

Conclusion To The Small Catechism Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16,

On December 6, 1877, Thomas Edison leaned forward and shouted a poem into a very large horn. Cleaned up a bit from the original recording, this is what Edison said almost 150 years ago. These words **“Mary had a little lamb”**...caused a crude stylus to make marks on a piece of tin foil which had been placed around a cylinder. When the needle was put down again, the machine played Edison’s words back to an amazed group of onlookers.

I have no doubt that if Edison were to wander through a modern day electronics store he would be staggered by seeing the technological advances we have made in the years following his monumental recording. We can store millions of documents on a small chip. No need for cameras... your cell phone takes high quality photos. E-commerce did not exist prior to 1975. Now we have the explosion of e-commerce opportunities while we watch the old box stores like Sears, JC Penny, K-Mart, even Barnes and Nobles closing their doors. **Life simple, yes, yet so very complex.**

This is why Luther wrote the Small Catechism. Simple. Straight forward bible truths to live by. The Ten Commandments. Rules for a Civil Society. The commands of God. Theological truths. What to believe about God. The Creed. How to pray to the God of the Universe. The Lord’s Prayer. How to know you are saved and have your sins forgiven. Baptism and Holy Communion. A logical flow.

Throughout your life you have had questions about God. Haven’t you? When you were young, your questions might have dwelt with topics like: **“Where did the dinosaur go?”** Of **“if God made flies, why do people swat and squish them?”**

As you got more sophisticated, so did your questions. You wanted to know: **“How come some people die when they are young?”** and **“If we sent a rocket far enough into outer space would it land in heaven?”**:

As an adult, you really got down to brass tacks. You knew before you would ever consider a church, they would have to answer, **“Are all gods the same?”** and **“How come there are so many hypocrites in church?”** and **“If God really is a God of love how come He lets bad things happen to good people?”**

In your first visit to a church you hear words like ***“sanctification”, “synergism”, “Objective justification”***. But these words are not simple. Luther knew that if people were to have a common sense theological approach to life then he needed to provide a simple straight forward explanation to the biblical truths about life. He wrote the Small Catechism.

Today, Christianity remains the largest movement in the world. Jesus has touched more people, changed more lives, redirected more souls than anybody else.

Jesus has changed the world because Jesus who was crucified, died and was buried, didn’t stay that way. Having shouldered and carried our sins to the cross Jesus did die. Anybody who says differently is full of baloney. Among the tens and hundreds of thousands of people the Romans crucified, not one of them ever escaped.

Jesus died and was buried, but He didn’t stay that way. Three days after Jesus’ lifeless body had been placed into that tomb, days after a guard had been set as His grave, and a seal placed upon Him, some women who had come to take care of His corpse saw Him; His closest disciples saw Him numerous times; hundreds of others saw Him, ate with Him, touch Him. Let’s keep it simple

There is no doubt that three days after Jesus had died, according to prophecy, Jesus was alive. Why is this important? Well, you may be a good person, but you, like all of humanity, are a sinner. Your thoughts, your actions, your words confirm that you have broken God’s commandments. **In Ecclesiastes 7:20 God states: “surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.”** Ezekiel 18:20 says: **“The soul who sins shall die.”**

The good news is that God who created you loves you. **“God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.”** John 3:17 The reality is that all human beings die... but that was not God’s original plan. God’s holiness demands punishment for our broken commandments, so He Himself came to earth and took upon Himself our broken commandments offering everyone forgiveness by faith in Jesus. **We are saved by faith alone through God’s grace alone.** Martin Luther’s concern was “how to help children and adults understand what it means to be a Christian and live in this world with hope”.

Both the Large and the Small Catechism were written in the fall of 1528 and the spring of 1529. Although the Large Catechism's first aim was to present sermon material for the preachers, Luther's Preface also states its aim was the education of children and people in the Christian Faith.

Unlike earlier catechisms, Luther places the commandments before the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Like Paul, Luther was convinced that keeping the commandments cannot save but Jesus can. Since Christ saves and the commandments can't, the commandments remain for they can provide order in life. But the commandments were not, are not, and never will be meant to save. That is what Jesus came to do.

Luther then follows the Ten Commandments with the Creed. The goal is the simple one: to get to the bottom of what God has done, is doing, and can be expected to do for us.

1. God created you and me. All things.

2. "He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, by the death and resurrection of Jesus... all so that "I may be his own, live under him and serve him."

3. In the immediate reality of living life the Holy Spirit calls us to faith, sanctifies and keeps us in the faith and on the last day will raise us up from death.

Next Luther adds The Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer is the Christian's battle cry. We acknowledge our dependence on God's power, on His ability to supply or daily "bread". Luther said: **"When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we ask God to give us this day our daily bread. He does it by means of the farmer who plants and harvested the grain, the baker who made the flour into bread, the, the truck driver who hauled the produce the factory worker in the food processing plant the stock boys, the lady at the checkout. The bankers, agricultural scientist mechanical engineers all play their part in supplying our Daily bread.**

In the Lord's Prayer we pray that God will help us defeat the temptations that come our way from the "evil one" who simply desires the destruction of our lives.

In Baptism we are forgiven our sins and brought into God's family, under His protection for nourishment. "God does not just "zap " people into faith. God's Word is the primary means of grace.

God's message of His love and forgiveness through Jesus comes to people through Baptism and Holy Communion." God employs the **"Church" the "Ekklesia"**, to give spiritual care for His children.

Luther ends the Small Catechism with the gift of grace through the Sacrament of Holy Communion, a mystery of His presence in, with and under the Bread and Wine for the forgiveness of our sins. (God at Work Gene Veith p.37)

Paul reminds us, as did Luther, that we are saved by the grace of God and we contribute absolutely nothing of our own actions to the work of Christ. Jesus bore all our sins, received all the punishment that we deserve, and imputed to us all of His righteousness.

We come to God as sinners, not as doers of good works, and what we receive from Him is pure free and unconditional forgiveness.

Our response, our call is to do **"the good works God has prepared in advance for us to do"** whether we be a parent, grandparent, mechanic, fireman, social worker, teacher, nurse, hospital technician, The careers in which you find yourselves..... your vocation.... Means that you are doing good works, not for God, but for your neighbor. What did Jesus say? **"Love your neighbor.**