

AN ANGLICAN CATECHISM
Grace Anglican Fellowship

catechesis: the teaching of the Christian faith (Greek: κατήγησις, "instruction")

catechism: the study of the Christian faith

catechist: the teacher of catechesis

catechumen: the person being taught the Christian faith; "disciples" are life-long learners.

catechumenate: the period or course of study

catholic: from Greek καθολικός, *katholikos*, literally *katha* + *olikos*, "just as the whole." The earliest usage of the word in Christian writings from the second century onward implies sound, universal and Biblical doctrine as opposed to heresy, and unity of organization as opposed to schism.

"To Be a Christian" is not specifically "to be an Anglican Christian:" J. I. Packer lurks behind every page.

There is a desperate need for catechism in the Church, where mainline churches have contented themselves with running people through a one-hour service that assuages their perceived need for nodding in God's general direction, while the mega churches have focused on swelling their numbers by attracting new members and entertaining Christians who have grown tired of the traditional church.

Both of these approaches have supplanted discipleship in the Church, the only thing that Jesus actually commanded for the Church in His Great Commission: "Go into the world and make disciples, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you" (Matthew 28:19, 20a).

This is precisely what the modern church has failed to do. We are paying the price for this neglect of teaching and discipling, the very things we were explicitly commanded to be doing, to the end not that people would say, "Church is fun," but to the end that they would know, accept and observe the commandments of Jesus. And so the **goal** of catechesis, the much-neglected foundation on which the Church of Jesus Christ is to be built, is to shape Christians into the image of Christ, Who commanded us to do so in His Name, in the Name of the Holy Trinity. And it is in the exercise of this discipline that Jesus promised, "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20b).

Come to see Jesus, to learn His Word and His commandments, to obey His Commission and to understand the Church as He meant it to be, not because you want to be better Anglicans or to help us out with our numbers, but because you want to go deeper in your faith by getting to know more of what it means "To Be a Christian," the title of our catechism. All catechesis is to be Christocentric: focused on Jesus.

We would do well also to remember the methodology of St. Augustine when preaching/teaching: "Those of you... who have understood, bear with me a little longer for the sake of those who have not, that I might open it up to them... Think of those who walk a little slower. Slow down your pace a bit – that you do not leave behind your slower companions."

Foundations of the Faith	Doctrine (Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, Articles, Jerusalem Declaration, et al.)	Devotion (Lord's Prayer, private and corporate worship, Sacraments)	Discipline (Decalogue, Summary, NT instruction, Evangelism, Discipling)
John 14:6	Truth	Life	Way
3 traditional principles	Lex credendi (law of faith)	<i>Lex orandi</i> (law of prayer)	Lex vivendi (law of life)
3 theological virtues (I Cor. 13:13)	Faith	Hope	Love
Acts 2:42	The Apostles' teaching	The breaking of bread and the prayers	The fellowship
Reformed catechisms	Exposition of the Creeds	Exposition of the Lord's Prayer	Exposition of the Decalogue
Prima Scriptura	Bible & the Creeds	Bible & the BCP	Bible & the Rule of Life
Jewish roots (<i>Tanakh</i>)	Law (<i>Torah</i>)	Writings (<i>Kethuvim</i>)	Prophets (<i>Nevi'im</i>)
The Way (the Faith)	Grounded <i>in</i> the Way	Worshipping <i>through</i> the Way	Living <i>out</i> the Way

It is important for persons with a Protestant background to recognize that catechesis is not something that Catholics, Anglicans and Lutherans do, but we do not. Catechumens existed by the time of Paul's Letter to the Galatians, which mentions them in 6:6 – "Let the catechumen, the one who is taught, share all good things with the catechist, the one who teaches." The practice slowly evolved from the development of doctrine and the need to test converts against the dangers of falling away. Catechumens were limited as to their attendance in formal services. One practice permitted them to remain in the first part of the mass, but even in the earliest centuries they were dismissed before the Eucharist. Others had them entering through a side door, or observing from the side, from a gallery, or near the font. It was not unknown to bar them from all services until baptized after 1 to 3 years of training.

According to our ACNA catechism, Christian disciple-making continued for some centuries before falling into disuse, as nominal Christianity increasingly became a universal aspect of Western culture until the Reformation era, when there was a vigorous renewal of *catechesis* for both adults and children among both Protestants and Catholics. But catechesis has been in serious decline since the eighteenth century, and much of the discipline of discipling has been abandoned altogether in today's churches.

Today Anglican and Lutheran churches tend to follow a catechumenate which can be likened to a course in the fundamentals of the religion, lasting typically from 6 weeks to six months and ending with baptism at the Easter Vigil. However, this is at the discretion of the local minister, and times may be adjusted, often so that the baptisms or receptions will coincide with the annual episcopal visit of the bishop.

