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SAMPLE

**The Bible, The Creeds, The Ten Commandments,
And The Sacraments**



For Youth And Adults

By

Rev. Thomas F. Fischer, M.Div., M.S.A.

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Luther's Small Catechism: An Introduction Is Available On-Line Or In Printed Formats

* Version 1.0

Welcome To *Small Catechism Online!*

Small Catechism Online is a simple introduction to Luther's Small Catechism. Simple enough for Fifth graders, Junior High Youth and adults will appreciate the simple, direct and non-complicated introductions to the Christian Faith via Luther's Small Catechism.

How To Use *Small Catechism Online*

Small Catechism Online is designed for individual and classroom use. It stands alone as a perfect basic introduction to Christianity for youth or adults. Consider using *Small Catechism Online* as...

- 1) A tool for personal growth and review of the Christian Faith;
- 2) A basic introduction for all ages; Fifth Graders to adults
- 3) A complement to Junior Confirmation Instruction
- 4) A complement to Adult Instruction
- 5) A Bible Class resource or a twenty week congregational emphasis to help renew the basis of Christian Faith via Luther's *Small Catechism*.

Available online, SmallCatechism.org is readily accessible by many Lutherans and others at home, work or church..

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Small Catechism Online Contents

Lesson Unit I: God's Word

- 1** ***I-A: What is Confirmation?***
- 2** ***I-B: The Small Catechism***
- 3** ***I-C: The Bible***
- 4** ***I-D: Law & Gospel***
- 5** ***I-E: Review***
- Supp** **Introduction To Martin Luther**

Unit II: The Ten Commandments

- 6** ***II-A: The Ten Commandments***
- 7** ***II-B: Commandments 1-3***
- 8** ***II-C: Commandments 4-6***
- 9** ***II-D: Commandments 7-10***

Unit III: The Apostles' Creed

- 10** ***III-A: The Creeds***
- 11** ***III-B: The Trinity***
- 12** ***III-C: The First Article***
- 13** ***III-D: The Second Article***
- 14** ***IV-E: The Third Article***

Unit IV: The Sacraments

- 15** ***IV-A: The Sacraments***
- 16** ***IV-B: Holy Baptism***
- 17** ***IV-C: Holy Communion***

Unit V: Review

**Online Quizzes are also available
For each lesson**

Introduction

The joy of discipling children, youth and adults into the Christian Faith is one of the greatest joys Christians can experience.

www.SmallCatechism.org provides tools to help experience this joy of discipleship in Christ. Biblically-based and Christ-Centered, the materials are written from a Confessional Lutheran perspective. It is this foundation in Biblical Truth that gives the Lutheran Faith its unique clarity regarding The Bible, The Sacraments, The Trinity, Law and Gospel, Grace and Sanctification.

I have originally written these materials to provide another way to help those in my congregation grow in Christ. It is my hope that Lutherans and non-Lutherans alike will be used to the glory of God to strengthen the Church. May God bless your use of these materials. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

Rev. Thomas F. Fischer, M.Div., M.S.A.

Also From *www.SmallCatechism.org*

- **Communion Retreat:** The perfect resource for a 3 hour experience of the Lord's Supper from a Biblical Perspective.
- **SmallCatechism.org Quizzes:** Offered in printed form and on-line!
- **New Testament Bible Summaries:** A remarkably simple way to help confirmands begin reading the Bible for themselves.
- **Small Catechism Outlines and Materials.**

About The Author:

Since his graduation from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri in 1983 (M.Div.), Thomas F. Fischer has had a passion for discipleship. His writings have appeared in numerous periodicals and featured by well-known publishers including the Alban Institute. In addition to furthering his studies at the graduate level in exegetical and systematic theology, Tom completed a Masters of Science in Administration at Central Michigan University (1994). Tom's passion for leadership is demonstrated in his internationally acclaimed ***www.MinistryHealth.net*** website, written to support healthy Pastors and congregations. An accomplished classical organist, Tom enjoys classical and contemporary music, writing hymns (***www.creativehymns.com***). He is currently writing a commentary on the New Testament to encourage lay people to read and understand the Bible (***www.DailyBibleHabit.com***). When not at the church, you can be sure to find Tom doing his favorite thing: golfing.

