



“HANDBOOK FOR CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES: THE SMALL CATECHISM” *A Resource for Lent and Other Times.*

Produced by The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia under
“Theological Education for the Laity.”

GETTING STARTED

Lent is a good time to talk about the Small Catechism and how it can be such a valuable resource for Christians Disciples of all ages. To assist congregations, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia offers “Handbook for Christian Disciples: The Small Catechism” as a theological study resource for laity.

In the back of this notebook, you will find two additional resources:

- “Disciples: Who Are They and What Do They Do?”
- “A Contemporary Translation of Luther’s Small Catechism”

THE TOPIC – “HANDBOOK FOR CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES: THE SMALL CATECHISM”

Martin Luther’s Small Catechism, first published in 1529, is one of the most well-known documents produced during the Reformation. Yet we often restrict its use in Lutheran parishes to required reading for young teenagers.

Although it is good that well over 90 percent of all ELCA parishes still use Luther’s Small Catechism in their confirmation instruction, its original audience was not so much the children but their parents, guardians, and teachers. As we recover the Catechism’s original intent and readership, we may well say with Katie Luther that “Everything in this book was said about me.”

This study will assist members of your congregation:

- To rediscover the power of the Small Catechism for adult discipleship.
- To learn or relearn the heart of the gospel message: God’s grace in Jesus Christ.

An added value is the fact that this material can be used at other times and with other groups. Thus, “Handbook for Christian Disciples: The Small Catechism” can be a key theological resource for all laity at any time throughout the year.



THE AUDIENCE – “HANDBOOK FOR CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES: THE SMALL CATECHISM”

“Handbook for Christian Disciples: The Small Catechism” is a theological resource for laity – all the people of God — and for all ages. Possible audiences include:

- Lenten Soup and Study sessions
- Listeners to Meditations within Lenten mid-week services
- Lenten breakfast study
- Adult Forums
- Confirmation classes
- Retreats
- Advent Study groups, etc.

In each setting, make photocopies of the Study Guide for each person.

NOTEBOOK OF RESOURCES – “HANDBOOK FOR CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES: THE SMALL CATECHISM”

This notebook contains a variety of resources.

- **“Images for Lent”**- information that can assist in your planning/promotion,
- **“Teacher’s Guides”**- information for the person(s) leading each session. Provided are an overview of the theme, specific teaching suggestions and background materials for the sessions.
- **“Study Guides”**- a master copy of the five (5) reproducible “Study Guides.” Print copies of the “Study Guide” as needed so each person has a copy.
- **“A Contemporary Translation of Luther’s Small Catechism”**- *one* copy is enclosed with the notebook. **Each participant should have a copy.** If your congregation does not have copies, order the Contemporary Translation edition from Augsburg Fortress by calling 1-800-328-4648 and ask for item number 0-8066-0026-8. Cost is \$6.49.
- **“Disciples: Who Are They and What Do They Do?”**- a background article
- **“Evaluations and Suggestions”**- a form on which the leader and/or all participants can return comments and suggestions for the future studies.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/EDITOR

Dr. Timothy Wengert, the author of this study, has been a parish pastor and currently is serving as Professor of Reformation History at The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. Executive editor, the Rev. George E. Keck, is Director of Theological Education for Laity. Formerly, he served the Seminary as its Admission Director.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

"HANDBOOK FOR CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES: THE SMALL CATECHISM"

Thank you for serving as a leader for this study. May God richly bless you and your group as you reflect upon Martin Luther's confession of faith and witness to us.

BACKGROUND RESOURCES FOR YOU AS A TEACHER

In addition to this Teacher's Guide, several resources will help you prepare for your important role as a teacher. Take time to read or review:

- "Images for Lent" – [Getting Started section]
- "A Contemporary Translation of Luther's Small Catechism" [Resource section of the notebook. **Remember to provide copies for all participants.**]
- "Disciples: Who Are They and What Do They Do?"- [Resource Section]

THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY - "HANDBOOK FOR CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES: THE SMALL CATECHISM"

This study will assist members of your congregation:

- To rediscover the power of the Small Catechism for adult discipleship.
- To learn or relearn the heart of the gospel message: God's grace in Jesus Christ.

THIS STUDY IS DESIGNED FOR VARIOUS OPTIONS

- For lay or ordained leadership.
- For individual or rotating leadership. If the group has more than one leader, be sure that each leader receives this "Leader's Guide" information in advance. For the sake of the group and the study's coherence, be sure each leader attends the other sessions.
- For flexible use in a variety of formats. For example, as a Lenten adult mid-week or Sunday morning group – large or small. Also it may be adapted and used as a resource for homilies in mid-week Lenten worship.
- For sessions of 45 minutes to an hour.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

"HANDBOOK FOR CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES: THE SMALL CATECHISM" CONTINUED

GETTING READY TO LEAD

For all sessions you will need:

- Copies of the Study Guide for each participant, copies of the Small Catechism, and Bibles for everyone at some sessions.
- A comfortable space. If possible have participants seated so that they can see each other. Consider how you might have participants work in small groups if appropriate.
- Some means of recording ideas that can be visible to the entire group, e.g., newsprint, markers, or blackboard and chalk.
- A variety of activities and /or learning experiences. For each session, be sure you have double-checked that you have enough copies of the Study Guide for each participant, plus copies of the Small Catechism, Bibles or photocopies of the passages.
- Enough time to state the theme at the beginning of the session and time for a summary at the close of each session.

FORMAT OF THE STUDY SESSIONS

All references in this study are to *A Contemporary Translation of Luther's Small Catechism* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994; ISBN: 0-8066-0026-8). There are two other formats for this translation, the smaller of which does not include all of the material referred to in this study. **Therefore, unless the cost is prohibitive, you are urged to purchase the "Study Edition" for all participants.**

Each session follows the same format. The session begins with a gathering prayer, proceeds to a study of the Small Catechism, the pertinent Bible passages and/or theological reflection on the topic of the day, and ends with a sending prayer.

Except for the opening session, each time together also affords opportunity at the outset for a brief review of the preceding session. During this time, new participants may also be welcomed.

The "Study Guide" sheet for each session also includes suggestions for preparation for the next session ("This Week").

On the following pages you will find Teacher's Guides for each session. They are intended as a help and support for your work as a leader. The Guides are arranged to follow the "Study Guide" exercises for each session.

- Items marked with a bullet in the Teacher's Guide are specific instructions for you to guide the educational process with the participants.

Thanks again for your role in providing theological education for the laity.