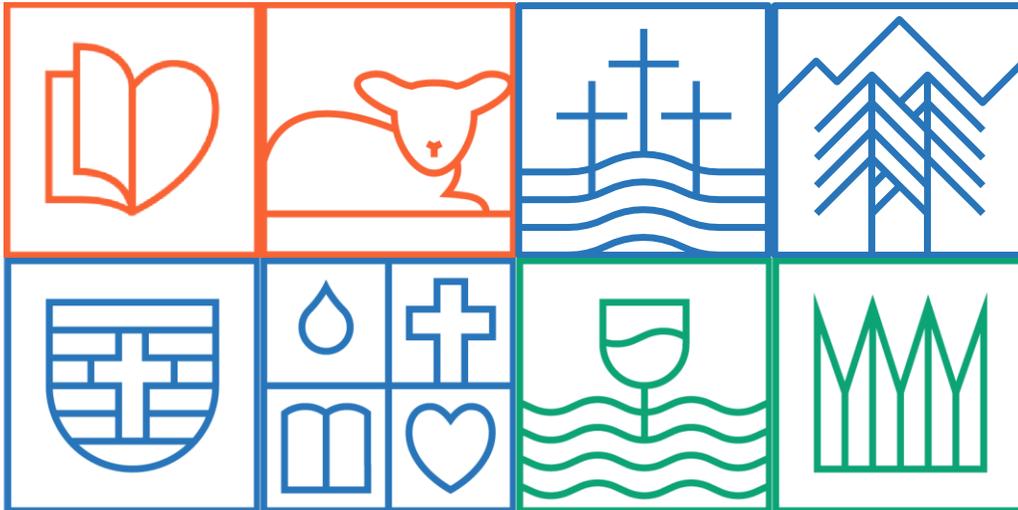


A Discussion Guide for **NEW CITY 2020**



**This is a guide to help facilitate
discussion and learning
in small group**

**Any questions on the content,
contact the staff for clarifications**

What is our only hope in life and death?



That we are not our own but belong, body and soul, both in life and death, to God and to our Savior Jesus Christ.

Romans 14:7-8 *For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. (ESV)*

1. Describe in as few words as possible your identity, your hopes you're your desires as you grew up?
2. How do those hopes and desires influence who you are?
3. What appeals to you about viewing yourself as "belonging, body and soul, both in this life and in death, to God and to Jesus our savior"?
4. What about viewing yourself as "belonging, body and soul, both in this life and in death, to God and to Jesus our savior" does not fully fit how you view yourself and what you desire?
5. Why do you think so few people in churches view themselves as belonging, body and soul, both in this life and in death, to God and to our savior Jesus Christ and desire to do God's will revealed in Jesus?
6. What needs to happen to cause us to see ourselves as belonging to God and to Jesus our savior and to desire to do his will?
7. What would this new identity, hope and desire do to improve the lives and witness of us in our economic and social system?
8. What is the most important thing for you about this identity, hope and desire that described by Roman 14?
9. How can we make this identity, hope and desire more realistic for us in this group?

New City Catechism » Question 2

What is God?



God is the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything. He is eternal, infinite, and unchangeable in his power and perfection, goodness and glory, wisdom, justice, and truth. Nothing happens except through him and by his will.

Psalm 86:8-10,15 *There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God...But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. (ESV)*

1. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of God?
2. How do you know that God is the Creator?
3. What helps you trust that God sustains everyone and everything?
4. Are there personal experiences that cause you to doubt God as the sustainer of everyone and everything? If so, what are they?
5. What about God as Creator implies that God is “eternal”?
6. What about God does the word “infinite” describe?
7. Why is it essential that one of the Creator’s attributes is “goodness”?
8. Do you normally use the word “glory” in everyday conversations? Why or why not?
9. When in reference to God, what does the attribute “glory” mean to you?
10. What is your understanding of “wisdom” and how it develops?
11. What is your current understanding of “truth”?
12. What is the popular idea of “truth” in our culture?
13. Why do you think it is important that the true God is the God of truth?
14. What circumstances also tempt you to believe that God is not good?
15. Are there times when you suspect that God is powerless to sustain you and provide what you need?
16. What do you tend to do when you conclude God is not providing what you need?
17. What about God being “unchangeable in his power and perfection,” creates for us a sense of safety and security?
18. Describe things in your own life that reveal God’s “goodness”!
19. Where is God’s glory most evident to you?
20. Describe times when God’s wisdom guided you in a difficult situation.
21. How is his justice made evident in your life?
22. What is the first truth you learned about God?
23. What truth about God causes you the most difficulty?

New City Catechism » Question 3
How many persons are there in God?



There are three persons in the one true and living God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

2 Corinthians 13:14 *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.* (ESV)

1. Who in God – God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – was first personally introduced to you?
2. Who in God – God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – do you now know the best?
3. Who or what specifically helped you best know this person in God?
4. Who in God – God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – do you know the least?
5. Why do you think that you have the least experience with this person in God?
6. Besides the reference in 2 Corinthians 13:14, what other Scriptures come to mind that suggest that there are more persons than one in God?
7. In your growth as a Christian, which of the three persons in God do you need to learn more about and more fully open yourself up to him?
8. At this point in your development “in Christ,” what hindrances hold you back from opening up to this person “in God”?
9. What is it about these hindrances that holds you back from opening up to this person?
10. What specifically encourages you to open up more fully to this person in God?
11. What excites you about God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
12. What do you hope to see Father, Son and Holy Spirit do for the members of your group?

New City Catechism » Question 4

How and why did God create us?



God created us male and female in his own image to know him, love him, live with him, and glorify him. And it is right that we who were created by God should live to his glory.

Genesis 1:27 *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* (ESV)

1. Think through and write out some of the implications of Genesis 1:27 about the Creator God?
2. What does Genesis 1:27 say about God's original purpose for mankind and for you, specifically?
3. Since God also created you to "love him," how has this purpose taken root in your life?
4. Since God created you "to live with him," what do you currently do to make this a reality in your life?
5. List specific ways the statement, "It is right that we who were created by God should live to his glory," has influenced the way you live?
6. As you became an adult, did you have a clear purpose in your life? What was it?
7. When and how did God's purpose for you begin to take root in your heart?
8. Which of God's purposes for you is most developed in your life?
 - a. Knowing Him.
 - b. Loving Him.
 - c. Living with Him.
 - d. Glorifying Him.
9. What more would you like God to do to help you fulfill His purpose?
10. What do you need to do to increase your fulfilling of God's purpose for your life?
11. What can your group do to deepen your fulfilling of God's purpose?
12. What can your church do to help you fulfill God's purpose?
13. What is the most important thing to you as you have reflected upon God's purpose for creating you?

New City Catechism » Question 5
What else did God create?



God created all things by his powerful Word, and all his creation was very good; everything flourished under his loving rule.

Genesis 1:31: *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning – the sixth day.*

1. What does God use to bring into existence these various aspects of reality that we now enjoy?
2. As you look on the nature around you, what do you see right now that reveals the nature of God?
3. What about God’s creation most amazes you?
4. What disquiets or disturbs you most about all that God has created?
5. What does it mean that God rules in a “loving” manner?
6. What are some examples of everything flourishing under God’s loving rule?
7. Do you feel like you are flourishing under God’s loving rule?
8. What do you think you now need to do about it?

New City Catechism » Question 6
How can we glorify God?



We glorify God by enjoying him, loving him, and by obeying his will, commands and law.

