



MY FAITH:

NAZARENE CATECHISM FOR KIDS

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE • LONG CATECHISM LEADER'S GUIDE


WORD*action*

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NAZARENE CATECHISM FOR KIDS

Contents

Welcome Letter	5
Introduction	7
Review Activities	12
Lesson 1: Beliefs About the Triune God, Part 1: The Father	22
Lesson 2: Beliefs About the Triune God, Part 2: Jesus Christ	34
Lesson 3: Beliefs About the Triune God, Part 3: The Holy Spirit	44
Lesson 4: Beliefs About the Bible, God's Holy Word	54
Lesson 5: Beliefs About the Human Race and Sin	65
Lesson 6: Beliefs About Salvation, Part 1	76
Lesson 7: Beliefs About Salvation, Part 2	86
Lesson 8: Beliefs About Entire Sanctification	97
Lesson 9: Beliefs About the Church	108
Lesson 10: Beliefs About the Christian Life	117
Lesson 11: Beliefs About the Sacraments and Divine Healing	125
Lesson 12: Beliefs About Things to Come	134
Documents of Our Faith	144
Word Alert! Master List	156
Q & A Scripture List	160

Introduction

What Is Catechism?

A catechism is a series of questions and answers designed to teach certain information. Although you can use a catechism to teach any subject, most catechisms teach biblical and doctrinal truths. Christians began using the *catechetical* (question and answer) method to teach the essentials of the faith in the first century AD. The practice has been continued by Christians of every type—eastern and western, Protestant and Roman Catholic.

Historically, *catechesis* (the process of being formed and educated by a catechism) was necessary for joining a congregation. In this way, new converts met the minimum knowledge requirements for understanding God and his mission of salvation. We strongly recommend using this catechism in the same manner—perhaps including ministry opportunities or internships within the church for participating students.

My Faith is a great way to prepare students for membership, baptism, or graduation into the youth group. *My Faith* guides students through the central doctrines of Christianity as they are articulated in the Agreed Statement of Belief and the Articles of Faith of the Church of the Nazarene.

My Faith is not merely one curriculum among many. It lays a theological foundation students will build on—hopefully for the rest of their lives. The process of catechesis is a pivotal time in the lives of young people who are encountering some of this information for the first time.

Why Teach Catechism?

The necessity for catechism today is as strong as ever. Pluralism (all religions are pretty much the same and lead to the same God) and universalism (everyone goes to heaven no matter what) are popular ideas in our increasingly global culture. Every day anti-Christian ideas are promoted through schools, books, movies, TV, friends, and even family members. Christian young people are not immune to these messages. They may know a lot of Bible stories and how to behave without knowing what they believe in some key areas and why. They may have begun to accept our society's views about themselves, God, sin, priorities, and many other things. Catechism provides the opportunity to focus on these issues.

Today, interest in using catechism to teach doctrinal truths is again growing. In an era of moral questioning and uncertainty, parents and church leaders sense the need to help young people know what we believe and why. If the Church of the Nazarene is to continue and be strong, each new generation must understand, treasure, and live by the biblical beliefs that led to the formation of the denomination. *My Faith* teaches these beliefs and helps children discover the Scriptural basis for our doctrines.

Behind the Catechism

Because *My Faith* is a catechism, it serves a different, though complementary, purpose from other Sunday School materials. This purpose is reflected in the catechism format. The question-and-answer methodology reflects our participation in something that has been going on long before we were born—or born again. God has been at work through the Church for thousands of years and we, as new believers, are not starting from scratch or making up our own religion. We are joining a mission in progress. Catechism informs us of the faith the Church received from the apostles, including our Nazarene emphases. In fact, the lessons are structured around the Agreed Statement of Belief and informed by the Articles of Faith.

This is not to say, however, that there is no room for dialogue, or that the church's beliefs must be received without question or proof. We invite each student to explore and discover the foundations of the church's faith with the hope that he or she will be convinced to make it his or her own.

My Faith is intended to complement traditional Sunday School. Sunday School lessons provide the central teachings of the faith over a long period of time, often as a result of studying another topic or in varying biblical units depending on what stories are being told. Students may focus on practical application or other elements of the lesson without fully grasping a key truth about God. Lessons may focus on topical issues or moments of self-discovery. As

important as those issues are, the nature of this material and the time available to learn it does not allow for in-depth treatment of life issues.

Catechism distills the biblical message in a conversational, question and answer journey through the core teachings of the Church. *My Faith* seeks to draw these various threads together with clear and concise explanations of doctrine in age appropriate terms.

Short Catechism or Long Catechism?