O God, Who wonderfully created and yet more wonderfully restored the dignity of human nature: grant that we may share the divine life of Him who humbled Himself to share our humanity, Your Son Jesus Christ, Who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen*

PART I: BEGINNING WITH CHRIST

Introduction

This Catechism is designed to make clear to everyone what it means to be a Christian. It lays out what is essential for Christian faith and life. It will open for you the door to knowing Jesus Christ and experiencing the full love of God through Him. It will lead you to full involvement in the life and mission of the Church, as you become a citizen of the Kingdom of God. And it will anchor you in the full reality of unquenchable joy, beginning in this life and ever increasing in the life to come.

However, one can know about these things and yet remain apart from them. In order not to miss what God is offering you, it is imperative that you receive Jesus Christ as your own Savior and Lord – if you have not already done so – and commit yourself to Him to be His lifelong disciple. This opening section of the Catechism focuses on helping you to take this step, and when you have done it, to know that you have done it, so that you may go on from there.

To be a Christian is a lifelong commitment, but it begins with becoming a Christian in a conscious way, just as being a spouse begins with taking marriage vows. Being a Christian is a process of advance from that point. As you continue with Christ, with His Father as your Father, His Holy Spirit as your helper and guide, and His Church as your new family, you will constantly be led deeper into your born-again calling of worship, service, and Christ-like relationships.

The Gospel

You need to be clear from the beginning that God creates human beings for intimacy with Himself; but no one naturally fulfills this purpose. We are all out of step with God. In Bible language, we are sinners, guilty before God and separated from him. Life in Christ is, first and foremost, God taking loving action to remedy a dire situation.

The key facts of this divine remedy, which the Bible calls the Gospel (meaning “good news”), are these: God the Father sent His eternal Son into this world to reconcile us sinners to Him, and to preserve and prepare us for His glory in the life to come. Born of the Virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit, the Son, Whose human name is Jesus, lived a perfect life, died a criminal’s death as a sacrifice for our sins, and rose from the grave to rule as Christ (meaning “the Anointed”) on His Father’s behalf in the Kingdom of God. Now reigning in heaven, He continues to draw sinners to Himself through communication of the Gospel here on earth. He enables us by the Holy Spirit to turn whole-heartedly from our sinful and self-centered ways (repentance) and to entrust ourselves to Him to live in union and communion with Him (faith). In spiritual terms, self-centeredness is the way of death, and fellowship with Christ is the way of life. Holy Baptism, the rite of entry into the Church’s fellowship, marks this transition from death to life in Christ. The Apostle Peter said, as he proclaimed the Gospel on Pentecost morning: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of

your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself” (Acts 2:38-39).

God the Father calls us to Himself through God the Son. Jesus said, “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). As we come to the Father through Jesus Christ, we experience the unconditional and transforming love of God.

God the Son calls us to believe in Him. After Jesus was raised from the dead, one of his followers named Thomas said that he would only believe if he could see Jesus and touch His wounds. Jesus later appeared, held out His hands, and told Thomas to put his finger in the wounds. Thomas then exclaimed, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). We may understand a great deal about Jesus, as Thomas did before this encounter, but that is not the same as personally believing in Jesus as our Lord and God. We can attend church services and do many good things without knowing the risen Jesus. Knowing Jesus as Savior and Lord means personally believing in Him, surrendering our lives to Him, and living as His joyful followers.

God the Holy Spirit enlightens our minds and hearts to believe in Jesus, and gives us spiritual birth and life as we do. Our loving Father will “give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him” (Luke 11:13). As we place our faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to live in us and wonderfully provides us with power and gifts for life and ministry as Jesus’ disciples. To live faithfully as Christians we must rely upon the equipping and empowering of the Holy Spirit.

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are near to us at all times and will hear us whenever we pray with sincerity, truly meaning what we say. God calls us to repentance and faith in Christ, and a way to enter into life in Christ is to say a prayer like this – preferably in the presence of a mature Christian:

Prayer of Repentance and Faith

Lord Jesus Christ, I confess my faults, shortcomings, sins, and rebellious acts, and ask You to forgive me. I embrace You, Lord Jesus, as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for Your atoning death on the cross in obedience to Your Father’s will to put away my sins. I enthrone You, Lord Jesus, to be in charge of every part of my life, and I ask You to indwell and empower me with Your Holy Spirit, so that I may live as Your faithful follower from now on. Amen.

Inquirers who are on the road to faith, but know they are not yet ready to pray these words with full sincerity, may still be able to pray honestly along the following lines:

Inquirer’s Prayer

O God, my Creator, Who sent Your Son as the Way, the Truth and the Life to save me and all the world, I believe in Your reality. Help my unbelief.

I long to understand all that it means to be loved, known, and forgiven by You, and to be made whole: at peace with You, others, myself, and Your creation. I know I have sinned against You, others, myself, and the creation of which I am part.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner. Open my eyes to all that You are, and draw me closer to You, I pray. Amen.

God will always answer honest prayer, made with patience, persistence, and humility.

