

The Westminster Shorter Catechism in Modern English

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Q. 1. What is the main purpose of mankind?

A. Mankind's main purpose is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

Q. 2. What rule has God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

A. The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

Q. 3. What do the Scriptures primarily teach?

A. The Scriptures primarily teach what we are to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of us.

Q. 4. What is God?

A. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

Q. 5. Are there more Gods than one?

A. There is only one, the living and true God.

Q. 6. How many persons are there in the godhead?

A. There are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are one God, the same in substance and equal in power and glory.

Q. 7. What are the decrees of God?

A. The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, by which, for his own glory, he has foreordained everything that ever happens.

Q. 8. How does God carry out his decrees?

A. God carries out his decrees in the works of *creation* and *providence*.

Q. 9. What is the work of creation?

A. The work of creation is when God made all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good.

Q. 10. How did God create mankind?

A. God created mankind male and female, in his own image, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, and with dominion over the creatures.

Q. 11. What are God's works of providence?

A. God's works of providence are his most holy, wise and powerful acts of preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions.

Q. 12. What special act of providence did God exercise toward mankind in the estate in which the first man was created?

A. When God had created the man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, on condition of

perfect obedience, forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, on the pain of death.

Q. 13. Did our first parents continue in the state in which they were created?

A. Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the state in which they were created by sinning against God.

Q. 14. What is sin?

A. Sin is any lack of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God.

Q. 15. What was the sin by which our first parents fell from the state in which they were created?

A. The sin by which our first parents fell from the state in which they were created was their eating the forbidden fruit.

Q. 16. Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?

A. Because the covenant was made with Adam not only for himself, but also for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by natural generation sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression.

Q. 17. What state did the fall bring for mankind?

A. The fall brought mankind to a state of *sin* and *misery*.

Q. 18. What does the sinfulness of that state into which mankind fell consist of?

A. The sinfulness of that state into which mankind fell consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the lack of the righteousness in which he was created, and the corruption of our whole nature; this is commonly called original sin; in addition there are all the actual transgressions which proceed from it.

Q. 19. What is the misery of that state into which mankind fell?

A. All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so are made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

Q. 20. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?

A. Out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, God chose some for everlasting life, and he entered into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of their state of sin and misery and to bring them into a state of salvation by a redeemer.

Q. 21. Who is the redeemer of God's elect?

A. The only redeemer of God's chosen ones is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was and continues to be God and man in two wholly distinct natures and one person, forever.

Q. 22. How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?

A. Christ, the Son of God, became man by taking to himself a true body and a reasoning soul,

being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin Mary and born of her, yet without sin.

Q. 23. What offices does Christ carry out as our redeemer?

A. Christ, as our redeemer, carries the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his state of *humiliation* and his state of *exaltation*.

Q. 24. How does Christ carry out the office of a prophet?

A. Christ carries out the office of a prophet in revealing to us, by his Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.

Q. 25. How does Christ carry out the office of a priest?

A. Christ carries out the office of a priest in offering up himself as a sacrifice one time, to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us.

Q. 26. How does Christ carry out the office of a king?

A. Christ carries out the office of a king in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

Q. 27. What did Christ's humiliation consist of?

A. Christ's humiliation consisted of his being born in a low condition, living under the Law, undergoing the miseries of this life, undergoing the wrath of God and the cursed death of the Cross, and in being buried and continuing under the power of death for a time.

Q. 28. What does Christ's exaltation consist of?

A. Christ's exaltation consists of his rising again from the dead on the third day, ascending to heaven, sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and coming to judge the world on the last day.

Q. 29. How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?

A. We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit.

Q. 30. How does the Spirit apply the redemption purchased by Christ to us?

A. The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ by creating faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our *effectual calling*.

Q. 31. What is effectual calling?

A. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit by which, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the Gospel.

Q. 32. What benefits do those who are effectually called partake of in this life?

A. Those who are effectually called partake in this life of *justification*, *adoption* and *sanctification*, and the various benefits which either accompany or flow from them in this life.

