

CHRISTIAN BELIEF

CATECHISM



SUNNYBROOK

For God's people at Sunnybrook Christian Church,
a true joy to serve.

*How happy is the one who does not
walk in the advice of the wicked
or stand in the pathway with sinners
or sit in the company of mockers!
Instead, his delight is in the Lord's instruction,
and he meditates on it day and night.*

Psalm 1:1–2

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Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your city gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4–9

Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18–20

You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

2 Timothy 2:1–2

“...there yet remains two things of apparently great importance for promoting the grand object of our association... The first of these is a catechetical exhibition of the fullness and precision of the holy Scriptures upon the entire subject of Christianity—an exhibition of that complete system of faith and duty expressly contained in the sacred oracles; respecting the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Christian church... A performance of this nature might, with apparent propriety, be called the Christian Catechism.”

Thomas Campbell, *Declaration & Address*, 1809

ABOUT THIS BOOK

All true beliefs are derived from the Bible, which is the source and the standard for what is taught in the local church. The Apostle Paul taught his disciple, Timothy, that “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17). *Christian Belief* is based entirely on those certain and unchanging truths revealed by God in his holy Scriptures. A *catechism* is a basic summary of the Bible’s teaching, often used in the faith formation of children or adult converts.

As a ministry staff, we envision *Christian Belief* being used both in classrooms and in the homes of Sunnybrook’s members. Some may choose to teach directly from the catechism, while others may prefer to have it as a handy reference tool alongside other instruction. Parents may wish to use it as a preparatory tool for a child considering submitting to Jesus in baptism, yet others may use the catechism as a refresher document for their own long-held faith in Christ. It can certainly serve as a vital aid in evangelism, while also standing as a clear, concise set of beliefs held by the elders, ministers, and members of Sunnybrook Christian Church.

A catechism is ideally used in the context of a relationship between one trained in discipleship and one eager to learn the essential beliefs and practices of the faith. The one being instructed is invited by his or her discipler to embrace a new identity in Christ and a new community of faith, to live for the glory of God, to practice the Christian life, and to partner in the ministry of sharing this Good News with others.

We pray that this book will be an effective component in the training up of believers at Sunnybrook in the truth of the Gospel, so that they may serve Jesus Christ to the fullness of their calling. May this catechism serve to build up the body by grounding Christian believers in the Good News of Jesus Christ. To God be the glory!

— The Ministers of Sunnybrook Christian Church

FIRST THINGS

God Speaks

1. How can I know God?

We can know God because he chose to reveal himself to us through the Holy Spirit's inspired words found in the Bible. (Heb 1:1–2)

2. What is the Bible?

The Bible is the **inspired**, written Word of God. (2 Tim 3:16; Heb 4:12; 2 Pet 1:20–21)

3. Can I trust the Bible?

I can trust the Bible because God is perfect, and his Word is always true. (2 Tim 3:16)

4. Must I obey the Bible?

God is sovereign over all of creation, so his words are binding and authoritative. (Acts 5:29; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20–21)

5. What is the Old Testament?

The Old Testament is the collection of thirty-nine inspired and authoritative books from Genesis to Malachi. (See Appendix 1.)

6. What is the New Testament?

The New Testament is the collection of twenty-seven inspired and authoritative books from Matthew to Revelation. (See Appendix 1.)

CHAPTER 1

God, Creation, Fall, & Israel

7. Who is God?

God is the only eternal, self-existing, all-powerful, spiritual being. Nothing happens except through him and by his will. (Pss 86:8–10; 90:2; Col 1:15–20)

8. What did God create?

God is the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything. (Ps 24:1–2; Rev 4:11)

9. What is the Trinity?

The word *Trinity* describes the nature of the one true God, who simultaneously exists as one being and three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. (Matt 28:19–20)

10. What is God like?

Among many other characteristics, God is perfectly good, **just**, merciful, gracious, and holy. He is infinite and all-knowing, simultaneously **transcendent** and nearby. (Gen 18:25; 1 Kgs 8:27; Pss 19:9; 36:7; 119:68; 139:8–10; Prov 9:10; Isa 6:3; Matt 7:11; John 1:16–17; Acts 17:27–28; Rom 3:23–24; Eph 1:6–7; Col 3:1–3; 2 Pet 3:9)

11. How and why did God create us?

He created us male and female in his own image to know him, to represent his character to the rest of creation, and to bring him glory. (Gen 1:26–27)

12. How can we glorify God?

We glorify God by loving, trusting, obeying, and **confessing** allegiance to him. (Deut 6:5; Matt 22:37)

13. How have we not glorified God?

We dishonor God by choosing our own way in rebellion against him. This is called **sin**. (Rom 1:21–23; Eph 2:3)

14. How does God respond to sin?

Because God is perfectly just and righteous, he **judges** and **punishes** all sin. (Rom 6:23)

15. What is the Law?

The Law is a set of rules for living in relationship with God and each other. It was given to the nation of Israel through the prophet Moses. (Deut 5:1–3)