Deuteronomy 11:1: *You shall therefore love the Lord your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always.* (ESV)

1. What are specific things you do to “**enjoy** God”?
2. Describe some of the specific things you do to **love** him?
3. How specifically do you demonstrate your **trust** in him?
4. What is the difference between God’s will, commands and law?
5. How do you know what **the will of God** is?
6. What specific **will of God** do you obey?
7. Which specific **commands** in Scripture that you obey?
8. Which of God’s **laws** do you seek to obey?
9. What action you are now going to work on to “glorify God”?

What does the law of God require?



Personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience; that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love our neighbor as ourselves. What God forbids should never be done and what God commands should always be done.

Matthew 22:37-40: *And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."* (ESV)

1. The bar of "Personal Obedience," i.e. personally doing what God says.
 - a. Are you convinced that obeying God's requirements is a personal choice? Do you believe that people are capable of making this personal choice?
 - b. When did you make your own personal decision to obey God? What led you to make this personal decision?
 - c. To make this personal decision, what obstacles did you face and have to overcome?
 - d. What benefits resulted once you made this personal decision? What difficulties have you encountered in carrying it out?
 - e. What has helped you personally to overcome these difficulties?
2. The bar of "Perfect obedience," i.e. doing exactly what God says completely.
 - a. What do you think it means to obey God perfectly?
 - b. What does imperfect obedience look like and involve? Describe an instance when you feel you obeyed God perfectly.
 - c. Describe a time when you feel you obeyed God imperfectly.
 - d. What did you learn about God and obeying him from both these times?
3. The bar of "Perpetual Obedience," i.e., doing exactly what God says completely, consistently and continually.
 - a. Why do you think that God requires you to obey him "perpetually?"
 - b. What causes people to obey God in a hit or miss fashion, not continually?
 - c. What would help you obey God perpetually?
 - d. What can you do to help others obey God perpetually?
4. Examining Your own Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength:
 - a. What motivates you most from Jesus' words in Matthew 22:37-40?
 - b. What tendency do you find you have when you think about God requiring "personal, perfect, perpetual obedience" of you and of all his children?
 - c. Why do you think some people insist upon holding other people to high standards?
 - d. Why is it difficult for some people to hold themselves to high standards?

New City Catechism » Question 8

What is the law of God stated in the Ten Commandments?



You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below—you shall not bow down to them or worship them. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Honor your father and your mother. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony. You shall not covet.

Exodus 20:3 *You shall have no other gods before me.* (ESV)

1. As you grew up in the structure of your family, from your family's behavior what was the highest priority you were guided by as a child?
2. How did this family priority influence your behavior, your hopes and dreams and the direction of your life?
3. According to the world by what highest priority are we to live?
4. According to God by what highest priority are we to live?
5. What does God promise to those who choose to live by this priority?
6. What are the consequences for not living by this priority?
7. When did you decide that you wanted to live by this priority?
8. What led you to make this decision?
9. What in your circumstances makes it difficult to live by this highest priority?
10. What has been the biggest blessing about living by this priority?

New City Catechism » Question 9

What does God require in the first, second and third Commandments?



First, that we know and trust God as the only true and living God. Second, that we avoid all idolatry and do not worship God improperly. Third, that we treat God's name with fear and reverence, honoring also his Word and works.

Deuteronomy 6:13-14 *It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you. (ESV)*

1. On a scale of 1 to 10 -- 1 being "weakly" and 10 being "strongly" -- how well do you feel that you "know" the God of the Bible?
2. What specific things built up and encouraged you to trust him "as the only true and living God"?
3. Describe an experience in your life that tested your trust in God?
4. Since one meaning of "to idolize" is "any object of ardent or excessive devotion or adoration," what forms of "idolatry" do you see operating in our culture?
5. What are some of the objects to which you grew up giving excessive devotion and adoration?
6. As you have grown in faith, how have these "idols" had a pull upon you?
7. What have you had to do practically in order to "avoid [these forms of] idolatry"?
8. What do you suspect may be improper forms of worshiping "the only true and living God"?
9. How have these improper forms of worship influenced you?
10. What does it mean to "treat God's name with fear and respect"?
11. What do you specifically do to honor His Word and works?

What does God require in the fourth and fifth Commandments?



Fourth, that on the Sabbath day we spend time in public and private worship of God, rest from routine employment, serve the Lord and others, and so anticipate the eternal Sabbath. Fifth, that we love and honor our father and our mother, submitting to their godly discipline and direction.

Leviticus 19:3 *Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and you shall keep my Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God. (ESV)*

1. As you grew up, what did your family allow you to do and not do on the Sabbath?
2. Was there any emphasis in your family on God's command to "keep the Sabbath Holy"?
3. When you first encountered this commandment of God, what did you think it meant practically to "*Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy*" and "*Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy*"?
4. Why does the Lord want his people to observe a Sabbath?
5. In our current culture, why do you propose that it is important to "observe the Sabbath day"?
6. Why do you think Sabbath keeping in the ways Scripture commands is no longer emphasized in our churches?
7. Do you think it is important to restore Sabbath keeping in the way Scripture prescribes?
8. What would it take practically for you to restore Sabbath keeping in the ways Scripture prescribes?
9. What would you predict would result first in your life and family and second in our community if we restored consistent Sabbath keeping?
10. As you grew up, were you aware of God's command to "Honor your father and your mother"?
11. Did you grow up honoring your father and your mother, or did you honor one but not the other? Why?
12. What pattern did this habit for honoring your parents establish in your life and in your family?
13. Did anything in your family dynamic make it easy or difficult to develop this habit? What was that dynamic?
14. How has this dynamic impacted your life and relationships as an adult?

New City Catechism » Question 11

What does God require in the sixth, seventh and eighth Commandments?



Sixth, we do not hurt, or hate or be hostile to our neighbor, but be patient and peaceful, pursuing even our enemies with love. Seventh, that we abstain from sexual immorality and live purely and faithfully, whether in marriage or in single life, avoiding all impure actions, looks, words, thoughts, or desires, and whatever might lead to them. Eighth, that we do not take without permission that which belongs to someone else, nor withhold any good from someone we might benefit.

Romans 13:9 *For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (ESV)*

1. What does Deuteronomy 5:17-19 actually say? What does the sixth commandment actually say?
2. What does the seventh commandment actually say? What does the eighth commandments actually say?
3. What does Deuteronomy 5:17-19 mean?
4. What does "You shall not murder" mean, i.e., what are its practical implications?
5. What does "You shall not commit adultery" mean, i.e., what are its practical implications?
6. What does "You shall not steal" mean i.e., what are its practical implications?
7. What practical habits have you developed for practicing what God requires of you in Deuteronomy 5:17-19?
8. What specific habits have you developed in practicing "You shall not murder"?
9. What specific habits have you developed in practicing "You shall not commit adultery"?
10. What habits have you developed in practicing "You shall not steal"?
11. If consistently practiced within a modern society, such as our own, what relational dynamics would these three commandments establish in the fabric of a nation?
12. Propose a list of reasons why these three commandments no longer govern the ways some people respond today in our country.
13. Which of these three commandments do you consider to be the hardest to keep?
14. Which commandment is the easiest to keep and why?

What does God require in the ninth and tenth Commandments?



Ninth, that we do not lie or deceive, but speak the truth in love.
Tenth, that we are content, not envying anyone or resenting what God has given them or us.

