

A Model of Catechism for Disciple-Making

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Contents

1	Introduction	4
1.1	On Catechism	4
1.2	On the Influences of this Model	5
1.3	On Terms	5
2	The Model in Outline	5
2.1	The Actors	6
2.2	Three Contents	6
2.3	The Lessons	7
2.4	The Outcomes	9
3	The Actors	9
4	The Lessons	9
4.1	Lesson One: God the Father	10
4.2	Lesson Two: Jesus Christ	10
4.3	Lesson Three: Crucifixion and Resurrection	11
4.4	Lesson Four: The Holy Spirit	11

4.5	Lesson Five: The Church	12
4.6	Lesson Six: The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting	12
4.7	Lesson Seven: Baptism and Communion	13
4.8	Lesson Eight: The Creeds	14
4.9	Lesson Nine: Genesis and Exodus 1-20	14
4.10	Lesson Ten: The Torah (Remaining)	15
4.11	Lesson Eleven: Joshua - 2 Kings	15
4.12	Lesson Twelve: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel	15
4.13	Lesson Thirteen: The Minor Prophets	15
4.14	Lesson Fourteen: The Writings	15
4.15	Lesson Fifteen: The Gospels	15
4.16	Lesson Sixteen: The Epistles and Revelation	16
4.17	Lesson Seventeen: Prayer	16
4.18	Lesson Eighteen: Our Father	16
4.19	Lesson Nineteen: Hallowed Be Thy Name	16
4.20	Lesson Twenty: Thy Kingdom Come	16
4.21	Lesson Twenty-One: Thy Will Be Done	16
4.22	Lesson Twenty-Two: Our Daily Bread	16
4.23	Lesson Twenty-Three: Forgive Us Our Trespases	16
4.24	Lesson Twenty-Four: Lead Us Not Into Temptation	16
4.25	Lesson Twenty-Five: Deliver Us From Evil	16
4.26	Lesson Twenty-Six: Fasting and Feasting	17
4.27	Lesson Twenty-Seven: Praying in Tongues	17
4.28	Lesson Twenty-Eight: Musical Worship	17
4.29	Lesson Twenty-Nine: Public Reading of Scripture	17

4.30 Lesson Thirty: The Psalter	17
4.31 Lesson Thirty-One: Morning Prayer	17
4.32 Lesson Thirty-Two: Evening Prayer and Compline	17
4.33 Lesson Thirty-Three: I am the Lord Your God	17
4.34 Lesson Thirty-Four: Idolatry	17
4.35 Lesson Thirty-Five: Bearing God's Name	17
4.36 Lesson Thirty-Six: Sabbath	17
4.37 Lesson Thirty-Seven: Honor	17
4.38 Lesson Thirty-Eight: Image of God	17
4.39 Lesson Thirty-Nine: Sexual Ethics	18
4.40 Lesson Forty: Economics and Generosity	18
4.41 Lesson Forty-One: Honesty	18
4.42 Lesson Forty-Two: Covetousness	18
4.43 Lesson Forty-Three: Atonement and Sanctification	18
4.44 Lesson Forty-Four: Righteousness	18
4.45 Lesson Forty-Five: Spirit Baptism	18
4.46 Lesson Forty-Six: Groups	18
4.47 Lesson Forty-Seven: Ministry	18
4.48 Lesson Forty-Eight: Preparation	18
5 General Practices	19
6 Resources	19
7 Reference	19

1 Introduction

The Model here described provides a basic outline and lesson plan for the process and content of catechesis at Flatland Church. Jesus commanded his followers to disciple the nations. This command has followed each generation of the Church in an unbroken succession since Christs Resurrection. A necessary component of this discipling is naturally, first, the conversion of people through the power of the Holy Spirit, repentance, and acceptance of Christs kingship.

However, it has become common to spend the bulk of our energy in merely the conversion of people, rather than to the direct discipleship of those converted¹. This is a natural inclination for Christ-followers, as indeed we wish to see all people saved. Yet it seems that over the past half-century, greater emphasis has been spent on bringing sheep into the fold to the neglect of creating resilient disciples. This is certainly why we see a serious decline in Church attendance with a continual downward trend in the West of young people.