16. Is obedience to the Law enough to restore our relationship with God?

No, it is not possible for us to perfectly obey God's law. (Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16; Heb 10:1–4)

17. How can we keep from being separated from God and restore our relationship with him?

We can be **reconciled** to God only by trusting in Jesus. (Eph 2:16; Col 1:22)

CHAPTER 2

Jesus, Redemption, & Church

18. Who is Jesus?

Jesus is the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, Israel's **Messiah**, and the Redeemer of the world. (John 1:29–31; Col 1:15–20; Heb 1:1–3)

19. Why must Jesus be both God and man?

Jesus must be divine to represent God to man, and he must be a human to represent sinful humanity to God. (Matt 1:21–23; Eph 2:18; Phil 2:5–11; Heb 2:17)

20. What was Jesus' message?

God's Kingdom has arrived, so **repent** and **believe** the **Gospel**. (Mark 1:14–15)

21. What was Jesus' ministry?

Jesus' ministry was to do the will of the Father, which involved teaching about and demonstrating the presence of the Kingdom and setting people free from the power and the effects of sin. (Matt 4:13–17; Mark 4:35–5:43; 10:45; Luke 4:18–19; John 6:38; 10:10; 20:30–31; 1 John 3:8)

22. Why did Jesus die?

Jesus died in our place as a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins. (Rom 3:21–26; 5:15–17; Eph 2:13–18; Heb 10:11–14)

23. What does Jesus' death redeem?

Jesus' death **redeems** and **restores** humanity and all creation to God. (Eph 2:16; Col 1:15–23)

24. How and why did Jesus resurrect from the dead?

God the Father raised Jesus from the dead to fulfill the Scriptures, to defeat death, and to guarantee our future bodily resurrections. (Matt 28:1–10; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–10; Acts 2:24; 5:30–33; 1 Cor 15:1–28)

25. How are we saved?

We are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus, trusting in his sacrificial death for our **justification**. This results in God judging us according to Jesus' **righteousness**. (Rom 3:23–24; Eph 2:4–10)

26. What is grace?

Grace is God's mercy to people who deserve his judgment. (Eph 2:4–5; 1 Pet 1:1–12)

27. What is faith in Jesus?

Faith is trusting Jesus in all things and choosing to obey him. (John 14:15; Jas 1:22; 2:26; 1 John 2:6)

28. What is repentance?

Repentance is changing your mind and turning away from sin and towards God. (Pss 32; 51; Matt 3:2, 8; 2 Cor 7:10)

29. What is baptism?

Baptism is a **sacrament**. It is an immersion into water following a new Christian's confession of faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and membership in the Church. (Matt 28:18–20; Acts 2:38; Rom 6:1–11; Col 2:8–15; 1 Pet 3:21–22)

30. What is the Church?

The Church is the body of Christ, consisting of everyone who places their faith in Jesus as part of God's plan of redemption. (Acts 2:41–42; Gal 3:27–29; Eph 2:18–22; 3:20–21; Rev 7:9–14)

31. What is the Church's mission?

The Church's mission is to glorify God as ambassadors of the Kingdom, teaching people to obey everything Jesus has commanded and to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (Matt 28:19–20; 2 Cor 5:16–21)

CHAPTER 3

Spirit, Restoration, & Mission

32. Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity. He is fully God. (Matt 3:11; 28:19–20; John 3:5–9)

33. What does the Holy Spirit do?

The Holy Spirit lives in every believer, empowering and guiding him or her to accomplish the Church's mission. The Spirit unites us to Jesus, fills us with hope, and helps us to grow in obedience to the Scriptures. (John 14:16–17; 16:7–15; Acts 2:38; Rom 8:9–16; Gal 5:18–25)

34. Do Christians have to obey God?

Yes, obedience is the natural and normal response of those who love and follow Jesus. (John 14:15–26; Rom 6:1–2; Eph 2:10)

35. How can we obey God?

As we submit to God and his Word, the Holy Spirit transforms our hearts and minds to obey God. This is called **sanctification** and is an act of **worship**. (Rom 8:9–17; 12:1–2; Gal 5:16–26; Col 3:12–17; 2 Tim 3:16–17)

36. What is prayer?

Prayer is turning our hearts toward God by communicating with him. We do this through praise, requests, confession of sin, and thanksgiving. (Matt 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4; see Appendix 4)

37. What is the Lord's Supper?

The Lord's Supper is the regular remembrance of Jesus' death through the sharing of the bread and the cup. This is a **sacrament** initiated by Jesus as a celebration for believers only. Through it, we **commune** with God and one another. (Luke 22:14–22; 1 Cor 11:17–26)

38. Where is Jesus now?

After his **resurrection**, Jesus appeared to many witnesses and then **ascended** in his body to the Father's right hand to rule over creation and to **intercede** on our behalf. (Dan 7:13–15; Matt 28:1–10; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–10; Acts 2:24; 5:30–33; Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:1–28)