James 2:8 *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. (ESV)*

1. What are the two things we are not to do and the one thing we are always to do?
2. Has anyone ever spoken or given false witness about you?
 - a. What did their doing this stir up in your feelings and thoughts?
 - b. When you found out about it, what decisions did you consider?
 - c. What did you decide to do?
 - d. What resulted from what you decided to do?
3. How have you violated the ninth commandment?
 - a. What caused you to do this?
 - b. What happened as a result?
 - c. After you did this, what decisions did you face?
 - d. Did you decide to do anything to correct your falsehood?
 - e. What resulted from this?
4. What in the character of God makes it essential for his people to always speak what is true and never to utter falsehoods?
 - a. When have you found it the easiest to speak the truth to or about your neighbor?
 - b. When have you found it the hardest to speak the truth to or about your neighbor?
 - c. Why is it essential for God's people to always speak the truth, especially when it is difficult?
5. Are you aware when you "*set your desire on*" someone or on something?
 - a. Internally, when you do this, what is this like?
 - b. Do you evaluate whether or not the Lord God approves of the person or the object on which you set your desires?
 - c. What has happened when have you attached your desires to a person or object of which the Lord disapproves?
 - d. When you realize that the Lord disapproves of the person or object on which your desires are set, what do you do to detach your desires from them?

New City Catechism » Question 13

Can anyone keep the law of God perfectly?



Since the fall, no mere human has been able to keep the law of God perfectly, but consistently breaks it in thought, word and deed.

Romans 3:10-12 *As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." (ESV)*

1. When were you first introduced to, or did you first take to heart, the law of God, i.e., the Ten Commandments, and how did this occur?
2. What are some of the things God had done for you personally before you were introduced or reintroduced to his commandments?
3. Did you believe that God required of you "personal, perfect and perpetual obedience" as the answer to Question 7 asserts? If not, what were you instructed to do about God's commandments?
4. Is it possible to keep the Ten Commandments without engaging your whole personality? Why or why not?
5. Does Scripture indicate that God expects you to keep his commandments? Why or why not?
6. When you realize that you have broken one of the commandments of God, what thoughts and feelings are stirred up inside?
7. What specifically do you usually decide to do when this situation arises?
8. Is it relatively easy to do what you decide? Why or why not?
9. What process and steps do you usually follow to answer such questions? Or do you normally try to ignore them?

New City Catechism » Question 14

Did God create us unable to keep his law?



No, but because of the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, all of creation is fallen; we are all born in sin and guilt, corrupt in our nature and unable to keep God's law.

Romans 5:12 *"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned"* (ESV)

1. Which of God's laws do you find most difficult to keep consistently?
2. Do you think of "sin" as wrong behaviors or as an internal condition?
3. Do you ever have an inner conflict over keeping God's law?
4. How does this conflict manifest itself in your life?
5. To this point in your life, how have you tried to resolve this conflict?
6. What has worked for you and what has not?
7. What does this teach you about "sin" as not just behavior but an inner condition?
8. Besides God, who knows that you have this inner conflict?
9. How can we break the power and grip of sin over people's lives and relationship?
10. Why do you think most people have a difficult time talking to others about their own "sins"?
11. If we did this, what do you propose would result?
12. Apart from God and his work in your life, if you continually practiced confession what do you predict would have resulted?
13. How would the trajectory of your life been different?

New City Catechism » Question 15

Since no one can keep the law, what is its purpose?



That we may know the holy nature and will of God, and the sinful nature and disobedience of our hearts, and thus our need for a Savior. The law also teaches and exhorts us to a life worthy of our Savior.

Romans 3:20 *For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (ESV)*

1. In Romans 3:20, what is the purpose of God's law?
2. Have you had an X-ray, MRI or CAT scan? What is the purpose of these instruments and what do they measure?
 - a. What would result if we did not have the measuring abilities of the X-ray, MRI and CAT scan machines?
3. What would result if we did not have God's Law i.e., His "standard" or "measuring rod," to reveal "sin"?
4. In your experience, what is the worst "sin" a person can possibly commit?
5. Describe how you first became aware of your own "sin". What instrument was used to help you become aware?
6. Has anyone ever come to you personally and said "that's sin that you are doing"?
 - a. If this has happened, how did you first react and how did it make you feel?
7. From what you know of God and his word, is "sin" always indicated by feelings?
8. When you feel "guilty" about something you have felt, thought, desired or done, what do you usually seek to do to get rid of this feeling?
9. Why do you think that people today do not admit that they have sinned?
10. Who or what has caused this "great deception"?
11. What do you think is the best way to correct this deception?
 - a. How has confessing your sins strengthened your "*fellowship*" with God and Jesus?
 - b. How has confession created close relationships with other followers of Jesus?
 - c. What has hindered you from developing such "*partnerships*"?

New City Catechism » Question 16

What is sin?



Sin is rejecting or ignoring God in the world he created, rebelling against him by living without reference to him, not being or doing what he requires in his law – resulting in our death and the disintegration of all creation.

1 John 3:4: *Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.* (ESV)

1. What is your personal understanding of and definition for “sin”?
2. How would you characterize the current condition of our world, our nation and our society?
3. What does our society consider Murder? Stealing? Adultery? Coveting?
4. Why do you suspect that our country has drawn these conclusions about these behaviors?
5. Within our country, what are the consequences for these actions?
 - a. What are the consequences for murder?
 - b. What are the consequences for stealing?
 - c. What are the consequences for adultery?
 - d. What are the consequences for coveting?
6. What does our country say is the cause of these realities?
7. Apart from God’s remedy, what does our society propose for remedies for this condition?
8. How well do these remedies diminish and correct these behaviors?
9. How has sin, as the condition of your inner being that leads to wrong behaviors, infected your life?
10. What are some of the things that “sin” has caused in your life?
11. For you, what is the worst thing about “sin”?
12. Where have you seen people apply God’s remedy for sin, yet continue to secretly sin?
13. Why do you think this sometimes happens with Christians?

New City Catechism » Question 17

What is idolatry?



Idolatry is trusting in created things rather than the Creator for our hope and happiness, significance and security.

Romans 1:21,25: For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened...because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (ESV)

1. As you grew up, what did you know and understand about “idols” and “idolatry”?
2. When in your life have thought about attaining or having something or someone that would make you happy?
 - a. Did you attain this?
 - b. Did attaining it bring you “happiness, significance and security?”
3. Did you ever think what you hoped for was an “idol”? Why or why not?
4. Consider your childhood “hope.” Were you aware that, beneath the surface of your heart, what you truly desired and hoped for was “happiness, significance and security” and that some “created relationship or position” was the means to attain what you desired?
5. What did you do in pursuing this childhood relationship or position?
6. Did you finally obtain this relationship or position?
7. Once you obtained this relationship or position, what was your experience?
8. Did it give you “happiness, significance and security”?
9. If so, how long did this last?
10. Did you ever become disillusioned and disoriented about what attaining this “created relationship and position” would produce for you?
11. Defined in this way, is there the possibility that your childhood emotional need and hope is at the heart of “idolatry”?
12. Do you still hang your hope on achieving this “relational or positional” idol?
13. What specifically are you doing serve and attain this relationship or position?
14. If you still hope for this created thing, what would it take for you to tear it down and demolish your idol and return to putting the Lord first in your heart and desires?

New City Catechism » Question 18

Will God allow our disobedience and idolatry to go unpunished?



