



## *The Catechism*

“As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household.” - Martin Luther

Luther recognized the need for a tool that can be placed in the hands of parents to correct that lack of biblical knowledge that he discovered in his assessment of the state of the church in Germany. While he had hoped that others might take up the cause, in the end, the result was *Luther's Small Catechism* (*Luther's Large Catechism* was produced to use by the clergy to improve their own lack of biblical knowledge). The concept of the catechism was not original to Luther, however the question and answer format and his extensive use of Biblical passages to establish the foundational doctrines of the church. This question and answer format was critical to Luther's pedagogical approach. The head of the household was to regularly ask the children of the family the questions from the catechism, drilling them to gain understanding of the answers and their biblical source.

The repetition of these fundamental doctrines was to be done in order to establish and then solidify a firm foundation or put another way the solid ground upon which a lifetime faith could grow and mature. Luther did not see these doctrines as teachings that one might master and then move on from to other teachings, but rather that over time and through this repetition these doctrines would be understood in ever deeper and deeper ways. Luther himself returned frequently to the catechism for his own growth in Christ.

While it remains tempting to try and move beyond the solid ground of the catechism, these foundational doctrines are and remain essential to our ongoing growth as disciples of Christ. Returning to not only the various questions of the catechism, but the examination of the biblical texts associated with the answers provided brings us back to the source of our faith each time we engage in this ongoing study.

## *Thoughts for Reflection*

When was the last time you spent time reading/studying *Luther's Small Catechism*?

How might you make the regular study of the doctrines of the catechism a part of your discipleship?