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The Existence of God

There is only one, true Creator God who rules over all things

*Catechism

Question 1: What is the chief end of man?

Answer: Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

Question 4: What is God?

Answer: God is a spirit, Whose being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth are infinite, eternal, and unchangeable.

Question 6: How many persons are in the one God?

Answer: Three persons are in the one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

These three are one God, the same in substance and equal in power and glory.

**The Westminster Shorter Catechism was published in England in 1653 by early Presbyterians. It was designed in a question and answer format to be used as a teaching tool that faithfully summarized the main teachings of the Bible.*

I. ***Class Introduction***

A. The most important issue of our lives is having a right _____ with God.

“The chief end (main purpose) of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

B. _____ exists in the world.

- Natural evil refers to general suffering that makes human life hard.
- Moral evil refers to the human suffering caused by other humans.

Both types of evil can make life seem empty, meaningless, and for many people, even not worth living.

C. Christianity is _____ to modern life.

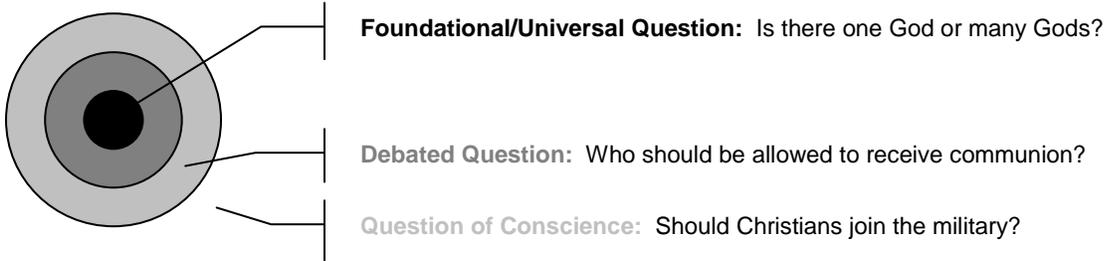
- It offers a perspective on human purpose in the face of hard realities that can bring order, peace, hope, life and love to any person.

▪ **Key Verse—**

“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you [relationally], the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” (John 17:3)

II. What will we study in this class?

- A. _____ are the beliefs/confessions that are the spiritual “starting point” of a truly Christian life.
- B. _____: Christians throughout all history have agreed upon these core beliefs/confessions.



- C. _____ do not allow for contradictory claims to also be true.

III. What is Christianity?

- A. Christianity is not a group of _____ about _____.
Many people do good deeds, and many more just try to avoid doing really bad things, but that isn't a test of true Christianity.
- B. Christianity is a _____ with a _____ who has revealed Himself and His will through the Bible and through His son Jesus Christ.
- Real relationship: It is a person-to-person relationship analogous to human relationships of the greater to the lesser person, e.g. King/Servant, Father/Child, Leader/Follower and Teacher/Student.
 - Personal God: He has intelligence, will, character, “emotions”.
 - Revealed: God makes himself known to us. He “introduces” us to himself and initiates the pursuit of this relationship.

- C. Summary: Christianity is all about all about God's love for you _____ through his son Jesus.
- D. Note: All other religions place a high priority on _____ and initiative. So, Christianity is unique in that it begins with God taking all the initiative.

IV. How can we know what God is like?

- A. Human tendency is to define God according to our own _____ or _____, rather than to discover Him. Instead of really investigating, we make up beliefs about God that suit us.
- Need in ancient Palestine, the Canaanite's survival depended on the fertility of their crops and flocks. Their perceived need was for a god who would bring regular rain. They worshipped the god Baal and his female counterpart Ashtoreth (God of Fertility) who was thought to bring the rains for crops and keep the flocks bearing young.
 - Fear: real human cultures are filled with the tragedy of human sacrifices offered out of fear of imagined gods.
- B. The problem with this approach is that human definitions of God _____ God because they imagine that God is like us.
- *"...know that there is no one like me in all the earth." (Exodus 9:14)*
 - *"To whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared?" (Isaiah 46:5)*
 - *"I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me." (Isaiah 46:9)*
 - *"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:9)*
 - *"How great you are, O Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears." (2 Samuel 7:22)*

C. The thrust of these scriptures is that God is _____ from us.

How will we know Him? He must reveal himself to us. It is a sign of His love and mercy that He does so.

V. *What is God like?*

A. The authors of the Westminster Shorter catechism summarized what God is like with these words “God is a _____, Whose being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth are infinite, eternal, and unchangeable.”

B. God is _____.

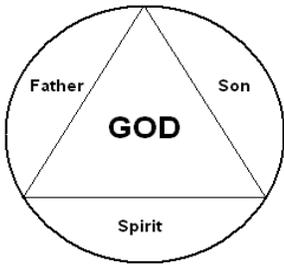
- BIG—Infinite (space) and eternal (time) and unchanging. He is everywhere (omnipresent), always. He knows everything (omniscient). He has all power (omnipotent). He created everything. He governs and rules everything.
- ABOVE ALL in terms of authority and prominence
He “outranks” us as Creator to creation; as King to his subjects;
as Lord to his servants.
- AWESOME he is worthy of the awe that bows our heads and leaves us speechless.

C. God is _____.

- JUST in all that He does. He does no wrong, makes no injustice. He rewards good, and punishes evil.
- PERFECT He makes no mistakes. He is not growing and learning, as we must, because he has always had perfect knowledge and perfect power and perfect love.
- KIND God is love, the Bible says. God cares for the weak, the sick, the oppressed, the young, the orphaned, the lonely, the rejected, the humble, and the meek.

D. God is _____.

- One God, eternally existing in three Persons. The authors of the Catechism summarized the teaching of the Bible on this by saying that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are “the _____ in substance and _____ in power and glory.



1. There is only one God. (*John 1:18*)
2. The Father is God. (*John 6:27*)
3. The Son is God. (*John 1:18; John 5:18*)
4. The Holy Spirit is God. (*Matthew 3:16*)
5. The Father is not the Son. (*John 6:46; John 13:3*)
6. The Son is not the Holy Spirit. (*John 3:34*)

- The only way to reconcile these statements and maintain that each is true is with the doctrine of the Trinity—that there is one God eternally existing in three Persons.

E. _____ to God

- His power and authority inspires reverence.
- His goodness toward you inspires love.

