

A Model of Catechism for Disciple-Making

**As designed for Flatland Church in the tradition of the historic Christian
Church**

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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.

In addition, the *Westminster Larger Catechism* and St. Gregory of Nyssa's *Catechetical Discourse* have been instrumental in ensuring a fully robust dialogical catechism. The model of following the Lord's Prayer and the Apostle's Creed as a guide to imparting sound teaching has been taken up by the likes of N. T. Wright and Karl Barth in the past, whose influences on this guide cannot be dismissed.

Apart from Scripture, much of the direction on the roles and characters of the various actors in this Model have been drawn in part from *The Rule of St. Benedict*.

Finally, the development of counter-liturgies as taken up throughout the Lessons of the third Content have been heavily influenced by the works of James K.A. Smith, Tish Harrison Warren, and John Mark Comer.

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.

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.

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.

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 (48 weeks + Baptism) 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.

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.

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.

- **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.

⁵ACNA Catechesis Task Force. (2020).

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)	
			The Histories	
			Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel	
			The Minor Prophets	
			The Wisdom Books	
			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 Psalter	
	The Daily Office			
	The Book of Common Prayer			
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
		Romans + Psalms		Atonement & Sanctification
				Righetousness
		N/A	N/A	Spirit Baptism
	Christian Life at Flatland Church		Life Coaching	
			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

Hello

4 General Practices

5 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.

A note on questions

The questions contained herein have been heavily influenced by the catechisms of the historic church. In some cases, the phrasing of a given question has been lifted directly from either the ACNA Catechism or the Westminster Larger Catechism (with modernized language). Given the shorter form of both of those works, and therefore ease of retrieval, attribution for those uses are made here alone to aid in uninterrupted question-answer format in the lessons. In all cases effort has been given to form answers without the direct aid of any catechism.

5.1 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?

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

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?

5.2 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?

5.3 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?

5.4 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?

5.5 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?

5.6 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?

5.7 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?

5.8 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?

5.9 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 a covenant?

Why do we say the world has fallen?

What is the promise given to all mankind after Adam and Eve sin?

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?

5.10 Lesson Ten: The Torah (Remaining)

Why do you call it the Torah?

What is contained in the Torah?

The five books attributed to Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

What should we learn from the Torah?

What has the Church said about the Torah in the life of the Christian?

Is the Torah still useful to us today?

What did Israel do to merit God's salvation?

How was Israel saved of their sins?

What is the greatest commandment?

What does God reveal about himself in the Torah?

God reveals that his name is YHWH. He reveals that he is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loyal love and faithfulness. He maintains his love to thousands, he forgives wrong doing, transgression, and wrong-doing. But he does not leave the guilty unpunished, inflicting punishment on the fathers on the children to the third even the fourth generation.

(Exodus 34:6-7)

Why should we read the Torah?

5.11 Lesson Eleven: The Histories

Why do you call them the Histories?

What books are contained in the Histories?

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

Whose death opens the book of Joshua?

What can we learn from the Histories?

What is the promise God makes to David?

What great tragedy concludes 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles?

Why is Israel's exile so important?

What can we know about God given Israel's exile?

Why is Esther a peculiar book?

5.12 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 is the promise Isaiah makes regarding the Messiah?

What was the message of Jeremiah?

What does Jeremiah promise will happen to the hearts of people?

What was the message of Ezekiel?

What do we learn from Ezekiel's throne vision?

What can we learn about God from Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel?

5.13 Lesson Thirteen: The Minor Prophets

Why do you call them the Minor Prophets?

What books are contained in the Minor Prophets?

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habbakuk, Zephaniah, Obadiah, Haggai, Zachariah, and Malachi.

What do the prophets say is the reason for Israel's destruction?

How do the prophets still speak to us?

What is shalom?

How does God's justice bring about shalom?

5.14 Lesson Fourteen: The Wisdom Books

What is wisdom?

What books are contained in the Wisdom Books?

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs.

What is the message of the book of Proverbs?

What is the message of the book of Ecclesiastes?

What is the message of the book of Job?

What can we learn about God from the books of Wisdom?

5.15 Lesson Fifteen: The Gospels

What are the books contained in the Gospels?