This edition of the catechism has been provided in two versions—a short catechism, and a long catechism. The printed leader’s guide contains the short catechism, presented in eight weekly lessons. This long catechism is in PDF on the enhanced DVD. It is presented in 12 weekly lessons. Consider the following when deciding which version to teach:

- The short catechism contains 8 lessons; the long catechism contains 12. Determine how long you would like to spend going through *My Faith*. If you would like to pair it with *id: Nazarene Membership for Kids* in one quarter, you will choose to teach the short catechism for a total of 13 weeks, eight weeks spent on the catechism and five weeks on the membership course.
- This long catechism includes more questions and spends more time on certain topics than the short catechism. It also covers more topics than the short catechism. The Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, the 10 Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Lord’s Prayer, and other topics are addressed only in the long catechism.
- The short catechism is provided in printed form. This long catechism is provided as a PDF on the enhanced DVD. Teachers can print lessons as needed.
- The *My Faith* student book and the other teaching resources coordinate with both versions of the catechism.

Age Level and *My Faith*

Though it can be used with students of other ages, *My Faith* has been created especially for 11-12 year olds (preteens). It, along with WordAction’s other resources for preteens, serves as the culmination of the children’s ministry.

My Faith coordinates with *Preteen Faith Connections*, *id: Nazarene Membership for Kids*, and *Wired*. *My Faith* builds upon the biblical knowledge students have gained from *Preteen Faith Connections*. It is ideal preparation for *id: Nazarene Membership for Kids*, with *My Faith* addressing our theology and *id* covering the meaning and requirements for membership with the Church of the Nazarene. With these courses accomplished, students will be ready to transition from the children’s department into the youth group with *Wired*.

Course Goals

The goals for *My Faith* are to help students:

- Become acquainted with the beliefs of the Church universal and the Church of the Nazarene.
- Understand Nazarene beliefs well enough to answer catechism questions correctly. Their answers need not be word-for-word as long as they accurately convey the idea in the printed answer.
- Appreciate the doctrines of the church and want to live by them.
- Prepare students for reception into the church or baptism.

If you plan to use *My Faith* to prepare students for church membership or baptism, have your pastor meet with your students to discuss plans for joining with the church.

Curriculum Tools

The *My Faith* Leader’s Resource Kit contains these main items—the printed leader’s guide (short catechism), an enhanced DVD that includes this long catechism, and an interactive student book. *My Faith* provides teachers with more resources and activities than can be used in any one class session. This allows teachers to customize the materials to fit their particular students’ educational needs and interests. This flexibility will keep the catechism fresh for students and teachers for years to come.

You can order additional copies of the *My Faith* student book online at wordaction.com.

My Faith Leader's Guide

This leader's guide contains complete instructions for conducting 12 catechism lessons. The short catechism leader's guide, available in print and as a PDF, contains complete instructions for eight lessons. Each lesson contains these helpful features:

- The portion of the Agreed Statement of Belief that forms the basis for the questions and answers in that session with reference to the corresponding Article(s) of Faith
- *Lesson Goals* and *Checkpoints* (ways to evaluate learning)
- A list of *Curriculum Resources* needed
- An answer to the question, *Why Teach This Lesson?*
- A three-part lesson plan
- Other special features include:
 - * **Our Wesleyan Perspective**—Brief discussions of how Wesleyan theology differs from other theological views
 - * **Word Alert!**—Reminders of words students may need to have defined
 - * **Checkpoint(s)**—Help you assess learning “on the spot”

The leader's guide also contains:

- **Review Activities**—A collection of activities for beginning and/or closing the lessons. These activities are grouped according to ways students learn best. You can choose from these to enhance and customize your lesson.
- **Word Alert! List**—A master list of all the Word Alert! words and definitions
- **Question Scriptures**—A section of all the scripture passages cited in the lessons allowing for quick and easy reference.
- **Important “Need to Know” documents**—The Agreed Statement of Belief, Articles of Faith, General Rules, creeds, 10 Commandments, Beatitudes, and Lord's Prayer are reproduced in full.

My Faith Enhanced DVD

The enhanced DVD contains a variety of resources for teaching the catechism. They are:

- The short and long catechism leader's guides in reproducible PDF format
- Reproducible activity handouts in PDF format. These provide a variety of activities to help students understand catechism words, concepts, questions, and answers. The handouts include games, puzzles, discussion guides, and other items. Look for when and how to use these handouts in each lesson.
- *Word Alert!* words and definition cards in PDF format
- Activity PowerPoints®
- Question and Answer PowerPoints® for each lesson that allows time for students to discuss and discover the answers for themselves.
- Interactive videos for use in activities
- Two flash games
- Two songs in mp3 format
- Two Say-Along videos to help students learn the Agreed Statement of Belief and The Apostles' Creed
- Tutorial video to acquaint the teacher with *My Faith*
- Six “Tough Topics” videos to provide the teacher with helpful information on six topics related to lesson discussions. You will find out when to view these in specific lessons

My Faith Student Book

The interactive student book contains all the *My Faith* questions, answers, supporting scriptures, and important “need to know” Scriptures and documents of the church. Questions that are only covered in the long catechism are marked with a chalice icon. [☞]

Pages for in-class activities and journaling are included. Encourage your students to use their books to keep track of any questions they may have, prayers and answers to prayer, or whatever might be helpful for them as they

go through this course. We hope it will remain a valuable keepsake and resource long after students have finished the course.