Q. 33. What is justification?

A. Justification is an act of God's free grace by which he pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only because of the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, received by faith alone.

Q. 34. What is adoption?

A. Adoption is an act of God's free grace by which we are received into the number of the sons of God and have a right to all the privileges of them.

Q. 35. What is sanctification?

A. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace by which we are renewed in our whole person in the image of God and by which we are enabled more and more to die to sin and live to righteousness.

Q. 36. What are the benefits that accompany or flow from justification, adoption and sanctification in this life?

A. The benefits that accompany or flow from justification, adoption and sanctification in this life are assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance in it to the end.

Q. 37. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?

A. The souls of believers at their death are made perfect in holiness and immediately pass into glory; their bodies, being still united to Christ, rest in their graves until the resurrection.

Q. 38. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?

A. At the resurrection, believers will be raised up in glory, will be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and will be made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity.

Q. 39. What is the duty that God requires of mankind?

A. The duty which God requires of mankind is obedience to his revealed will.

Q. 40. What did God first reveal to the mankind as the rule of their obedience?

A. The rule that God first revealed to the mankind for obedience was the *moral law*.

Q. 41. Where is the moral law given in summary form?

A. The moral law is summarized in the *Ten Commandments*.

Q. 42. What is the summary of the Ten Commandments?

A. The summary of the ten commandments is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Q. 43. What is the preface to the Ten Commandments?

A. The preface to the Ten Commandments is these words: "*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*"

Q. 44. What does the preface to the Ten Commandments teach us?

A. The preface to the Ten Commandments teaches us that because God is the Lord, and our God and redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments.

Q. 45. What is the first commandment?

A. The first commandment is, *“You shall have no other gods before me.”*

Q. 46. What is required in the first commandment?

A. The first commandment requires us to know and acknowledge God as the only true God, and our God, and to worship and glorify him accordingly.

Q. 47. What is forbidden in the first commandment?

A. The first commandment forbids denying or not worshiping and glorifying the true God as God, and our God; it also forbids giving of that worship and glory, which is due to him alone, to anyone or anything else.

Q. 48. What are we especially taught by these words, “before me,” in the first commandment?

A. These words, *“before me,”* in the first commandment teach us that God, who sees all things, takes notice of and is very displeased with the sin of having any other god.

Q. 49. What is the second commandment?

A. The second commandment is, *“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.”*

Q. 50. What is required in the second commandment?

A. The second commandment requires receiving, observing, and keeping pure and whole all the religious worship and ordinances that God has appointed in his Word.

Q. 51. What is forbidden in the second commandment?

A. The second commandment forbids worshiping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in his Word.

Q. 52. What are the reasons added to the second commandment?

A. The reasons added to the second commandment are God’s sovereignty over us, his ownership in us, and the zeal he has for his own worship.

Q. 53. What is the third commandment?

A. The third commandment is, *“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.”*

Q. 54. What is required in the third commandment?

A. The third commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, Word and works.

Q. 55. What is forbidden in the third commandment?

A. The third commandment forbids all profaning or abusing of anything by which God makes himself known.

Q. 56. What is the reason added to the third commandment?

A. The reason added to the third commandment is that although breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not allow them to escape his righteous judgment.

Q. 57. Which is the fourth commandment?

A. The fourth commandment is, *“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”*

Q. 58. What is required in the fourth commandment?

A. The fourth commandment requires keeping holy to God such set times as he has appointed in his Word, in particular one whole day in seven to be a holy Sabbath to himself.

Q. 59. Which day of the seven has God appointed to be the weekly Sabbath?

A. From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath; ever since it has been the first day of the week, which is the Christian Sabbath, so to continue to the end of the world.

Q. 60. How is the Sabbath to be sanctified?

A. The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy rest all that day from worldly employments and recreations that are lawful on other days, spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except what is taken up by works of necessity and mercy.