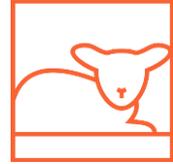
No, every sin is against the sovereignty, holiness and goodness of God, and against his righteous law, and God is righteously angry at our sins and will punish them in his just judgment both in this life and in the life to come.

Ephesians 5:5-6 *For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.* (ESV)

1. Think of a specific time when you were punished in childhood. In these instances, what method(s) or instrument(s) was used to “punish”?
 - a. What did these punishments cause or lead you to do?
 - b. Were you ever punished in such a way that it left painful memories or you were impaired in some way by it?
 - c. What about the punishment’s method, instrument or timing made it painful or impaired you?
2. As you grew up, did you fear being punished and, therefore:
 - a. You avoided doing certain things in order not to be punished?
 - b. Or you hid what you did so you would not be punished?
3. If you are a parent, what have you done when your children disobeyed you?
 - a. Were you fair and just in punishing?
 - b. Did your children always think you were fair and just?
4. Did you grow up convinced that God is fair and just in whatever he decides?
5. Are you clear in your understanding about whom, how and when God punishes and for how long?
6. What is your primary question about God punishing?
7. Where does it seem to you that God is unfair in his judgments and punishments?
8. Describe what is the best way to be prepared for God to thoroughly investigate your heart, your thoughts and your actions?
9. Do you have any hidden and un-confessed sins? Describe them?
10. What does God think about your sin?

New City Catechism » Question 19

Is there any way to escape punishment and be brought back into God's favor?

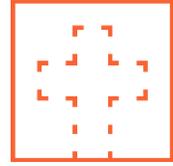


Yes, to satisfy his justice, God himself, out of mere mercy, reconciles us to himself and delivers us from sin and from the punishment for sin, by a Redeemer.

Isaiah 53:10-11 *Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. (ESV)*

1. As you grew up, were there times when you really deserved to be punished?
2. What were some of the ways you tried to avoid and escape being punished?
3. Did you ever think or feel that you were out of God's favor? If so, when and why?
4. When did you come to understand and believe that God does not relax his standards and has to punish sin?
5. List some of the ways you have been punished in your life?
6. Did anyone ever pay the price for you for your failure?
7. How aware are you that what you deserve for your sin is death and permanent separation from the presence of your Creator?
8. What has God done in your life to continually redeem you and lead you on his path of redemption?
9. What do you still want God to do for you in his ongoing work of redemption?
10. Who does Scripture say is your "Redeemer"?
11. In Exodus, how does God the Father use Moses in his work of redemption?
12. In the New Testament, how does God the Father use Jesus the Son in his work of redemption?
13. What are you currently doing to maintain a right relationship with your Creator?

Who is the redeemer?



The only redeemer is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, in whom God became man and bore the penalty for sin himself.

1 Timothy 2:5 *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.* (ESV)

1. The New Testament was written by disciples of Jesus for instructing new disciples on what God has done in Jesus and on how to live as a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. Do you view yourself as a follower of Jesus? Why or why not?
2. When you began your life as a follower of Jesus, what did you understand about being “redeemed”?
3. Which Scripture best explains to you what it means in to be “redeemed”?
4. Initially, who did you understand Jesus to be?
5. What were you seeking to gain when you began your journey as a Christian?
6. When you first took your initial step towards Jesus, did you think of him as “my redeemer”?
7. Which of the promises and commands of Jesus, “the Redeemer,” are most redemptive for you, i.e., have set you free from what enslaves you?
8. When you decided to become a follower of Jesus, did you understand where he would lead you?
9. Where has he led you that is different from what you initially expected?
10. What has been the best thing for you in following “the Redeemer”?

What sort of Redeemer is needed to bring us back to God?



One who is truly human and also truly God.

Isaiah 9:6 *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* (ESV)

1. When was a time when someone came to your rescue?
2. Did you have to wait long, or did he/she come quickly?
3. What was the world like when Jesus was born?
4. What is the personal significance of the Redeemer coming as a child?
5. The phrase “the government shall be on his shoulder” is another way of saying that the son will *bear the responsibility of governing*. While Jesus didn’t occupy a political office, such as king or governor, his leadership was evident. In what ways did/does the Redeemer exhibit leadership?
6. How do the titles listed in verse 6 describe his authority? What do they mean to you?
 - a. Wonderful Counselor
 - b. Mighty God
 - c. Everlasting Father
 - d. Prince of Peace
7. Of the 4 titles listed above, how have you experienced the presence and leadership of Christ the most?
8. How can we *pray* knowing that God identifies with us as humans?
9. What is the hardest part of Christ’s identity *as human and divine* that you struggle to believe?
10. How has that at time affected your worship, prayer life, discipline, or faith
11. Who is someone you can share the news about the Redeemer with today?

Why must the Redeemer be truly human?



That in human nature he might on our behalf perfectly obey the whole law and suffer the punishment for human sin; and also that he might sympathize with our weaknesses.

Hebrews 2:17 *Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (ESV)*

1. How does Jesus perfectly “obey the whole law”?
2. If Jesus were to sin, how would that affect his ability to make payment for our sins?
3. Have you ever experienced a time when it helped to know Jesus identified with your human weakness?
4. How does Jesus represent humanity before the throne of God (as high priest)?
 - a. What comfort might that invoke in God’s people?
5. What are the primary benefits to Christians in knowing Christ is fully human?
6. How might we live more *incarnationally* with...
 - a. ...one another?
 - b. ...those who do not know God?
 - c. ...Creation?
 - d. ...how we deal with sin (inwardly against ourselves/outwardly against others)?

Why must the Redeemer be truly God?



That because of his divine nature his obedience and suffering would be perfect and effective; and also that he would be able to bear the righteous anger of God against sin and yet overcome death.

Acts 2:24 *God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. (ESV)*

1. How does Jesus demonstrate his *Divinity* throughout his earthly ministry? [Consider his power (miracles), forgiveness, relationship with Creation, teaching with authority.]
2. Which of these might shocked Jesus' witnesses?
3. How did he claim *Divinity*?
4. What makes people reject Jesus as "truly God" today?
5. How do you deal with moments of doubt regarding this Truth?
6. What difference does it make to your life personally to worship Christ as God?

New City Catechism » Question 24

Why was it necessary for Christ, the Redeemer, to die?



Since death is the punishment for sin, Christ died willingly in our place to deliver us from the power and penalty of sin and bring us back to God. By his substitutionary atoning death, he alone redeems us from hell and gains for us forgiveness of sin, righteousness, and everlasting life.

Colossians 1:21–22 *And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him. (ESV)*

1. Why must sin have a consequence?
2. What would our world look like if this were not true?
3. What does it mean that we are “redeemed from hell”?
4. How is hell understood or believed in our world?
5. What does the reality of hell mean for you?
6. How did Jesus speak of his own impending death?
7. Could he have accomplished his mission without dying?
8. What is our daily application of knowing that God has satisfied the requirement of death-for-our-sin by his own son’s death?
9. How does your life demonstrate that you have been redeemed?
10. How might this affect our understanding of death and suffering on this side of eternity?

New City Catechism » Question 25

Does Christ's death mean all our sins can be forgiven?



Yes, because Christ's death on the cross fully paid the penalty for our sin, God graciously imputes Christ's righteousness to us as if it were our own and will remember our sins no more.