Online Question and Answer Game

Students may study the catechism answers at home with their parents through playing this online game. Go to wordaction.com and click on the catechism link to play.

Planning the Course

Who Should Teach *My Faith*?

The pastor or any layperson who understands the beliefs of the church can do so. Each session provides thorough discussion helps for the teacher.

Experience shows that students experience special benefits if the pastor can either teach this course, or take an active role in some of the sessions. In churches where the pastor does this, students usually form a stronger-than-average bond with him or her.

If the pastor cannot teach the course, here are ways he or she can take an active role in *My Faith*:

- By writing a personal letter or email to each potential class member, emphasizing the importance of the class and urging the student to take part. The pastor can also phone or text each student.
- By attending some sessions and taking part in the discussion and activities.
- By speaking to each student personally about baptism and church membership.
- By personally honoring the *My Faith* students who complete the program before the congregation.

Teaching Options

My Faith can be taught in eight one-hour sessions or 12 one-hour sessions if using this long catechism version. However, longer sessions or more sessions can make the course more effective. Either option gives more time for discussion and learning activities. With shorter or fewer sessions, students will need to spend more time at home learning the catechism.

Each session is divided into three parts:

- **Dig In**—This section contains interest-building and/or review activities to lead into the lesson. This is a great time to learn the Agreed Statement of Belief or The Apostles' Creed using the Say-Along videos.
- **Discover Our Faith**—In this section, students take part in in-depth study of the catechism questions and answers.
- **Do and Review**—Here students further explore and actively apply catechism teachings.

Optional Thirteenth Session

At the close of the *My Faith* course, consider conducting a review, celebration, and graduation session. Invite family members. Use the students' favorite games and activities to review catechism questions and answers. Award prizes for activity winners. Allow time for students to discuss any remaining questions they have about their beliefs.

Question-and-Answer Cupcakes: Bake chocolate and white cupcakes. Frost the chocolate cupcakes with white icing. Draw the letter Q on each one. Frost the white cupcakes with chocolate icing and draw A's on them.

Have one student take a question cupcake and ask a friend a catechism question. The friend takes an answer cupcake and gives the answer. This student then chooses another student to take a question cupcake. Continue this way until everyone has a cupcake.

Schedule Options

If you teach *My Faith* in one-hour sessions, schedule your time as follows:

- **Dig In**—15 class minutes. Begin this portion of the session period when the first student arrives. Conclude it 15 minutes after the scheduled beginning of the class.
- **Discover Our Faith**—25 minutes
- **Do and Review**—20 minutes

If you have one-and-a-half-hour sessions, use this schedule:

- **Dig In**—20 class minutes
- **Discover Our Faith**—35 minutes
- **Do and Review**—35 minutes

If you can provide two one-hour class sessions for each catechism lesson, schedule as follows:

First Week

- **Dig In**—25 class minutes
- **Discover Our Faith**—35 minutes. Cover about two-thirds of the questions.

Second Week

- **Discover Our Faith**—20 minutes. Study the remaining questions, and review.
- **Do and Review**—40 minutes

Churches can use *My Faith* in a variety of teaching settings.

Sunday School: For this option, take students out of their regular class and provide a separate *My Faith* teacher. The strength of this approach is that the greatest number of students is likely to attend during Sunday School. The weakness of the plan is that students miss the content of that quarter of Sunday School curriculum.

Children’s Church: Have students meet with a catechism teacher during morning worship/children’s church. This plan gives a longer class period than the typical Sunday School session. Also, a large number of students is usually available. The weakness of the plan is that students miss worship. You can partially overcome this weakness by devoting a small part of the catechism session for music, prayer, and spiritual sharing. Just be sure to allow at least one hour for the catechism study.

Sunday Evening or Other: You also may teach *My Faith* as a special class on Sunday evening, during the week, or on Saturday. The strength of this option is that students will not miss other ministries or activities. The weakness is that many families may find it difficult to schedule another event at church.

May God bless you and your students as you come to know him better through *My Faith!*

MY FAITH

LONG CATECHISM UNIT I LESSON 1

Beliefs About God and the Bible *Beliefs About the Triune God,* *Part 1: The Father*

AGREED STATEMENT OF BELIEF

We believe in one God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (26.1) See Article of Faith I on page 148.

LESSON GOALS

To help students

- Discover who God the Father is and what he is like.
- Feel awe and wonder as they consider the wisdom, power, holiness, and love of God.

CHECKPOINTS

- Could students give the main ideas found in the answers to catechism questions 1-12?
- How did students' ideas about God change during this lesson?
- Did any students tell how this lesson helped to change incorrect ideas they had about God?
- Did students express feelings of awe, wonder, reverence, or love for God?

