

Faith, Hope, Love

A Short Catechism

Version 1.16

Introduction

What are the ‘basics’ of Christianity? Throughout history, Christians have produced various summaries of basic Christian teaching. A summary like this can be called a ‘catechism’.

Many catechisms (including this one) are based on three virtues widely recognised as central to the Christian life: faith, hope and love (cf. 1 Corinthians 13.13, 1 Thessalonians 1.3; 5.8).

In this catechism, each of these three virtues is used to introduce a classic Christian text, respectively the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer and the Ten Commandments.

The catechism explores each in a set of questions and answers, supported by Bible references. Each Q&A can be discussed as little or as much as the student or group needs.

Great News

The central Christian message is the Great News about Jesus (which is often called ‘the Gospel’ which means Great News). The Great News is summarised in this Bible verse:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. *John 3.16*

For God so loved the world...

There is one God who created and rules the world. All people have rebelled against his rule, bringing God’s judgment on ourselves. Nevertheless, God continues to love the world.

...that he gave his only Son...

The ultimate way that God has shown his love is by coming into the world as Jesus. He was punished for our rebellion against God when he died on a cross, so that we can be forgiven.

...that whoever believes in him...

Jesus rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and will one day return for his people. We can become his people by turning from our rebellion and welcoming Jesus as our king.

...should not perish but have eternal life.

When we welcome Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit and begin a life-changing relationship with God as our heavenly Father, which will continue forever in God’s everlasting Kingdom.

If you are hearing or understanding this Great News for the first time, and you believe it, you can begin a new relationship with God by praying a prayer like this:

Almighty God, I believe that you so loved the world, that you gave your only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life, and I believe that your Son is Jesus. In Jesus’ name, please forgive my sins and please give me eternal life so that I will be one of your beloved children, now and forever. Amen.

If you prayed that prayer, and meant it, your sins have been forgiven, and you have started eternal life! The way to keep going is to keep growing in faith, hope and love in Jesus.

We can’t do that on our own. Thankfully, the Holy Spirit unites us to God and to God’s people, so that we now belong to a new, eternal family of people who follow Jesus together.

Faith

Faith is where the Christian life begins. We don't become or remain one of God's people by living good-enough lives, but by believing the Great News about Jesus (John 3.16, Romans 10.10, Galatians 2.16). This Great News was first proclaimed by Jesus' Apostles and, around the second century AD, their teaching was summarised in the Apostles' Creed.

The Apostles' Creed

We believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
We believe in Jesus Christ,
God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy universal church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

What do we mean by 'We believe'?

We accept the Christian faith as presented in the Bible, which is God's written word.

Psalm 1.1-2; 19.7-11; 119.105, John 8.47; 10.27; 10.35, Romans 15.4, Hebrews 1.1-2; 2 Timothy 3.16-17, 2 Peter 1.19-21; 3.14-18

What do we mean by 'God'?

God is one being who eternally exists as three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Genesis 1.26; 3.22; 11.7, Isaiah 9.6, Matthew 3.16-17 (cf. Mark 1.9-10, Luke 3.21-22); 28.19, Galatians 4.6, 2 Corinthians 13.14

What do we mean by 'the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth'?

God the Father is the all-powerful creator, sustainer and ruler of all things and all people.

Genesis 1.1, Psalm 33.6; 104.24-30, Genesis 1.1, Isaiah 45.11-18, Matthew 10.29, Luke 1.37, Acts 17.1-28, Revelation 4.11

What do we mean by 'We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord'?

God the Son became the man Jesus, the God-appointed ruler and saviour of the world.

Psalm 2.7-12; 89.19-29, Malachi 3.1, Matthew 16.13-19, Luke 3.21-22; 4.16-19, John 1.1-5; 11.27, Philippians 2.5-11, 1 John 5.20

What do we mean by 'who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary'?

Jesus is fully human and fully God, and is the only bridge between God and humanity.

Genesis 3.15, Isaiah 7.14, Matthew 1.18–25, Luke 1.35, John 8.56–58, Colossians 1.19–20, 1 Timothy 2.5–6, Hebrews 2.17–18; 4.15, 1 John 4.2–3

What do we mean by 'suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried'?

Jesus accepted God's judgment in our place so that we can be reconciled to God.