If your goal is to know God and be aware of His presence and work in your life, then you must recognize and respond to both His Greatness (power and authority over you), and His Goodness (incredible love for you). One without the other is a distortion of who God is. You must respond to His Greatness with reverence/awe, while His Goodness causes you to love Him.

The Word of God

The Bible is the only divinely revealed word of God

Catechism

Question 2: What authority from God directs us how to glorify and enjoy Him?

Answer: *The only authority for glorifying and enjoying Him is the Bible, which is the word of God and is made up of the Old and New Testaments.*

Question 3: What does the Bible primarily teach?

Answer: *The Bible primarily teaches what man must believe about God and what God requires of man.*

I. **How does God reveal Himself and His will?**

- A. _____ refers to the activity of God in revealing His existence to *all* people universally through creation.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." (Psalm 19:1)

"...what may be known about God is plain to [people], because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made..." (Romans 1:19-20)

- B. _____ refers to the activity of God in revealing His gifts (Gospel) and demands (Law) to a *specific* people.

Question 3: What does the Bible primarily teach?

Answer: *The Bible primarily teaches what man must believe about God and what God requires of man.*

"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways..." (Hebrews 1:1)

"...but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son..." (Hebrews 1:2)

- C. God used human authors to preserve the content of _____ in Scripture for the spiritual benefit of all generations.

"All Scripture is God-breathed ["inspired"] and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..." (2 Timothy 3:16)

The Old Testament reveals the character of God and develops the theme of God's promise to save a people for Himself from every nation through a Messiah.

The New Testament reveals that Jesus is the promised Messiah who proclaims the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Him.

II. **What do Christians believe about the Bible?**

- A. The Bible is _____. This doesn't merely mean that the Bible is inspiring (though, it is), but rather that the Bible is the "God-breathed" communications of God Himself given through human witnesses.

Note: Inspiration refers to the original autographs (writings), not copies or translations.

- B. The Bible is _____ because it is God's word.

Question 2: What authority from God directs us how to glorify and enjoy Him?

Answer: *The only authority for glorifying and enjoying Him is the Bible, which is the word of God and is made up of the Old and New Testaments.*

- C. The Bible is _____.

- The Bible was written in a period of over _____ years.
- The Bible was written by _____ or more human authors.
- The Bible was written on _____ continents and in _____ languages.

*"Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."
(Jesus speaking in Luke 24:44)*

- D. The Bible is _____.

- E. The Bible is _____.

As in all literature, context is the key to accurate interpretation.

Also, since the Bible is unified, another key principle of interpretation is that Scripture interprets Scripture. This means that if one passage seems unclear on a particular subject, another passage can be compared with it to help make the meaning more plain.

F. The Bible is _____ and _____.

- _____ means that Scripture (in the original writings) is error-free in all that it affirms.

- _____ means that Scripture is entirely truthful and will not fail God's purposes.

G. The Bible is _____.

H. The Bible is _____ to show you:

- Who God is: His existence, nature, and character

- What God demands His moral and ethical requirements

- What God promises His presence, blessing, and gift of eternal life through his Son

- How to rightly relate to God: to be assured that you will spend eternity with Him

III. How Is The Bible Organized?

TESTAMENT	GENRE/SECTION		BOOK	AUTHOR
Old Testament <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 39 books ▪ Written in Hebrew and some Aramaic ▪ Spans creation – 400 BC ▪ Develops God's promise to graciously save a people for himself from every nation through a Messiah who would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> : be a prophet like Moses; : be a descendant of David; : be filled with God's Spirit; : first suffer; and : later be glorified. ▪ Important figures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> : Adam : Abraham : Isaac : Jacob : Moses : Samuel : David 	Pentateuch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ means "5 Books" ▪ Hebrew "torah" (Law) ▪ Creation to Israel's entry into Canaan 	1	Genesis	Moses
		2	Exodus	
		3	Leviticus	
		4	Numbers	
		5	Deuteronomy	
	History <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 12 books ▪ Israel's conquest of Canaan under Joshua to Israel's defeat and exile in Babylon 	6	Joshua	?
		7	Judges	Samuel?
		8	Ruth	Samuel?
		9	1 Samuel	?
		10	2 Samuel	?
		11	1 Kings	?
		12	2 Kings	?
		13	1 Chronicles	Ezra?
		14	2Chronicles	Ezra?
		15	Ezra	Ezra
		16	Nehemiah	Ezra?
		17	Esther	Mordecai?
		Poetry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5 books 	18	Job
	19		Psalms	Various
	20		Proverbs	Various
	21		Ecclesiastes	Solomon?
	22		Song of Solomon	Solomon
	Major Prophets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5 books ▪ named for their relative length 	23	Isaiah	Isaiah
		24	Jeremiah	Jeremiah
		25	Lamentations	
		26	Ezekiel	Ezekiel
		27	Daniel	Daniel
	Minor Prophets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 12 books ▪ named for their relative brevity 	28	Hosea	Hosea
		29	Joel	Joel
		30	Amos	Amos
		31	Obadiah	Obadiah
		32	Jonah	Jonah
		33	Micah	Micah
		34	Nahum	Nahum
		35	Habakkuk	Habakkuk
		36	Zephaniah	Zephaniah
		37	Haggai	Haggai
		38	Zechariah	Zechariah
		39	Malachi	Malachi
New Testament <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 27 books ▪ Written in Greek ▪ Spans Jesus birth – AD 90 (at the latest) ▪ Reveals that Jesus is the promised Messiah, who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> : Is God incarnate; : Proclaims the Gospel of God's Kingdom; : Is the object of saving faith; : Gathers God's people from every nation into His church. 	Gospels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4 books ▪ Life of Jesus 	40	Matthew	Matthew
		41	Mark	Mark
		42	Luke	Luke
		43	John	John
	Pauline Epistles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 13 books ▪ epistle = "letter" ▪ named according to the addressee. 	44	Acts	Luke
		45	Romans	Paul
		46	1 Corinthians	
		47	2 Corinthians	
		48	Galatians	
		49	Ephesians	
		50	Philippians	
		51	Colossians	
		52	1 Thessalonians	
		53	2 Thessalonians	
		54	1 Timothy	
		55	2 Timothy	
		56	Titus	
57	Philemon			
General Epistles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ named according to the author (except Hebrews) 	58	Hebrews	?	
	59	James	James (bro. of J.)	
	60	1 Peter	Peter	
	61	2 Peter		
	62	1 John	John	
	63	2 John		
	64	3 John		
	65	Jude	Jude	
Apocalypse	66	Revelation	John	

IV. Which English version is the “real” Bible?

- A. There is no “real” English Bible.
English Bibles are translations based on manuscripts in the original languages—Hebrew for the Old Testament, and Greek for the New Testament.
- B. Translations are grouped by translation type.
Translators may choose to translate word for word (very literal), or thought for thought (more loosely to capture the gist), or to paraphrase, which is very interpretive and not a translation in the strict sense.
- C. The Chart below summarizes the most popular versions available today ranked from most literal to least literal. The ranking is not meant to imply “best” to “worst”.

