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*Christian Living*

# HC and ME

The Heidelberg Catechism for

**BOB ROZEMA**

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**The Heidelberg Catechism for  
Christian Living**



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\*Unit numbers are provided here for your reference. They are not indicated in the student Catechism book.

# HOW TO USE THIS COURSE

Welcome to Year 1 of *HC and Me: The Catechism for Christian Living*. If this brief overview doesn't answer all of your questions, please feel free to call us at 1-800-333-8300 or e-mail us at [editors@faithaliveresources.org](mailto:editors@faithaliveresources.org).

*HC and Me* provides an effective, easy-to-use approach to teaching the Heidelberg Catechism to high school students. Year 1 covers Q&A 1-58 in twenty-five sessions; year 2 covers Q&A 59-129 in twenty-six sessions. Each session follows a simple 1-2-3 arrangement in both the student Catechism book and this leader guide. The emphasis throughout is on “do-able” activities that are faithful to Scripture, the Catechism, and the diverse ways high school students learn. Because the Catechism itself is such a warm and personal confession, this course continually asks students to reflect on and apply the Catechism's teachings to their daily lives.

**Leaders familiar with *Landmarks*, a previous course on the Catechism, will recognize a significant number of questions and activities borrowed or adapted from that material.** A few activities are also borrowed or adapted—with acknowledgement—from *Questions Worth Asking* by Jane Vogel and Mary Sytsma.

## <AUDIENCE>

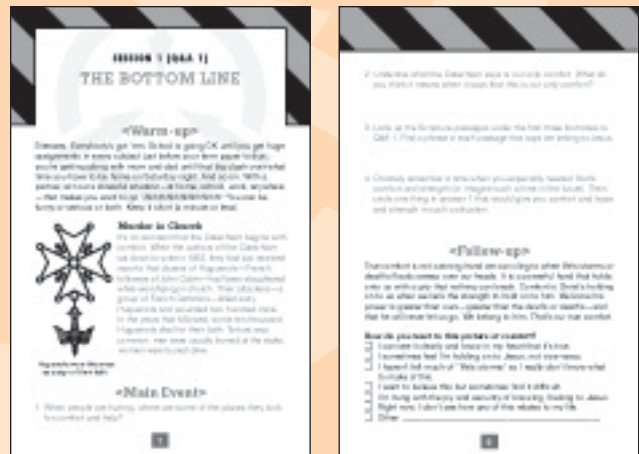
*HC and Me* can be used with the entire high school age range (grades 9-12) but we especially recommend it for ninth- and tenth-graders. By then students are intellectually able to handle a question-by-question study of the unabridged Heidelberg. In addition, many ninth- and tenth-graders are at a developmental stage where they are open to letting the Catechism shape their faith.

## <GOALS>

This course aims to help high school students

- recognize the Heidelberg Catechism as a restatement of the central truths of Scripture.
- recognize the personal, confessional nature of the Catechism and use it to express their own faith.
- respond to the Catechism's call to live out their faith in the world.

## <STUDENT RESOURCE>



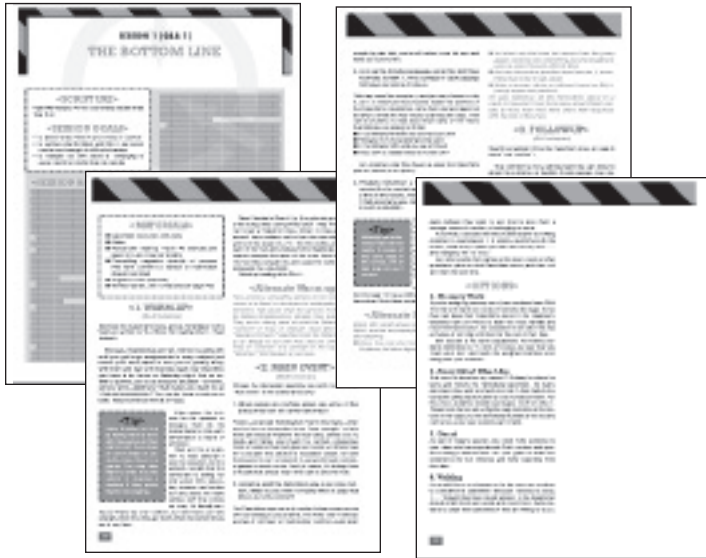
This course has just one student resource—a Catechism book with a three-part discussion guide built right into each session. The three parts—Warm-up, Main Event, and Follow-up—take you and your students through each session with a variety of questions and activities designed to appeal to the different ways students learn.

