

To the Catechist

The Catechist Edition of *New Testament Catechesis* was prepared to assist pastors, day school teachers, homeschoolers, and parents in discussing the Bible Stories from *New Testament Catechesis* with their catechumens. Catechists are *not* to read from this material during class sessions. This material is to assist the catechist in understanding the basic meaning of each Bible story. This material is *not* intended to exhaust the meaning of the story. Catechists should become thoroughly familiar with each Bible Story so that they can teach the story, ask questions, and discuss with their catechumens with only the text of the Bible in front of them. The definitions of each term covered in the story should also be well known by the catechist so that he can weave the use of this vocabulary into the discussion of the story.

Central Thoughts

Several “central thoughts” are offered for each of the 32 main lessons and the four additional lessons. These central thoughts are intended to convey the basic themes of the New Testament narrative.

Key Questions and Answers

This section lists basic questions and that can be asked of the catechumens as the Bible story is being read. Brief answers to the questions are provided in the parentheses that follow the questions. These questions are not exhaustive. They follow a general line of direction that uncovers the central thoughts of each lesson. The catechist should use these questions as a general guide and not be bound to them too rigidly.

Catechesis Summary

The catechesis summaries are intended to draw together all the central thoughts to be covered in the discussion. These summaries attempt to show that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the central message of both the Old and New Testaments and how the church and every individual Christian lives from the preaching of the Gospel and the faithful administration of the sacraments of Christ.

“Learn by Heart” Catechism Connection

This brief section is intended to open the mind to see how the faith and doctrine of the Small Catechism is in agreement with the New Testament Scriptures. Although the main purpose of assigning sections of the catechism each week is to learn these sections by heart, the catechist should certainly point out connections to the catechism in the New Testament stories. These “catechism connections” only scratch the surface of the many allusions to the catechism in the New Testament stories.

Notes to the Catechist on the Missionary Journey’s of Paul

Although specific lessons are not provided for the missionary journeys of Paul, *New Testament Catechesis* does provide brief notes on each of these major sections from the book of Acts, along with the most significant terms that are drawn from these stories.

Notes to the Catechist on Parables and Miracles of Jesus

Use of the actual expressions, language, and vocabulary of Scripture is a primary objective in covering the parables and miracles of Jesus. For this reason, the catechumen edition and the parables and miracles of Jesus study cards highlight important words and phrases from each reading, along with only one or two statements on what the particular parable or miracle teaches. It is important for catechumens to study the actual texts of these parables and miracles of Jesus, rather than a textbook about them. The study of

the parables and miracles of Jesus is best handled at the middle school level (sixth, seventh, and eighth grade) or above, and among those who have been thoroughly grounded in the Catechism and the basic stories of the Old and New Testaments. The “Notes to the Catechist on Parables and Miracles of Jesus” are intended to assist the catechist in opening up the meaning of these texts based on what catechumens already know from the rest of Scripture.

Preface to New Testament Catechesis

Old and New Testament Catechesis are the first and oldest works in *The Lutheran Catechesis Series*. Their early development and use dates back to my first parish, St. Paul's and Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Boone and Dayton, Iowa. As a young pastor first starting in the parish, I soon realized how little my confirmation-aged youth knew of basic Bible stories. Without the familiarity, understanding, and vocabulary of the most important Bible stories of the Old and New Testaments, they were ill equipped to go on in confirmation instruction. I had no material other than the Bible. I had no money to purchase material, even if I had found material that I liked. Most of the material available at that time led students away from the stories and language of the Bible into modern-day life applications. Jesus became a teacher of morality more than the Savior of sinners. I wanted my catechumens to learn the Bible and the Bible's own language, convinced that the text of God's Word would bear fruit in their lives, especially if the discussion of Bible stories always centered on Christ.

So I plotted out a set of 32 Old Testament readings and 32 New Testament readings that could be covered over the course of an academic year. The courses were for fifth- and sixth-graders to help them learn the Bible, memorize the Catechism, and prepare them for in-depth catechism instruction in preparation for confirmation. The *Old Testament Catechesis* course would alternate years with *New Testament Catechesis*. Each member of the class had a New King James Bible (a reliable translation that preserved much of the language and familiar expressions of the Bible that their parents and grandparents knew). We sat down each week for one hour, taking turns reading out of our Bibles the appointed verses for the day. I interrupted the reading throughout the session, asking questions, engaging catechumens in discussion, and making comments. As we came upon important words, names, places, or concepts, I would write them on the board with simple definitions. Catechumens would take notes on these terms and make flash cards to study at home. This is how *Old and New Testament Catechesis* began.