2 Corinthians 5:21 *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (ESV)*

1. How does Christ's righteousness bring glory to God?
2. How does our *imputed* righteousness bring glory to God?
3. Why are some tempted to believe our sins are only partially dealt with?
4. What assurance does God point us to in regard to his promise of complete forgiveness?
5. As complete forgiven people, what can we do that people were not once able to do?
6. How is this personally significant for you? (or how could it be?)
7. If our sins are forever dealt with, why must we practice the discipline of private and corporate confession?
8. What is the role of faith in receiving forgiveness?
9. What can you do to strengthen faith when it is lacking?

New City Catechism » Question 26

What else does Christ's death redeem?



Christ's death is the beginning of the redemption and renewal of every part of fallen creation, as he powerfully directs all things for his own glory and creation's good.

Colossians 1:19–20 *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (ESV)*

1. How do we see the evidences of Creation being affected by sin?
2. Can you think of anything Jesus did or said in the Gospels that demonstrate his commitment to restore Creation?
3. How does the work of Christ reorient our perspective to re-enter the purposes of life in the Garden? (i.e. relationships, intimacy, satisfaction, meaningfulness)
4. How does this give you hope about the future?
5. What are some broken things about the world that you long for their restoration?
6. Is there any area of your life that you want to see return to its intended purpose?

New City Catechism » Question 27

Are all people, just as they were lost through Adam, saved through Christ?



No, only those who are elected by God and united to Christ by faith. Nevertheless God in his mercy demonstrates common grace even to those who are not elect, by restraining the effects of sin and enabling works of culture for human well-being.

Romans 5:17 *For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. (ESV)*

1. Why do some (of us) struggle to accept God's sovereign choice to bring election through Jesus Christ?
2. What is the basis of God's initiation-plan of salvation?
3. How does the language of *united* bring insight to God's election?
4. Is there a non-saving grace that is at work in the broader reaches of human cultural interaction?
 - a. Where do you experience it?
5. How can the world experience everyday glimpses of God's invitation to salvation through Christ?
6. Because we understand that people can and do *reject God**, what is the outcome of their own decision – not *just* eternally-speaking, but in *this life*?
7. Do death and hell motivate you to engage people in your life with the invitation of salvation? Why or why not?

What happens after death to those not united to Christ by faith?



At the day of judgment they will receive the fearful but just sentence of condemnation pronounced against them. They will be cast out from the favorable presence of God, into hell, to be justly and grievously punished, forever.

John 3:16-18, 36 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God...Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. (ESV)

1. What have you understood about the concept of hell?
2. What was that based on?
3. From the Fall of Adam, how does God teach humanity that sin has a consequence?
4. What is at stake with this question? (what if we don't believe or teach the existence of hell?)
5. Does the threat of everlasting punishment ignite the you to stand firm in faith and proclaim the Gospel? Why or why not?
6. How might the understanding of hell influence our prayers for the lost?
7. How might it influence our actions and words toward those who do not believe?

New City Catechism » Question 29

How can we be saved?



Only by faith in Jesus Christ and in his substitutionary atoning death on the cross; so even though we are guilty of having disobeyed God and are still inclined to all evil, nevertheless, God, without any merit of our own but only by pure grace, imputes to us the perfect righteousness of Christ when we repent and believe in him.

Ephesians 2:8–9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* (ESV)

1. Read all of Ephesians 2. How does Paul refer to the life apart from Christ? How does that differ from the life in Christ?
2. What might have been some of the righteous acts, deeds, merits of mankind that were thought to be sufficient for God's favor and ultimately, salvation?
3. How do those differ from our modern world and the ways people try to gain salvation?
4. Why do you think God accepts the substitutionary death of Christ on our behalf? (i.e. What do we know about God's character that might explain his grace?)
5. The imputed righteousness of Christ can be difficult to understand. What are some other ways the actions of one person grant special ability or privilege to another?
6. In what ways do Christians still struggle to embrace salvation through faith alone? How can we repent of this?
7. How can we experience "good works" without relying on them to gain favor with God?
8. Many have found the grace of Christ to be "too good to be true". What would you say to someone who cannot accept this gift?

What is faith in Jesus Christ?



Faith in Jesus Christ is acknowledging the truth of everything that God has revealed in his Word, trusting in him, and also receiving and resting on him alone for salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel.

Galatians 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* (ESV)

1. Describe the moment or season in your life when you acknowledged the truth of Christ and received his salvation.
2. What does this salvation mean to you?
 - a. How does it affect your day-to-day life?
3. How do we sometimes (or how does our world) seek faith in something or someone other than Christ?
4. Though we can have Christ and experience deep joy and grace, is there a place for doubt of any kind?
5. What would you say to someone you love who doubts God's love and forgiveness? (Or his very existence?)
6. Does Jesus have something to say to those of us who struggle to believe?
 - a. How does this comfort you...or complicate things for you?

New City Catechism » Question 31
What do we believe by true faith?



Everything taught to us in the gospel. The Apostles' Creed expresses what we believe in these words:

We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Jude 3 I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. (ESV)

1. What value do you think the Creed offered to the early church?
2. What value does it offer today?
3. What problems does this faith present for the world?
4. What hope does it offer?
5. Look at each statement from the Creed and decide if it is accurate:
 - a. I Believe In God the Father Almighty (Mt 5 :45), Maker of Heaven and Earth (Gen 1:1; Rom 1:20)
 - b. And in Jesus Christ, His Only Son, Our Lord (Mt 3:17; Phil 2:12)
 - c. Who Was Conceived by the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary (Lk 1:35, Lk 2:7)
 - d. Suffered Under Pontius Pilate; Was Crucified, Dead, and Buried (Jn 19:16-42)
 - e. He Descended to Hell, the Third Day He Rose Again from the Dead (1 Pet 3:19-20, Mt 28:1-10; Jn 20:11-18)
 - f. He Ascended into Heaven and Sits on the Right Hand of the Father Almighty (Lk 24:51, Heb 1:3, Mark 14:36)
 - g. From Whence He Shall Come to Judge the Living and the Dead (Mt 16: 27; Acts 10:39, 1 Cor 15: 51)
 - h. I Believe in the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:15-20; Acts 1:7-8)
 - i. The Holy Catholic* Church, the Communion of Saints (*means "universal") (Mt 16:18-19; Eph 5:26-27; Col 1:24; Mt 28:19-20; 2 Cor 11:13; 1 Cor 15: 33)
 - j. The Forgiveness of Sins (Jn 20:22-23)
 - k. The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting. Amen (1Cor 15:51-54; 1 Jn 5:20)

What do justification and sanctification mean?



Justification means our declared righteousness before God, made possible by Christ's death and resurrection for us. Sanctification means our gradual, growing righteousness, made possible by the Spirit's work in us.

1 Peter 1:1–2 *To those who are elect exiles . . . according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. (ESV)*

1. What are the benefit to those justified in Christ? Where would we be without this justification?
2. If our righteousness is “declared”, what accusation can be made to God’s elect?
3. Is there any way that we can lose this established declaration?
4. Regarding sanctification, what does an ongoing work of “gradual, growing righteousness” look like?
5. In what ways are we personally encouraged by God’s justification?
6. How might we be tempted to believe anything other than our declared righteousness? What doubts or whispers have you heard... or been tempted to believe?
7. How can God’s people deal with such temptations to doubt our justification?
8. If sanctification means we are in process, how do we – as God’s people – deal with the remaining presence of sin. How do *you* deal with it?
9. How can we work out our salvation “*with fear and trembling*”?

Should those who have faith in Christ seek their salvation through their own works, or anywhere else?