As you explore this Catechism, turn again and again to God in prayer, so that you will come to know Him more and more. As you learn more about God the Father, you could pray a prayer like this:

Gracious Father, I come to You through the saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Thank You for adopting me as Your child through Him. Grant me the grace to know You more fully as my heavenly Father, that I may enjoy the fullness of the promises of Your eternal Kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

As you learn more about God the Son, you could pray a prayer like this:

Lord Jesus Christ, as I surrender to You as Lord of my life, draw me ever closer to You. Show me where I may harbor resistance to Your lordship and rejection of Your will. Bring me into the greater joy of the abundant life that You desire for me, now and forever; through Your holy Name. Amen.

As you learn more about God the Holy Spirit, you could pray a prayer like this:

Almighty God, thank You for giving me new life in Jesus Christ. I ask You to fill me afresh with Your Holy Spirit. Bring forth in me the goodness and love of Jesus. Empower me to serve You in faith and obedience to Christ that I may always live for Your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In order to give clarity and further detail, and for the purposes of teaching and learning, these things will now be set out in question and answer form.

SALVATION

1. What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is the good news of God loving and saving lost mankind through the ministry in word and deed of His Son, Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Romans 5:15; John 1:12; 1 John 5:11-12)

2. What is the human condition?

The universal human condition is that, though made for fellowship with our Creator, we have been cut off from Him by self-centered rebellion against Him, leading to guilt, shame, and fear of death and judgment. This is the state of sin. (Genesis 3; Romans 3:23)

3. How does sin affect you?

Sin alienates me from God, my neighbor, God's good creation, and myself. I am hopeless, guilty, lost, helpless, and walking in the way of death. (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23)

4. What is the way of death?

The way of death is a life empty of God's love and life-giving Holy Spirit, controlled by things that cannot bring me eternal joy, but that lead only into darkness, misery and eternal condemnation. (Romans 1:25; Proverbs 14:12; John 8:34)

5. Can you mend your broken relationship with God?

No. I have no power to save myself, for sin has corrupted my conscience and captured my will. Only God can save me. (Ephesians 2:1-9; John 14:6; Titus 3:3-7)

6. What is the way of life?

The way of life is a life directed toward loving and responding to God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in the power of God's indwelling Holy Spirit, and leading to eternal life. (John 14:23-26; Colossians 1:9-12; Ephesians 5:1-2; Romans 12:9-21)

7. What does God want to give you?

God wants to reconcile me to Himself, to free me from captivity to sin, to fill me with knowledge of Him, to make me a citizen of His Kingdom, and to enable me to worship, serve, and glorify Him now and forever. (1 John 5:11-12; 1 Corinthians 5:19; Ephesians 2:19; 3:19; Colossians 1:9)

8. How does God save you?

God saves me by grace, which is His undeserved love given to me in and through Jesus. “God so loved the world, that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

9. Who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus is my Savior, fully divine and fully human. He bore my sins, dying in my place on the cross, then rose from the dead to rule as anointed King over me and all creation. (Colossians 1:15-26)

10. Is there any other way of salvation?

No. The Apostle Peter said of Jesus, “There is salvation in no one else” (Acts 4:12). Jesus is the only one Who can save me and reconcile me to God. (1 Timothy 2:5)

11. How should you respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

I should repent of my sins and put faith in Jesus Christ as my Savior and my Lord. (Romans 10:9-10; Acts 16:31)

12. What does it mean for you to repent?

To repent means that I have a change of heart, turning from sinfully serving myself to serving God as I follow Jesus Christ. I need God’s help to make this change. (Acts 2:38; 3:19)

13. What does it mean for you to have faith?

To have faith means that I believe the Gospel is true; I acknowledge that Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead to rule over me; I entrust myself to Him as my Savior; and I obey Him as my Lord. As the Apostle Paul said, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

14. How may a person repent and place faith in Jesus Christ?

Anyone may repent and place their faith in Jesus Christ at any time. One way to do this is by sincerely saying a prayer similar to the *Prayer of Repentance and Faith* given above. (John 15:16; Acts 16:31-34; Romans 10:9; Hebrews 12:12)

15. What should you do once you have turned to God for salvation in repentance and faith?

If I have not already been baptized, following proper instruction, I should be baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and thus into membership in His Body, the Church. (Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 12:13)

16. What does God grant in saving you?

God grants me reconciliation with Him (2 Corinthians 5:17-19), forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13-14), adoption into His family (Galatians 4:4-7), citizenship in His Kingdom (Ephesians 2:19-21, Philippians 3:20), union with Him in Christ (Romans 6:3-5), new life in the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:4-5), and the promise of eternal life (John 3:16; 1 John 5:12).

17. What does God desire to accomplish in your life in Christ?

God desires to transform me into the image of Jesus Christ my Lord, by the power of His Holy Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

18. How does God transform you?

He will transform me over time through corporate and private worship, prayer, and Bible reading; fellowship with God's people; pursuit of holiness of life; witness toward those who do not know Christ; and acts of love toward all. The first Christians set this pattern as they "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:23-25)