Psalm 22.1–31, Isaiah 53.4–6, Matthew 20.28, John 3.14–15; 12.32, Romans 5.6–11; 6.4, 2 Corinthians 5.19–21, Galatians 3.13, 1 Peter 3.18, 1 John 2.2; 4.10

What do we mean by 'he descended to the dead'?

Jesus went all the way into death to lead his people all the way out of death.

Genesis 3.15, Psalm 16.8–11; 71.20, Acts 2.22–33; 1 Corinthians 15.56–57, Ephesians 4.9–10, Hebrews 2.9–15, Revelation 1.12–18

What do we mean by, 'On the third day he rose again from the dead'?

Jesus was raised to life, confirming that he is the saviour-king God promised to send.

Isaiah 53.10–12, Hosea 6.1–2, Joel 2.32, Matthew 12.40, Luke 24.1–7, John 20.24–29, Acts 2.16–36, Romans 1.1–4; 6.9, 1 Corinthians 15.3–8; Revelation 2.8

What do we mean by 'he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father'?

Jesus is now with the Father, where he rules the world and intercedes for his people.

Psalm 110.1, Daniel 7.13–14, Acts 1.9–11, Romans 8.34, Ephesians 1.15–23, Philippians 2.9–11, Colossians 3.1, Hebrews 7.23–25, 1 Peter 3.22, 1 John 2.1–2

What do we mean by 'from there he will come to judge the living and the dead'?

Jesus will welcome the saints into eternal life and send sinners into eternal punishment.

Matthew 25.31–46, Luke 21.27–28, John 5.25–29, Acts 17.31, 2 Corinthians 5.10, 1 Thessalonians 4.16–18; 5.1–11, 2 Peter 3.8–10, Revelation 20.11–21.8

What do we mean by 'We believe in the Holy Spirit'?

God the Holy Spirit begins, continues and completes God's work to make us his people.

Isaiah 11.2, Joel 2.28–29, John 14.16–17; 14.26; 16.7–14, Romans 1.7; 5.5; 8.9; 8.26–27, 1 Corinthians 1.2; 12.1–3, 2 Corinthians 3.18, Galatians 4.6; 5.16–24

What do we mean by 'the holy universal church'?

God's people belong to one worldwide family of people who gather in local places.

Matthew 16.18, John 10.16; 17.20–23, 1 Corinthians 3.16–17, 12.12–13, Ephesians 2.19–20; 4.4–6, Hebrews 12.24–25, 1 Peter 2.4–10, Revelation 5.9–10

What do we mean by 'the communion of saints'?

God's people are set-apart for worshipping God in fellowship with one another.

Mark 12.27, Acts 2.42–47, 1 Corinthians 1.9; 12.12–27, 2 Corinthians 13.14, Ephesians 4.1–3; 4.15–16, Hebrews 12.1–2; 12.22–24, 1 John 1.3–7

What do we mean by 'the forgiveness of sins'?

God's people are pardoned for rejecting his rule and counted 'righteous' in his sight.

Leviticus 26.40–45, Matthew 26.28, Luke 24.46–47, Acts 2.3; 10.43, Romans 3.21–26; 5.1–17; 10.5–13, 2 Corinthians 5.16–21, Colossians 1.13–14, 1 John 1.7

What do we mean by 'the resurrection of the body'?

God's people will be raised from the dead like Jesus, each in a glorious, eternal body.

Isaiah 26.19, Ezekiel 37.1–6, Daniel 12.1–3, John 6.39–40, 11.23–27, 1 Corinthians 15.35–55, Philippians 3.20–21, 1 Thessalonians 4.13–17, 1 John 3.1–3

What do we mean by 'the life everlasting'?

God's people will live in perfect joy with God and each other in the New Creation forever.

Psalm 16.11; 23.6; 27.4, Jeremiah 30.18–22, Isaiah 65.17–25, Ezekiel 37.24–28, John 3.16, 1 Thessalonians 4.13–18, Revelation 21.1–4; 22.1–5

Hope

Christian faith produces Christian hope, as we look forward to the wonderful things that God has in store for us both in this world and in the world-to-come. We express and exercise this hope in steadfast prayer (cf. Luke 18.1, Romans 12.12, Colossians 4.2). Jesus teaches priorities for our prayers in what we call ‘the Lord’s Prayer’ (Matthew 6.9-13, Luke 11.2-4).

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Why do we pray ‘Our Father in heaven’?

We rejoice that through faith in Jesus, his loving Father is now our loving Father.