39. What happens to people after they die?

Those who don't love and obey Jesus will be held accountable for their sins against God. He will rightly **judge** them for rejecting Jesus, removing them from his gracious presence for **eternity**. (Nah 1:2–3; Acts 17:30–31; 2 Thess 1:9; Rev 20:11–21:8)

Since those who love and obey Jesus have had their sins paid for by him—God has already judged their sins on the cross—he continues to **reward** Jesus' followers with life in his presence for **eternity**. (1 Cor 15:50–58; 2 Cor 5:1–5; 1 Thess 4:13–18; 5:8–11; Rev 21:1–7)

40. What happens when Jesus returns?

He will gather his people and they will reign with him forever. All humans will be **resurrected** from the dead. Unbelievers will be judged and believers will be rewarded. (1 Thess 4:13–18; 2 Pet 3:10–13; Rev 20:11–21:8)

41. What are the new heavens and new earth?

The new heavens and new earth is God's final **restoration** of all creation. (Isa 65:17–25; 2 Pet 3:10–13; Rev 21–22)

GLOSSARY

Ascension – at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry he entered into the presence of the Father again. This ended his visible ministry on earth and prepared the way for the sending of the Holy Spirit to minister to the church. He now reigns with the Father as Lord and will return again to judge the world.

Believe – to have trust, faith or confidence in someone or something

Commune – implies not only a common faith but a common purpose and a common goal to become Christlike. It is closely associated with the idea of having fellowship through the Holy Spirit.

Confess – a biblical idea related to the Greek word which means to say the same thing or to agree. It is used three different ways in the Bible, (1) to acknowledge the greatness of God, (2) to acknowledge and turn away from sin, and (3) to verbalize faithfulness to someone.

Eternity – what lies beyond time and is not constrained by time

Gospel – literally it means “good news.” The Gospel is the message of salvation and inclusion into God’s Kingdom through faith and confession of allegiance to Jesus as King.

Grace – God’s loving actions towards creation, particularly those made in his image

Inspiration – the term used to describe the work of the Holy Spirit empowering the human authors of the Bible to record what God desired to have written in the Scriptures

Intercede – act of prayer, petition, or asking the favor of another

Judge – God’s perfect evaluation as to the rightness or wrongness of an act of something he made—either a human or angelic being—using his own character as the standard

Justice – the result of God acting according to his righteousness

Justification – a legal term referring to the divine act where God declares humans, who are sinful by nature, to be accepted by him as holy and righteous. We are justified by God’s grace through faith in Jesus’ work on the cross.

Punish – to inflict a penalty on someone for an offense or transgression

The Law – this term can refer to the Old Testament in general, the Torah (particularly the first five books of the Bible), the Ten Commandments, or the particular codes of conduct that identified Israel as set apart and in a covenant relationship with YHWH God

Messiah – the Hebrew *masiah*, the Aramaic *mesiha* or the Greek *christos* all mean “the anointed one”

Reconciliation – a change in a relationship or attitude from hostility to peace

Redeem/Redemption – the process through which sinful humanity is brought back into relationship with God freeing them from their slavery to sin. It is accomplished through the payment of Jesus’ death on the cross, satisfying God’s righteous requirement.

Repent – to turn away from sin and toward trusting God and his will

Restore – to make new again

Restoration – after being reconciled to God, the Holy Spirit begins a work of making a person whole again as God designed and intended

Resurrection – the central and defining doctrine of the Christian faith is the bodily resurrection of Jesus, whom God raised from the dead, proving that Jesus is his anointed one

Righteousness – a moral state in line with the character of God

Sacrament – a visible form of invisible grace or a sign of a sacred thing. They are used by God to confirm divine promises to his people.

Sanctification – to be set apart or to be made holy

Transcendent – a state of existence that is not subject to time, space, or matter, possessed by God alone

Worship – to acknowledge, praise, give thanks and serve. God alone is worthy of worship.

APPENDIX 1

Books of the Bible Summarized

The Old Testament

Genesis (Gen) is the book of beginnings. Written by the prophet Moses, Genesis tells of God creating the universe, including the human race. It introduces us to the problem of sin and the beginning of God's plan of redemption through the line of Abraham.

Exodus (Exod), also written by Moses, tells the story of his role as the Israelites' leader while God miraculously frees his people from slavery in Egypt. God gives the nation the Law at Mt. Sinai, and the book concludes with the Israelites wandering in the wilderness between Egypt and the Promised Land.

Leviticus (Lev) is the third book of Moses. It describes the priesthood and their service in the tabernacle. It also records God's laws regarding proper worship, ceremonial cleanness, morality, and feasts.

Numbers (Num) is the fourth book of Moses. It tells the story of God's judgment for Israel's disobedience and of his mercy to one day deliver them to the Promised Land. This book covers the forty years of wilderness wanderings.

Deuteronomy (Deut) is the fifth and final book of Moses. It tells the story of Moses giving the new generation of Israelites God's Law after their parents had died, and of God's promised blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. The book concludes with Israel's leadership being passed to Joshua and the death of Moses.

