

Back to the Basics: Luther's Large Catechism – The Preface

Opening Prayer

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| 1 Lord, help us ever to retain
The Catechism's doctrine plain
As Luther taught the Word of truth
In simple style to tender youth. | 3 Hear us, dear Father, when we pray
For needed help from day to day
That as Your children we may live,
Whom You baptized and so received. |
| 2 Help us Your holy Law to learn,
To mourn our sin and from it turn
In faith to You and to Your Son
And Holy Spirit, Three in One. | 4 Lord, when we fall or go astray,
Absolve and lift us up, we pray;
And through the Sacrament increase
Our faith till we depart in peace.
Amen. |

Read:
Deuteronomy
6:6–8

Lord, Help Us Ever to Retain (LSB 865)

The Six Chief Parts:

1.	2.	3.
4.	5.	6.

As the Head of the Household Should Teach in the Simplest Way...

The Catechism is for home use by the head of the household to teach and practice the faith with his children. Parents, and especially the father, are the primary catechists of their children.

The primary texts of Luther's Catechisms are not "Luther's." The primary texts belong to the Church of all times and in all places. They are the most important texts for the Church and they are all taken from the Bible. They answer the practical questions for every Christian: What is God's Law? The _____. What is the Gospel? The _____? How do Christians pray? The _____. How do we become Christians? The Sacrament of _____. How is our faith strengthened? The preaching of _____. What medicine does God give us against the devil, the fallen world, and our sinful nature? The Sacrament of the _____. These texts are not unique to Lutherans. They are Christian and Biblical.

Christians Learn by Doing

Christian catechesis does not only take place in youth catechism class. Catechesis involves "the doing" of those things which will continue to be part of the Christian's life after Baptism: attending the Divine Service, confessing sin, hearing preaching and the absolution, receiving the Lord's body and blood, and living in one's calling. The man's calling includes confessing faith in Christ, loving his wife and children unconditionally, teaching his family the Word of God, praying for them and his neighbors, forgiving the trespasses of those who have sinned against him, suffering for the sake of the Gospel, and contending with his own weakness and failings in the joy and confidence of Christ's forgiveness. All this flows from faith in Christ. Catechesis enables the Christian to live faithfully in that calling by hearing the Word of Christ and doing those very things that will continue to be a part of his life.

Luther's Preface to the Large Catechism

Luther's Preface of 1530

1. Why is the Catechism such a useful tool for Christians to use in their daily lives? [1]

2. What classes of people aroused Luther's anger because of their attitude toward the teaching of Christian doctrine? [1]

3. What misuse of the Catechism does Luther describe? [5]

4. What did Luther criticize the rulers for saying? [6]
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
5. What was Luther’s personal habitual use of the Catechism? [7]

6. What benefits would a Christian today experience from a similar habit?

7. What should Christians never assume about the Catechism? [9]

8. Catechism study is a most effective help against what? [10]

9. What directive does Luther find for us in Deuteronomy 6:6-8? [14]

10. What is the practical and daily benefit of repeatedly and carefully studying the Ten Commandments? [17]

Luther’s Shorter Preface of 1529

11. What was the original use of the Catechism? [1-2]

12. What does Luther say about those Christians who do not know the Catechism? [2]

13. What is the duty of every head of household (father)? [4]

14. Luther suggests a number of ways to commit the Catechism to memory. Is he being harsh? Why is he so concerned that this have a high priority in our lives? [15-16]

15. What would you say to a person who says, “I don’t need to look at the Catechism. I’m already a confirmed Lutheran”?

16. How can you help your children, grandchildren, or Godchildren learn the basic parts of the Catechism?

Closing Prayer

Lord, help us ever to retain The Catechism’s doctrine plain
 As Luther taught the Word of truth In simple style to tender youth. Amen.

Lord, Help Us Ever to Retain (LSB 865, stanza 1)

References in this Study Series:

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