Psalm 103.13, Matthew 7.11; 10.28-31, Luke 11.13, John 1.9-13; 14.7; 14.20-21, Romans 8.15, Colossians 3.3, Hebrews 12.5-10, 1 John 1.3

Why do we pray ‘hallowed be your name’?

We long to see all people worshipping God as worthy of all honour, glory and power.

Leviticus 22.31-33, 1 Chronicles 16.10, Psalm 99.3; 103.1; 105.1-4; 106.4; 145.21, Isaiah 29.23; 66.18-21; Ezekiel 39.7, 1 Peter 1.13-16; 2.9-12

Why do we pray ‘your kingdom come’?

We long to see God’s rule spread across the earth, ultimately with the return of Jesus.

Psalm 145.13, Isaiah 9.6-7; 11.1-9, Mark 1.15; 4.26-32, Luke 17.20-21, Romans 14.11, Colossians 1.9-14, 1 Thessalonians 1.9-10, Revelation 22.20

Why do we pray ‘your will be done on earth as in heaven’?

We long to see God’s purposes fulfilled in this world, especially as we serve him.

Psalm 103.21, Mark 3.35, John 6.40, Romans 12.1-2, 1 Thessalonians 4.3-8; 5.18, Hebrews 13.20-21, 1 Peter 2.15; 4.2, 1 John 2.17; 5.14

Why do we pray ‘Give us today our daily bread’?

We need God to sustain us physically, emotionally and spiritually each day.

Deuteronomy 8.3, Psalm 34.8-18, Proverbs 30.7-9, Matthew 7.7-11, John 6.41-51, 2 Corinthians 1.3-4, Ephesians 6.18, Philippians 4.6; 4.19

Why do we pray ‘forgive us our sins’?

We need, each day, the grace and mercy that Jesus attained for us at the cross.

Psalm 51.1-17; 86.5, Ezekiel 18.23, Isaiah 1.18; 55.6-9; Jeremiah 31.34, Luke 18.9-14, James 5.16, Hebrews 4.16; 10.19-22, 1 John 1.5-10; 2.1-2

Why do we pray 'as we forgive those who sin against us'?

We need to show other people the same grace and mercy that God has shown us.

Leviticus 19.17-18, Matthew 5.43-48; 18.21-35, Luke 17.3-4; 23.34, Acts 7.60; Romans 12.17-21, Ephesians 4.30-32, Colossians 3.13, 2 Corinthians 13.14

Why do we pray 'Lead us not into temptation'?

We need God's help to avoid situations when sin may entice, entangle or enslave us.

Genesis 4.6-7, Psalm 119.9-11, Jeremiah 10.23-24, Mark 14.38, Romans 6.12-14; 13.11-14, 1 Corinthians 10.12-13, James 1.12-15, 1 John 2.15-17

Why do we pray 'but deliver us from evil'?

We need God's help to resist Satan's temptation, deception, accusation and intimidation.

Zechariah 3.1-5, Matthew 4.1-11 etc., Romans 16.20, 1 Corinthians 7.5, 2 Corinthians 2.10-11; 11.14, Ephesians 6.10-18, James 4.7, 1 Peter 5.6-11

Why do we pray 'For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.'?

We rejoice that Our Heavenly Father is the all-powerful, eternal ruler of the universe.

1 Chronicles 16.8-34; 29.11-13, Psalm 29.1-2; 72.19, Ephesians 3.20-21, Philippians 4.20; 1 Timothy 1.17, Jude 25, Revelation 1.6; 5.13; 7.12

Devotional Habit

The Bible calls Christians to 'continue steadfastly in prayer' (Colossians 4.2). As a starting point, we can obey this by praying the Lord's Prayer each day. But Christians should also learn to pray their own prayers. One way is following the 'teaspoon' (TSP) pattern:

- Thanks: Thanking God for some of the good things he's given you.
- Sorry: Confessing specific and general sins and asking God's forgiveness.
- Please: Asking God for things that you or people you care about need.

By adding some Bible reading, a prayer habit can become a devotional habit (a way of expressing and increasing our devotion to God). If you're new to Bible reading, you could begin with the *New Testament Bible Reading Plan* from the Navigators organisation.

Love

Christian faith and Christian hope produce Christian love. God teaches us to love by his commands (1 John 5.2-3) like the Ten Commandments he gave Israel (Exodus 20.1–17; Deuteronomy 5.6–21). And Jesus teaches us that these commandments are not the end-point, but the starting-point of loving God and neighbour (Matthew 5.21-48; 22.34-40).