He and his wife, Cheryl, have been married since 1980. Together they have a daughter, Michelle, and a son-in-law, Bob, married in February, 2009.

Acknowledgements

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Unit I-A

What Is Confirmation?

Confirmation: An Early Church Practice

From the beginnings of the Christian Church adults and children were baptized and taught the Christian Faith as Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:18-20). At Pentecost, thousands were baptized in a single day (Acts 2). Scripture records many times when entire households were baptized. "Households" included not only family members, but all the families of servants living in her extensive household (Acts 16:14-15). The practice of Confirmation is not recorded in Scripture. Nowhere are we commanded to "confirm" people. However, Jesus, St. Paul, Peter, Moses and so many others commanded us to grow in the faith (Colossians 2:6-7), "continue in the things you have learned" (II Timothy 3:15-17), and put one's faith into practice each day by any means possible (Deuteronomy 6:4ff.).

What Is Confirmation?

"Confirmation" is a rite developed by the Church. Lutherans do not hold it as a sacrament. At confirmation, a baptized person publicly "confirms" their faith at the Lord's altar. Unbaptized persons are traditionally baptized at their time of their confirmation.

In every case, confirmation involves some form of instruction. Lutherans base their confirmation instruction on Luther's *Small Catechism*. The oldest catechism still in use, Luther's *Small Catechism* taught six essential areas of faith ("chief parts"). These include...

- 1) How Christians Live (The Ten Commandments)
- 2) Who God Is (The Apostles' Creed)
- 3) How To Pray (The Lord's Prayer)
- 4) How To Forgive And Be Forgiven (The Office Of The Keys And Confession)
- 5) What Baptism Is (Holy Baptism)
- 6) What The Lord's Supper Is And Does (The Lord's Supper)

Lutheran Confirmation Today

There are many ways Lutherans conduct confirmation. Regardless of the method of instruction, the goal is always to provide a significant base for a growing faith.



As important as confirmation is, the ritual of confirmation is not as important as the development of faith which confirmation strives. Confirmation's goal is to encourage, by God's Word and Holy Spirit, a growing, dynamic, life-long expression of faith which endures until we receive the "crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

Why Do I Have to Go Through Confirmation?

For young people who have been brought up in the church, much of what it means to be a Christian and to take on the ministry of being a church member is already well-known.

You've listened in worship and in religious education classes and have an idea of why we have church services. You've (hopefully) been in Sunday School and seen baptisms and come to receive a blessing at the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The purpose of Confirmation is to organize all the stuff you've been learning over the years and fill in a few blanks you may have.

- * Confirmation prepares you to make your own public profession of Christian faith first made at your baptism by parents and sponsors.
- * Confirmation helps Confirmands understand how they fit in the church and how they are part of the marvelous Body of Christ.
- * Confirmation explores God's great love for the world--and for you--and explains it in a meaningful way.
- * Most importantly, Confirmation provides a fundamental understanding of Christian Faith so that we can attend Holy Communion and receive it's full benefits (I Cor. 10-11)

Of course, Confirmation is about your becoming a member of the church, experiencing the joy of serving the Lord's Church, and sharing in the responsibilities of making the church do what God would have it do.

The Confirmed members of the church you belong to have ministered together to provide the best confirmation instruction available. At your confirmation, you become an on-going part of the Church which will confirm Christians until Jesus comes again.

Unit 1-B The *Small Catechism*

What Is A "Catechism"?

A "catechism" is a book of questions and answers. Catechisms are a very useful learning tool and have been used for centuries.

Many churches have catechisms. Like Luther's *Small Catechism*, they are frequently used to teach individuals. The *Baltimore Catechism*, used by the Roman Catholic Church, is used to prepare Catholics for confirmation.

Luther's Small Catechism

Martin Luther wrote the *Small Catechism* in 1529. The invention of Johannes Gutenberg's printing press in 1440, less than 100 years earlier, enabled Luther's *Small Catechism* to be printed and distributed throughout Germany...and beyond.