- **Warm-up** activities get students interested in the topic of the session—often in a light and fun way.
- **Main Event** activities take students into Scripture and the Catechism, using individual and small group work, writing, questions, drama, art, and other interactive approaches.
- **Follow-up** activities challenge students to evaluate what they've learned and to apply it to their daily lives. Students journal, reflect, and pray about specific ways to live out their faith at home, school, work—wherever they are and whatever they do.

We suggest collecting the student Catechism books at the end of each session rather than having students take them home (where they are easily forgotten when it's time for your next session).



## <LEADER'S GUIDE>



This leader's guide walks you through each session with easy-to-follow teaching suggestions. You'll become acquainted with its features as you work through the first session. Here are some highlights of each session:

- **Session backgrounds** tell you what you need to know and get you fired up to teach. Written by the late Dr. Harvey Smit, these backgrounds were a much-appreciated feature of the *Landmarks* Catechism course.
- **Step-by-step directions**—with estimates of time needed—that match the Warm-up, Main Event, and Follow-up steps included in the student Catechism books. Includes tips to help you teach.
- Lots of **alternate steps**, printed in color, let you try a different learning activity than the one provided in the main step. We encourage you to use these alternate steps from time to time, mainly to inject variety into your sessions and to depart from the standard session outlined in the student Catechism books. Most sessions contain two alternate steps.
- **Options** listed at the end of each session provide memory work suggestions, home reading suggestions from *Every Bit of Who I Am*, and additional activities to enrich students' learning.
- **Reproducible handouts** at the back of this guide are used to supplement the student Catechism book.
- A **Catechism Organizer** poster (inserted into this leader's guide) helps students navigate through the Catechism.



The sessions in this course are designed for 50-60 minutes. If you have less time, you'll want to scale down or omit some activities. As with any course, you are encouraged to use these materials selectively, pulling out of them what works best for your class.

## <CLASSROOM SUPPLIES>

You'll need a number of standard supplies to teach the lessons:

- Bibles (we suggest NIV)
- pens/pencils
- markers
- newsprint or other large sheets of paper
- roll of paper (try shelf paper or paper table covering—check your church kitchen)
- paper for writing and drawing
- index cards (also called notecards)
- scissors
- glue sticks
- masking tape or tacky adhesive
- construction paper

## <MEMORY WORK>

We provide (optionally, at the end of each session) a single, memorable Q&A to learn for each unit, as follows:


- Unit 1: Q&A 1
- Unit 2: Q&A 21
- Unit 3: Q&A 32
- Unit 4: Q&A 54

Memory work is printed on the reproducible pages at the end of this leader's guide. This provides a way for students to bring home a copy of the suggested memory work (without bringing home their Catechism books).

See session 2 options (p. 15) for suggestions on how to help students memorize the Catechism passages listed above.

## <CATECHISM DEVOTIONAL>

James C. Schaap has written a wonderful book of devotions for teens, based on the Heidelberg Catechism, called *Every Bit of Who I Am*. You'll notice a number of quotes from this book in the student material—and a take-home reading suggestion at the end of every session in this leader's guide. Check out a sample at our website ([www.FaithAliveResources.org](http://www.FaithAliveResources.org)). If you like what you see, ask your church about providing a copy for each of your



students. Or tell parents about it. Jim's stories, examples, and insights will bring the Catechism and its teachings into your students' lives in a way that they'll really appreciate.

## <CONTACT WITH HOMES>

Support from parents can make your job a lot easier. For one thing, it helps to ensure that you will have live bodies in your classroom on a fairly regular basis. Here are some suggestions for involving parents (from *Questions Worth Asking*, Jane Vogel and Mary Systma):

- Mail a letter before the season begins. Explain that you're teaching the first half of the Catechism, indicate when and where the class meets, ask for parental prayer and support, list any memory work you're going to assign, and leave your phone number or e-mail address for feedback.
- Or convey the above information by e-mail or a phone call instead of a letter.
- Hold an introductory meeting for parents during which you explain the course (this can be part of a churchwide kick-off day for the new season).
- Occasionally suggest that students ask a parent about a Catechism topic being discussed. See our suggestions for this at the end of several sessions.
- Plan a learning/social activity involving both parents and kids.