Joshua (Josh) is the first of what is known within Scripture as the "books of history." After Moses passes leadership on to Joshua, he leads the people of Israel across the Jordan to take possession of the Promised Land. The book chronicles the conquest of Canaan under the direction and strength of God, concluding with the death of Joshua.

Judges (Judg) follows Israel's story after the death of Joshua. The judges were Spirit-empowered leaders whom God raised up to deliver his people from the nations continuing to invade and occupy Israel. But the Judges were flawed, and over the course of the book the people of Israel spiral further and further into sin and away from God.

Ruth is the daughter-in-law of Naomi. Naomi is an Israelite who moves across the Jordan to Moab with her husband and sons during the time of the Judges. Both Naomi and Ruth are widowed and decide to return to Bethlehem. There Ruth meets Boaz, who redeems the family line of Elimelech. The book of Ruth records God's

providential work in making this unlikely union of a Moabite and an Israelite, which then leads to David (a key figure in God's redemptive plan).

1 Samuel (1 Sam) begins the era of kings in Israel. The Israelites implicitly refuse to have God as their King, leading to the nation crowning Saul as king. However, Saul eventually fails to follow God, and a young David is anointed as his replacement. Saul holds on to his kingship, hunting David down for years. Yet, God is with David. God eventually vindicates David as Saul and his sons are killed to end the book.

2 Samuel (2 Sam) tells of David's coronation as king. God establishes a covenant with David, stating that someone from the line of David will always be on the throne; this covenant sees its ultimate fulfillment in Christ. David spends the beginning of his rule driving out Israel's enemies and uniting the country, all under God's guidance. After David consolidates his kingdom, he commits an egregious sin and pays a terrible consequence by God's hand as the kingdom is racked by civil war. He eventually reunites the kingdom at a high cost.

1 Kings (1 Kgs) begins with David's death and Solomon's coronation. Solomon begins as a great king, seeking wisdom from the Lord and building the Lord's temple. But in disobedience, he takes foreign wives, bringing idolatry into Israel. Because of this sin, God determines to split the kingdom into two, dividing it between Solomon's two sons. History moving forward is now divided into southern and northern, the kingdoms of Judah and Israel respectively. God raises up many prophets, the most notable of which are Elijah and Elisha, to call judgment on Israel and Judah's corrupt kings. The book ends with Judah's king walking rightly in the Lord's sight and the king of Israel abandoning God and worshiping Baal.

2 Kings (2 Kgs) continues the story of both the southern and northern kingdoms. We see good kings and bad kings leading God's people until finally the fall of the northern kingdom to the Assyrians in 722 B.C., and the fall of the southern kingdom (David's promised line) to the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

1 Chronicles (1 Chr) establishes and demonstrates the importance of both the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. This book chronicles Israel's history from the perspective of the southern kingdom and parallels the book of 2 Samuel.

2 Chronicles (2 Chr) continues the story of the southern kingdom of Judah, beginning with Solomon's request for wisdom. It too tells of the temple's construction and the slow descent of its kings and people into outright rebellion against God, which results in their exile and the destruction of Jerusalem. The book ends with the promise of Cyrus, a Persian king who will allow the exiles to return to Israel (*both 1 and 2 Chronicles were written after the exile, including material from the exile itself*).

Ezra begins with Cyrus' decree and the first wave of exiles returning to Jerusalem. Key themes include the rebuilding of the temple to God and the re-establishing of the Mosaic Covenant among God's people. This book covers close to a hundred years of history from 539 to 457 BC.

Nehemiah (Neh) is the sequel to Ezra, as the exiles return and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and rededicate themselves to God and his covenant. The book covers less history, only thirteen years, but is significant. In this period, we see God moving to prepare his people for the coming of the Messiah as God's people have returned "home" and begin to re-establish their land and their commitment to YHWH.

Esther (Esth) is another book of history recorded to show God's providential work in preserving his people. The Jews find themselves on the verge of being completely wiped out by the Persian king at the insistence and scheming of Haman. However, Queen Esther is used by God to save his people.

Job is part of the wisdom literature of the Bible and is addressing age-old questions about suffering and if God can be trusted. Throughout this poetic book, Job and his friends speculate about why Job is suffering until God speaks and silences their finite accusations. God reminds them and us that his ways are above our ways, and we can bring our pain to him because he is wise and just. Job points to our suffering Redeemer who will end human suffering and restore all things.

Psalms (Ps/Pss) is a collection of 150 poems and hymns that express a wide variety of emotions, including joy, lament, and thanksgiving, that point us to God. If you find yourself close to God or feeling distant, desperate for help or wanting to praise him, Psalms provides a way to express it to him. In this way, Psalms is the prayer-book of God's people striving to be faithful to him as we wait for our King to return.

Proverbs (Prov) is part of the wisdom literature of the Bible and is a collection of wise sayings that lead us toward God. Proverbs is meant to make us wise and encourage us to stay on the straight path toward a good life with God. Proverbs teaches practical and ethical wisdom that leads to theological wisdom because "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (9:10).