CURRICULUM RESOURCES

- *My Faith* student book for each student
- Apostles' Creed Say-Along video and Enhanced DVD segment
- Nicene Creed Enhanced DVD
- Articles of Faith Enhanced DVD
- Agreed Statement of Belief animated video
- Lesson 1 Questions and Answers PowerPoint®

- “Where Could These Beliefs Lead?” animated video
- Computer, projector, and screen
- TV and DVD player

Every student also needs a New International Version (NIV) Bible and a pencil or pen.

WHY TEACH THIS LESSON?

Knowing a person is an essential part of relationship. In fact, without some knowledge of the other person we can be in relationship *to* him or her, but not in relationship *with* him or her. It is no different with God. If a Christian is to be in relationship with God the Father through Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, it is important to know who they are. Thankfully, God has revealed himself through his actions in history, prophecies, the Bible, and especially in Jesus Christ. This makes knowledge of God, his purposes, and his character possible.

Scripture teaches us there is only one God. It also speaks of God the Father, his only begotten Son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. They are not the same person, yet they all have the characteristics of deity. Their ministry and identities are interconnected in an unusual way. The Church describes this unique way of being as “Trinity”—three in one. “Trinity” is a concept we can begin to understand, but can’t get our minds completely around. Yet in order to be faithful to God’s self-revelation to us, we live with this mystery.

As your students learn more about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they will have the opportunity to deepen their relationship with God. Help them think about how important this knowledge is for their personal spiritual lives. Encourage them to praise God for who he is and what he has done for us. Consider viewing the Tough Topics videos on the creeds and the Trinity to help you prepare the lesson.

TEACH THE CATECHISM

Dig In

Choose activities to review catechism questions, spark students' interest in this lesson, and introduce them to key ideas.

HERE'S MY QUESTION

From construction paper, cut out large question marks. On additional construction paper print "Here's My Question," "What Does Our Church Believe About . . . ?" and "Why Does Our Church Believe . . . ?" The first caption should be larger than the other two.

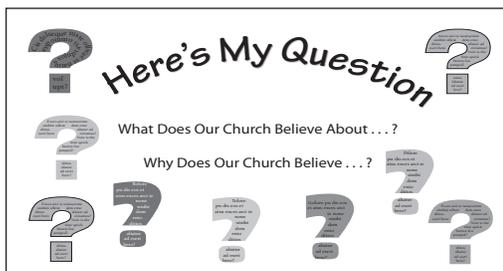
Materials and Preparation

- Colored construction paper
- Scissors
- Markers, including dark colors
- Plasti-Tak, pins, or other fasteners

Fasten the first caption to the top of a bulletin board or on the wall. Attach the other two captions below this. Have question marks, markers, and fasteners ready for students to use.

Activity: Direct students' attention to the bulletin board captions and the question-mark shapes. Explain that as people grow and mature they think more about their beliefs. Say, **You may have wondered what our church believes about God, Jesus, and being a Christian. Or perhaps you know something about our beliefs, but you wonder why we believe the way we do. This is a class where you will consider these important subjects. You can ask questions about your beliefs and together we will search for answers.**

Have students write their questions on the question marks, decorate the shapes as desired, and attach them to the bulletin board.



Discover Our Faith

INTRODUCE MY FAITH

Activity: Explain that *My Faith* is a catechism that teaches the beliefs of the Church of the Nazarene. Have students turn to the contents page of

Materials and Preparation

- *My Faith* student book for each student

the question and answer book to discover the subjects covered in this catechism. Then have them turn to page 7 to look at the questions and answers dealing with “God, Our Father.” Help students identify the three parts to each item: question, answer, and scripture verse(s).

Ask, **Why is it important for Christians to know what we believe about subjects like these?** (*Beliefs influence the way we think and live, and religious beliefs are the most important beliefs a person has. However, people don’t all believe the same about God, Jesus, salvation, or Christian living. Christians need to know what they believe—and why they believe it—so they can live as God teaches. Also, Christians who know what they believe can withstand temptation to choose wrong beliefs and wrong actions better than those who don’t know what they believe.*)

Why do you think the catechism questions include Bible verses? (*God’s Word is the source of our Christian beliefs. Our beliefs are not simply ideas that church leaders decided to teach. The scripture verses with each question and answer show what God’s Word teaches about these subjects.*)

CATECHISM AND THE ARTICLES OF FAITH

Activity: Explain or review what the creeds, the *Manual*, the Agreed Statement of Belief, and Articles of Faith are. Point out that these documents have been included on pages 71-86 in the student book. Ask, **Since our beliefs come from the Bible, why do we need creeds, a Manual, the Agreed Statement of Belief, and Articles of Faith?** Let students discuss.