In addition, I set the goal of learning, word for word, the text of two of the six chief parts each year. In Old Testament catechesis, the goal would be to learn the texts of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar. In New Testament catechesis, the goal would be to learn the texts of the Lord's Prayer and Confession and the Office of the Keys. I didn't spend a lot of time teaching the text of the catechism during Old and New Testament catechesis classes; my main goal was to have the catechumens simply learn those parts by heart. (I did, however, make "catechism connections" with the lesson for the day whenever it was appropriate to do so.) I knew, if the goal was to memorize just one small section from the catechism each week, that everyone could learn it by heart and learn it well. Our Sunday School program focused upon learning the texts of the remaining two parts of the catechism: the Ten Commandments and the Creed. In this way, the catechesis program of the congregation in the elementary years made it possible to learn by heart all six chief parts of the catechism before "confirmation class" began. My reasoning was simple: if the kids learn the catechism by heart along with the important Bible stories of the Old and New Testaments *before* more extensive study of the catechism begins, they will be equipped with a solid foundation for studying the catechism in greater depth in "confirmation class." This basic pattern has continued ever since for both the public and parochial school students of my parish. Old and New Testament catechesis and learning by heart (memorizing) word for word the six chief parts of the Small Catechism is the prerequisite and foundation for further catechesis that culminates in confirmation.

My catechumens still remember their Old and New Testament catechesis class sessions and how their pastor often created voices for Biblical characters or acted out some portion of the story. The point of such antics was not simply to entertain or keep them interested, but to make the story and its characters come alive for them. It is very important that catechumens come to understand that the Biblical characters and events were real and to see themselves as part of the story of God's saving activity in the world. After I left Iowa, one of my former catechumens who heard from his mother of my continued work in catechesis remarked, "Does he still stand on top of the table and use those voices?" Yes, he does!

Old and New Testament Catechesis, Catechumen Editions, were first published in 1998. They have been revised and updated for this second edition in 2004. The second editions of these volumes include minor adjustments or corrections to a few of the Bible Story references and term definitions. The following "study helps" have also been added to the second edition: listing of the Old and New Testament books of the Bible according to their arrangement in the canon of Scripture, Old and New Testament timelines, and Old and New Testament term groups. The pagination of the Term Glossary and Small Catechism in both the catechumen and catechist editions is the same.

Originally, *Old and New Testament Catechesis* did not include discussion questions or catechetical helps for the pastor or the catechumens. Pastors need to develop the habit of catechizing by working with the actual text of Holy Scripture. All too often, Christians study a curriculum *about* the Bible rather than the Bible itself, or they study a textbook *about* the Small Catechism, rather than the text of the catechism itself. "Read the Bible and discuss it" remains the most important part of every class session. Nevertheless, as people used the original catechumen edition, it became apparent that pastors, day school teachers, Sunday School teachers, homeschoolers, and parents needed guidance in understanding and discussing the Bible stories from a Lutheran perspective. To fill this need, catechist editions of both *Old* and *New Testament Catechesis* have been prepared.

I am indebted to Mrs. Susan Gehlbach, our technical editor, for the painstaking and thorough way in which she plowed through the manuscripts for the new editions of both *Old* and *New Testament Catechesis*. Rev. John Klieve and Deacon Matthew Gatchell designed the covers for each of these volumes. Deacon Gatchell also offered invaluable assistance in the preparation of the "study helps" for the second editions and in preparing the manuscripts for publication. Finally, I give thanks to God for the faithful catechumens of Peace Lutheran Church, Sussex, Wisconsin, who remain so enthusiastically supportive of the work of the Concordia Catechetical Academy: to promote Luther's Small Catechism and faithful Lutheran catechesis in the Church-at-large.

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Introduction to New Testament Catechesis

New Testament Catechesis is part of *The Lutheran Catechesis Series*, published by the Concordia Catechetical Academy, Sussex, Wisconsin. *The Lutheran Catechesis Series* offers a comprehensive set of catechetical materials for a Lutheran congregation, elementary school, and homeschool family. A complete listing of materials in the series is available on line at: www.peacesussex.org/CCA.