Q. 61. What is forbidden in the fourth commandment?

A. The fourth commandment forbids the omission or careless performance of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, by doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works about our worldly employments or recreations.

Q. 62. What are the reasons added to the fourth commandment?

A. The reasons added to the fourth commandment are God allowing us six days of the week for our own employments, his claiming a special ownership of the seventh, his own example, and his blessing of the Sabbath day.

Q. 63. What is the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment is, “*Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.*”

Q. 64. What is required in the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment requires that we preserving the honor and perform the duties appropriate to everyone in their various places and relations, whether in authority over us, under our authority, or equals.

Q. 65. What is forbidden in the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment forbids the neglect of, or doing anything against, the honor and duty that belongs to everyone in their various places and relations to us.

Q. 66. What is the reason added to the fifth commandment?

A. The reason added to the fifth commandment is a promise of long life and prosperity (as far as it serves for God’s glory and their own good) to all who keep this commandment.

Q. 67. What is the sixth commandment?

A. The sixth commandment is, “*You shall not murder.*”

Q. 68. What is required in the sixth commandment?

A. The sixth commandment requires all lawful efforts to preserve our own life and others.

Q. 69. What is forbidden in the sixth commandment?

A. The sixth commandment forbids the taking away of our own life or the life of our neighbor unjustly, as well as anything that tends to that.

Q. 70. What is the seventh commandment?

A. The seventh commandment is, “*You shall not commit adultery.*”

Q. 71. What is required in the seventh commandment?

A. The seventh commandment requires the preservation of our own and our neighbor’s chastity, in heart, speech and behavior.

Q. 72. What is forbidden in the seventh commandment?

A. The seventh commandment forbids all unchaste thoughts, words and actions.

Q. 73. What is the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment is, “*You shall not steal.*”

Q. 74. What is required in the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment requires lawfully procuring and furthering the wealth and outward state of ourselves and others.

Q. 75. What is forbidden in the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment forbids anything that may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbor's wealth or outward state.

Q. 76. What is the ninth commandment?

A. The ninth commandment is, "*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*"

Q. 77. What is required in the ninth commandment?

A. The ninth commandment requires maintaining and promoting truth between one person and another, as well as maintaining and promoting our neighbor's good name as well as our own, especially when being a legal witness.

Q. 78. What is forbidden in the ninth commandment?

A. The ninth commandment forbids anything that puts the truth at risk or is injurious to our own or our neighbor's good name.

Q. 79. What is the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment is, "*You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.*"

Q. 80. What is required in the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment requires full contentment with our own condition, with a correct and charitable orientation of our spirit toward our neighbors and all that is theirs.

Q. 81. What is forbidden in the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment forbids all manner of discontentment with our own state, envying or grieving at the good state of our neighbors, and all excessive feelings and desires for anything that belongs to them.

Q. 82. Is anyone able to keep the commandments of God perfectly?

A. Since the fall, no mere human is able to keep the commandments of God perfectly in this life; everyone breaks them daily in thought, word and deed.

Q. 83. Are all transgressions of the law equally evil?

A. Some sins in themselves, and because of various factors that increase their evil, are more evil in the sight of God than others.

Q. 84. What does every sin deserve?

A. Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come.

Q. 85. What does God require of us that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us for sin?

A. To escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requires of us *faith* in Jesus Christ, *repentance that leads to life*, and the diligent use of all the outward *means* by which Christ communicates the benefits of redemption to us.

Q. 86. What is faith in Jesus Christ?

A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace by which we receive and rest on him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the Gospel.

Q. 87. What is repentance that leads to life?

A. Repentance that leads to life is a saving grace by which a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin and awareness of the mercy of God in Christ, turns from it to God with grief and hatred of his sin, purposing and working constantly for a new obedience.

Q. 88. What are the outward and ordinary means by which Christ imparts to us the benefits of redemption?

A. The outward and ordinary means by which Christ imparts to us the benefits of redemption are his ordinances, especially the *Word*, the *sacraments*, and *prayer*; all of these are made effectual to his chosen ones for salvation.