The Ten Commandments

I. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery; you shall have no other gods besides me.

How does this commandment inspire us to love God and neighbour?

By loving God above anything or anyone else, exclusive of any other religion or spirituality.

Deuteronomy 6.5; 10.12, Psalm 86.8-13, Matthew 6.33; 22.37, Mark 12.30, Luke 4.5-8; 14.25-33, 1 Corinthians 8.4-6, 1 Thessalonians 1.9-10, 1 John 5.21

II. Do not make any idol for yourself; you shall not bow down to them or serve them.

How does this commandment inspire us to love God and neighbour?

By letting God's word alone teach us what God is like and how we should serve him.

Exodus 3.14, Leviticus 10.1-3, Deuteronomy 4.15-19; Psalm 110.105, Jeremiah 14.14, Mark 12.24, Luke 6.46, Romans 12.1-2, 2 Timothy 3.16-17; 4.3-4

III. Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

How does this commandment inspire us to love God and neighbour?

By honouring God in all our speech and our behaviour.

Leviticus 19.12; 22.31-33; 24.10-16, Numbers 30.2, Malachi 1.6-14, Matthew 5.33-37, Ephesians 1.11-12, Colossians 3.16-17, 2 Timothy 2.19, Titus 1.16

IV. Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days shall you labour and do all you have to do, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.

How does this commandment inspire us to love God and neighbour?

By taking regular, God-centred rest, including gathering weekly with God's people.

Genesis 2.2-3, Exodus 31.12-17, Mark 2.23-3.6, Luke 10.38-42 Acts 20.7, Colossians 2.16-19, 1 Thessalonians 4.9-12, Hebrews 4.1-13, 10.24-25

V. Honour your father and your mother.

How does this commandment inspire us to love God and neighbour?

By respecting the responsibility of parents and all authorities established by God.

1 Samuel 26.1-12, Proverbs 20.20; 23.22, Ephesians 6.1-4, Colossians 3.20, Romans 13.1-7, 1 Timothy 2.1-2; 5.1-2, Hebrews 13.17, 1 Peter 2.13-17

VI. Do not murder.

How does this commandment inspire us to love God and neighbour?

By seeking the physical, emotional and spiritual welfare of others, even our enemies.

Leviticus 19.17, Deuteronomy 19.4-13, Matthew 5.21-26, Luke 6.27-31, Romans 12.19-21, Ephesians 4.26-27, James 2.14-16, 1 John 3.15; 4.20

VII. Do not commit adultery.

How does this commandment inspire us to love God and neighbour?

By honouring marriage as the only God-appointed setting for sexuality.

Genesis 2.18-25; Proverbs 2.16-19, Matthew 5.27-32; 19.3-9, Romans 1.24-27, 13.13, 1 Corinthians 6.9-20, Ephesians 5.3, 1 Thessalonians 4.3-7, Hebrews 13.4

VIII. Do not steal.

How does this commandment inspire us to love God and neighbour?

By working with integrity to provide for ourselves, our families and people in need.

Exodus 21.33-22.15, Leviticus 6.2-4; 19.13; 25.35-37, Proverbs 16.8; 15.27; 20.17, Acts 5.1-11, Romans 13.7, 1 Corinthians 6.10, Ephesians 4.28, James 5.4

IX. Do not give false testimony against your neighbour.

How does this commandment inspire us to love God and neighbour?

By speaking with truth, wisdom and love, to help people and glorify God.

Proverbs 12.17-22; 15.1-4, Matthew 5.33-37; 18.15-17, Ephesians 4.15-32, Colossians 3.8-10, 16, 1 Thessalonians 5.11, James 1.19-21, 1 Peter 3.15; 2.9

X. Do not covet anything that is your neighbour's.

How does this commandment inspire us to love God and neighbour?

By living a lifestyle of contentment, generosity and thanksgiving.

Ecclesiastes 5.10, Luke 12.32-34, 2 Corinthians 9.6-12, Philippians 4.11-13, Colossians 3.5, 1 Thessalonians 5.18, 1 Timothy 6.6-10; 6.17-18, Hebrews 13.5; 13.16

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Thanks

Eion Simmons

Other Catechisms

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Richard Baxter's Ten-Question Catechism for Pastoral Care

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Articles

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