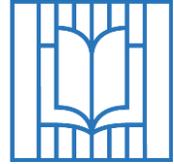
No, they should not, as everything necessary to salvation is found in Christ. To seek salvation through good works is a denial that Christ is the only Redeemer and Savior.

Galatians 2:16 *Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. (ESV)*

1. Read Galatians 2: What issues were present in the early church that gave rise to this dangerous heresy—in regard to salvation by works?
2. How does Paul reconcile the function of the Law with justification in Christ?
3. What problems might early Christians have with the understanding that “by works of the law no one will be justified”?
4. Why does it seem the “world goes astray” when it attributes merit based on works?
5. What cultural systems encourage this idea?
6. Do you agree that God has no reason to love humanity on the basis of our works? Why/why not?
7. How does *adoption* become an appropriate metaphor for God’s divine prerogative to reject our works-based merit?
8. In what ways do you slip into the habit of pursuing salvation by works?
9. Why do you think this temptation is so attractive?
10. What is the difference between works-based rituals or disciplines and those that are faith-based? *Why might disciplines and practices be resources for growth but not requirements?*
11. How might our church community help one another live in the truth of faith and reject works-based salvation?

New City Catechism » Question 34

Since we are redeemed by grace alone, through Christ alone, must we still do good works and obey God's Word?



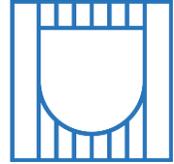
Yes, because Christ, having redeemed us by his blood, also renews us by his Spirit; so that our lives may show love and gratitude to God; so that we may be assured of our faith by the fruits; and so that by our godly behavior others may be won to Christ.

1 Peter 2:9–12 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (ESV)

1. From what we know from the book of Acts, how did the early church demonstrate good works?
2. Why do you think some misinterpret the purpose of *good works* as acts that somehow produce righteousness?
3. Describe examples of good works that might reveal someone's love or gratitude to God.
4. How does Peter argue that *abstinence* from "passions of the flesh" brings honor to God *and* helps us live out a heavenly mission?
5. What does Jesus expect of his disciples in terms of *obedience*?
6. How does obedience translate into love of God?
7. How do *you* demonstrate love and gratitude to God?
8. What role does *obedience* play in your life as a believer?
9. How have you encouraged others who struggle to do good works *for the right reason* (as opposed to *trying to please God or earn his favor*)? How have you been encouraged when *you* struggle to do good works? of salvation.

New City Catechism » Question 35

Since we are redeemed by grace alone, through faith alone, where does this faith come from?



All the gifts we receive from Christ we receive through the Holy Spirit, including faith itself.

Titus 3:4–6 *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior. (ESV)*

1. Paul's letter to Titus reminds him/the church of what God's transformation (v.3) has done. What is the primary evidence for the claim that faith comes from God and not from man?
2. What kind of comfort does this offer to the Church?
3. How does the Church (universal) slip into preaching a different message about faith's origin?
4. How might this endanger or create problems for the people of God?
5. What evidences of righteousness have you been able to experience that you could not before coming to Christ?
6. How does your faith become strengthened?
7. How have you found this kind of righteousness true and present in your life?
8. How will God enable our lives, so that we are able to endure trials, hardships, and even face death with confidence in our salvation?

New City Catechism » Question 36

What do we believe about the Holy Spirit?



That he is God, coeternal with the Father and the Son,
and that God grants him irrevocably to all who believe.

John 14:16–17 *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. (ESV)*

1. How does Jesus reveal the Person and role of the Holy Spirit to the disciples? Why do you think there was such a need for their consolation?
2. What misconceptions do you think people have about the Holy Spirit? What might those misconceptions be based upon?
3. How would you describe the Holy Spirit to someone who has never heard of him?
4. The word *irrevocably* teaches us that the Holy Spirit can never be taken away from those who believe. Why is this important to our understanding of God's message of salvation in Christ?
5. What are some symbols and images that Scripture use to illustrate the Holy Spirit? How are they effective in our growing knowledge of who he is?
 - a. Based on your experience, can you think of any other metaphors or images that capture the Spirit's role or personality?
6. What encouragement do you have in knowing that Jesus did not leave his people helpless?
7. What story/stories in Scripture fuel your understanding of the Spirit?
8. Prophets like Ezekiel (11:19; 37:14) and Isaiah (44:3; 59:21) foretold of the Day when God's Spirit would be poured out and take residence with his people forever. What does it mean to *you* that the advent of the Spirit was *always* God's plan?
9. How might this teach us more about God's vision for the Church?

New City Catechism » Question 37
How does the Holy Spirit help us?



The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin, comforts us, guides us, gives us spiritual gifts and the desire to obey God; and he enables us to pray and to understand God's Word.

Ephesians 6:17–18 *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints. (ESV)*

1. What is the personal role of the Holy Spirit to those who belong to Christ?
2. What is the Spiritual transformation that has already taken place in the eyes of Heaven? What does this mean for God's people?
3. Do you think the Church believes in the power available *personally* and in *community*? Why or why not?
4. What encouragement does it give you to know that "Spirit helps us in our weakness"?
5. Do you ever experience the need for the Spirit's intercession "for us through wordless groans"? How would you describe that need?
6. What has been a specific way you have experienced the Holy Spirit's presence or power in your life?
7. In what way(s) are you asking the Holy Spirit to lead in your life?

New City Catechism » Question 38

What is prayer?



Prayer is pouring out our hearts to God in praise, petition, confession of sin, and thanksgiving.

Psalm 62:8 *Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. (ESV)*

1. Great prayers in the Bible?
2. What drove/drives people to pray?
3. What is the purpose in
 - a. Praising God?
 - b. Petition?
 - c. Confessing sin?
 - d. Giving thanks?
4. Are there kinds of prayers that neglect biblical teaching or miss the point?
5. Where did you learn to pray?
6. What keeps prayer in your life / what prevents prayer?
7. Spend some time writing what you believe about prayer...and what you want to experience in your prayer life? (*Groups, share some of these reflections*)

New City Catechism » Question 39

With what attitude should we pray?



With love, perseverance, and gratefulness; in humble submission to God’s will, knowing that, for the sake of Christ, he always hears our prayers.

Philippians 4:6 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (ESV)*

1. Why are we tempted to be anxious in lives? What side effects might anxiety bring into our relationship with God?
2. What does Jesus say about such anxiety?
3. How can *worry* be a master?
4. What do nature’s rhythms reveal about God’s perspective on worry?
5. What can be a benefit of articulating thanksgiving to God...even as we wait and ask for Him to answer or provide?
6. Why do the people of God possess the ability to have *confidence* in our prayer life?
7. Where in Scripture do we see God address those who pray with perseverance?
8. What does it mean that “for the sake of Christ, he always hears our prayers”?
9. How would you describe your attitude in day-to-day prayers?
10. Which attitude-words in our answer would you like to see adjusted in your prayer life?
11. How do you experience *love of God* as you pray? (If you do not, what keeps you from experiencing love?)
12. Do you tend to experience more anxiety or confidence before God?
13. What is something you have prayed for with perseverance and experienced God’s answer?
14. What is something you have prayed for with perseverance and you are still waiting on Him to answer?

New City Catechism » Question 40

What should we pray?



The whole Word of God directs and inspires us in what we should pray, including the prayer Jesus himself taught us.