If then, the models of Bill Hybels and the Beatles have failed us, we ought to look back to the earliest days of the Church. The early centuries of the Church recognized that there is crucial importance to the instruction of new believers. Of course, head knowledge is not adequate to the creation of resilient disciples. Rather, practices and instruction that capture mind, body, heart, soul, and daily practice are the only things sufficient to properly discipling life-long Jesus apprentices.

1.1 On Catechism

In the early days of the Church, the Apostles crafted a short encyclical for Gentile believers entitled *The Didache*², which served as one of the earliest examples we have of structured teaching of Church doctrine. Within a century or two we would see the rise of several structured instruction manuals for teaching new converts on their way to Baptism. We know from Augustines sermons (late 4th century) that by the time he was in ministry, the Church had a year-long process in which new converts would be taught the beliefs and practices of the Christian faith prior to their baptism.

¹It is worth noting here that if we believe that it is the Holy Spirit who draws all people to Christ, then we must accept to some extent that the Holy Spirit, not the individual, is the primary agent of salvation. To believe otherwise is to venture into a form of Pelagianism or semi-Pelagianism. This is not to say that man has no freewill nor that he has no agency in the choice to become allegiant and repent. Yet if the Spirit is the primary agent, perhaps we ought to have at all times been more focused on the discipleship of the converted than the conversion of the unconverted, not to the exclusion of the latter but certainly recognizing the decades long neglect of the former.

²It is worth noting that at no point during the history of the Church was *The Didache* ever considered part of the Biblical canon, nor was its inclusion considered as far as we are aware. However, we do see references by some fathers as early as the Third Century, and more and more have come to believe that *The Didache* was either written directly by the Apostles or was a compilation by the successors/disciples of the Apostles of the commonly shared teachings of the Apostles.

This practice was known as catechism, from a Greek word that meant, to teach orally. This practice was used throughout Church history to varying degrees. During the Reformation, many reformers sought to develop new catechisms for their flocks to help impart the important truths of the faith, no longer mediated through the Magisterium.

1.2 On the Influences of this Model

The most direct influence of this Model is without a doubt *To Be a Christian*, the catechesis developed by the Anglican Church in North America. It is admittedly tempting to simply port that catechesis to our usage, as it is comprehensive, tradition, yet still incredibly modern (owing to its very recent publication). However, while the structure and motivating documents for that work have been incredibly shaping of this Model, the sacramentology of the Anglican Church is at odds with the view of the ordinances as espoused by the Assemblies of God³.

1.3 On Terms

For the purpose of this paper, ancient and perhaps overly traditional terms will be adopted. This is in an effort to aid retrieval, further reading, and greater discovery on the topics here discussed. The purpose of this paper is not to inform terms that should be adopted by Flatland Church in its execution of a model of catechesis, but to develop a program, name players, and demonstrate a pedagogical model for apprenticing new believers as they prepare for baptism leading to life-long resilient discipleship to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Where a term is explicitly capitalized (e.g. Model, Catechumen), the term is a canonical term of this Model, and may be replaced in all instances with one more appropriate to the ministry context.

2 The Model in Outline

The Model here will be outlined by describing the major actors in the catechesis, the Three Contents, the Lessons, and the Outcomes. Each of these will be expounded in greater depth in the coming chapters.

³For the sake of transparency, it is worth noting that this author holds to a view of the Sacraments that reflect the historical, orthodox views of the Christian Church as were understood for the first 1500 years of the Christian Church, and carried forward by all but one reformer and one new movement at the time of the Reformation. This view is that the sacraments are a physical sign of an inward grace, that the Lord is truly present in the Eucharist, though not physically, and that Baptism is truly regenerative. The catechism here reflected will however hold to the Assemblies of Gods doctrine on the ordinances, and merely note that both ordinances are a means of grace.

2.1 The Actors

There are four major parties who participate in the process of catechesis. Each of these persons play a crucial role in the catechesis of the believer⁴.

1. **The Catechumen** - The individual who is being discipled and is preparing for Baptism. This individual, in the context of this particular guide and model, is meant to be an unbaptized, recent convert who is seeking to begin their journey of life-long discipleship to our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. **The Mentor** - This individual is a trained church leader who functions as mentor, spiritual director, and accountability partner for the Catechumen. The Mentor may at times act in the role of instructor (or catechist), though may hand this role to various teachers throughout the program as is appropriate or designated by the Model. They are to be commissioned for a year (55 weeks) of service, caring for the spiritual life of the Catechumen until his or her Baptism.
3. **The Instructor** - The instructor may at times be the same person as the Mentor, though many times will be a qualified teacher appointed for specific instruction as designated in the Model.
4. **The Community** - The body of believers to which the Catechumen has entered into. While the role of the Community is largely indirect, the Community is to be about the crucial work of praying for the progress and spiritual life of each Catechumen as he or she begins their walk with the Lord.