## SESSION 1 (Q&A 1)

# THE BOTTOM LINE

### <SCRIPTURE>

Psalm 46; Romans 14:7-9; 1 Corinthians 3:23; 6:19-20;  
Titus 2:14

### <SESSION GOALS>

- to identify times when we are in need of “comfort”
- to explore what Scripture and Q&A 1 say about comfort and strength in difficult situations
- to evaluate our own sense of “belonging to Jesus” and the comfort that can provide

### <SESSION BACKGROUND>

The first two questions and answers of the Catechism are usually called the “Introduction,” but they could better be called the “Summary.” True, these two conversations introduce the rest of the document, but they make the introduction by way of summarizing all that follows. Not only that, they are a summary of the entire gospel. Without altering a word in either answer, you could restate the two questions as: “What is your hope of salvation?” and “What does the gospel mean to you?”

Q&A 1 sets the tone for the entire Catechism. It is the best known of all the Catechism’s questions and answers.

John Calvin opened his Geneva Catechism with, “What is the chief end of human life?” Many catechisms, notably those of Westminster, followed Calvin’s lead. But the Heidelberg owes its beginning to Ursinus, whose earlier catechisms had each begun with the question, “What is your firm comfort in life and in death?”

In this first session, you should teach the meaning of two key concepts (one in the question, the other in the answer)—*comfort* and *belonging*. Teach that our only comfort is that we *belong* to Christ.

Comfort is a theme that appears over and over in the Catechism. When the Catechism speaks of “comfort,” it is referring to strength (fort, fortitude, fortress) as in Psalm 46: “God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble.” There is nothing cheap or tawdry or commercial about this comfort. It is not a sedative (like Southern Comfort). This strength and assurance is the stimulant “to live for him.”

The whole matter of *belonging* has been a popular topic of discussion. Child psychologists have warned that children will be warped if they have no “sense of belonging,” and the whole

of Western culture has been duly chastised for telling elderly people that, since they are old, they “no longer belong.” It’s not only popular to talk about belonging; it’s important. It makes us remember that we do not have our identity in ourselves, but in our relationships to others.

Throughout the story of the Bible, God reminds his people that their identity is to be found in their relationship with him. Over and over again we hear God reassuring his people that they are just that, *his* people. They are not on their own. The Israelites were not left on their own to face hostile forces on their way to the Promised Land. New Testament followers of Christ are not on their own to fight through the obstacles of sin and spiritual warfare. The covenantal promise of God sounds repeatedly throughout Scripture, like a glorious refrain: “I am your God; you are my people” (Gen. 17:7; Ex. 19:5-6; Ps. 95:6-7; Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:28; Rev. 21:3). In the language of Lord’s Day 1, it is God saying to his people over and over again, “You are not your own, you belong to me!”

In the New Testament we discover that our true identity is found “in Christ.” Belonging to Christ (being in Christ) is the heart of the biblical truth. When we listen to the whole scheme of the Scriptures, we hear Adam’s question to Eve on the way out of the garden, “Now where do we belong?” And when we join the crowd on Calvary, we hear the answer! We belong in the family of God. Our belonging and identity are restored and guaranteed through the sacrifice of our Savior.

The “belonging” language of the first question and answer is characteristic of the entire Catechism. Watch for such examples of it as being “grafted into Christ” (answers 20 and 64), being a “member of Christ” (answer 32), and being “united more and more to Christ’s blessed body” (answer 76). It’s a particularly important lesson for young people in an age that worships the rugged individual.

Belonging to Jesus Christ is the key. From it comes all the rest—the benefits, helps, credits, advantages, and comforts that form the bulk of this first answer. When the work of Christ is studied in the second part of the Catechism, those benefits return in detail.

It’s infinitely to our advantage to belong to Christ. If your students can come to know this, truly know it as they know it is to their advantage to breathe, then they’ll be well on their way to making Q&A 1 the foundation of their faith and life.