Translation	Abbr	Date	Translator/Publisher	Translation style	Notes on Translation	Sample from John 3:16
New American Standard Bible	NASB	1971	The Lockman Foundation	Word for word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very literal ▪ Excellent study Bible ▪ Lacks easy readability 	For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.
King James Version	KJV	1611	Authorized by King James 1 of England	Word for word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stylistically beautiful ▪ Antiquated language/words ▪ Based on inferior manuscripts 	For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
New King James Version	NKJV	1982	Thomas Nelson	Word for word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retains the literary style of KJV ▪ Improved readability over KJV 	For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
New Revised Standard Version	NRSV	1990	Zondervan	Thought for thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Readable ▪ Updates English of RSV ▪ Based on superior manuscripts 	For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.
New International Version	NIV	1978	International Bible Society	Thought for thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Best selling version today ▪ Very readable ▪ Based on superior manuscripts 	For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
Contemporary English Version	CEV	1995	American Bible Society	Thought for thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very readable, simple English ▪ Aimed at 1st time Bible readers 	God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die.
New Living Translation	NLT	1996	Tyndale	Thought for thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revision of Living Bible paraphrase ▪ Goal of simple, powerful style 	For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.
The Message	MSG	1993	Eugene Phillips/ NavPress	Paraphrase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Informal “spoken” English ▪ Not a translation, very interpretive ▪ Popular, modern paraphrase 	This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.

V. *Why read the Bible?*

A. It is the best way to _____ Christianity.

B. It is necessary to truly _____ yourself.

The Bible is like a _____ and it reflects a truer picture of our lives than we really want to see.

"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6)

"Blessed are those who mourn [for their sins], for they will be comforted. (Matthew 5:4)

C. It is the surest way to _____ the love of God.

The Bible is like a _____

"The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted..." (Isaiah 61:1)

D. It is a primary means of _____

The things we call the means of Grace (Bible Study, Prayer, Corporate worship, etc) are the methods God uses to transform our lives.

VI. Read John 6 – 10, then answer these questions

Try to write 2 or more lines for each question.

1. In John 6 Jesus taught that he was “the bread of life”. What did he mean?
2. In John 8:31 Jesus told a group of people what real faith in Him would require. If you were to do what Jesus said in this verse, would your life change? How?
3. Later in John 8 Jesus said, “...before Abraham was born, I am!” What did he mean?
4. In these chapters, you have seen see a lot of hostility toward Jesus. Why were the Jews hostile to Jesus? Why did they want to kill him? (John 10:33)

The Son of God

Jesus is the only divine Son of God

Catechism

Question 22: How did Christ, the Son of God, become man?

Answer: Christ, the Son of God, became man by assuming a real body and a reasoning soul. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, who gave birth to Him; yet He was sinless.

I. Who is Jesus?

A. _____ is not just about God. It's about God *revealed in Jesus*.

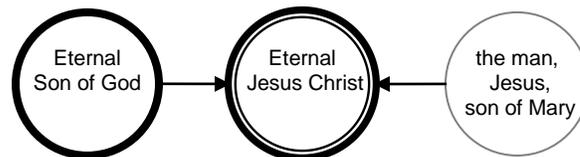
B. _____ Jesus is the key to understanding Christianity.

- In one way, studying Jesus is just like studying the messenger of any world religion—Mohammed, Moses, Confucius, or Buddha. You look at their lives, their historical context, and their teaching and then you decide whether you believe what they taught.
- Yet, studying Jesus is unique because unlike these other messengers, Jesus claimed to be divine; an appearance of God; the object of worship. So studying Jesus does not end with whether you agree or not. It ends with whether you will worship Him.

II. What do Christians say about Jesus?

A. Jesus is God _____.

The Incarnation was the act of God the Son, the eternal second person of the Trinity, whereby he joined himself to a human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary.



Two distinct natures joined to become one unique Christ

The Incarnation was the act of God the Son, the eternal second person of the Trinity, whereby he joined himself to a human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the Glory of the One and Only..." (John 1:1, 14)

What do these two verses teach?

- The Word was _____ at the beginning of time. (i.e., the Word was eternal)
- In one sense, the Word was _____ God. (i.e., not the same as God)
- In another sense, the Word _____ God. (The Trinity reconciles these two statements.)
- The Word took on flesh and bone _____ and lived with people.
- People beheld in the man, the _____ of the one true God.

B. Jesus _____ the Gospel.

“I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.” (Leviticus 26:12.)

“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel--which means, ‘God with us.’” (Matthew 1:23)

C. Jesus is one _____ with _____ natures.

¹ existing fully as God and fully as man with a rational soul and a human body; equal to the Father in divinity, subordinate to the Father in humanity.

Although he is God and man, he is not divided, but is one Christ.

² He is united because God has taken humanity into himself; he does not transform deity into humanity.

³ He is completely one in the unity of his person, without confusing his natures.”

(taken from The Athanasian Creed, a statement produced by the early Church to summarize what the Bible teaches about Jesus. For more, refer to Appendix A—The Athanasian Creed; Appendix B—The Nicene Creed; Appendix C—The Definition of the Council of Chalcedon.)

What does this mean?

1. 100% God + 100% Man = 1 Christ. In Jesus, two complete natures (divine and human) compose one person.

2. Jesus did not change from being God into being human. He wasn't God in Heaven, then changed into a man on earth, then changed back into God when he returned to heaven.