It is important that each of these players be clearly identified before the Catechumen begins the catechesis. Further, each player, where appropriate, ought to be well trained and prepared to execute their role in this Model.

2.2 Three Contents

In undertaking the process of catechesis, it is important to understand what the contents of said instruction must be. As noted in *On Catechism* the ancient Church has long held the teaching of the Creeds, the Lords Prayer, *The Didache*, and the 10 Commandments as crucial elements of the teaching of the faithful. To that end, the ACNA Catechesis Task Force identified⁵ three primary contents necessary to a proper catechesis which this Model will readily adopt.

⁴This is not to discount the role the Holy Spirit plays in the formation of the believer. However, as we recognize the Holy Spirit is the primary agent of Salvation and Baptism, we recognize that the Lord has commissioned us to the sacred task of discipling and forming the life and practice of believers for the work of the Kingdom and for the coming of our Lord.

⁵ACNA Catechesis Task Force. (2020).

- **Believing** - Here the Catechumen will be introduced to the most basic beliefs of the Church as handed down throughout generations through the Creeds (primarily Apostle and Nicene, with some attention given to the Athanasian Creed). The foundations are by no means a replacement of Holy Scripture, rather act as summaries of the canon which impart the clearest and most important elements of the Faith for the life of the believer. Here also will the greater doctrines of the Church be informed where appropriate.
- **Praying** - Here the Catechumen will be introduced to the Lords Prayer as a model of Christian prayer. Here too the Catechumen will be taught how to build a life of prayer and worship. Emphasis will be given to role of speaking in tongues in personal worship, in keeping with Flatland Churchs Pentecostal distinctives.
- **Living** - Here the Catechumen will be introduced to the 10 Commandments as a basic ethical framework for Christian spiritual practice. Teaching will extend into the Sermon on the Mount as well as specific sundry topics important for building a Christian ethic.

Each of the Three Contents will be addressed in sequence, with Belief taking the first third of the year, Praying the second, and Living the third.

2.3 The Lessons

The Lessons are 48 individual lessons focused on imparting an important aspect of Christian belief, life, or practice. Most of the Lessons utilize a tool, whether from Scripture or Church tradition, to act as a guide or outline. In addition to providing structure, these tools, when committed to memory or regular practice, should aid in the recall and formation of each of the Lessons.

The Lessons are then grouped topically in chunks that extend at fewest two weeks and at most two months. Where appropriate for the Catechumen or the ministry context (say a class or specific group), the groups may be used as broader substitutes for the individual lessons.

Each of the lessons will be dealt with in depth in the respective section of that Contents chapter.

Content	Tool	Group	Lesson
Belief	The Apostle's Creed	Trinity and Gospel	God the Father
			Jesus Christ
			Crucifixion and Resurrection
			The Holy Spirit
		Christian Belief	The Church
			The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting
			Baptism and Communion
			The Creeds
	N/A		
	The Bible	Scripture	Genesis & Exodus 1-20
			The Torah (remaining)
			Joshua - 2 Kings
			Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel
			The Minor Prophets
			The Writings
			The Gospels
The Epistles and Revelation			
Praying	The Lord's Prayer	Praying	Prayer
			Our Father
			Hallowed Be Thy Name
			Thy Kingdom Come
			Thy Will Be Done
			Our Daily Bread
			Forgive Us Our Trespases
			Lead Us Not Into Temptation
			Deliver Us From Evil
	N/A	Practicing	Fasting & Feasting
			Praying in Tongues
			Musical Worship
			Public Reading of Scripture
	The Book of Common Prayer	Daily Office	The Psalter
			Morning Prayer
			Evening Prayer & Compline
Living	10 Commandments + Sermon on the Mount	Spiritual Life	I am the Lord Your God
			Idolatry
			Bearing God's Name
			Sabbath
			Honor
			Image of God
		Ethical Life	Sexual Ethics
			Economics and Generosity
			Honesty
			Covetousness
			Atonement & Sanctification
			Righetousness
	Romans + Psalms		
	N/A	N/A	Spirit Baptism
		Christian Life at Flatland Church	Groups
			Ministry
N/A			Preparation Week
Baptism			