Unlike the Roman Catholic church which taught that the Bishop or priest must confirm youth, Luther's intended that his *Small Catechism* be taught not just by pastors, but by parents, too. That's why Luther's *Small Catechism* has the following header: "As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household."

Who Needs The Small Catechism?

Virtually everyone! Luther originally wrote it because of the awful condition of faith in sixteenth century Germany. Read below what Luther wrote in the Preface of his *Small Catechism*.

Martin Luther to All Faithful and Godly Pastors and Preachers
Grace, Mercy, and Peace in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The deplorable, miserable condition which I discovered lately when I, too, was a visitor, has forced and urged me to prepare [publish] 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 [so much so, that one is ashamed to speak of it]. Nevertheless, all maintain that they are Christians, have been baptized and receive the [common] holy Sacraments. Yet they [*do not* understand and] cannot [*even*] recite either the Lord's Prayer, or the Creed, or the Ten Commandments; they live like dumb brutes and irrational hogs; and yet, now that the Gospel has come, they have nicely learned to abuse all liberty like experts

The Small Catechism: For Us Today

Do we need the *Small Catechism* today? Of course we do! Just as in Luther's time, Christians often do not understand *even* the basics of Christian Faith.

What are the basics of the Christian Faith? Luther said there were six key items we need to know about God. He divided his *Small Catechism* into six sections ("Six Chief Parts") to teach these six areas of faith that he believed all Christians should know. These include...

1. Knowing God (The Creeds),

2. Knowing how God wants us to live (The Ten Commandments),
3. Knowing how to pray (The Lord's Prayer),
4. Giving and receiving forgiveness (The Office Of The Keys & Confession),
5. Understanding how we come to Faith (Holy Baptism), and
6. Recognizing Jesus' Real Presence in the Lord's Supper (The Sacrament at the Altar).

The Small Catechism *And You*

Would you like to know God better? Would you like to know how to live a God-pleasing life? Would you like the confidence of knowing that God hears your prayers? Do you understand just how wonderful God's promises in His Sacraments really are?

That's what Luther's *Small Catechism* is for: to teach people like you the basics of the remarkable message of the Bible: Jesus loves you.

Welcome to this journey of Christian Faith!

Unit 1-C The Holy Bible

God Speaks In The Holy Bible

Have you ever wanted God to speak to you? Ultimately, all of us do!

God knows that we desire to have Him talk with us. He could have chosen to spoke to us through dreams and visions. In fact, that is how much of the Holy Bible was originally written (**Hebrews 1:1**).

Since giving us all we need to know to be saved in His 66 books, God no longer speaks to individuals with dreams, voices or visions.

Instead, the only place we get God's Word is in the Holy Bible (*see II Timothy 3:15-17; II Peter 1:21; et al.*).

The Bible: God's Library

The Bible can be described as a library of sixty-six books written by approximately forty people over sixteen hundred years. These sixty-six books make up what is called the canon, a listing of Bible books approved by the church.

In order to be canonical (that is, considered part of the Bible), Biblical books had to meet very strict criteria:

- they clearly proclaimed God's truth,
- their writings were inspired by the Holy Spirit,
- their teachings were consistent with other portions of the Bible,
- they had been written by the prophets or apostles, and
- they contained no false or untrue teachings.

Books which met all these criteria were considered "Canonical" and were accepted as authoritative by all parts of the Christian Church.

Books that were not widely accepted by Christian Churches are called the Apocrypha or Deuterocanonical Books. Roman Catholics add some of these books to their Bible. Because of their errors and false teachings, most Christians--*including Lutherans*--do *not* consider the Apocrypha and Deuterocanonical Books to be God's Word. That is why non-Catholics do not use these books in their churches.

The Bible: The Old Testament

The Bible is divided into two parts, the *Old Testament* and the *New Testament*.

The Old Testament begins with the book of Genesis and ends with the Book of Malachi. It contains sixty-six books, all of which were written between 1500 BC and 400 BC. Since all the Books of the Old Testament were written before Jesus' birth, it's main message is "*The Savior Will Come.*"

Among the thirty-nine (39) Old Testament books are books of *History* (Genesis-Esther), *Poetry* (Job-Song of Songs), and *Prophecy* (Isaiah-Malachi). Among the authors of these books are kings such as David and Solomon, an Egyptian prince named Moses, a fig-tree grower named Amos, prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah and others, as well as other "unlikely" common--and uncommon--people whom God had chosen to bear His inspired Word.