3. Jesus' natures are joined, but not blended (“confused”).

III. What did people who knew him personally say about Jesus?

- A. (Levi) Matthew, a tax collector and disciple of Jesus, said he was God with us.

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said...they will call him 'Immanuel'—which means, 'God with us'." (Matthew 1:22-23)

- B. John the Baptist, a Jewish ascetic prophet and cousin of Jesus, said he was the Son of God.

"I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God." (John 1:34)

- C. John the Apostle, a Galilean fisherman, disciple of Jesus, and Jesus' closest friend, said he was God manifest in flesh for people to see.

"We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only [God]." (John 1:14)

- D. (Simon) Peter, also a fisherman, disciple of Jesus, and spokesman of the early Church, said he was the Christ, the Son of God, and the only way of salvation.

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12, responding to interrogation by the Jewish elders)

"You are the Christ." (Mark 8:29)

- E. Paul, a tent maker by trade, a Pharisee, an Apostle, and a former persecutor of the Church, said he was God.

"Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God..." (Philippians 2:6)

IV. What did Jesus say about himself?

- A. Jesus made _____ claims about himself.

- B. Jesus claimed _____ titles for himself.

- He claimed to be the promised Messiah, which means "Christ" or "Anointed One").

"I know that Messiah' (called Christ) 'is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.'... 'I who speak to you am he.'" (John 4:25-26, speaking to the Samaritan woman)

- He claimed to be the Son of God.

"I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.' 'Yes, it is as you say'..." (Matthew 26:63-64, responding to the High Priest's interrogation)

C. Jesus claimed to have a _____ relationship with God.

- He claimed to be sent as God's messenger.
"...the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it...whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say." (John 12:49-50, speaking to a crowd)

- He claimed to be the only mediator between people and God.
"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6, speaking to His disciples)

- He claimed to be God's unique Son.
"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son..." (John 3:16, speaking to Nicodemus about himself)

- He claimed to have exclusive knowledge of God.
"No one knows the Father except the Son..." (Matthew 11:27)

- He claimed to have a unique intimacy with God.
"...The Father is in me and I am in the Father." (John 10:38)

D. Jesus made claims which only _____ himself can make.

- He claimed to be from heaven
"No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven..." (John 3:13, speaking to Nicodemus about himself)

- He claimed to be the giver of life.
"For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." (John 6:33, speaking to a crowd after miraculously feeding them)

- He claimed to have authority to forgive sin.
"But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." (Matthew 9:6, speaking to teachers of the Law)

- He claimed to have power over death.
"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies..." (John 11:25, speaking to Martha, the sister of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead)

E. Jesus claimed to have an _____ and _____ with God.

- He claimed that to know him was to know the Father.
“You do not know me or my Father...If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” (John 8:20, speaking to the Pharisees)
- He claimed that to see him was to see the Father.
“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9, speaking to Philip)
- He claimed that to believe in him was to believe in God.
“When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.” (John 12:44, speaking to a crowd in Jerusalem)
- He claimed God's name as his own.
“I tell you the truth...before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:58, speaking to a crowd who then tried to stone him for blasphemy. “I Am” is the name of God revealed to Moses in the story of the burning bush, cf. Exodus 3:14, which means “Eternal One”)
- He claimed that he was actually God.
“I and the Father are one.” (John 10:30, speaking to a crowd who again tried to stone him because, “...you, a mere man, claim to be God.” v 33)

V. What do you say about Jesus?

A. C. S. Lewis was persuaded that there were only 3 possible explanations for these claims:

- Jesus was a _____. He was deliberately false
- Jesus was a _____. He was self-deceived.
- Jesus is _____. His claims were completely true.

B. Believing in Jesus means: to place your hope and trust in Him so completely that you devote your lives to worship and follow him.

VI. Read John 11 – 15, then answer these questions

Try to write 2 or more lines for each question.

1. What did Jesus mean when he said, “I am the resurrection” in John 11:25? What does he say will happen to those who believe in him? Do you believe this?
2. What is the one condition Jesus gives for finding life? What does it mean to follow Jesus? (John 12:25-26)
3. What is true of those who truly love Christ? (John 14:15, 21-24)
4. In John 15 Jesus used the analogy of branches receiving natural life from a vine to describe how believers receive spiritual life from him. How would you know if you were “abiding/remaining” in Jesus? Be specific.

The Mission of the Son of God

The resurrection validates Jesus' claim to be the only Lord and Savior

Catechism

Question 27: How was Christ humiliated?

Answer: Christ was humiliated: by being born as a man and born into a poor family; by being made subject to the law and suffering the miseries of this life, the anger of God, and the curse of death on the cross; and by being buried and remaining under the power of death for a time.

Question 28: How is Christ exalted?

Answer: Christ is exalted by His rising from the dead on the third day, His going up into heaven, His sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and His coming to judge the world at the last day.

I. What did Jesus believe he had come to do?

A. Jesus claimed to be _____ in human flesh and the only way to the Father in Heaven.

B. Jesus knew what his _____ was.

"Why were you searching for me...Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49)

C. Jesus' sense of mission corresponded to Old Testament _____. He saw himself as fulfilling the role of the promised Messiah.

"He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." (Luke 24:25-27)

D. What did the Old Testament prophesy about the _____?

- He would be human, would conquer the Evil One, and yet would suffer.

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." (Genesis 3:15)

- He would be a son of Abraham through whom all people would be blessed.

"In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed..." (Genesis 22:18)

- He would be a Prophet who would speak face to face with God as Moses did.

"I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. (Deuteronomy 18:18 – 20)

"Since that time [i.e. Deut 18:18] no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face..." (Deuteronomy 34:10)

- He would be a descendant of David who would rule over a righteous, eternal Kingdom.

“Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.” (2 Samuel 7:16)

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called—Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.” (Isaiah 9:6 - 7)

- He would be empowered by the Spirit to bring the message of God’s salvation.

“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor.” (Isaiah 61:1 – 2)

“Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, ‘Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’” (Jesus speaking, Luke 4:20 – 21)

- He would suffer instead of the guilty to bring salvation to the guilty.

*“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely **he** took up **our** infirmities and carried **our** sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But **he** was pierced for **our** transgressions, **he** was crushed for **our** iniquities; the punishment that brought **us** peace was upon **him**, and by **his** wounds **we** are healed.” (Isaiah 53:3 – 5)*

- He would later receive glory and vindication from God.

“Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied...” (Isaiah 53:10 – 12)

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13 – 14)

E. What did Jesus _____ he had come to do?

Jesus believed he had come to proclaim God’s _____ and deliver God’s _____ by offering his life for their sins; and after defeating God’s _____, to receive God’s _____.

“The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” (Luke 19:10)

“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

II. How did Jesus fulfill his life mission?

A. Jesus lived in perfect _____ to God.

- He exhibited complete devotion to God from his youth.
“Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49)

- He submitted himself to God’s Law.
“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” (Matthew 5:17)

- He resisted Satan’s direct temptation after fasting for 40 days in the wilderness.
“...the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if you will bow down and worship me.’ ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’ Then the devil left him...” (Matthew 4:8 - 10, cf. 1 – 11)

- He resisted Satan’s subtle temptations to avoid the path of suffering.
“From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ‘Never, Lord!’ he said. ‘This shall never happen to you!’ Jesus turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.’” (Matthew 16:21 – 23)

- He relied completely on the Father.
“I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing...” (John 5:19)

- He pursued the task appointed to him.
“As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” (Luke 9:51)

- In his most difficult moment, he surrendered his will to the Father.
“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” (Luke 22:42)

B. Jesus offered his perfect life as a _____ to God.

III. How did Jesus suffer?

A. Jesus suffered as a _____ and _____ person.

B. Jesus suffered _____.

C. Jesus suffered _____ torture.

- Beating - Jesus was tried before Pilate who ordered him to be flogged. We know from historical records that Roman floggings were especially gruesome.

- Crucifixion - After this, the soldiers forced him to carry a heavy wooden crossbeam out of the city to the hill, Golgotha. There they drove iron spikes through his wrists into the crossbeam. It was then lifted by ropes and dropped onto the upright post, to which his feet were fastened with another spike.

- Burial - prepared his body according to Jewish custom by wrapping it in 75 pounds of spices with strips of linen, and then laid him in a nearby garden tomb, rolling a stone in front of the opening.

D. Jesus suffered _____.

"It pleased the Lord to crush him." (Isaiah 53:10)

"Why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34)

IV. How did Jesus receive glory?

Question 28: How is Christ exalted?

Answer: Christ is exalted by His ^A rising from the dead on the third day, ^B His going up into heaven, His sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and ^C His coming to judge the world at the last day.

A. God _____ Jesus from death.

What evidence leads Christians to believe in the physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus?

- His body was gone, though the tomb was sealed and well guarded.
This vital fact is recorded in all 4 gospels.
(Matthew 28:1 - 8, Mark 16:1 - 8, Luke 24:1 - 20, John 20:1 - 8)

- The grave clothes remained.
The description of the scene suggests the grave clothes were undisturbed except that the body was gone.

- He appeared to over 500 people in a variety of circumstances.
He appeared first to Mary Magdalene and another Mary (possibly the mother of Jesus) in the garden where his body had laid.

- The conversion of Paul.
Paul was an aggressive persecutor of believers, pursuing them from city to city, arresting them, and even participating in the murder of Stephen.

- The martyrdom of Apostles.

B. Jesus _____ to the right hand of the Father.

“When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.” (Luke 24:50)

C. Jesus will _____ again in power to judge all.

“...he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’” (Acts 1:9 – 11)

V. What conclusions can be drawn from the crucifixion and resurrection?

A. The _____ shows us:

- The uniqueness of Christianity and the falseness of all other religions.
- The credibility of Christ’s claims to be God in flesh and the only way to the Father.
- That he is the ultimate spokesman for God and the fullest revelation of God to us.
- That Jesus is the only legitimate focus of saving faith.
- That the Gospel is true. God will forgive our sins as He has promised and grant us eternal life—simply by His grace, through faith in Christ alone.

B. The _____ shows us:

- The great evil of sin in that the death of God’s Son was necessary to remove it.
- The great love of God for us in that Jesus Christ was willing to die. More than that, he pursued life and death motivated by his passion to rescue us from an eternal death.

VII. Please read John 16 – 21, then answer these questions.

1. Who is Jesus praying for in John 17? What does he pray for them? Do you think you are included in his prayer?
2. Pilot raises an important question in John 18:38, "*What is truth?*" How would you define truth?
3. John 20 – 21 tells the story of the resurrection of Jesus. If the resurrection is historical fact, what are the implications for you?
4. Based on your readings in John's Gospel. What response to His life and ministry does Jesus want to see in you?

The Human Condition and the Justice of God

No one is truly good, yet God requires perfect goodness

Catechism

Question 13: Did our first parents remain as they were created?

Answer: Left to the freedom of their own wills, our first parents sinned against God and fell from their original condition.

Question 14: What is sin?

Answer: Sin is disobeying or not conforming to God's law in any way.

Question 19: What is the misery of man's fallen condition?

Answer: By their fall all mankind lost fellowship with God and brought His anger and curse on themselves. They are therefore subject to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

I. What is the human condition?

A. The world isn't _____.

B. The human heart isn't _____.

The source of any goodness we see in people is not the people themselves, it is God's Law and Grace impressed upon the human conscience.

II. How did humanity get this way?

A. God is not the _____ of moral evil.

"God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." (Genesis 1:31)

B. God gave humanity the _____ and _____ to make moral choices.

"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:15 - 17)

- God gave humanity a _____. We see that God commissioned the first man to take care of the garden.

- God gave humanity a _____. We also see the first Law—the first command—to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Humanity was created with the moral *ability* and moral *responsibility* to obey the creator.

C. Humanity chose to _____ God.

"'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it." (Genesis 3:5 - 6)

Adam's misuse of his moral freedom and responsibility is the cause and source of human badness (moral evil).

Adam and Eve's first choice was an act of:

- _____ - they distrusted God's truthfulness and goodness.
- _____ - they thought they could be "like God" in wisdom and authority.
- _____ - they chose to return evil for the good God had done them. They became like the proverbial dog that bites the hand that feeds it.
- _____ - they rejected God's rule over them. In effect they said, "We will not have you to rule over us."
- _____ - they allied themselves with the Enemy to escape God's authority.