Ecclesiastes (Eccl) is part of the Bible's wisdom literature because it teaches us how to wisely respond to the futility (absurdity, meaninglessness) of life. This unique and strange book teaches us that when we experience death, injustice, and the unpredictability of life, we are not to seek meaning in life under the sun but instead seek God to find meaning in everything.

Song of Songs (Song) is a collection of poetry that extols the love that a man and a woman have for each other. The book highlights each process of the couple's relationship: dating, engagement, and marriage. It uses dramatic and erotic language to show a passionate love affair that is blessed by God, which reminds us that we were created for a passionate and intimate relationship with God and points to Christ's love for us as his bride, the Church.

Isaiah (Isa) is the first of the books known as the Major Prophets. Written by Isaiah, a prophet of the 8th century BC, it is the Old Testament book most frequently quoted by the New Testament writers. This is due in large part to its many messianic prophecies (9:1-7; 11:1-9; 42:1-9; 49:1-6; 50:4-6; 52:13-53:12). Isaiah rebukes the sinful rebellion of God's people, calls them to repent, and announces God's judgment against all who don't turn from their ways (chs. 1-39). The book concludes with prophecies pointing to the hope of restoration (chs. 44-60).

Jeremiah (Jer) is the second of the books known as the Major Prophets. Written by Jeremiah, a prophet during the 7th and 6th centuries BC, the prophecies are directed at the rebellious people of Judah. Jeremiah's message was a constant call to repentance, but God's people did not respond. Though many of his prophecies

pronounced judgment, the best known passage is one of hope and restoration of a “new covenant” that would one day take place (31:31–34).

Lamentations (Lam) is about maintaining hope in God while enduring the pains of life. Few books articulate the intensity of human pain and suffering like Lamentations. The author’s agony comes as a result of Jerusalem’s violent capture and destruction in 586 BC, itself a result of God’s judgment against Judah’s rebellion.

Ezekiel (Ezek) records God’s words through the prophet Ezekiel to the exiles in Babylon. Considered the third work of the Major Prophets, the book’s message emphasizes both the judgment of the Lord and his promise to restore his people after their discipline in exile. Though Judah’s sins are frequently prophesied against, Ezekiel is ultimately a book about the hope one should have in the goodness of God.

Daniel (Dan) is the final work in the Major Prophets. Written in the Babylonian exile during the 6th century BC, Daniel chronicles key events that take place during captivity in Babylon—famously including the lion’s den and the fiery furnace. The latter half of the book details a number of prophetic visions the Lord gave to Daniel, including the famous throne room vision later considered a messianic prophecy (7:13–14).

Hosea (Hos) opens with the story of his divinely commissioned marriage to Gomer, a prostitute. Gomer repeatedly abandons her husband and commits adultery. Hosea welcomes her back each time, showing his commitment to their marital covenant. Hosea’s marriage is a portrait of Israel’s promiscuity and idolatry against YHWH. Hosea reminds Israel of her unfaithfulness to God, calls her to repent, and warns of judgment. The book ends with God’s promise of repentance and restoration.

Joel focuses on the judgment of Israel, recalling the plague of locusts in Deuteronomy 28. Assuming Israel’s guilt, he calls her to repent not once but twice. Joel reminds Israel that YHWH is slow to anger and that He will always relent if his people repent. Joel then focuses on the future restoration of Israel and the promise of the coming of YHWH’s spirit.

Amos highlights God’s right to judge the nations specifically when it comes to social justice and religious hypocrisy. Amos, a shepherd and fig farmer, warns of God’s wrath and judgment through descriptive visions, encouraging the people to repent as the promise of redemption comes through messianic restoration and blessing.

Obadiah (Obad) predicts divine judgment against Edom for their pride and cruelty towards the nation of Israel. He then reminds the people of Israel that the day of the LORD is coming, and they should place their hope in the covenantal promise, as they will receive restoration from God.

Jonah, a reluctant prophet, tries to escape God’s call on his life by running from God. Instead, God creates a storm, has Jonah swallowed by a fish, and has him taken to the nation of Nineveh to deliver a message of repentance. God then provides a plant to shade Jonah and a worm to eat the plant as Jonah doesn’t recognize God’s compassion. God’s gracious faithfulness to all who repent is the message of Jonah.

Micah (Mic) is a prophetic work with three basic messages: Israel will be judged for rampant injustice, God has high ethical standards for his people, and—mercifully—a redeemer from the line of David will one day come to set all things right.

Nahum (Nah) calls for God to judge Nineveh for their continued mistreatment of their enemies. Considering both YHWH's patience and wrath, Nahum portrays God as a compassionate warrior who protects those who find refuge in him and brings destruction on those who are unrepentant.

Habakkuk (Hab) wrestles with the human problem of understanding the ways of YHWH, working through this tension with God through oracles and prayers. Habakkuk is challenged to continue within his faith and to trust YHWH for deliverance while waiting on the coming judgment of the nations.