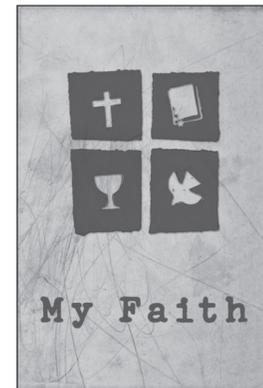
(Some people read the Bible and use it to teach wrong things about God and other subjects. The creeds were written to teach the apostles’ message about God. Even when Christians read the Bible, they often understand God’s Word in different ways. Certain beliefs of Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, or Baptists are different from our beliefs. The Articles of Faith tell us how Nazarenes understand the teachings of the Bible. The Agreed Statement of Belief is a summary of the creeds understood in light of the Articles of Faith, and is the standard of belief for joining the Church of the Nazarene.)

Read Article 1 from the *Manual* or from page 148 of this leader’s guide. You can also find this presentation on the Enhanced DVD. Ask volunteers to tell whether this was easy or difficult for them to understand. Explain that the Articles of Faith were written for adults. The catechism takes the ideas in the Articles and teaches them through questions and answers in everyday language.

Have the students read The Apostles’ Creed from their student books (page 144), or from the “Apostles’ Creed” animated slide. Then do the same for the Agreed Statement of Belief. When your students are familiar with the creed and Agreed Statement of Belief, lead them in the Say-Along Video activity on pages 14 and 27 of the leader’s guide.

Materials and Preparation

- *My Faith* student book
- A recent edition of the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene (check with your pastor)
- Articles of Faith Enhanced DVD



Word Alert!

Catechism—A series of questions and answers that teach religious beliefs

DISCUSS STUDENTS' QUESTIONS

Activity: Say, **In My Faith we will study questions and answers that express our church's beliefs. However, it is important for you to think about what you believe.**

In this class, you may ask questions about your beliefs and search for answers to those questions. Assure students that in this class every question will be treated respectfully. Tell students some of the questions you have wrestled with through the years and those with which you are still dealing.

Let students take turns pointing out and reading the questions they wrote earlier, or give them time to write questions now. Do not answer the questions, but assure students you will work with every question during this class. Today, you will discuss questions about God.

Materials and Preparation

- Questions students wrote earlier or materials to do this now (see Here's My Question)

WORDS ON THE WALL

Activity: Ask students to think of words or short phrases that describe God. Have them call out the words as they write them on index cards and give them to you to attach to a wall or bulletin board. The idea is to post as many ideas as you can as quickly as possible.

Materials and Preparation

- Index cards
- Marker or pencil for every student
- Plasti-Tak or other fastener

When students have exhausted their ideas, discuss the words. Listen carefully to what students say. It will help you understand what they believe about God.

Say, **Most people who are old enough to think about their beliefs have some belief about God. How are your ideas about God similar to or different from ideas your friends have?**

Some students may say they have friends who do not believe there is a God. If so, relate the following information.

The Bible is our main source of information about God. However, the Bible does not try to prove there is a God. The writers of the Bible believed God existed, and they expected us to believe it too. They wrote to help us understand who God is and what God is like.

Although the Bible doesn't try to prove there is a God, people who have thought about this have suggested reasons we should believe in God. Here are some of their ideas.

- Everything in our universe, except God, had a beginning. So, the universe also must have had a beginning. Someone or something must have caused the universe.
- A universe as complex as ours could not have happened by chance any more than a beautiful painting could happen by throwing paint cans into the air. An intelligent designer—God—must have created this world.
- It's hard to explain where human feelings about right and wrong come from unless there is a God.
- The experiences of people who have known, loved, and served God convince them God exists. When the Bible talks about "knowing" God,

Word Alert!

The Manual—A book that contains information about the beliefs and practices of people who belong to the Church of the Nazarene.

Articles of Faith—Statements in the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene that tell what we believe the Bible teaches about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and 13 other subjects.

Faith—Believing God's Word and acting in a way that shows that belief. **Faith** is trust in action. **Faith** is necessary for salvation. **Faith** can also be a doctrine or set of religious truths a person believes and to which he or she is loyal.

it does not mean just knowing facts about God. In the Bible, “knowing” God means having a personal relationship with him. People’s personal experiences with God do not prove that he exists. However, those who have had these experiences declare that they know there is a God.

Say, **No human being can scientifically prove God exists because science does not have the tools to study matters about God. Neither can we fully understand God. However, we can know more than enough to help us know him personally and trust in him. Let’s see what the Bible teaches us about God.**

THE CATECHISM

Activity: Choose one of these ways to work through the catechism questions and answers.

1. Open the PowerPoint® file for Lesson 1 of the long catechism. Read each question, look up the scriptures provided, and discuss the probable answer as a class. Facilitate discussion, but do not comment on the accuracy of their ideas. When the students have decided on an answer, bring up the catechism answer on the PowerPoint®. Discuss the differences between the catechism answer and the students’ answer. Address any mistaken ideas the students may have included in their answer. Encourage students to ask any questions they have about the material. Check especially to see that students understand the meanings of words.