Ephesians 3:14–21 *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.* (ESV)

1. How has the Bible helped you learn *how* to pray?
2. Can you think of some examples of biblical prayers that have given you a pattern to follow or a deeper understanding of praying with the right heart?
3. Has there been a person that taught you to pray? What did you glean from their modeling or instruction?
4. Are there types of prayers that we *ought not* to pray?
5. Read the verses again and underline the words or phrases that you need prayed over you in this season of life.
6. *Circle* any words that you want to pray for others in your life.
7. What are learning about prayer through this study?
8. Are there aspects to your prayer life that you need to change?
9. Who is someone you should be praying for *and with* and possibly help them learn how to pray? (Or is there someone you could ask to help teach you?)

New City Catechism » Question 41

What is the Lord's Prayer?



Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Matthew 6:9 *'Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name... (ESV)*

1. *The New Testament includes two references to the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4). These two scenes capture Jesus helping his disciples grow in their understanding on *prayer*. Why do you think they needed this instruction?*

 - a. Read both accounts and discuss the nuances between them. (Caution – we do **not** have to see one version as better than another.)

2. How would you describe your attitude in day-to-day prayers?
3. What drives you to pray?
4. When praying alone, what guides or inhibits your prayers?
5. How does praying in a group encourage or distract you?
6. When reciting or reading the Lord's Prayer, are you experiencing sincere understanding or (accidentally) doing it from rote memory (ie. thoughtless routine)?
7. How can our church community better approach this prayer together?
8. What might this demonstrate to one another...and our neighbors?

New City Catechism » Question 42

How is the Word of God to be read and heard?



With diligence, preparation, and prayer; so that we may accept it with faith, store it in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.* (ESV)

1. According to Paul, where does the Scriptures' authority come from? Why is this important?
2. How does Paul claim to possess this same authority?
3. What makes these words similar *and unique* from one another: **Scripture, Word of God, Gospel**?
4. What are some examples of the way the Bible offers “teaching, reproof, correction, or training-in-righteousness?”
5. How *should* “godly fear” play a role in our study of Scripture? (Hebrews 4:2)
6. How does God’s *participate* in our study or hearing of God’s Word?
7. How do you *practice* God’s Word?
8. If we are to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling?”, how might we experience God’s Word guiding us to accomplish this?

New City Catechism » Question 43

What are the sacraments or ordinances?



The sacraments or ordinances given by God and instituted by Christ, namely baptism and the Lord's Supper, are visible signs and seals that we are bound together as a community of faith by his death and resurrection. By our use of them the Holy Spirit more fully declares and seals the promises of the gospel to us.

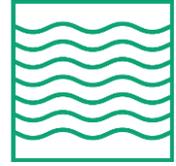
Romans 6:4 *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

Luke 22:19–20 *And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise, the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." (ESV)*

1. What is baptism intended to demonstrate? How is this a *sign* and *seal*?
2. Why might this be an important symbol in the Christian life –
 - a. To those who are being baptized?
 - b. To those who do not yet believe *but are witnesses*?
 - c. To those who have been baptized *and are witnesses*?
3. How does the Lord's Supper offer an *invitation* to those who do not yet know Christ and call believers to *obey*?
4. Should those who do not yet believe in Christ partake in this observance? Why/why not?
5. When you participate in the sacraments, we are being "bound together" by Christ's death and resurrection. How have you experienced this to be true personally or in our church?
6. If you think about each sacrament's purpose, how are you fulfilling your role as a community member...
 - a. When someone is baptized?
 - b. When we partake in the Lord's Supper?
7. How have you experienced these signs as visible, faith-stirring means of grace?
8. What would you say to someone who feels like they take the sacraments for granted?

New City Catechism » Question 44

What is baptism?



Baptism is the washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; it signifies and seals our adoption into Christ, our cleansing from sin, and our commitment to belong to the Lord and to his church.

Matthew 28:19 *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...* (ESV)

1. How might baptism have been a helpful practice in their world?
2. How might it have been *unhelpful*? (or confusing/unnecessarily complicated?)
3. John the Baptist preached and practiced a baptism of repentance. How might his baptism have been different from that of the priests? (Read John's story in Luke 3:1-21)
4. How was John's baptism have been different from that of Jesus?
5. What might the significance be of baptism being marked with a Trinitarian promise? (i.e. "I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit")
6. How have you come to understand this kind of baptism?
7. How is it different to a believer's baptism where an individual professes her/her faith in Christ as part of their baptism?
8. What did/does that event symbolize for you?
9. What comfort of the promise made in baptism do you experience today?
10. What would you ask the Spirit to do in you today when you witness baptism or remember your own?

New City Catechism » Question 45

Is baptism with water the washing away of sin itself?



No, only the blood of Christ and the renewal of the Holy Spirit can cleanse us from sin.

Romans 6:1-4 *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (ESV)*

1. From Romans 6, what is Paul's reason behind avoiding sin in our new life in Christ?
2. How does the reaffirmation of our baptism bring a healthy reminder to the works of sin and death?
3. Does the same hold true for those who were baptized as infants? Why or why not?
4. What does it mean that "only the blood of Christ and renewal of the Holy Spirit" brings our purification from sin?
5. How do we sometimes get this wrong when it comes to the application of baptism? (In our church/tradition or others that we're aware of?)
6. *For personal reflection:* If you've not yet been baptized, what has kept you from taking this step?
7. When you struggle with sin, do you ever recall the sacrament of baptism? How does this help or bring comfort?
8. Do you ever feel like the *event* of baptism was disconnected from your current struggle with sin? If so, why might that be?
9. How might a church who deals with sin *with theological clarity* be a brilliant light in our community?
10. How might we embody freedom from sin...
 - a. In our personal lives?
 - b. In our families?
 - c. For a believer struggling with sin?
 - d. In our communities?

What is the Lord's Supper?



Christ commanded all Christians to eat bread and to drink from the cup in thankful remembrance of him and his death. The Lord's Supper is a celebration of the presence of God in our midst; bringing us into communion with God and with one another; feeding and nourishing our souls. It also anticipates the day when we will eat and drink with Christ in his Father's kingdom.

1 Corinthians 11:23–26 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (ESV)

1. As this sacrament is also called "Communion," what is the significance of this meal bringing us into community...
 - a. ...with Jesus, our Redeemer?
 - b. ...with the Holy Spirit, the applier of our sanctification?
 - c. ...with "the Body of Christ," our church community?
2. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul wants the community to be clear about the atmosphere of grace around the table of the Supper.
 - a. Why would the issue of *favoritism* be so unhealthy for God's people as they apply the sacrament?
 - b. If the Supper is meant to unify us, how have some used it to divide?
3. What are some ways that we can experience the Supper incorrectly?
4. In the Lord's Supper we have a remembrance, a celebration of God's presence, and an experience of communion. We also have something that nourishes us, and in the Lord's Supper, we anticipate the glory to come."¹⁹ How have you experienced...
 - a. Remembrance of Christ?
 - b. Celebrating his presence?
 - c. Communion (with Christ, the Spirit, his people)?
 - d. Nourishment as we await his coming glorification?
5. What should we do if we struggle to experience any of these benefits?
6. If we are in disagreement with a brother and sister in Christ, how might the Lord's Supper guide you to restoration – before or as a part of the sacrament?

New City Catechism » Question 47

Does the Lord's Supper add anything to Christ's atoning work?



No, Christ died once for all. The Lord's Supper is a covenant meal celebrating Christ's atoning work; as it is also a means of strengthening our faith as we look to him, and a foretaste of the future feast. But those who take part with unrepentant hearts eat and drink judgment on themselves.