III. What are the consequences of that first choice?

A. Adam's evil choice bound humanity over to moral corruption.

Before the evil choice	After the evil choice
Able to do good	Able not to do good
Able to do evil	Able not to do evil.
Innocent - knowing only good	Guilt - knowing good and evil, but bound by evil

*God defines "good works" as those that outwardly conform to His Law and are inwardly motivated by love for God. In other words, "doing the right thing for the right reason".

"Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field.' And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him." (Genesis 4:8)

"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time...Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways." (Genesis 6:5, 11 - 12)

B. Christians call this moral corruption the _____.

- A condition of the human mind.
- An inclination to do evil.

The Bible describes us as being "...slaves to sin" (John 8:34; Romans 6:6)

- A defining characteristic of human nature.

"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." (Psalm 51:5)

C. This moral corruption is the source of all human conflict.

"...The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree..." (Genesis 3:12)

"Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9)

D. God punished the Man and Woman for their evil choice.

*"By their fall all mankind lost fellowship with God and brought His anger and curse on themselves."
(Catechism, answer 19)*

- They would have to struggle to survive.

"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you..." (Genesis 3:17 – 18)

- They would be alienated from God.

"I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." (Gen 3:10)

"So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden..." (Genesis 3:23)

*"Our hearts were made for You, O Lord, and they are restless
until they find their rest in you."—St. Augustine*

- They would die.

"By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:18 - 19)

E. God promised future _____.

"And I will put enmity between you [the serpent] and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:15)

IV. What does this have to do with me?

A. Isn't it unjust to be _____ for another's crime?

B. I have _____ Adam's moral corruption.

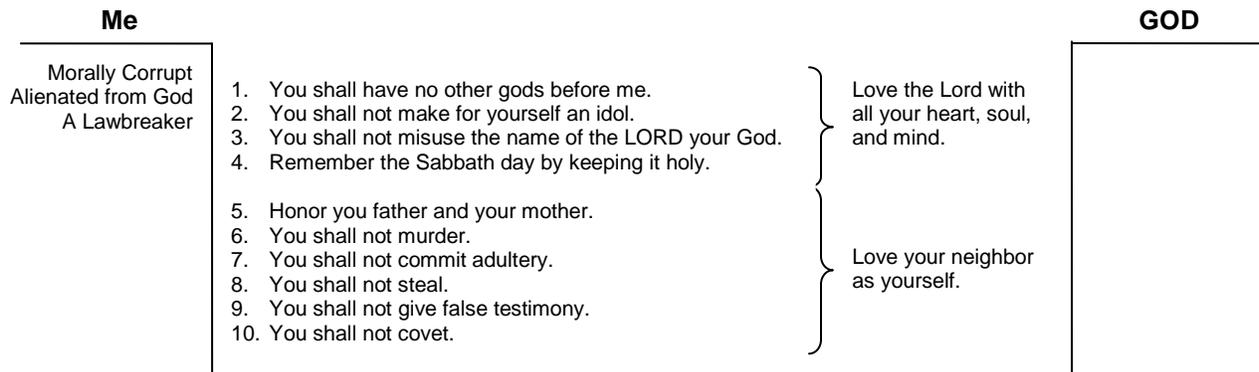
"...Through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners..." (Romans 5:19)



C. I have _____ God's Law.

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8)

"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God...there is no one who does good, not even one." (Romans 3:10 – 12)



If I have already broken God's Law, should I try harder? Be more sincere? Something else?

According to Jesus we become lawbreakers two ways:

- _____ We do what God forbids, and we fail to do what He commands.

- _____ mere *outward* conformity to God's Law doesn't satisfy God

"...anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment." (Matthew 5:22)

"...anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28)

Sin is any inward or outward lack of conformity to the God's Law.

D. I will be held _____. Yet, our corrupt nature compels us to justify ourselves with excuses:

- "I didn't mean to. It was her fault." (ex. Adam speaking of Eve, Genesis 3:12)
- "Why should I care? It's not my responsibility." (Cain speaking of Able, Genesis 4:9)
- "I only have to love people like me." (Expert in the Law who sought to excuse himself by asking, "Who is my neighbor?" Luke 10:29 – 37)
- "But, I have kept the Law, I'm a good person." (The Rich Young Ruler, Luke 18:18 – 23)
- "I'm better than the other guy." (Parable of the Pharisee and Publican, Luke 18:9 – 14)

"The soul who sins is the one who will die." (Ezekiel 18:4)

"The wages of [punishment for] sin is death." (Romans 6:23)

E. The _____ is for me.

What does it mean to believe in Jesus? It means to place your hope and trust in Him so completely that you devote your life to worship and follow him.

What does it mean to be a Christian? It means you've abandoned hope that you could ever earn God's favor. Instead, you follow Christ because you trust that He has earned God's favor for you.

V. Please read Matthew 5 – 7, and then answer these questions.

1. Matthew 5 – 7 records Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount". The first section of the Sermon on the Mount is called "The Beatitudes". Each Beatitude begins with the word "Blessed", which means "happy", "fortunate". The Beatitudes describe the inner thoughts of a true follower of Jesus. Describe what you think it means to be "poor in spirit", to "mourn", or to "hunger and thirst for righteousness". (*Matthew 5:1-6*)

2. Jesus talks about "hypocrites" (*Matthew 6:1 – 16*). Try to list some characteristics of a person that Jesus would describe as a hypocrite. How do these characteristics differ from the beatitudes of a true follower of Jesus?

3. Jesus also describes how to distinguish between true and false followers (*Matthew 7:13 – 27*). List some of the differences between true and false followers. In light of your list, where do you see yourself?

True followers	False Followers

Jesus and the Mercy of God

The only hope of eternal life is the mercy of God offered in Jesus

“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” (Romans 4:25 – 5:2)

Catechism

Question 20: Did God leave all mankind to die in sin and misery?

Answer: *From all eternity and merely because it pleased Him, God chose some to have everlasting life. These He freed from sin and misery by a covenant of grace and brought them to salvation by a redeemer.*

I. What have we established so far?

- A. The Condition of humanity (unit 5): Sinful—having an internal inclination to break God's Law.
- B. The Disposition of God (Unit 5): Just—having an obligation to punish lawbreakers.
- C. The Mission of Jesus (Unit 4): Rescue—having a mission to rescue humanity.

II. What could God do about sin?

- A. Execute _____ on all.

Jesus did not have to die in the sense that he had a moral obligation to save humanity.