2. Divide students into three groups. For each question, have one group read the question, the second group read the answer, and the third group read the verses. Then discuss the question as described above. For succeeding questions, rotate the reading. Group 2 reads the question, group 3 the answer, and group 1 the scriptures, and so forth.

3. If your students are poor or reluctant readers, read the material to them, then discuss as described.

Q1 Where can we find a summary of the basic beliefs of all Christians?

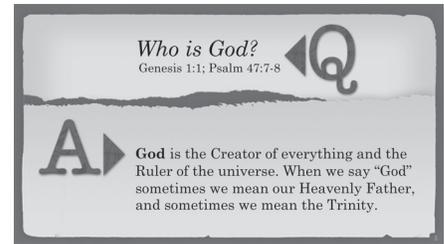
A1 The Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed sum up Christian beliefs. (See pages 144-145 or The Apostles’ Creed and Nicene Creed animated videos.)

The Apostles’ Creed was written sometime in the early second century AD. The Nicene Creed was begun in AD 325 and completed around 381. The creeds were written to clarify the basics of true Christianity as taught by the Apostles. Other teachers had begun to teach many false ideas about Jesus—like he wasn’t fully God or he wasn’t fully human. For centuries, the creeds have been the standard for Christian belief and interpretation of Holy Scripture.

If you plan to teach your students The Apostles’ Creed or the Nicene Creed, go through it with them now. Practice The Apostles’ Creed with the

Materials and Preparation

- Bibles
- Long catechism Lesson 1 PowerPoint®, or *My Faith* student book for each student
- Apostles’ Creed from Enhanced DVD
- Nicene Creed from Enhanced DVD
- Apostles’ Creed Say-Along video
- Whiteboard or newsprint and marker



animated video, and then say it together as a class along with The Apostles' Creed Say-Along video.

Q2 Where can we find a summary of the beliefs of the Church of the Nazarene?

A2 The Agreed Statement of Beliefs sums up the beliefs of the Church of the Nazarene as stated in the Articles of Faith. (See pages 148 and 148-155.)

The Agreed Statement of Belief is the standard of belief for joining the Church of the Nazarene. It is further explained through the Articles of Faith. Just as the creeds distinguish between Christianity and other religions, the Agreed Statement of Belief distinguishes between the Church of the Nazarene and other churches.

Our Wesleyan Perspective

When seeking out religious truth, Wesleyan scholars typically follow John Wesley's method, which they call the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. This takes four factors into account: Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Scripture is our source of revealed knowledge. Every conclusion we come to must be consistent with Scripture. We use tradition and reason to help us study and understand Scripture. Tradition provides wisdom from the great saints who went before us. Reason helps us to think clearly and consistently, and to apply Scriptural truth to our lives. Experience is the means of participating in Scriptural truth and offers additional evidence from which we can reason.

Q3 Who is God?

GENESIS 1:1; PSALM 47:7-8

A3 God is the Creator of everything and the Ruler of the universe. When we say "God" sometimes we mean our Heavenly Father, and sometimes we mean the Trinity.

The statement that God is our Father is important. Some people say God is only an impersonal force or energy. We believe that God is like Jesus and like Jesus said he is. God is a loving, caring Being who has authority over us and with whom we may have a personal relationship. Human beings are persons with minds, feelings, and wills. So, it makes sense to believe they were created by an even greater personal Being, rather than by an impersonal force or energy.

Q4 Is there more than one God?

ISAIAH 44:6; DEUTERONOMY 4:35

A4 There is only one true and living God.

Most people in our society do not worship many gods in the same way some people in Bible times did. However, some religions believe that people are gods. Other religions believe everything in nature is God.

Word Alert!

Reign—To rule over

Q5 What is the Trinity?

DEUTERONOMY 6:4; MATTHEW 28:19; 2 CORINTHIANS 13:14; GALATIANS 4:6

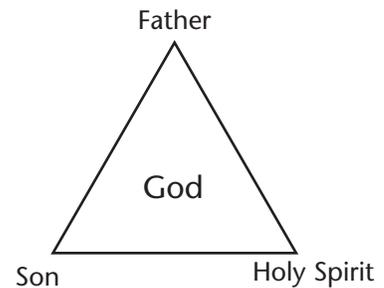
A5 Trinity means “three in one.” There is only one God, but he exists and reveals himself in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

The Trinity is impossible to understand fully. However, it may help to think about other “three-in-one” things with which we are familiar. An egg is one example. It is one egg, yet it includes the shell, the white, and the yolk. All three together form the egg, yet separately each is egg: eggshell, egg white, and egg yolk. (Note: This is not a perfect analogy, because the eggshell, egg white, and egg yolk are three different parts of the egg. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not parts of God.)

There are two errors people sometimes make when they think about the Trinity. One is to think of three separate Gods—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The second error is to say there is only one God but he takes on different forms at different times. We believe that God is One, but he reveals himself in three Persons at the same time—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

On a chalkboard or newsprint draw a triangle. Explain that we often use this symbol to illustrate the idea of the Trinity. To be complete, a triangle must have all three sides. It is not a triangle if one side is missing.