Zephaniah (Zeph) indicts Judah for their idolatry, social injustice, and religious ritualism, calling the nation to repent. Through righteousness and humility, Zephaniah encourages the nation to return to God alone in preparation for the coming day of the LORD. The prophet speaks to the remnant of Israel who will ultimately be chosen through grace, thereby receiving eternal salvation.

Haggai (Hag) writes of the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem as a sign of God's covenantal faithfulness. He challenges the Jewish people to examine their lives and begin to live in ways that are pleasing to YHWH, such as caring for others and living a devoted and holy life. Haggai encourages the people to recognize their self-centeredness and to start the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

Zechariah (Zech) looks backward then forward within his message. He exhorts the Israelites to repent of their evil ways and obey the Biblical laws, which mirrored their ancestors' action, who also failed YHWH. Zechariah then calls the people to strive for a restored relationship with YHWH coming as a result of their spiritual renewal. Obedience would lead to blessing, prosperity, and righteousness of the messianic age.

Malachi (Mal) reminds Israel of several historic covenants: the priestly covenant, the covenant made with Abraham, and the covenant of marriage. Their disobedience to these covenants separated them from God. Malachi ends with the foretelling of the messenger of a new covenant, the prophet Elijah, coming to lead the way for Jesus, the Messiah.

The New Testament

Matthew (Matt) is an account of Jesus' life and ministry written primarily for a Jewish audience. It is crafted to highlight his messianic identity, his rightful place in the Davidic line of kings, and his fulfillment of the promises made to Israel throughout the Old Testament. Matthew opens his book with Jesus' genealogy and birth, before jumping ahead to his ministry, which culminates in his death,

resurrection, and “the Great Commission.” While Matthew’s focus is on the narrative of Jesus’ ministry, he also devotes long sections to Jesus’ teachings such as the Sermon on the Mount.

Mark is the shortest of the Gospels. It is a fast-paced account, moving quickly from scene to scene. Mark does record some of Jesus’ teachings, but in smaller snippets than the other Gospels. He prefers to focus on the actions and interactions of Jesus. The first half of this Gospel presents evidence that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, and the second half explains that the Messiah did not come to gain political or military victory, but to suffer and die “as a ransom for many.”

Luke is the longest of the Gospel accounts. Luke, the Bible’s only Gentile writer, emphasizes that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is for all people. He often focuses on outsiders and their inclusion in God’s plan (Gentiles, women, the poor, etc). Luke was also a doctor with an eye for detail, and he writes to give “an orderly account” (1:3) from the earliest eye witnesses to Jesus’ life. The book starts with Jesus’ genealogy and birth and follows the story all the way to his ascension. Luke also includes more of Jesus’ parables than any other Gospel writer.

John is the most unique of the four Gospels. The Apostle John wrote his book after Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and chose to highlight themes and stories that had not been covered in depth in their accounts. Still, John’s main theme, that Jesus is the promised Messiah and the Son of God, is similar to that of the other Gospels. From his opening line, John is clear to emphasize that Jesus is God who has come in the flesh, and that eternal life comes through belief in him. He then proceeds to outline a series of signs (miracles), symbols, and discourses that prove this to be so, until arriving at the ultimate proof: Christ’s death and resurrection.

Acts is the sequel to Luke’s Gospel. It was written by Luke to show how the ministry of Jesus continues through his Holy Spirit, as the Church spreads his Gospel throughout the world. Acts opens with Jesus telling his disciples that they will be his witnesses “in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (1:8). This statement becomes an outline for the book as the Gospel moves out from Jerusalem in ever-widening circles. The first half of the book focuses largely on the twelve Apostles and their ministry in Judea and Samaria. The second half of the book focuses on the Apostle Paul and his missionary activities throughout the Roman Empire, but the main protagonist of Acts is the Holy Spirit.

Romans (Rom) is a letter from Paul to the Christians in Rome. The church of Rome was made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers who were grappling with how to worship with each other with their diverse backgrounds. Paul helps them see their situation in light of the character of God and the Good News that Jesus is the fulfillment of all of God’s promises to both Jews and Gentiles (all people who don’t descend physically from Abraham). God’s righteousness and faithfulness is proved in the person and work of Jesus. Despite their sin and the death they deserved because of it, all those who put their faith in Jesus receive salvation as an act of God’s grace. As a result of the work of Jesus and the reception of the Holy Spirit, the believer is no longer under the penalty or power of sin. This allows for the true people of God, both Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus,

to unite as a new community to obey God's commands and take the Good News of Jesus to a sinful and dying world.

1 Corinthians (1 Cor) is a letter from Paul meant to address specific questions and correct some specific brokenness in the church at Corinth. Paul's intention was to unite the people of Corinth under the truths of Jesus. As a result of his encouragement and rebuke, Paul desired to protect the church from false teaching and sinful practices that were leading to disorder and disunity. In short, Paul wanted to remind the Corinthians of the implications of life under the authority and lordship of Jesus.