1 Peter 3:18 *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God...* (ESV)

1. How might the Lord's Supper be an opportunity to share the Gospel of Christ and an invitation to accept him as Lord and Savior?
2. Why is it important to understand the distinction of judgment *upon Christ* and not upon ourselves?
3. Before the Reformation, the host of the table was seen as the priest – the one who distributed the elements and therefore passed the mercy of God onto the people.
 - a. Why is it important to see that the host is really Jesus – and not a priest or minister?
 - b. What, then, is the role of the Christian minister as he facilitates this sacrament?
4. Do you ever experience the temptation to believe that participating in this meal (or for that matter, any act of liturgical worship) makes you worthy of God?
5. Which image of God comforts you more: the one where a priest offers bread and wine to make you worthy of God's affection, or the one where God himself comes to you and feeds all those in need of mercy?
 - a. What difference does this make to you?
6. Regarding common misconceptions about the Lord's Supper, what would you tell someone who...
 - a. believes children cannot participate?
 - b. finds the sacrament strangely sounding like cannibalism?
 - c. was taught that sin excludes you from the Table?
7. What questions about the Table remain for you?

New City Catechism » Question 48

What is the church?



God chooses and preserves for himself a community elected for eternal life and united by faith, who love, follow, learn from, and worship God together. God sends out this community to proclaim the gospel and prefigure Christ's kingdom by the quality of their life together and their love for one another.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 *But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. (ESV)*

1. What was the expression of a *faith community* before Christ came?
2. How does Paul describe the uniqueness of the Church?
3. Why might it matter that God's initiative is out of his love in order that he would save and sanctify, rather than to acquire obedient worshipers?
4. Why might some Christians avoid meeting together?
 - a. How is this tragic?
 - b. How is this a poor reflection of the community into which God has called us?
5. When and where does the church exist for you?
6. As both a *preserved* and *sent* community, how would you describe the mission of the Church?
 - a. How do you personally identify with this mission?
 - b. What are the risks that this mission causes God's people to take on?
7. What are the reflections of Christ's "prefigured kingdom" in our church?
8. How might being with "people like us" be unhealthy and dangerous in living out our kingdom identity?
9. What do you think the future of the Church looks like?
10. How do you pray for the mission of the Church (*and* our church)?

Where is Christ now?



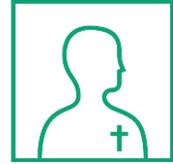
Christ rose bodily from the grave on the third day after his death and is seated at the right hand of the Father, ruling his kingdom and interceding for us, until he returns to judge and renew the whole world.

Ephesians 1:20–21 *He raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.* (ESV)

1. In Ephesians 1:20-21, Paul's confidently summarizes Christ's location, sovereignty, supremacy – both in this age and impending age that will unveiled in time.
2. What is the purpose of Christ's present location?
3. How is the Church meant to understand Christ's sovereignty over all "rule and authority and power and dominion"?
4. Why is the supremacy of Christ's name important?
5. How is *any* of this meant to bring confidence in Jesus' present and future reign?
6. When you think of Christ or spend time in prayer, how do you imagine his location? Is he far off in some otherworldly realm? Is he close? (Does this even matter to you?)
7. What difference does Jesus' location and authority make in your day-to-day life?
8. What comfort do you have in knowing that Jesus intercedes and prays for us at the right-hand of the Father?
9. When you think about Jesus' return what emotions arise?
10. Do you believe in his return? Why or why not?
11. According to our readings and what we profess to believe, why is it important for God's people to believe he is coming again?

New City Catechism » Question 50

What does Christ's resurrection mean for us?



Christ triumphed over sin and death by being physically resurrected, so that all who trust in him are raised to new life in this world and to everlasting life in the world to come. Just as we will one day be resurrected, so this world will one day be restored. But those who do not trust in Christ will be raised to everlasting death.

1 Thessalonians 4:13–14 *But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.* (ESV)

1. What kinds of misinformation *might* the church in Thessalonica have?
2. Why is it important to be clear on the issue of what will happen to those who have already died in the Lord?
3. Why do you think the church struggled to have confidence in the bodily resurrection of the dead?
4. What are some things Jesus taught about the resurrection?
5. What are some of the modern-day teachings on the resurrection of the dead?
6. What does the resurrection of Christ mean to you?
 - a. How does the Church proclaim the resurrection?
 - b. Why is it important that we do so?
7. What does the promise of *your* resurrection mean to you?
8. Who is someone that you look forward to being reunited with?
9. When you imagine Jesus' return to earth, what comes to mind? Does this image bring *comfort* or *fear*? (or *some other emotion*?)
10. How might we “encourage one another” with this teaching?

Of what advantage to us is Christ's ascension?

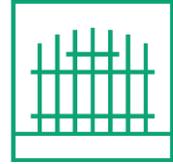


Christ physically ascended on our behalf, just as he came down to earth physically on our account, and he is now advocating for us in the presence of his Father, preparing a place for us, and also sends us his Spirit.

Romans 8:34 *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.* (ESV)

1. “Advocating”, “Preparing”, and “Sending the Spirit”. These three terms describe Jesus’ authority and office. What do these phrases mean in light of our spiritual status before God?
2. How does Jesus’ authority stretch beyond the throne room of heaven and guide the Church?
 - a. How does he advocate, prepare, or send his Spirit?
 - b. Do you think Jesus still appears this way to people? Why does this matter (or not)?
3. How do you think the early church experienced *condemnation* – either spiritually or physically?
 - a. Verse 34 says that our ascended Lord is “interceding for us.” What do you think this means?
 - b. Why do we need Jesus to intercede on our behalf?
4. Have you ever experienced a situation where someone came to your defense? (Even if you were wrong!) What was that like?
5. How have you experienced spiritual condemnation?
 - a. If not you – how do others in your life experience spiritual condemnation?
 - b. What do you think God would expect of his people in speaking truth over such condemnation?
6. What do you think is our appropriate response to Jesus for his faithfulness in his advocacy, preparation, and spiritual empowerment?
7. Because we stand accused-but-justified before God, how might we demonstrate this reality to our world?
8. Is this reality hard to accept for you?

What hope does everlasting life hold for us?



It reminds us that this present fallen world is not all there is; soon we will live with and enjoy God forever in the new city, in the new heaven and the new earth, where we will be fully and forever freed from all sin and will inhabit renewed, resurrection bodies in a renewed, restored creation.

Revelation 21:1–4 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. (ESV)*

1. Why is this catechism question an appropriate *last question*?
2. Why do you think Christians can sometimes be uncomfortable talking about such things?
3. What does the culture we live in say about a Church who believes in God’s new heaven and earth?
4. Was the New Earth an idea that came with/after Christ...or was it always part of God’s plan?
5. How does the Old Testament describe God’s desire to dwell with mankind forever?
6. What prevented this from happening? (Does that same reason keep him from dwelling with us today?)
7. How does the Holy Spirit give us a glimpse of God’s intended dwelling place?
8. What does it mean for God’s dwelling place to be with mankind *forever*?
9. Can you think of any reason why the old heaven and old earth must pass away before the *new* can come?
10. How might the Church present the reality of God’s new heaven and earth without intimidating others or coming across as mentally unstable?
11. Do you think about your heavenly home? If so, what comes to mind?
12. Do you think about your restored physical body in God’s new creation? Does that excite you?
13. How are we to live – in light of what we know about eternity?