- B. Execute Judgment on _____ representative.

“God presented him [Jesus] as a sacrifice...to demonstrate his [God's] justice at the present time, so as to be ¹just and ²the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” (Romans 3:25 – 26)

- ¹just -

- ²the one who justifies -

Jesus did have to die in the sense that the justice of God required death as the penalty for sin.

III. Why would God offer mercy?

A. _____ is an expression of God's love.

"...we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved." (Ephesians 2:3 – 5)

"The Lord is full of compassion and mercy." (James 5:11)

“Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the Whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.”

--from Frederick Lehman's 1917 hymn, The Love of God

B. Mercy _____ the glory of God's grace in Christ.

"God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ...in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches [i.e. glory] of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:4 – 7)

Mercy and Grace are complimentary, like two sides of the same coin.

- Mercy can be described as *withholding* a bad that *is* deserved.
- Grace can be described as *granting* a good that *isn't* deserved.

"...it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this is not from yourselves, it [i.e. both the grace and the faith] is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8)

IV. Why do Christians say Mercy & Grace come through Christ alone?

A. People can't do anything to help themselves in regards to sin.

B. Jesus said he was the only way to the Father.

"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

C. God appointed one specific person to be a mediator.

*"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus..."
(1 Timothy 2:5)*

"Christ is the mediator of a new covenant..." (Hebrews 9:15)

"For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" (Romans 5:10)

D. Is God being unfair to _____ those who have never heard the Gospel?

- God is not obligated to show mercy to anyone.

"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy..." (Romans 9:15)

- Showing mercy to some does not equal injustice for others.

- God will reveal himself to any who genuinely seek for Him. He can reveal their need and His Grace through the proclamation of the Gospel, as in the story of the Apostle Philip when he preached the Gospel to the Ethiopian (e.g. Acts 8:26 – 38) or by the direct intervention of His Spirit (miracles, dreams, etc). There are amazing stories of people, even whole tribes of people, who call upon and worship the One, True God though they have never heard the name Jesus. Don Richardson documents many examples of this in his book, Eternity in their Hearts.

V. What are the benefits of the New Covenant?

“...These [Christians] He freed from sin and misery by a covenant of grace and brought them to salvation by a redeemer.” The new Covenant of Grace in Christ promises:

- _____ removal of God’s wrath because of sin. (*focus on Divine Justice*)
- _____ rescue from the dominating power of sin. (*focus on human need*)

A. _____ - God’s act of pardoning our sin. (*God as Judge*)

_____ Righteousness: the righteousness (“right-with-God-ness”) that comes from God as a gift.

“For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed...” (Romans 1:17)

“God made him who had no sin to be sin [a sin offering] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

God remains just *and* justifies me from my sin by imputing Christ’s righteousness to me.

B. _____ - God’s act of receiving us into his family. (*God as Father*)

- Reconciliation Christ reverses the alienation caused by sin.

“...when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son...” (Romans 5:10)

“...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...” (Romans 5:1)

- Fellowship Reconciliation makes communion with God possible.

Adam was driven away from God’s presence, but Christ leads us back into God’s presence. Our communion with God is as children relating to a strong, yet tender Father. He is our Heavenly Father who bestows his unconditional love and blessing upon our lives.

He protects us from the enemy of our soul (the devil), provides for our daily bread, and promises us an eternal home with Him.

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1)

The Lord’s Table is a celebration of that fellowship. Don’t neglect the Lord’s Table since it reminds of how Christ restored us to fellowship with our Father through his suffering.

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1)

- Inheritance God grants us the full privileges due to His children. Think of that! Just as an earthly inheritance can be passed on to an adopted child, so God grants believers an inheritance, even though Jesus alone is His true Son.

“Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ... I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:17 – 18)

The inheritance of glory that we shall receive defies description.

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9, alluding to Isaiah 64:4)

And this inheritance cannot be lost.

“In his great mercy he has given us...an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you...” (1 Peter 1:3 – 4)

C. _____ - God’s continuing act of making us like Christ. (*God as Renewer*)

Sanctification is the slow, gradual *imparting* of righteousness. How does this happen?

- God’s Spirit: The Holy Spirit dwells within Christians, changing us inwardly so that we learn to hate our sin and cease from it, while learning to love goodness, following Jesus as the example of perfect goodness. The Holy Spirit’s work will not fail:

“...he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion...” (Philippians 1:6)

So, if you are a Christian, you should expect to see growth and change in your life. Sometimes more or less; sometimes with struggle, but always over time, change.

- The Christian Christians cooperate in sanctification by following Jesus.

D. _____ - God’s act of completing the redemption of our whole person.

“I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s kingdom.” (Matthew 26:29)

VI. What are the terms of the New Covenant?

A. By _____ Alone (*Sola Gratia*). God offers us a New Covenant by His free grace alone.

B. Through _____ Alone (*Solus Christus*.) We must never forget that Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant.

“...it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed...but with the precious blood of Christ.” (1 Peter 1:18 – 19)

C. By _____ Alone (*Sola Fide*). Justification is by faith alone.

“For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’” (Romans 1:17, quoting Habakkuk 2:4)

*“Justification is received by faith alone, but not by the faith that is alone.”
(Jonathan Edwards, 18th century American Pastor)*

“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? [No!]...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” (James 2:14 – 17)

D. For God’s _____ Alone (*Soli Deo Gloria*). The significance here is that you and I don’t get any credit for our salvation.

“The only thing that I contributed to my own salvation was the sin that made it necessary.”

“To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. (Jude 24 – 25)

E. By _____ Alone (*Sola Scriptura*). This means that the Bible is the only guide and final authority given by God to instruct us for our salvation

VII. Please read Romans 3 - 5, then answer these questions

1. Review Romans 3:9 – 18. Paul is arguing that every single person is sinful before God. Do you feel like he is describing you in these verses? Why or why not?
2. Read Romans 3:21-26 several times. Try to summarize in your own words what the Apostle Paul is teaching in these verses.
3. How is Abraham the example of a person who is justified by “faith alone, but not by the faith that is alone”? (Romans 4, you may want to read Genesis 15 and Genesis 22)
4. Review Romans 4:25 – 5:5. What blessings result from being justified by faith?

