquiring minds soak up information at a spectacular rate. They are trying to make sense of a complex and ever-changing world, seeking to acquire the skills to survive – and even thrive – in life. As they learn, a framework of understanding is established in their minds. This is called a worldview. All children and adults observe and interact with the world through their personal worldview. It is a thrilling and great responsibility to raise children and shape their understanding of the world, how it works, and their unique purpose in it. To catechize children is to build their worldview, to teach them from Scripture about the world, and to inform their interactions with those they will live, play, learn, and work alongside.

You will notice that each catechism question has a symbol that corresponds to one of the Christian virtues listed on page 11. Each question and corresponding answer is derived directly from Scripture; as children are catechized, they are learning to bury the truths of Scripture deep in their hearts. The virtue symbols are simply guides to help families talk about how to respond to the Word of God, and they correspond to *The New City Catechism Curriculum* (Crossway 2018). The emphasis and intention of *The New City Catechism* is to shape and affect the hearts of the children who learn it, with the hope that the catechism will contribute greatly to the nurture of godly, mature, and virtuous young men and women.

It is our hope that as families work together to learn the fifty-two questions and answers found in this book, they will increase not only in knowledge, but in the fruit of the Spirit, as they grow to love God with all of their hearts.

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut. 6:6–9)

– Melanie Lacey
Director of Theology for Children
and Youth, Oak Hill College

Virtues Key



Awe

As children gain an increasing awareness of God, they will correctly understand themselves as ones who have been created for relationship with God and others.



Forgiveness

As children clearly comprehend the amazing forgiveness that has been provided for them through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, they will develop an active forgiving nature.



Gratitude

As children realize the goodness and grace of God in their own lives, a disposition of gratitude is developed; this nurtures a grateful spirit and causes children to act in generous ways toward others.



Honesty

As children recognize the truth of the gospel and the holiness of God, they will desire to live in a transparent and honest way that will greatly benefit their relationship with God and others.



Hope

As children come to understand God's eternal plans and provision, they will begin to know the hope that God is presently at work in them making them more like Jesus, and that one day they will be with him forever.



Humility

As children observe the humility displayed in Jesus's life, they will be shaped to be increasingly inclined to put the needs of others before their own. They should be willing to sacrifice personal gain and status for the sake of others.



Joy

As children come to know and understand the perfection, power, and provision of God, they will develop a joyful disposition. This will allow them to find contentment in God and his promises rather than fleeting happiness that comes from external factors and experiences.



Love

As children comprehend the unconditional, redemptive love of God, their ability to love and propensity for love will increase and influence their own familial and peer relationships.



Perseverance

As children understand the work of the Spirit in their lives and the hope of eternal glory, a spirit of perseverance grows; they will be established to face the trials and difficulties of life confident in the power and provision of God.



Trust

As children learn great truths about the triune God and the Scriptures, a robust and trustworthy worldview is established through which the world may be encountered.

The large catechism question is easy to read quickly.

The illustrations throughout the book are visual depictions of the questions and answers in the catechism. Each illustration was designed to help visual learners with memorization.

Question 24

Why was it necessary for Christ, the Redeemer, to die?



Answer

Since death is the punishment for sin, Christ died willingly in our place to deliver us from the power and penalty of sin and bring us back to God. By his substitutionary atoning death, he alone redeems us from hell and gains for us forgiveness of sin, righteousness, and everlasting life.

The highlighted portion is a more concise answer designed to be memorized by younger children.

The icon represents a response to God that flows from each question. A key to the icons can be found on page 11.



Colossians 1:21-22

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

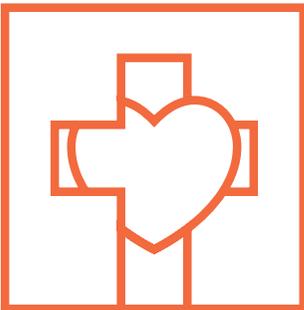
Supporting Scripture passage.

Part 1

God, Creation & Fall, Law

Question 1

What is our
only hope in life
and death?



Answer

That we are not our own
but belong, body and soul,
both in life and death,
to God and to our Savior
Jesus Christ.

Romans 14:7-8

For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.



Question 2

What is God?



Answer

God is the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything. He is eternal, infinite, and unchangeable in his power and perfection, goodness and glory, wisdom, justice, and truth. Nothing happens except through him and by his will.

Psalm 86:8–10, 15

There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God. . . . But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.



Question 3

How many
persons are there
in God?



Answer

There are three persons in the one true and living God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are the same in substance, equal in power and glory.



2 Corinthians 13:14

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Question 4

How and why did God create us?



Answer

God created us male and female in his own image to know him, love him, live with him, and glorify him. And it is right that we who were created by God should live to his glory.



Genesis 1:27

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Question 5

What else did God create?



Answer

God created all things by his powerful Word, and all his creation was very good; everything flourished under his loving rule.



Genesis 1:31

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.