

INTRODUCTION TO THE SMALL CATECHISM



TIMELESS TRUTH

God has called me to be His own.

LESSON FOCUS

The confirmands will be able to define the Christian faith.

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SMALL CATECHISM



CONSIDER THIS

When you hear the word *Christian*, what other words come to mind? Give yourself one minute. In that time, write down as many words as you can below. Don't think too long, just write. Now . . . go!

Share your responses with someone else. Face it, there's a whole lot to this Christian faith. We know it's all about Jesus, but where do we start? In this lesson, we'll focus on some really big things we need to understand about the Christian faith: a definition of the Christian faith, where and how we learn about the Christian faith, and the chief parts of Christian teaching and life. Let's begin!

A DEFINITION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Question 1 of the Explanation gives the definition shown below. Let's build on that definition. In each of the boxes, read a catechism question that matches a word of the definition. Then, in your own words, summarize in one short sentence, in the matching box, what that question says.

Question 4: What is a Christian?

Question 5: What does it mean to confess Jesus Christ as my Lord?

The Christian faith is the confession that Jesus Christ is the world's only Savior and Redeemer.

Question 3: What has this one God done?

Question 2: Who is Jesus Christ?



THINK ABOUT IT . . .

Name one interesting new thing that you learned or that caught your eye as you expanded the definition of the Christian faith.

I can define the Christian faith.



GOD HAS CALLED ME TO BE HIS OWN.

UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO CONFIRMATION

Make sure you use the question from the catechism to answer this. If you have trouble with the reading for this question, ask your parents to help.

If you are not sure how to come up with a fifteen-word summary, try these steps:

1. Read through the question and pick out four to five key words.
2. Include those key words as you write or dictate a short sentence summary—but without counting the words.
3. Then count your words and think through how you can refine their summary to exactly fifteen words.

DIGGING DEEPER

WHERE WE LEARN ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Now that we have a good definition of the Christian faith, it's time to turn our attention to where we learn and get information about that faith: the Holy Bible. The Bible is a library of sixty-six different books combined into one volume. Read **Question 6**. In the open-book image below, write the central message of the Bible.

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

Look over **Question 7** for answers to the key questions about the Bible.



1. How long did it take to write the Bible?

2. Who, exactly, wrote the Bible?

3. Why is the Bible reliable for the Christian life and faith?

WHY CAN WE BE CONFIDENT THAT THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD?

Many, many people want to say that Christians are foolish for believing that God's Word is true. When we read the words of Jesus recorded in the Bible, we see that Jesus Himself taught that God's Word is true. Read **Question 8**. Pick one of the three examples of how Jesus declared that all Scripture is God's own Word. Use exactly fifteen of your own words to summarize that one example here.

WHERE DOES THE BIBLE GET ITS POWER?

The amazing thing about the Bible is that it is God's Word. Because of this, when the words of the Bible are received—through hearing, reading, or the Sacraments—it's God who is doing the work, not us! The Holy Spirit works by using the Word to create and keep faith in us as we receive it.

Read **Isaiah 55:10–11**. Pick out one word or phrase from this passage. Why does this stick out to you? What does this tell you about how God's Word works?

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WHAT ABOUT HUMAN REASON, THEN?

If the Christian faith is all about God using His Word to work in our lives, is there a place for using our human reason, or knowledge, when reading it? Read **Question 9**. The Holy Spirit guides our reception of God's Word. In the space below, write down a way or two about how we should and shouldn't use human reason when reading the Bible.

How **SHOULDN'T** we use human reason?



How **SHOULD** we use human reason?

THE TWO GREAT TEACHINGS OF THE BIBLE

Throughout confirmation instruction, you will hear a lot about the Law and the Gospel. These are the two central doctrines (or teachings) of the Bible. As you receive the Word of God, the Holy Spirit works both Law and Gospel in you. It's not just about knowing what's Law and what's Gospel. It's about understanding how God uses both to create faith and eternal life in you!

One way to remember how Law and Gospel work is the memory device SOS. Read **Questions 10–11**. In the space below the Law column, write down things the Law does. Next to these things, and under the Gospel column, write down what the Gospel does.

The Law **Shows Our Sin** (SOS)

The Gospel **Shows Our Savior** (SOS)



Now read the Bible verses associated with the Law and Gospel in **Question 11**. Note which ones are Law and which are about Gospel. In your chart above, write down in each column the Scripture reference for the one(s) that are Law and the one(s) that are Gospel.

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As you go into this, you may find it helpful to look up the word reason in a dictionary or online. Try to define what reason is and what reason isn't before tackling Question 9.

Ask yourself, "Can Christians be scientists or philosophers?" Write down reasons why or why not. The point is that Christians should use their human reason but should do so remembering that God's Word is the final authority on all things.

Law and Gospel are a huge component of understanding the timeless truths of God's Word. Consider one of the following:

- Draw out a giant SOS on a board, screen, or piece of paper. Write out "Shows Our Sin" and "Shows Our Savior" next to the letters for all to see.
- Think through a worship service with your parents. Identify with them where in the service you hear the Law being spoken and where you hear the Gospel being proclaimed.



CONNECTIONS

WHAT ARE THE CHIEF PARTS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE?

We've looked at how to define the Christian faith (it's all about Jesus), where we learn about the Christian faith (the Bible), and how God uses His Word to create saving faith in Jesus (Law and Gospel). Where do we now turn?

Think about a sport or activity you like to do. Draw a quick sketch of you doing that thing below. Don't worry, just doodle.

Now, think about it again. Whatever activity you like to do requires some knowledge and some skill. You need to know about the activity. If it's a sport, you need to know the rules of the game. If it's music, you need to know how to read music. Alongside basic knowledge, you also need to know some fundamental skills, right? These are the things you practice over and over to get good at. Return to your drawing above. In the space around your sketch, write down some of the fundamental skills you need to continually practice to get really good at that activity.

Questions 12–14 tell us about how confirmation is a rite of the church that's preceded by a period of instruction in the fundamentals of the Christian faith. In light of the fact that we've learned about who Jesus is from God's Word, now we look to the chief teachings of God's Word for our faith and life in the Small Catechism.

After reading **Questions 12–14**, what do you think are the "fundamentals" of the Christian life? Add at least three of these to the above space. Share with a friend.

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For Next Week:

Ensure you have your journal and memory work done!