New Testament Catechesis is a survey of New Testament Bible stories. It is intended to build a foundation of Bible knowledge and vocabulary from the New Testament, and teach the words of the Small Catechism under the Lord's Prayer, Confession and the Office of the Keys, and, from the Table of Duties, "Of Civil Government" and "Of Citizens." The catechist and catechumens will be working directly with the text of the Bible and the text of the Small Catechism. *New Testament Catechesis* provides a schedule of thirty-two lessons, four additional lessons for optional use, 212 New Testament terms, and notes on twenty-seven parables and twenty-three miracles of Jesus. Each lesson contains three parts: the Bible story to be read for that class session, the section of the catechism to be "learned by heart" in advance of that class session for oral recitation in class, and New Testament terms which apply to the Bible story.

Bible Story

The narrative stories of the Bible are among the most important portions of the Bible for any Christian to know. The first five books of the New Testament, the gospels and Acts, are the foundation of the New Testament. These books include the stories of our Lord's birth, ministry, death, and resurrection, and His ongoing ministry through His apostles in the book of Acts. The lessons begin and end with the ascension of our Lord and the church's ongoing ministry of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is most common for *New Testament Catechesis* to be offered in congregations and schools beginning in the fall and ending in the spring. For this reason, the first thirteen lessons focus on narratives from the book of Acts and the remaining nineteen lessons focus upon the narratives of Jesus from the gospels. This allows the narratives concerning the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ to be covered during the festival half of the church year in which these stories normally occur. Lessons may be covered out of sequence, if the catechist desires to align the stories even more closely to the church year. If the lessons are taken out of order, adjustments will need to be made by the catechist in the Learn by Heart section.

The focus upon the concrete stories of the New Testament is important for three reasons. First, it is through the events recorded in these stories, specifically the incarnation, birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, that our salvation was won for us, and it is on the basis of these events that the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins in Christ is preached to the world. Second, the apostles preached Jesus as the Christ, promised in the Old Testament, from the things that He did and said for our salvation as recorded in the gospels. The saving acts of Christ in the gospels are further explained and applied in the New Testament epistles. Without a thorough acquaintance with the events, language, and vocabulary of the gospels and Acts, the epistles cannot be properly understood. Third, children, as well as adult converts who are infants in the faith, cannot understand and receive doctrinal concepts until they first know and believe in the facts of the New Testament narrative upon which these concepts are based. The concrete stories of our Lord are not illustrations of how God saves us—they are the actual means through

which our Lord saves. The preaching of the Gospel applies what our Lord did for us in these saving acts, that it might be received by us in faith as our very own.

The Bible Translation

The New King James Version of the Bible, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc., is the translation recommended in *The Lutheran Catechesis Series* and used in all quotations of the Holy Scriptures. It is necessary that the catechist and catechumens all use the same translation of the Scriptures, and that the translation not be a paraphrase.

Working with the Text of the Bible Itself

In the catechumen edition, there are no questions, answers, or commentary on any of the Bible Stories beyond the titles and terms assigned to each lesson. The reason for this is to develop the habit of working with the text of the Bible itself. The narrative should be read out loud, verse by verse, by members of the class taking turns. The catechist should interrupt the reading by asking questions of the reader and other members of the class. All his questions should flow out of the text of the narrative itself: What are the facts of the story? Who is who? Who did what? Why did they do it? What did Jesus say or promise? What did Jesus do? How does this story teach salvation by grace alone through faith in Christ? What does this story tell us about the church and the office of the ministry? These are the kinds of questions that need to be asked throughout the reading of the narrative. This means that the catechist should be very familiar with the story so that he can lead the discussion. The catechist's goal is to place the catechumen into the story, so that the catechumen begins to see the story of the Bible as his own story of faith. The catechist edition provides guidance in the kinds of questions the catechist might ask and how he might direct the discussion of the story.

Ordinarily, *New Testament Catechesis* will be taught by the pastor of the congregation, or by those who have been instructed by the pastor so that they are able to teach the lessons faithfully. Parents who use *New Testament Catechesis* for home schooling their children are encouraged to ask questions of their pastor, so that they, too, remain thoroughly grounded in the Lutheran confession of the faith.

