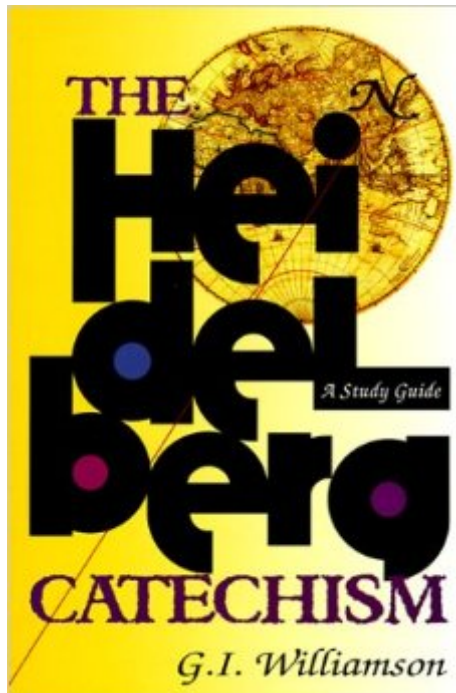


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# The Heidelberg Catechism: A Study Guide



## Synopsis

The Heidelberg Catechism is one of the finest creeds of the reformation period. A faithful teacher of millions, it has stood the test of time and is still, today, one of the best tools available for learning what it means to be a Christian. This study guide to the Catechism includes 129 questions and answers, along with clear exposition and questions for review, further study, and discussion.

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## Customer Reviews

I am just about finished with Williamson's study guide to the Heidelberg Catechism and it seems I've learned more from that one book, than the volumes of reformed theology I have sitting on my shelf. Williamson makes it clear, that Christianity is an old old story, and so many times we are looking for the new 'mantra' or 'chant' to break us through to the blessed life. When we realize who we are in Christ, and take advantage of what Christ has given us (the church, the sacraments, prayer, the word, etc) we see that we can live the Christian life without want or worry every 5 minutes. BUT IT NOW!

Before I ever discovered the Heidelberg Catechism, I memorized and studied the Westminster Catechism. I wish I could say that I had nobler motives, but the truth was that if I had memorized the catechism and wrote an essay on it assigned by the Presbyterian Church USA, I had a good chance of getting a stipend from the denomination given to students who attended PC(USA) colleges. So, I, along with 2 or 3 of my college peers began to work hard to memorize the text, and we succeeded both in memorizing the document and in receiving the \$1000 dollars promised for doing so.

Somehow, in the process, I was given a study guide of the catechism by someone. The study guide was from G.I. Williamson. Now that I am getting deeper in my study of the Heidelberg Catechism, I have also picked up a study guide on Heidelberg by Williamson entitled (surprise) *The Heidelberg Catechism: A Study Guide*. Many times, as I read what he says, I hear a person with questions that come from a more conservative hermeneutical perspective than I, and from a different generation than I. Nevertheless, I find his discussion on each week of questions and answers helpful because he helps me see things from my church people's perspective (who are also from a more mature generation), and it helps me read the text with fresh eyes. There are times when I disagree with Williamson, but I appreciate his willingness to stay rooted in his Orthodox Presbyterian tradition. Each chapter has commentary on the questions and answers to be studied on each week. They also questions on the lesson, and questions for further study on the biblical and theological issues that the week's questions bring up. Williamson is thorough! No matter what perspective you come from, I think if you want to study the Heidelberg Catechism, you need to *The Heidelberg Catechism: A Study Guide* by Williamson on your desk. It is the standard in the English language on studying the document.

G. I. Williamson writes in a clear manner with a series of questions at the end of each Lord's Day to spur discussion. His writing is easily understood, 3-4 pages per Lord's Day. While Ursinus is the author of the Catechism, his commentary sometimes lack the applicability that Williamson brings. I am using this book to teach my adult Sunday School class.

The Heidelberg catechism is a most pastoral teaching document for new comers to the Christian faith. It is a refreshing stream for both newcomers and for those who have spent a lifetime under its influence. The central message of the Heidelberg catechism is that the Holy Spirit is our Comforter in life and in death. G.I. Williams is a man of the Westminster Standards (the most clinical of Reformed teaching and training resources) and in this book he shines light on the true nature of man, the true nature of Jesus Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit within the body of Christ, His Church. G.I. has a unique style that was born out of many years of ministry in the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches of America and also out of his missionary activities within the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. He taught from the Heidelberg catechism and he has counseled several generations of young and old believers - it shows. This book is to the point, it is not exhaustive, but it is clearly illustrative of the hope and joy that believers share in Jesus Christ. If you are hungry for knowledge rooted in the infallible Word of God this book will not disappoint you.

Having learned the Heidelberg Catechism by heart more than three decades ago and still cherishing its words, I was a little bit skeptical when I first came across Williamson's study guide to the Catechism. Williamson is best known for his guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith, a doctrinally-sound confession, but one that does not exactly exude the warmth and the pastoral spirit we find in the Catechism. I was pleasantly surprised to find that Williamson clearly appreciates the Catechism, and his own pastoral spirit comes through in his explanations of the 129 articles of the Catechism. Moreover, his guide is complete without being longwinded. (Those who want a more detailed explication of the Catechism should consult Zacharias Ursinus's Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism. Ursinus, of course, was one of the authors of the Catechism itself.) In addition to his explication of the text, Williamson provides a set of study questions at the end of each of the 52 "Lord's Days." These questions are ideal for individual or small-group study. I would highly recommend this book as a resource for anyone wishing for a better understanding of this Catechism that was written 451 years ago and is still widely used today.

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