



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Teacher's Guide to Lutheran Confirmation

Lesson 2: Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism

What is Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism?

Of course, all of God's truth comes to us in the 66 books of God's inspired Word from the Old and New Testaments. It is very important to make the students familiar with their Bibles, and to give them a love for the lifelong study of God's Word.

The Small Catechism is useful in presenting a brief outline of Bible doctrines. It is known as a "handbook of Christian teaching." After Martin Luther left the Roman Catholic church, many churches also rejected the false teachings of Rome and became Lutheran. As Luther visited these churches, he found that there was widespread ignorance about the Bible's teachings among the church members and even among the clergy. He saw a need for a simple teaching tool that would introduce young people to what the Bible says. Luther knew that if the children understood the Bible's teaching about six different articles of faith, they would have a solid foundation of Scripture knowledge which they could build upon for their whole lives. These six articles faith are:

1. The 10 Commandments
2. The Apostles' Creed
3. Holy Baptism
4. The Lord's Supper
5. The Ministry of the Keys and Confession
6. The Lord's Prayer

Luther said that his Small Catechism was "the simple way a father should present it to his household." For more than 500 years Lutheran parents and churches have used this outline to instruct their children, with the aim of giving them a life-long love of reading and studying the Word of God.

The original *Small Catechism* was quite brief -- only a few printed pages with simple explanations about the meaning of the six chief parts. Most churches use an expanded version. This is a book which includes questions and answers about the chief parts, along with Bible passages that show the truth of what is being taught. It is best if both the teacher and the students have the same expanded version for class purposes. If your students do not have access to such a book, you should at least provide them with Luther's original, short version. You can then encourage them to take notes in an exercise book as you teach.

Short Answer Study Questions:

1. Where does all of God's truth come from? Why is it important to always stay focused on this truth?
2. Why did Martin Luther write the Small Catechism?
3. List the six chief parts of Luther's Small Catechism.
4. How did Luther describe the purpose of his Small Catechism?
5. What is included in the expanded version of the Catechism that most churches use?