Categories Of Old Testament Books

The Old Testament	Five Books of Moses	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	
	Twelve Books of History	Joshua Judges Ruth; I Samuel II Samuel I Kings II Kings	I Chronicles II Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther
	Five Books of Poetry	Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon	
	Five Major (Longer) Prophets	Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel	
	Twelve Minor (Shorter) Prophets	Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum	Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi

The Bible: The New Testament

The New Testament begins with the Gospel of Matthew and ends with the Book of Prophecy, Revelation. The first book of the New Testament was written approximately 45 AD. The final book written was the Book of Revelation. Since the New Testament describes Jesus' life and teachings, it's main message is *"The Savior Has Come."*

Among the twenty-seven (27) New Testament books are the Gospels (Matthew-John) which describe Jesus' life, death and resurrection, a book of history (Acts), many letters to churches and individuals from Apostles (including James, Peter and Paul), and a book of prophecy, the Book of Revelation.

Together both the Old and New Testaments have one teaching: how God saves us by grace through His Son, Jesus Christ (cf. John 3:16).

Categories Of New Testament Books

The New Testament	Four Gospels	Three Synoptic ("same-eye") Gospels	Matthew Mark Luke
		John	
	One Book of History	The Acts of the Apostles	
	Twenty-One Epistles (or "Letters")	Thirteen Letters from Paul (Written To Specific Churches Or People)	Romans I Corinthians II Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians I Thessalonians II Thessalonians I Timothy II Timothy Titus Philemon
		Eight General Epistles (Written To All Churches)	Hebrews James I Peter II Peter I John II John III John Jude
	One Book of Prophecy	Revelation	

The Bible: In Chapters And Verses

The Bible is divided into chapters and verses. Chapter and verse divisions in the Bible happened long after the Bible was written. Stephen Langton (d.1228), a professor at the University of Paris and later the Archbishop of Canterbury, England, divided the Bible into chapters. Verse designations as we know them were first published in 1509, just a couple of years after the invention of the printing press

It is important to remember that these chapter and verse divisions are merely for convenience. Often, however, chapter and verse divisions do *not* reflect the actual breaks intended by the author.

Unit 1-D Law & Gospel

The Bible's Message

The Bible's message is God's message. We know that because the Bible is "inspired."

"Inspired" can mean many things. Some people think it means that it "is interesting" or "fascinating." Certainly, the Bible does "inspire" us and give us joy.

"Inspiration," however, refers to the fact that God caused or "Breathed-in" ("inspired") the Bible. That means that every single word of the Bible is God's Word, not words invented by humans.

St. Peter wrote, "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about...our Lord Jesus Christ." (II Peter 1:16 NIV)

Many Christians don't believe all the Bible is God's Word. This is because they don't want to listen and obey God in everything. This is exactly where Satan wants them. Whenever we deny God's Word, we disobey God by making our words more important than God's Word.

Two Teachings Of The Bible

The purpose of the Bible is to show us how to be saved and how to live a Christian life.

The Law tells us how to live our lives. This is the first major teaching. We find the Law of God throughout the Bible. The best example of God's Law is in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5).

If we could be perfectly holy, we could be saved by keeping the Ten Commandments perfectly. Since we can't keep God's Law perfectly, everytime we hear God's Law, God's Law...

- **Shows Our Sin (SOS)**
- Makes us feel guilty,
- Condemns us to eternal life in hell,
- Reminds us that God will punish us for our sins, and
- Promises that we will die for our sin.

The Gospel, the Bible's second major teaching, teaches us that Jesus has paid the price for our sins. The Gospel is God's remedy for all the punishment promised by the Law. The Gospel is God's undeserved gift of salvation given to us in Jesus Christ. The Gospel...

- **Shows Our Savior (SOS)**
- Comforts sinners with Jesus' forgiveness,
- Reminds us Jesus paid for all our sins, and
- Promises eternal life.

