

**What Is the Pathway to Being Wholehearted?  
A Bible Study on Wellness  
By Deaconess Janet Nicol**

**Isaiah 45:7 “I form light and create darkness;  
I make well-being and create calamity;  
I am the Lord, who does all these things.”**

**Session 4: The Small Catechism and Wellness**

How does Lutheran doctrine as spelled out in the *Small Catechism* help us to understand wellness? Make sure you have a copy of *Luther's Small Catechism* while doing this session.

First, know that *The Book of Concord* (1580) or *Concordia* (often referred to as the *Lutheran Confessions*) is the historic doctrinal standard of the Lutheran Church, consisting of ten creedal documents recognized as authoritative in Lutheranism since the sixteenth century. Many Lutherans accept it as their doctrinal standard and recognize it to be a faithful exposition of the Bible. The Holy Scriptures are outlined in *The Book of Concord* to be the only divine source and norm of all Christian doctrine. The documents consist of the three creeds (the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed), the *Augsburg Confession* and the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, both by Phillip Melancthon, the *Small and Large Catechisms* of Martin Luther, his *Smalcald Articles*, Melancthon's *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, and the *Formula of Concord*, which was composed shortly before the publishing of *The Book of Concord* and intended for the same purpose: the pacification and unification of the growing Lutheran movement.

The crux of Lutheran doctrine is contained in the *Small Catechism* and is what most Lutherans know. Therefore, we will look at that. The six chief parts of the *Small Catechism* begin with the Ten Commandments. They are often referred to as the Law.

Read the Ten Commandments and the short “What does this mean?” section after each one.

- 1) Why are the three uses of the Law?**
- 2) Why is the second, or mirror, use of the Law so important?**
- 3) How does this relate to our well-being?**

Next, we look at the Apostles Creed. Read Romans 2:15; Romans 19; and Romans 21-22.

- 4) Why does the Apostles Creed follow the Ten Commandments?**
- 5) What is the Apostles Creed?**
- 6) What distinguishes the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit from one another?**
- 7) What unites the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one God?**
- 8) What does the Apostles Creed provide for us toward our well-being?**

Now we move on to the Lord's Prayer.

**9) Why does the Lord's Prayer come after the Apostles Creed?**

Read Psalm 105:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18; John 16:24; James 1:6-7; and Matthew 6:9.

**10) How does God initiate prayer?**

Read Isaiah 65:24 and 2 Corinthians 12:8-9.

**11) How does God answer prayer?**

Martin Luther commented about prayer in this way: "A Christian without prayer is just as impossible as a living person without a pulse. The pulse is never motionless; it moves and beats constantly, whether one is asleep or something else keeps one from being aware of it" (*Luther's Works* 24:89).

Read Psalm 65:8; Luke 18:1; and Psalm 50:15.

**12) For what does Jesus teach us to pray in the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer?**

**13) How can the Lord's Prayer--and the regular use of it and all prayer--help our well-being?**

Baptism is the next chief part and is, along with Confession and Absolution and the Sacrament of the Altar, a means of grace. Therefore, the catechism includes these three means of grace because as we confess in the Third Article of the Apostles Creed, the Holy Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church" through the Gospel--that is forgiveness of sins in Christ--which is offered through these means. Being a means of grace is a way of saying that God delivers grace and forgiveness to us by using earthly elements such as water, bread, and wine along with His Word.

Read the Sacrament of Baptism in the *Small Catechism*.

**14) What is the central thought in the blessings of Baptism?**

**15) What can Baptism mean for us and our well-being?**

Read about Confession in the *Small Catechism*.

Read 2 Samuel 11:1 through 12:15.

**16) What are some ways in which people attempt to deal with sin and its consequences in their lives?**

**17) How are we brought to confess our sins?**

**18) How does life change when we recognize that every day is a day for**

## **repentance?**

Read the Sacrament of the Altar in the small catechism. Read Exodus 12:1-14.

### **19) How does the meal of Christ's body and blood benefit us?**

Summary: Hopefully it is clear why the *Small Catechism*, which teaches us everything there is to know about being a Christian, is a superb tool for the wholeheartedness of us all. As Lutheran Christians, we really do have a true treasure in it and should make it a point to regularly study it and learn from it. I recommend the reading and studying of the whole *Book of Concord* as well. It will provide an even deeper and more meaningful understanding of Lutheran doctrine.

**Closing Prayer** Dear Heavenly Father, we praise and thank You for our redemption through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son. Keep us ever mindful that to have resilience and well-being in this life and in this time, we need to look to You. Give us what we need to become wholehearted people of Yours so that we can show the world Your glory. Give us the knowledge of Your truth so that we can love our neighbors and bring them to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.