

## Orthodoxy Corner

Crawling into a corner of the couch with a good book is refreshing and enlightening because you have the story teller all to yourself and there goodness, truth, and beauty are discovered. But when we think of reading a book on the study of God (Theology - *theos*, *god & logia*, *a subject of study*) we rarely think of the comfort of the corner of a couch. Therefore, the metaphor "Corner" in this series of articles, "Orthodoxy Corner", relates to the corner as a place of intersection. It's a reflection on a corner where roads or paths meet. Orthodoxy Corner is meant to be the place of reflection where the truth about God and his world intersect with our lives where we discover goodness and beauty. This reflection on truth is meant to be refreshing and enlightening as it intersects with your life. In this series of articles we'll be reflecting on questions and answers from The New City Catechism.



Why use a catechism to teach truth? A

catechism is a biblically grounded and carefully worded doctrinal standard for the church's growth and training. Catechism describes a form of teaching that derives from the Greek *katechein* which means "to teach orally or to instruct by word of mouth". Our writings each week in Orthodoxy Corner will allow us to ground the congregation in well worded biblical doctrine that we may grow to maturity in Christ (Eph.4:11-13).

American Christianity is high on experience and low on doctrine. In the Christian life practice pleasing to God is formed on the foundations of biblical doctrine. Catechisms have historically been the way the church has grounded her members in doctrine that leads to practice. Because the church has failed to make use of her catechisms today: "Superficial smatterings of truth, blurry notions about God and godliness, and thoughtlessness about the issues of living—career-wise, community-wise, family-wise, and church-wise—are all too often the marks of evangelical congregations today..." (From *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way*, by Gary Parrett and J. I. Packer, published by Baker, 2010.)

What is the purpose of The New City Catechism? The writers of this catechism give us three purposes.

Catechisms were written with at least three purposes. The first was to set forth a comprehensive exposition of the gospel—not only in order to explain clearly what the gospel is, but also to lay out the building blocks on which the gospel is based, such as the biblical doctrine of God, of human nature, of sin, and so forth. The second purpose was to do this exposition in such a way that the heresies, errors, and false beliefs of the time and culture were addressed and counteracted. The third and more pastoral purpose was to form a distinct people, a counter-culture that reflected the likeness of Christ not only in individual character but also in the church's communal life."

When looked at together, these three purposes explain why new catechisms must be written. While our exposition of gospel doctrine must be in line with older catechisms that are true to the Word, culture changes and so do the errors, temptations, and challenges to the unchanging gospel that people must be equipped to face and answer." - New City Catechism Devotional , p.9

So, let's go to the corner and hear the clarion call to orthodoxy and let it shape our life in his goodness and beauty.

Q.: What is your only hope in life and death?

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

The apostle Paul wrote, "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." - Romans 14:7-8

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“Leave me alone.” Whether this was an audible cry as a young child, or the cry of silence in your adult life, it reveals that we think we’re our own. But this is an error we must flee. And the truth that we must run into in relationship to God, self, others, and the world in which we live is, we’re not our own. It is a truth and more than that, a hope for those who cry, “Leave me alone.” The hope in this truth lies in belonging.

For those who breath and hope, there is belonging. Not being our own means we can forget ourselves because we belong to another. We belong to a God who holds our life and our death in his hands. We belong to him so we can live and die for him, as he has done for our belonging.

This is the basis of the Christian life. Not what you can do for God, but what he has done for you. He has given those who live by faith in his Son the breath of hope through his death and life. God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue you us from alienation, separation, and not belonging. By his grace we are saved not by our own works but by his for us in his death and resurrection. And the results of that grace is becoming the adopted children of God. “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” -John 1:12-13. In belonging we want to reflect in our life the truth about our family, both in life and death. We breath and live to look like our elder brother, Jesus, and we love to please our Father. We don’t live to please ourselves because we don’t belong to ourselves. But what does this mean and look like?

Because we don’t belong to ourselves we don’t determine truth. We belong to the God of truth who reveals his truth to us. Therefore, we are to wait on his Word where the true truth is revealed and we learn what is right and wrong. Because we don’t belong to ourselves we put first what pleases God and is good for our neighbor in love. Therefore, we must ask each and everyday, ‘What is pleasing to my Father, and how can I love my neighbor as myself?’ Because we don’t belong to ourselves we live in the midst of all of life’s situations trusting him. When the skies are bright and the path is clear, and when the storm clouds are breaking, we make the Lord our trust.

Belonging to God by his grace, knowing that we have done nothing which has made us his own, enables us to live each day, whether we’re facing life or death, knowing that he can ask of us whatever he wills. We’re not our own, we’ve been bought by the price of Christ’s precious blood. He gave himself completely and utterly for us, and now we can live completely and utterly for him.

## Pick Up a “Final Goals List”

In 2019 Christ Covenant Church is developing a plan to fulfill her Vision & Mission by undertaking the following three phases: 1) Understanding and affirming the Vision & Mission, 2) Setting Goals, and 3) Writing Strategies. On August 28 we completed the second phase. We accomplished this by working separately in three small groups who each placed 54 goals into the categories listed below.

1. Have to Do *Closest to fulfilling our Vision / Mission. Items viewed as the “best”.*
2. Ought to Do *Items viewed as “good”.*
3. Nice to Do *Items that while important, we were willing to put off.*

Each small group was tasked to limit the number of goals for Category #1 to 15. The small groups reconvened to compare what each of them selected for Category #1. By the numbers – Common Selections for Category #1 Using the coding system for goals (A – NN) the results written on chart paper, were posted on the wall. We looked for common goals that each small group chose for Category #1. Below is the breakdown of the results.

I. Number of the same goals chosen by all three groups.	4
II. Number of the same goals chosen by two groups.	8
III. Number of goals that were chosen by only one group.	13

In order to get 15 goals, in the large group we voted for the final 3 goals from the 13 in III. Since there was a tie, four goals were added to the list from I. and II. for a total of 16 agreed upon goals for Category #1. The packet you can pick up in the lobby at Barnwell St. contains the 16 goals selected for Category # 1 as described in the preceding section. Additionally, the 9 remaining goals selected for Category #1, that were chosen by only one group, are listed.

In the fall we will begin the phase of developing strategies to meet the 16 selected goals. November 30 is our target date to complete our long-range plan for Christ Covenant Church that we will to begin to address in 2020.

Pick up a “Final Goals List” and look for opportunities to participate this Fall as we seek to develop strategies to meet our goals beginning in 2020.