The Good News of God

God offers eternal life freely; only requiring repentance and faith in Jesus

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.” (John 3:36, Jesus speaking to Nicodemus, a Pharisee)

Catechism

Question 85: What does God require from us to escape His anger and curse, which we deserve for our sin?

Answer: *To escape God’s anger and curse, which we deserve for our sin, God requires from us faith in Jesus Christ and repentance unto life along with diligent involvement in all the external ways Christ uses to bring us the benefits of redemption.*

I. Is Christianity a “real” relationship?

A relationship is the mutual connection experienced between two or more persons.

How would you describe your relationship with God? Circle the words below that describe your current relationship with God.

growing	broken	troubled	vital	non-existent
declining	joyous	insecure	life-giving	confusing
free	baby-steps	resting	cautious	loving
irrelevant	committed	inconvenient	marginal	stressful
uncertain	satisfying	peaceful	questioning	stable
rocky	beginning	searching	annoying	frustrating
comforting	engaging	defining	disastrous	exciting
wonderful	jumbled	starting over	life-changing	crash-n-burn
difficult	new	fresh	surrendered	over

II. How can imperfect people have a relationship with a perfect God?

A. God creates the _____.

B. The Holy Spirit _____ the soul. The Holy Spirit:

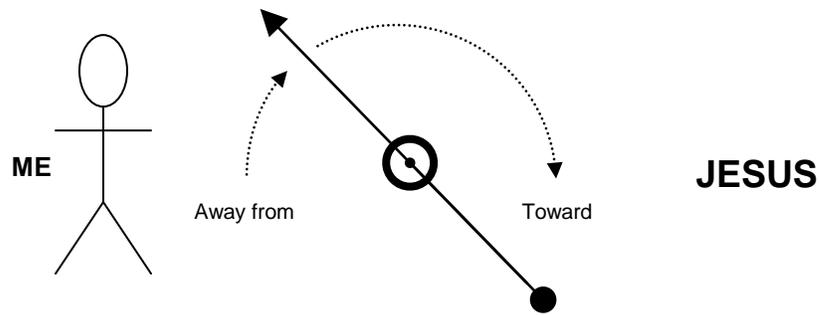
- Enables us to understand the hopelessness of our true spiritual condition.
- Convinces us that all our human effort to please God is in vain.
- Shows us that complete forgiveness and cleansing are available in Christ alone.
- Enables us to cry out for the mercy and grace we need.

“Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature’s night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.”

--4th verse of Charles Wesley’s 1738 hymn, And Can it be, that I Should Gain?

C. The _____ casts itself upon Jesus. This “conversion” consists of:

- _____ (turning away...) True repentance occurs when we become convinced that we have nothing to commend ourselves as worthy to God. Then our souls cry out to God for mercy because of our sins. There is often specific confession of our sins to God. The truly repentant soul makes no excuses, and abandons every attempt to show itself worthy of God’s favor. Repentance is different from mere remorse or regret because repentance does not end in despair; it leads us to surrender our lives to Christ.



Repentance and faith illustrated as a change in life focus

- _____ (turning to...) True repentance leads us to place our faith, hope and trust in Jesus to save us from the condemnation we know we deserve. There is a sense of joyful surrender when we recognize that Jesus as the solution—not just a solution—but the only solution we will need for a secure eternity. Over time faith will grow into a deeper and deeper conviction that we were truly lost, yet in Jesus we are truly saved.

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." (John 3:36)

III. What is saving faith like?

A. Saving faith _____ Jesus.

B. Saving faith is like _____ trust.

"I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3)

C. Saving faith is _____, not just theoretical.

IV. How can you be sure you have a saving relationship with God?

A. You can have _____ assurance of salvation.

The Christian who knows s/he is a Christian	The non-Christian who "knows" s/he is a Christian
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ True repentance and saving faith in Jesus. ▪ Knows s/he is unworthy of God's favor. ▪ Lives as a follower of Jesus in response to _____. ▪ Authentic assurance is a _____ of God's Spirit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No repentance. Theoretical faith in God. ▪ Believes s/he is somehow good enough. ▪ May or may not try to live a _____ life. ▪ False assurance is based on beliefs about _____.
The Christian who doesn't know s/he is a Christian	The non-Christian who knows s/he is not a Christian
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ True repentance and saving faith in Jesus. ▪ May feel that God could not _____ him/her. ▪ May be inconsistent as a follower of Jesus. ▪ Weak assurance based on personal _____. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No repentance. May/may not be person of faith. ▪ Not concerned about the true God's _____. ▪ Knows s/he is not a follower of Jesus. ▪ Self-assurance or assurance from _____ religions.

Where do you think most people you know would fit in this grid? Where do you think you might fit?

B. Authentic assurance of eternal life is supported by two kinds of _____.

- Objective evidence.

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." (Hebrews 6:19, speaking of the Gospel promise of God that was confirmed by the redemptive ministry of Jesus.)

"Before the throne of God above
 I have a strong and perfect plea.
 A great high Priest whose Name is Love
 Who ever lives and pleads for me.
 My name is graven on His hands,
 My name is written on His heart.
 I know that while in Heaven He stands
 No tongue can bid me thence depart.

--1st verse of Charity Bancroft's 1863 hymn, Before the Throne of God Above

- Subjective evidence. The subjective evidence comes two ways

1. The witness of the Spirit speaking to our hearts that we are the children of God.

"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." (Romans 8:16)

2. The work of the Spirit in our hearts that is seen in our changing lives.

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall...” (2 Peter 1:5 - 10)

V. What does it mean to follow Jesus?

We follow Jesus by participating in the means of Grace.

The Catechism says, “... God requires from us faith in Jesus Christ and repentance unto life along with diligent involvement in all the **external ways** Christ uses to bring us the benefits of redemption.”

The external ways referred to in the Catechism (normally called the “means of Grace” or “Spiritual Disciplines”) are the usual means through which the benefits of redemption (e.g. spiritual growth, assurance, etc.) are imparted to Christ’s followers.

Let’s briefly summarize what the means of Grace are:

A. _____ with God.

- Through _____.

“I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.” (Luke 6:47 – 48)

- Through _____

B. Participation in the _____.

- _____ this is the initial sign of belonging to God’s Family.

- _____ this ongoing sign reminds us of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

“This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me. For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:25 - 26)

C. _____ to all people.

VI. Why should I follow Jesus?