Label the three sides and center of the triangle as shown.



Word Alert!

Grace—God’s love, mercy, forgiveness, and power at work in our lives. God freely gives us his **grace** because he loves us, not because we deserve it.

Say, **There is only one God, but he exists as three Persons. Each Person of the Trinity has a special relationship to us. God is our Creator and Ruler. Jesus Christ is God’s Son and our Savior. The Holy Spirit lives within the Christian to guide and direct him. Yet together, these three are one God.**

Our Wesleyan Perspective

In short, God the Father is God beyond us—the Creator and Governor of the universe. God the Son is God beside us—the Redeemer who came into our world and became one of us. And God the Holy Spirit is God within us—the indwelling Comforter and Sanctifier.

Rob L. Staples*

Q6 Why is God greater than any other being?

ISAIAH 40:28; JOB 11:7

A6 God is greater than any other being because he has always lived and always will live and because he is not limited in any way.

The idea that God had no beginning and will have no ending is difficult for us to understand because we measure our lives by time—past, present, and future. God has an entirely different kind of existence. He is completely free of the limits of time. We say God is *eternal*.

God is also *infinite*. This means he is not limited in any way, and we cannot measure his greatness. We sometimes use the words *omnipotent*, *omnipresent*, and *omniscient* to describe ways God is great. *Omni* is a Latin

Word Alert!

Eternal—Having no beginning or ending
Fathom—To know and understand completely

*Rob L. Staples, “Words of Faith: Trinity,” *Herald of Holiness*, January 1997, 24.

word that means *all* or *unlimited*. See if your students can decide which *omni* word goes with each of these phrases.

- God has unlimited power (*omnipotent*).
- God is everywhere at the same time (*omnipresent*).
- God knows all that can be known (*omniscient*).

Though no one or nothing can limit God, God has chosen to limit himself in certain ways. God has unlimited power, but he never uses that power to do evil or to decide ahead of time who will choose Jesus as Savior and who will not. Yet even with these limitations God puts on himself, his wisdom, power, and knowledge are beyond what we can imagine, understand, or describe.

Ask, **Why do you think Christians find it helpful to know that God is unlimited in power, knowledge, and ability to be everywhere?** (*This means that we serve a God who gives us strength to face and deal with any problem or difficulty.*)

Q7 Why do we say that God is Creator of everything?

GENESIS 1:1; HEBREWS 11:3

A7 God is the Creator of everything because in the beginning there was nothing. Then God made everything.

We often use the word *create* to describe what people do, but only God can create something from nothing. Our universe came into being when God thought of it and spoke words that brought it into existence. Only God could do this.

Q8 How does God work in the universe today?

ISAIAH 40:25-26; 2 PETER 3:9; PSALM 66:18-20; 1 CORINTHIANS 12:14-20

A8 God keeps the universe operating and enables everyone who responds to him to be saved from sin.

Some people believe that God created the world, set it in motion, but then left the universe to run itself. We believe that God works actively to keep the universe operating. (See Hebrews 1:3 and Colossians 1:17.) God is at work in the world so in the end he will accomplish his plans and purposes.

If God is active in what happens in this world, why do so many terrible things happen? There is no easy answer to this question, though people have searched for it for thousands of years. Even Job in the Bible did not find the answer to this question. However, God reminded Job of the many great things he does that human beings cannot explain or do, and Job continued to trust God.

It's important to remember that God's purposes for our world are beyond what we can know or understand in this life. Also, what's happening now is only part of God's big picture. In the end we will see how God was constantly working out his purposes in every situation. In the meantime, an important way God works in this world is to enable people to enjoy a personal relationship with him.

Word Alert!

Repentance—To turn away from sin and turn to God. To feel sorry for sin, ask for forgiveness, and decide to live for God.

Sin—Rebellion against God. Putting your own will above God's will and choosing to disobey him. Sin can refer to a person's spiritual condition or to an action.

Our Wesleyan Perspective

God is sovereign over everything. This means he has authority and power over all things. Some Christians think this means God controls everything—he even chooses specific people to go to heaven or to go to hell. This is a misunderstanding of the Bible. God has given us the ability to choose how we respond to him and to others. He wants us to love him, and love must be chosen freely. This means God gives people the ability to reject him or harm others. God *allows* us to do wrong, though he doesn't want us to do so. However, because he is sovereign, he can guarantee that bad situations can be redeemed and justice will be done either in this life or the next.

Q9 How do we describe God's nature and character?

ISAIAH 6:3; 1 JOHN 4:16; DEUTERONOMY 7:9

A9 We describe God's nature and character as "holy love."

Q10 What do we mean when we say God is holy?

DEUTERONOMY 32:4; 2 SAMUEL 22:31; ISAIAH 55:8-9

A10 God is different from all other beings, and everything about him is good and perfect.