2.4 The Outcomes

- The Catechumen is familiar with basic tenets of the Christian faith as expressed through Holy Scripture and the historic Creeds.
- The Catechumen is familiar with overall shape of Scripture, and has read at least Genesis, the minor prophets, a number of Psalms, and the Gospels.
- The Catechumen understands the value and role of prayer in the life of the faithful believer.
- The Catechumen has developed a rule of life, the foundation of which is prayer.
- The Catechumen understands both the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount as informing the way in which Christians live.
- The Catechumen understands the role Flatland Church plays in their spiritual and community life.
- The Catechumen is prepared mentally, spiritually, and physically to enter into the life of the Church through Baptism in water and Spirit.

3 The Actors

4 The Lessons

In keeping with the great catechetical tradition lessons are formed from a series of question-and-answer pairs. This has on one hand a great pedagogical benefit. As the Catechumen learns each point in a lesson, the practice of answering the Mentor's question serves to place the Catechumen, temporarily, in the role of the teacher. This fulfills the old truism that the best way to commit a concept to memory is to teach it to others⁶.

As St. Gregory of Nyssa noted in his *Pastoral Rule*, it is imperative that we are aiding in the spiritual education based on the specific needs and life stage of the individual⁷. To that end, there are a series of additional resources tailored to each Lesson. These resources are not meant to replace the Lessons, nor are they designed to heap heavy burdens on the Catechumen. They only exist as supplemental materials that may be offered to a Catechumen during the catechesis process for deeper study or challenge, or may be returned to following his or her baptism to go deeper on a particular topic. More resources, at the Content, Tool, Group, and individual Lesson level are listed in the Resources chapter.

⁶It is important that this practice be done within the bounds of the mentor-catechumen relationship and never outside. Throughout this process the Catechumen may err in recitation or improvise in ways that could be harmful to fellow catechumens.

⁷cite this

4.1 Lesson One: God the Father

Begin this lesson by first reading the Apostle's Creed. See Resources section for text.

Who is God the Father?

Why do you call the First Person of the Holy Trinity "Father"?

Why do you call God the Father "Almighty"?

Why do you call God the Father "Creator"?

What does it mean that God created both heaven and earth?

Was the world God created good?

If the world was created good, why do we sin?

4.2 Lesson Two: Jesus Christ

Begin this lesson by first reading the Apostle's Creed. See Resources section for text.

Who is Jesus Christ?

What does Christ mean?

Where in Holy Scripture do we first hear the promise of the Messiah given?

Why is Jesus called the Father's "only son"?

What do you mean when you call Jesus "Lord"?

What do you mean when you say Jesus was "conceived by the Holy Spirit"?

Why is it important that Jesus was born?

What is the relationship between Jesus' divine nature and his human nature?

4.3 Lesson Three: Crucifixion and Resurrection

Begin this lesson by first reading the Apostle's Creed. See Resources section for text.

Why did Jesus suffer?

How do Jesus' sufferings help you?

What happened at Jesus' crucifixion?

What did Jesus accomplish on the cross?

What do you mean Jesus rose from the dead?

Why is it important that Jesus ascended into heaven?

What does it mean that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father?

What do you mean when you say Jesus will come again?

Can we know when Jesus will return?

4.4 Lesson Four: The Holy Spirit

Begin this lesson by first reading the Apostle's Creed. See Resources section for text.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

What are the ministries of the Holy Spirit?

How do you receive the Holy Spirit?

How does the Holy Spirit strengthen you for life in Christ?

What are the fruits of the Holy Spirit?

What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

4.5 Lesson Five: The Church

Begin this lesson by first reading the Apostle's Creed. See Resources section for text.

What is the Church?

Why is the Church called the body of Christ?

What unifies the Church?

Why is the Church called holy?

Who are the saints?

4.6 Lesson Six: The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting

Begin this lesson by first reading the Apostle's Creed. See Resources section for text.

What does Holy Scripture teach you about your body?

Why will you die?

What is the resurrection of the body?

How should you live as you await the resurrection of the body?