Q. 89. How is the Word made effectual to salvation?

A. The Spirit of God makes the reading of the Word, but especially the preaching of it, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, to salvation.

Q. 90. How is the Word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation?

A. For the Word may become effectual to salvation, we must pay attention to it with diligence, preparation and prayer, we must receive it with faith and love, we must lay it up in our hearts, and we must practice it in our lives.

Q. 91. How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?

A. The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them or in the one who administers them, but only by the blessing of Christ and the work of his Spirit in them who receive them by faith receive.

Q. 92. What is a sacrament?

A. A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ in which, by perceivable signs, Christ and the benefits of the New Covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.

Q. 93. Which are the sacraments of the New Testament?

A. The sacraments of the New Testament are baptism and the Lord's supper.

Q. 94. What is baptism?

A. Baptism is a sacrament in which washing with water, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, signifies and seals our grafting into Christ and our partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace and our engagement to be the Lord's.

Q. 95. To whom is baptism to be administered?

A. Baptism is not to be administered to anyone outside of the visible church until they profess their faith in Christ and their obedience to him; but the infants of members of the visible church are also to be baptized.

Q. 96. What is the Lord's supper?

A. The Lord's supper is a sacrament in which, by giving and receiving of bread and wine according to Christ's command, his death is shown forth. Worthy receivers are made partakers of his body and blood by faith, not in a bodily or physical manner, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, with all his benefits.

Q. 97. What is required for receiving the Lord's supper in a worthy manner?

A. Those who would partake of the Lord's supper in a worthy manner are required to examine themselves to be aware of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed on him, and of their repentance, love, and new obedience. They do this so that they do not eat and drink judgment to themselves by coming unworthily.

Q. 98. What is prayer?

A. Prayer is offering up our desires to God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and with thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

Q. 99. What rule has God given for our direction in prayer?

A. The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer, but the special rule of direction is the form of prayer that Christ taught his disciples, commonly called the *Lord's prayer*.

Q. 100. What does the preface of the Lord's prayer teach us?

A. The preface of the Lord's prayer, which is, "*Our Father who is in heaven,*" teaches us to draw near to God with a full holy reverence and confidence, and as children who draw near to a father able and ready to help us. Also (in using the plural *our*), it teaches us that we should pray with and for others.

Q. 101. What do we pray for in the first petition?

A. In the first petition, which is, "*May your name be hallowed,*" we pray that God would enable us and others to glorify him in everything by which he makes himself known, and that he would direct all things to his own glory.

Q. 102. What do we pray for in the second petition?

A. In the second petition, which is, "*May your kingdom come,*" we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed, that the kingdom of grace may be advanced and ourselves and others may be brought into it and kept in it, and that the coming of the kingdom of glory may be hastened.

Q. 103. What do we pray for in the third petition?

A. In the third petition, which is, "*May your will be done in earth as it is in heaven,*" we pray that God, by his grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to his will in all things, as the angels do in heaven.

Q. 104. What do we pray for in the fourth petition?

A. In the fourth petition, which is, "*Give us this day our daily bread,*" we pray that by God's free gift we may receive a sufficient portion of the good things of this life and enjoy his blessing with them.

Q. 105. What do we pray for in the fifth petition?

A. In the fifth petition, which is “*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,*” we pray that God, for Christ’s sake, would freely pardon all our sins. We are the especially encouraged to ask for this because we are enabled by his grace to forgive others from the heart.

Q. 106. What do we pray for in the sixth petition?

A. In the sixth petition, which is, “*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,*” we pray that God would either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support us and deliver us when we are tempted.

Q. 107. What doth the conclusion of the Lord's prayer teach us?

A. The conclusion of the Lord’s prayer, which is, “*For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*” teaches us to take our encouragement in prayer only from God, and in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power and glory to him. And in testimony of our desire and our assurance of being heard, we say *Amen*.