New Testament Books of the Bible

To assist the catechumen in understanding and memorizing the books of the New Testament canon, a study sheet is provided on p. xxiii. This page arranges the names of the 27 books of the New Testament according to their respective groupings: the Gospels and Acts, the epistles of Paul (to churches and to pastors), and the Catholic Epistles and Revelation.

Learn by Heart—The Small Catechism

After this, the catechist may take a few moments to relate the doctrine of that section of the catechism to the story for the day. Extended expositions on the catechism are reserved for future catechesis, *after* the text of the catechism has been mastered.

Small sections of the catechism are assigned to each lesson. These excerpts are to be learned by heart, word for word, prior to the class session at which they will be covered. Learning these sections by heart so that the catechumen can recite them fluently is the *primary* goal of these assignments. After the text of the catechism is learned by heart, then it can be used to assist in the understanding of the Scriptures. It is not intended that the catechist spend a long period of time with the catechism assignment for each lesson. Rather, the catechism section should be recited from memory by everyone in the class. The catechism should be confessed out loud at each class session by the class as a whole and by individuals within the class. After this, the catechist may, if there is a connection to the Bible story, take a few moments to

relate the doctrine of that section of the catechism to the story for the day. Extended expositions on the catechism are reserved for future catechesis, *after* the text of the catechism has been mastered.

The focus upon the Lord’s Prayer during New Testament catechesis is to underscore the Lord’s Prayer as the chief prayer of the church, her ministry, and the baptized. “Our Father...” can only be prayed by the baptized children of God. The first three petitions focus upon the ministry of the Word and how the kingdom of God is received from the Holy Spirit by faith in the Word. The first narratives from the book of Acts highlight the reliance of the apostles and the early church upon the promises of Christ. Each petition of the Lord’s Prayer directs us to believe in these promises and to claim them as our very own. The focus upon Confession and the Office of the Keys is to underscore that the Office of the Ministry in the church today is the Office of Jesus through which He continues “to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not repent.” The authority of the Holy Ministry is the Word and command of Christ to preach the Gospel, baptize, catechize, forgive sins, withhold forgiveness, judge doctrine, and distribute the Lord’s body and blood. The focus upon “Of Civil Government” and “Of Citizens” from the Table of Duties is to underscore how Jesus and the early Christians understood their relationship to the state. Obedience and honor toward those in positions of earthly authority is done out of faith in Christ who submitted Himself, for our benefit, to every earthly authority which God had established. By submitting ourselves to the governing authorities, even when they are wicked unbelievers, we learn to live our lives by faith in Christ who confessed that His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36).

The Small Catechism

The version of the Small Catechism used in this volume is the 1986 translation of the catechism by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The Concordia Catechetical Academy has received special permission to publish this translation of the catechism in a “Learn-by-Heart Edition” with a format and marginal notes that facilitate memorization. The notes in the margin of the catechism refer to the grade level at which that particular portion of the catechism is to be learned by heart. For example, “1st +” in the margin indicates a section of the catechism that first graders and above are to learn by heart. The primary texts of the catechism (that is, the words of the commandments, the creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Bible passages on the sacraments) should be learned first, before the explanations to those texts are memorized. The primary-text material is in bold type in the catechism.

Pray the Primary Texts of the Christian Faith

A two-page listing of the primary texts of the six chief parts is included on p. xiv. This is the basic, historic, catholic catechism for which Luther wrote his explanations in the Small Catechism. Throughout the history of the church, these primary texts have served as the basis for catechetical instruction. Each “chief part” is provided with a title sentence and summary statements that help guide the catechumen in understanding how these texts are to be understood and used in the Christian’s life. These primary texts represent the “pattern of sound words” (2 Timothy 1:13) that is to be handed down to every generation of Christians.

New Testament Terms

The New Testament terms provide the catechumen with a concrete vocabulary of the most important people, places, and events of the New Testament. The definitions for the terms are written from a Confessional Lutheran perspective. These terms and their definitions are intended to form a framework and vocabulary for understanding God’s saving activity in Jesus Christ in the New Testament, for listening to the Scriptures as they are read in the Divine Service and at home, and for confessing the faith in one’s life. The terms are not listed alphabetically, but sequentially according to their occurrence in the New

Testament lessons. The terms listed under each lesson are drawn specifically from that lesson. The list of terms is not exhaustive. Additional terms are provided for narratives not listed in the schedule to provide an overview of the entire New Testament. To begin to develop an understanding of the church's liturgy and its origin in the Scriptures, the names of the apostles and saints are listed according to how their names appear in the celebration of minor festivals in the church year, and New Testament canticles are listed according to their proper liturgical title and location in the liturgy. If catechumens know the terms in this list, they will have a very good foundational knowledge of the entire New Testament. Working with the new terms and reviewing previously covered terms is an essential part of the catechesis for each lesson.