What do you know about the unending resurrected life of believers?

4.7 Lesson Seven: Baptism and Communion

What is an ordinance?

What were the two ordinances ordained by Christ?

What is the outward and visible sign of baptism?

What is the inward and spiritual grace of baptism?

What is required of you when you come to baptism?

Should you ever become rebaptized? No.

What is communion?

What is the outward and visible sign of communion?

What is the inward and spiritual grace of communion?

What is required of you when you come to communion?

4.8 Lesson Eight: The Creeds

What is a creed?

What is the purpose of the creeds?

What does it mean to you to be allegient to Jesus?

What creeds are useful for life in the Church?

What is the Apostle's Creed?

4.9 Lesson Nine: Genesis and Exodus 1-20

What is Holy Scripture?

What is contained in Holy Scripture?

What is the Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures?

What is the New Testament?

What is the Torah?

What is the purpose of the Torah?

What is a covenant?

What covenants does God make with humans in Genesis and Exodus?

What is the promise God makes to Abraham?

How does God start to fulfill this promise in Genesis and Exodus?

4.10 Lesson Ten: The Torah (Remaining)

What is ...?

4.11 Lesson Eleven: Joshua - 2 Kings

4.12 Lesson Twelve: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel

What is a prophet?

What is the role of a prophet in Israel?

What was the message of Isaiah?

What was the message of Jeremiah?

What was the message of Ezekiel?

4.13 Lesson Thirteen: The Minor Prophets

4.14 Lesson Fourteen: The Writings

What is included in the books of the Writings?

4.15 Lesson Fifteen: The Gospels

What does the word "Gospel" mean?

Where does the word "Gospel" come from?

What is the Gospel which Jesus preached?

What is the Gospel which Jesus preached?

Are there more than one Gospel?

Why do we have four Gospel accounts?

4.16 Lesson Sixteen: The Epistles and Revelation

4.17 Lesson Seventeen: Prayer

What is prayer?

4.18 Lesson Eighteen: Our Father

4.19 Lesson Nineteen: Hallowed Be Thy Name

4.20 Lesson Twenty: Thy Kingdom Come

4.21 Lesson Twenty-One: Thy Will Be Done

4.22 Lesson Twenty-Two: Our Daily Bread

4.23 Lesson Twenty-Three: Forgive Us Our Trespases

4.24 Lesson Twenty-Four: Lead Us Not Into Temptation

4.25 Lesson Twenty-Five: Deliver Us From Evil

// Talk about evil powers, the Satan, and the temptation of Jesus

- 4.26 Lesson Twenty-Six: Fasting and Feasting
- 4.27 Lesson Twenty-Seven: Praying in Tongues
- 4.28 Lesson Twenty-Eight: Musical Worship
- 4.29 Lesson Twenty-Nine: Public Reading of Scripture
- 4.30 Lesson Thirty: The Psalter
- 4.31 Lesson Thirty-One: Morning Prayer
- 4.32 Lesson Thirty-Two: Evening Prayer and Compline
- 4.33 Lesson Thirty-Three: I am the Lord Your God
- 4.34 Lesson Thirty-Four: Idolatry
- Why is it important that we not create images of God to worship?*
- 4.35 Lesson Thirty-Five: Bearing God's Name
- 4.36 Lesson Thirty-Six: Sabbath
- 4.37 Lesson Thirty-Seven: Honor
- 4.38 Lesson Thirty-Eight: Image of God

What does it mean that God created humans in His image?

4.39 Lesson Thirty-Nine: Sexual Ethics

4.40 Lesson Forty: Economics and Generosity

4.41 Lesson Forty-One: Honesty

4.42 Lesson Forty-Two: Covetousness

4.43 Lesson Forty-Three: Atonment and Sanctification

4.44 Lesson Forty-Four: Righteousness

4.45 Lesson Forty-Five: Spirit Baptism

4.46 Lesson Forty-Six: Groups

4.47 Lesson Forty-Seven: Ministry

What ways can you engage in the work of ministry at Flatland Church?

What does it mean to be a church leader?

How do your gifts serve the body of Christ?

4.48 Lesson Forty-Eight: Preparation

In this final lesson the Catechumen should engage in a penitential discipline and commit themselves to pray leading up to their baptism.

5 General Practices

6 Resources

7 Reference