2 Corinthians (2 Cor) is the second letter from Paul to the church in Corinth. While Paul expressed great joy for those who responded appropriately to his previous teachings, some in the church were still refusing to submit to the instructions given in the first letter and were thus rejecting the authority that Jesus had given to Paul. This letter gives great insight into Paul's view of Christ's Church as well as Paul's view of ministry. Just as God is reconciling the world to himself through the person and work of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, so also God's people are to be ministers of reconciliation as ambassadors of God.

Galatians (Gal) is a letter written by Paul to a group of churches in the region known as Galatia, modern-day Turkey. There were still many Jewish Christians who were struggling with the idea of God's promises of blessings and salvation being fully extended toward Gentiles. These Jewish Christians also struggled with how to handle the Law now that Christ came and fulfilled it. Do we still obey the Law? Do we make the Gentiles get circumcised? Paul helps them understand that the Law was a good gift from God with specific purposes that did not include salvation. If the Law was meant to save, then Jesus died for nothing. If Gentiles have to be circumcised to receive salvation, then salvation is not based on grace through faith. Therefore, this letter is Paul's explanation of God bringing salvation to all people. It highlights the freedom the believers have in Christ and the power we have in the Spirit.

Ephesians (Eph) is one of many letters Paul wrote from prison in Rome. Upon hearing of new religious philosophies rising up as threats to the church he started in Ephesus, he wrote these words of encouragement and instruction. The beginning of the letter focuses on the blessing one has in Jesus. The heart of the letter is a picture of how believers have passed from an old life to a new one. We were once dead, enslaved, disobedient and under Satan's dominion. Now we are alive, free, obedient and in fellowship with Christ. Finally, he details the unity of believers, both Jew and Gentile, as fellow citizens of God's household.

Philippians (Phil) is a letter from Paul to the church in Philippi. It highlights Paul's joy and gratitude in the Lord as a result of the Philippian church's faithfulness to God and their support of Paul's mission. This joy and gratitude comes from a place of ultimate contentment in Christ. Paul wanted to highlight the importance of following the example of Christ, who was willing to empty himself for our sake. Thus, Paul is willing to empty himself for the sake of Christ and he rejoices that the church in Philippi is also willing to empty themselves for the sake of the mission of God.

Colossians (Col) is also one of the Roman imprisonment letters written by Paul to the Church in Colossae. Here he addresses the 'heresy' that threatens to nullify the beauty of who Christ is. In this letter, we find some of the finest expressions of Christ's deity and supremacy. The last half of the letter gives instructions about how we

should live to bring honor to Jesus' name by setting our minds on him and putting to death what belongs to our sinful nature.

1 Thessalonians (1 Thess) is a letter from Paul to the Christians in Thessalonica. Though this church was suffering because of their faith, they remained strong in their devotion to the Lord. Paul wrote to encourage them to stand firm in their faith, to clear up some misunderstandings about the return of Jesus, and to challenge them to continue growing in their sanctification.

2 Thessalonians (2 Thess) is Paul's second letter to the church in Thessalonica. These believers were still suffering persecution for their faith, so Paul wrote to encourage them and to remind them that God would bring judgment on those who opposed them. The Apostle also wrote to clear up that the end had not yet come, and that continued faithfulness is needed until Christ returns.

1 Timothy (1 Tim) is a pastoral letter written to Timothy, who was in Ephesus. Paul left him there as a pastor to handle the specific problem of false teaching and its adverse effect on the local church. The concern was for the truth of Gospel proclamation. Paul reminds Timothy that true doctrine will result in proper living.

2 Timothy (2 Tim) is Paul's final pastoral letter written from prison to his good friend and co-worker in the faith, Timothy. There is a request for Timothy to come see Paul in his last days on trial and in prison. His desire is to remind Timothy of his calling and to remain loyal to the task of carrying the truth of the Gospel to Gentiles. He reminds his disciple that many will rebel against this Gospel. Paul then encourages Timothy to stand firm and preach clearly in the midst of such opposition.

Titus is the second pastoral letter written by Paul and is addressed to Titus, his fellow coworker. Titus was left in Crete to continue the work of the church, appointing elders in each city to lead the believers. Once again, Paul exhorts Titus to preach consistent and sound teaching amidst false teachers and unholy living. As in 1 Timothy, Paul gives a list of traits that would be apparent in those qualified to lead the church as elders.

Philemon (Phlm) While in prison, Paul wrote this personal letter to Philemon who lived in Colossae. Philemon had a slave, Onesimus, who had robbed him and then ran away to Rome where he met Paul. Upon hearing the Gospel, Onesimus became a Christian. Paul implores Philemon to welcome Onesimus back as more than a slave, but as a fellow brother in Christ.

Hebrews (Heb) is an epistle pointing to the supremacy of Jesus. It is through Jesus that God is most fully understood and it is through Jesus that God most clearly speaks to humanity. Jesus is the perfect high priest and the perfect sacrifice who fulfills all of the promises, laws, and sacrificial system of the Old Testament. Like many books in the New Testament, a strong understanding of the Old Testament is required to fully understand this beautiful epistle.