When people speak of God's holiness, they usually mean that God never does anything wrong. This is true. However, the most important meaning of holy is *different from all other beings*. God is "one of a kind." He is so much greater than any other being that he does not fully compare to anyone or anything.

Q11 What do we mean when we say God is love?

1 JOHN 4:10; 1 JOHN 4:7

A11 God wants the highest good for every person and he continually works to bring this about. God especially showed his love to us by sending Jesus Christ into the world to be our Savior. He is the source of all love.

Our Wesleyan Perspective

The way we define "holy" and "love" is very important because these terms tell us who God is. We probably already have some idea about the meaning of these words by the time we study this catechism. It can be tempting to define our terms according to society's current definitions, or a desire for them to mean something particular. However, we must bring our definitions into line with Scripture in order to properly understand "holy love." God is love and has always been love. God's definition of love can account for all of his actions, teachings, and commands in the Old and New Testaments. Does your definition line up with God's?

Word Alert!

Exalted—Honored, praised
Righteousness—To be in right relationship with God, and to obey him because of that right relationship. To be right or good in thoughts, words, and actions. Righteousness also includes the desire for all people to experience what is right—justice.

Q12 How does God make himself known to us?

HEBREWS 1:1-2; 1 CORINTHIANS 2:13; ACTS 18:28

A12 God makes himself known to us in many ways but most importantly, through Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible.

If God did not choose to reveal himself to us, we could not know him. Thankfully, God has revealed himself to us in several ways. For example, the Bible reveals what God is like by showing us how he worked with people long ago. The Holy Spirit helps us understand what we read and how it applies to us. The clearest way God reveals himself is through Jesus Christ. We come to know Jesus through the teachings of the Bible and the Church, through the lives of other Christians, and through our personal experiences with him.



Checkpoint

As you discussed the above questions, did your students react with awe, wonder, reverence, or love for God?

Look again at the words describing God that students brainstormed earlier. Ask:

- **Which words help you better understand who God is and/or what he is like?**
- **Which words give you the best feelings about God?**
- **What are some things that are new or surprising to you from this lesson?**

Do and Review

Choose from the activities below and on pages 12-21 to help students review catechism truths and reinforce what they have learned.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH

Print each Bible reference listed below on an index card.

Activity: Remind students that the Bible is our main source of information about who God is and what he is like. Use this activity to help students add to their knowledge about God.

Use these signals for the scripture search.

Ready: Students hold Bibles shut between the palms of their hands.

Set: Leader holds up a Bible reference card and reads the reference.

Go: Students look up the Bible verse. (Continue to hold up the reference card while students look for the verse.) The first one to find it jumps to his or her feet.

Materials and Preparation

- Bible for every student
- Index cards and a marker

Allow this student to read the verse to the group and explain briefly what the verse tells us about God. If one student consistently finds the verse first, choose the second or third student to read.

Use these references: Isaiah 44:8 (one God); 1 Timothy 1:17 (eternal God); Jeremiah 23:24 (God everywhere); Matthew 5:48 (God is perfect); Jeremiah 32:17 (Creator; all-powerful); Romans 11:33-34 (all-knowing); Psalm 31:19 (God's goodness); Psalm 77:13 (God's holiness); 1 John 4:7 (God's love); Psalm 33:5 (God's righteousness and justice); Isaiah 40:25-26 (no one can compare with God).

BELIEFS ON DISPLAY

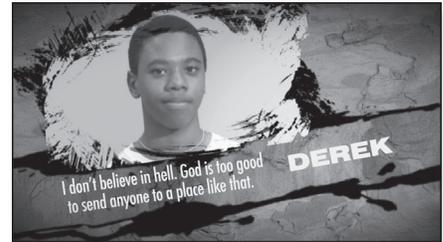
Activity: One at a time, bring the four statements about God up on the screen and discuss how these beliefs might affect a person's life, behavior, and relationship with God.

(Kevin's beliefs may cause him to be afraid of God. He may find it hard to love a God like this. Derek probably doesn't worry much about doing what is right since he thinks God will let him get by with almost anything. Brad will continually try to make "deals" with God. Mark will more likely love, yet respect, God and try to please Him.)

When the class has discussed all four statements, ask volunteers to identify the correct beliefs about God. *(Mark's statements)* Ask other volunteers to tell how they would respond to Derek, Brad, and Kevin's wrong ideas. Then talk about the students' beliefs.

Materials and Preparation

- "Where Could These Beliefs Lead?" animated video



Closing

JOURNAL

Activity: Allow time for students to work on the lesson 1 journal activity in class, or suggest they complete it during the week as part of their devotional time. If the activity is suggested as an at-home devotional exercise, remember to discuss it at the beginning of the next lesson and allow volunteers to show their work.

Prayer: Encourage students to pray brief prayers, thanking God for his greatness and especially for his love to us.

Materials and Preparation

- *My Faith* student book for each student
- Magazines with pictures students can cut out
- Pens or pencils
- Scissors (several pairs)