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

What does the word "Gospel" mean?

Where does the word "Gospel" come from?

What is the Gospel which Jesus preached?

Are there more than one Gospel?

Why do we have four Gospel accounts?

What do we learn about God in the Gospels?

5.16 Lesson Sixteen: The Epistles and Revelation

What is an Epistle?

What is an Apostle?

Why did the Apostles write letters?

Why should Christians read the Epistles?

What is the purpose of the book of Revelation?

What does the book of Revelation tell us about faithfulness to Jesus?

How does the book of Revelation say everything will end?

What do we learn about God from the book of Revelation?

5.17 Lesson Seventeen: Prayer

What is prayer?

Do you change God when you pray?

If God knows all things, why should we pray?

How has our Lord taught us to pray?

Our Father, who art in Heaven Hallowed be thy name Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done On eath as it is in heaven Give us this day our daily bread And forgive us our trespasses As we forgive those who trespass against us And lead us not into temptation But deliver us from evil For thine is the kingdom, And the power, And the glory, Forever and ever. Amen.

Why should you practice the Lord's Prayer?

How is the Lord's Prayer a pattern for your prayer life?

5.18 Lesson Eighteen: Our Father

Begin this lesson by first reading or reciting the Lord's Prayer. See Resources section for the text.

Why do we call God "Father"?

Why did Jesus teach us to pray "Our Father"?

What is heaven?

5.19 Lesson Nineteen: Hallowed Be Thy Name

5.20 Lesson Twenty: Thy Kingdom Come

5.21 Lesson Twenty-One: Thy Will Be Done

5.22 Lesson Twenty-Two: Our Daily Bread

5.23 Lesson Twenty-Three: Forgive Us Our Trespases

5.24 Lesson Twenty-Four: Lead Us Not Into Temptation

5.25 Lesson Twenty-Five: Deliver Us From Evil

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

5.26 Lesson Twenty-Six: Fasting and Feasting

What is fasting?

What is feasting?

Are Christians commanded to feast or fast?

Why should we fast?

Why must we remember to feasts?

What seasons of fasting has the Church historically taught?

What seasons of feasting has the Church historically taught?

What do feasts and fasts point to?

In fasting we mourn as we await the return of the bridegroom who comes for his bride. We feast as a foretaste of the great wedding feast of the Lamb. (Matt 9:15; Rev 21)

5.27 Lesson Twenty-Seven: Praying in Tongues

What do you mean when you say "praying in tongues"?

How does praying in tongues help your prayer life?

What is the appropriate role of tongues in corporate worship?

What types of tongues are given?

What are the two functions of tongues according to Holy Scripture?

Should we pray in tongues regularly?

How should you respond to one who says tongues have ceased?

5.28 Lesson Twenty-Eight: Musical Worship

5.29 Lesson Twenty-Nine: Public Reading of Scripture

5.30 Lesson Thirty: The Psalter

5.31 Lesson Thirty-One: The Daily Office

5.32 Lesson Thirty-Two: I am the Lord Your God

5.33 Lesson Thirty-Three: Idolatry

Why is it important that we not create images of God to worship?

5.34 Lesson Thirty-Four: Bearing God's Name

5.35 Lesson Thirty-Five: Sabbath

5.36 Lesson Thirty-Six: Honor

5.37 Lesson Thirty-Seven: Image of God

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

- 5.38 Lesson Thirty-Eight: Sexual Ethics
- 5.39 Lesson Thirty-Nine: Economics and Generosity
- 5.40 Lesson Forty: Honesty
- 5.41 Lesson Forty-One: Covetousness
- 5.42 Lesson Forty-Two: Atonment and Sanctification
- 5.43 Lesson Forty-Three: Righteousness
- 5.44 Lesson Forty-Four: Spirit Baptism
- 5.45 Lesson Forty-Five: Life Coaching
- 5.46 Lesson Forty-Six: Groups
- 5.47 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?

5.48 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.

6 Resources

6.1 The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son,
our Lord.
He was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of the saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

6.2 The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in Heaven
Hallowed be thy name
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done
On eath as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom,
And the power,
And the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen.

7 Reference