James (Jas) is an epistle full of wisdom for those who claim to put their faith in Jesus. James, the biological half-brother of Jesus, highlights the necessity to not simply hear the Word or understand the Word, but to actually do what the Word commands. In other words, followers of Jesus are those who put faith in Jesus and then actively work to obey Jesus.

1 & 2 Peter (1–2 Pet) are epistles that highlight the call to faithfulness in the midst of suffering and persecution. As followers of Jesus, the Christian's home is in the heavens with the Lord. Yet, we still live on earth as aliens and exiles. Therefore, Peter writes to encourage what it looks like to remain faithful and holy in a world that is not our home.

1-3 John are epistles encouraging the followers of Jesus to live as faithful children of the light in a dark world. John argues that we can know who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil based on whether or not people affirm Jesus as the Christ and whether or not people love and obey God's commands.

Jude is an epistle written to warn against false teachers that will arise within the Church. As a biological half-brother of Jesus, Jude desired to protect that faith that the Apostles received from Jesus. He sternly warns against those who deceptively teach false doctrine that leads to ungodly living.

Revelation (Rev) is an apocalyptic, prophetic epistle meant to encourage the churches of Asia Minor in the first century. These churches were facing immense social, economic, and physical persecution at the hands of the Romans and Jews because of their exclusive faithfulness to Jesus. John uses the beautiful imagery of a common form of literature in that day, apocalyptic, to help them visualize the transcendent power and ultimate control of God over the evil people, governments, and spiritual beings that seemed to be in control all around them. In a special vision, Jesus reveals to John how he is, always has been, and always will be in control despite the temporary circumstances that the Church finds itself in. The main message is this: Jesus has already won the victory through his death and resurrection and anyone who remains faithful to Jesus even unto death will experience this same victory at his return when he judges the world and makes all things new.

APPENDIX 2

The Ten Commandments

How to Love God

1: Do not have other gods besides me. (Exod 20:3)

2: Do not make an idol for yourself, whether in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. Do not bow in worship to them, and do not serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the fathers' iniquity, to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, but showing faithful love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commands. (Exod 20:4–6)

3: Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God, because the LORD will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses his name. (Exod 20:7)

4: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: you are to labor six days and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. You must not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female servant, your livestock, or the resident alien who is within your city gates. For the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and declared it holy. (Exod 20:8–11)

How to Love Others

5: Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. (Exod 20:12)

6: Do not murder. (Exod 20:13)

7: Do not commit adultery. (Exod 20:14)

8: Do not steal. (Exod 20:15)

9: Do not give false testimony against your neighbor. (Exod 20:16)

10: Do not covet your neighbor's house. Do not covet your neighbor's wife, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. (Exod 20:17)

APPENDIX 3

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting.

Amen.

APPENDIX 4

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

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Membership & Catechesis

Movement	Baptism	Confession	Catechesis ¹
Anglican Church in North America	<i>To <u>become</u> a member of a fellowship within Anglican Church of North America, one must be baptized into the faith. This movement practices paedobaptism.</i>	<i>To <u>become</u> a member of a fellowship within ACNA, one must affirm the 39 Articles of Religion that govern the doctrine and polity of the denomination.</i>	<i>To <u>remain</u> a member in good standing with the ACNA, denominational members are expected to engage with their catechism, To Be a Christian, at whatever level is determined appropriate by each parish's rector or bishop.* After successfully completing their training, members are confirmed by the bishop.</i>
Presbyterian Church in America	<i>To <u>become</u> a member of a fellowship within Presbyterian Church in America, one must be baptized into the faith. This movement primarily practices paedobaptism.</i>	<i>To <u>become</u> a member of a fellowship within the PCA, one must affirm the Westminster Confession of Faith that governs the doctrine and polity of the denomination.* <i>*This membership requirement was one of the key aspects of American Presbyterianism rejected by the early Restoration Movement leaders.</i></i>	<i>To <u>remain</u> a member in good standing with the PCA, denominational members are expected to engage with their catechism, The Westminster Shorter Catechism, at whatever level is determined appropriate by each fellowship's elders, session, or presbytery.* After successfully completing their training, members are confirmed by their elders.</i>
The Stone-Campbell Movement	<i>To <u>become</u> a member of a local church body within the stream of the Stone-Campbell Movement, one must be baptized into the faith. This movement practices credobaptism.</i>	<i>To <u>become</u> a member of a local church body within the stream of the SCM, one must affirm the Bible as the sole authority over the doctrine and practice of a church.</i>	<i>To <u>remain</u> a member in good standing with a local SCM fellowship, members are typically not expected to engage with a catechetical (elementary) form of training.* Thomas Campbell, however, believed that an important supportive ministry toward "primitive Christianity" would be the development of a "catechetical exhibition" (see p. 3 of our catechism for his full quote).</i>

¹ Each example above assumes submission to the authority of Scripture and leadership (bishops or elders) as essential marks of ongoing membership. The right-hand column focuses specifically on the expectation that members are formally catechized in the local church.