Confusing Law And Gospel

The most dangerous mistake any one can make is to confuse Law and Gospel. How can you tell if someone is confusing Law and Gospel? Just ask this simple question: "How are you going to heaven?"

1) Some say they will get to heaven because they are good people. Wrong! By completely eliminating Jesus' forgiving work on the cross, they believe they are saved completely by keeping the Ten Commandments. Unfortunately, the Bible says, those who believe this are going to hell.

2) Some people believe Jesus died for them, but He didn't completely save them. Since Jesus' sacrifice wasn't enough, they must do good things to be saved. This belief, too, confuses God's plan of salvation. As the Bible says, unless Jesus is our only Savior, we are going to hell. Those who want, by their own good works to "help" Jesus, are not Christians. They deny the Gospel and are in danger of eternal damnation.

The only way we are saved is by the clear--not confused--message of the Bible. St. Paul wrote,

"It is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Ephesians 2:8-10 NIV

Law and Gospel are *not* confused when we affirm the Bible's teaching that

- 1) *Nothing* we can do can save us. Only Jesus can do that.
- 2) The good works we do are simply the way we thank God for salvation in Jesus Christ.

St. Paul wrote that our good works are the way we live out God's calling for us that He planned for us before He even created the world.

- Why did God create you?
- What did God plan for you to do before the world began?
- Are you ready to do what God called and prepared you to do?

Unit 1-E Overview

Confirmation

Though Confirmation is not commanded in the Bible, baptizing and teaching children, youth and adults is commanded.

Confirmation is actually the "confirmation" of one's Baptism. Confirmation also marks one's entrance into being responsible for one's own faith. Confirmands should recognize that they ought to attend Church and Sunday School and be involved in the church as a normal way of living as Jesus' disciple.

Confirmation, then, is not the end of one's growth as a Christian. It's merely the beginning.

Luther's Small Catechism

Written in 1529 by Martin Luther, the Small Catechism is a book of questions and answers about the Bible. Divided into Six Chief Parts, the Small Catechism covers the essential basics of the Christian Faith: Who God is (The Creeds), What He wants (The Ten Commandments), What He Offers (Sacraments & Office Of The Keys), and How To Talk With Him (The Lord's Prayer).

Thus, the Small Catechism simply contains what EVERY Christian ought to know. That is why it is used in confirmation.

The Bible

The Bible is simply a record of God's conversations and interaction with people like you and me throughout history.

Given by "inspiration," God's Holy Spirit caused over 40 people to record God's words. These people, called "prophets" and "apostles", came from every walk of life. What this demonstrates is that God wants everyone--from every nation, race and time--to be His. So great is His love.

The Bible is an eternal record of God's love for us in Jesus Christ. Without the Bible, we would not know God. Neither would we know His plan of salvation.

How much of the Bible did God write? *Every* bit of it.

The Bible contains 66 "Canonical" books. These are books which have meet the "canonical" standards of acceptance by the Church. Books which are not part of the Bible are called "Apocrypha" and "Pseudepigrapha." The Catholic Church accepts the Apocrypha as canonical, even though these contain false teachings. These false teachings include praying for dead people, purgatory and other anti-Christian beliefs.

Law & Gospel

The two main teachings of the Bible are Law and Gospel. Using the "SOS" formula, the Law "**S**hows **O**ur **S**ins" and the Gospel "**S**hows **O**ur **S**avior."

Why are these teachings so essential? If we didn't have the Law, we wouldn't know we were sinners. If we didn't know we were sinners, we wouldn't see the need for the Gospel.

That is the main blessing of the Law: it reminds us that we are sinners in need of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are three uses of the Law: curb, mirror and guide. These uses protect us (curb), show us our sin (mirror) and show us how God wants us to live (guide).

It is essential to salvation that we do not confuse Law and Gospel. When we confuse Law and Gospel, we demonstrate it by thinking that Jesus really didn't save us. Instead, when Law and Gospel are confused, we think we save ourselves by keeping the Ten Commandments and other Laws of God.

Nothing could be further from the truth. That is why Christians must always maintain that we are NOT saved by our works. We are only saved because Jesus Christ released us from the guilt of the Law on the cross. By His death and resurrection, we are forgiven for all our sins.

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