Definitions for the New Testament terms listed in each lesson are found in the New Testament Term Glossary on p. G-1. *New Testament Term Cards* are also available from the Concordia Catechetical Academy. The terms are numbered according to the order in which they appear in the schedule of lessons. This allows for the cards to be shuffled for the purpose of study and put back in order for future classes or new catechumens. It is recommended that each catechumen have a set of New Testament Cards for study and review.

New Testament Term Groups

There are 212 terms in *New Testament Catechesis*. They have been divided into “term groups” to make the study of these terms more manageable. For easy reference, each term group is titled and identified by the first term from that group. Each term group contains 10 to 33 terms. As each lesson is covered, the terms from that lesson should be studied along with the terms that have been covered previously from that group. As the lessons are covered, the number of terms being studied from each group will gradually increase until all the terms from that particular group have been introduced. Mastery of one term group should be accomplished before moving on to the next group. Mastery of the New Testament terms is easily accomplished by spending several minutes a day reviewing the terms from a particular group. It is suggested that five point term quizzes be held each week to reinforce this habit of study and the comprehensive learning of the New Testament terms. On each week's quiz, catechumens may be asked to identify five terms, chosen randomly by the catechist, from the particular group that is being studied.

The first term group, **the Gospels and Acts**, is the most important set of terms for laying the foundation for New Testament catechesis. It is also the most difficult because of the doctrinal content that is introduced in such terms as repentance, conversion, fellowship, the holy Christian church, and the communion of saints. Younger catechumens may be encountering such abstract concepts for the first time. Therefore, these terms will require more careful explanation and thorough study to master. It may be advisable to return to this group at various times throughout the year for review. It should be noted that the second group, **St. Andrew, Apostle**, and the fifth group, **Paul's Missionary Journeys**, are sets of terms from the “additional New Testament term” category. Depending on the nature of the class and time constraints, the catechist may choose to omit them or cover them at a different time. It should also be noted that **The Baptism of Our Lord** term group includes the ten terms that are from the list of “additional lessons.”

New Testament Timeline

A timeline of the New Testament era is provided to assist the catechumen in understanding New Testament history and the development of the New Testament canon. The timeline includes major events from the stories, other significant events from the first century, key people from each lesson, and approximate dates for the writing of each book of the New Testament. The events of Holy Week are especially highlighted.

The Miracles and Parables of Jesus

Study material on the miracles and parables of Jesus is for use with catechumens who have advanced in learning by heart the catechism and the basic stories of Old and New Testaments. They are best studied by older children with this background or adults. Parables, in particular, were not included in the list of Bible stories because of their use of symbolic language. Parables often require the listener to think abstractly and make comparisons between the story of the parable and what Jesus Himself has done. This is difficult for anyone who has not first been catechized in the concrete stories from the Old Testament and the Gospels. The catechist edition of New Testament Catechesis contains additional “Notes to the Catechist” for each parable and miracle covered.

How to Use New Testament Catechesis

New Testament Catechesis was originally developed as a one-year course for fifth- and sixth- graders to be used in building a foundation of Bible knowledge in preparation for intensive catechesis in the Small Catechism. The main lessons may also be adapted for use in all the Sunday school classes and adult Bible classes of the congregation over the course of a year. This allows for everyone in the congregation and family to be studying the same stories at the same time. If *New Testament Catechesis* is used in a Lutheran day school, the main lessons are recommended for the fifth grade, after the children have had *Old Testament Catechesis*. The New Testament terms learned in *New Testament Catechesis* should be reviewed periodically and accompany the catechumen in further catechesis. The study material on the parables and miracles of Jesus may be used with adults or the seventh- and eighth- grade catechumens in a Lutheran day school or home school setting. (See: *The Lutheran Catechesis Compendium* for an outline of this course and other catechesis courses in the Lutheran Day School sequence).