## <MATERIALS>

- Catechism books (pp. 4-6), pens
- Bibles
- Responsive reading: Psalm 46 (reproducible page 141), one copy per student
- Compelling magazine photo(s) of persons who have survived a natural or man-made disaster (optional)
- Huguenot cross (optional)
- Memory Option, Unit 1 (reproducible page 142)

## <1. WARM-UP>

(10-15 minutes)

Distribute the Catechism books and go immediately to the Warm-up activity (p. 5), without first reading Q&A 1. Read it aloud:

**Stresses. Everybody’s got ‘em. School is going OK until you get huge assignments in every subject just before your term paper is due; you’re getting along with mom and dad until that big clash over what time you have to be home on Saturday night. And so on. With a partner, act out a stressful situation—at home, school, work, anywhere—that makes you want to go “Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!” You can be funny or serious or both. Keep it short (a minute or less).**

### <Tip>

**Make it easier for kids by telling them to work with the person on their right or left. If you have an odd number of students, have three in a group. You may also want to offer kids the option of drawing a cartoon if they prefer that to role-playing.**

Allow about five minutes for the partners to prepare, then do the dramatizations. Give each performance a round of applause.

Then ask for a volunteer to read Question 1 (just the question, not the answer). Explain that the Catechism is talking not only about life’s day-to-day stresses and strains but also about the really serious stuff that comes our way. It’s literally asking

us what’s our only comfort, our only hope, our only strength, when the chips are down, when the bottom drops out of our lives.

Read “Murder in Church” (p. 5) to give the group a sense of the trying times during which Q&A 1 was written. If you can locate a Huguenot cross, bring it to class and pass it around. Have students notice how the outer edge of each arm is in the shape of a “V.” The two points at the end of each of the four arms represent the Beatitudes. The open spaces between the arms of the cross form four hearts. The four lilies beneath the arms stand for purity. The dove represents the Holy Spirit.

Finish by reading all of Q&A 1.

## <Alternate Warm-up>

*Pass around a compelling picture or two showing survivors of a flood or hurricane or earthquake or act of terrorism. Talk about what the persons involved must be feeling (hopelessness, despair, fear, pain, sorrow). They are in strong need of what the Catechism calls “comfort” or hope or strength. Read Q&A 1 and the “Murder in Church” selection from the Catechism book (p. 5). Bridge to our own lives and our own frequent need of “comfort” and strength in the big and little “disasters” that happen in our lives.*

## <2. MAIN EVENT>

(20-25 minutes)

Choose the discussion questions you wish to use under “Main Event” in the Catechism books:

**1. When people are hurting, where are some of the places they look for comfort and help?**

People—especially individualistic North Americans—often tend to look to themselves for an “inner strength” to help them get through whatever life may bring. Others look to family and friends and church for comfort, wholesome forms of support that God gives us to help us. Others may try to escape into alcohol or substance abuse. Or bury themselves in work or attempt to escape through computer games or music or sex. And, of course, it’s during times of trouble that people most often call on God for help.

**2. Underline what the Catechism says is our *only* comfort. What do you think it means when it says that this is our *only* comfort?**

The Catechism says our only comfort is that we are not our own but belong to Jesus Christ. The word “only” here has a sense of “ultimate” or “bottom line” comfort—even when

everything else fails, Jesus still claims us as his own and holds us close to him.

**3. Look up the Scripture passages under the first three footnotes to Q&A 1. Find a phrase in each passage that says we belong to Jesus.**

This may seem like busywork, and you may choose to skip it, but it is important that students realize the answers of the Catechism consistently come from and are based on Scripture. Divide the four verses up among the class. Then call on students to read aloud those parts of the verses that indicate we belong to Christ:

- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: *You are not your own*
- Romans 14:7-9: *we belong to the Lord*
- 1 Corinthians 3:23: *and you are of Christ*
- Titus 2:14: *a people that are his very own*

Ask students what this shows us about the Catechism (that it's based on Scripture).

**4. Privately remember a time when you especially needed God's comfort and strength (or imagine such a time in the future). Then circle one thing in answer 1 that would give you comfort and hope and strength in such a situation.**

**<Tip>**  
Although your students may not feel ready to share at this early stage in the course, one or two may do so, if invited.

Give students a couple of minutes to reflect, then invite sharing of lines they circled. Be prepared to talk about a difficult experience you faced and how one of the several "benefits" of belonging to Jesus (mentioned in Q&A 1) could have (or did) help you through that situation.

You may want to read Psalm 46 responsively (reproducible page 141) as a biblical summary of the comfort we have when God claims us as his own.

### <Alternate Main Event>

Break into small groups and ask each group to use Q&A 1 and the accompanying Scripture footnotes to do the following:

- Show how one line from this answer is based on Scripture (let them figure out how to do this).

- Jot down one line from the answer that the group agrees could be very comforting and encouraging to persons going through difficult times.
- Ask one discussion question about answer 1, something they'd like to talk about.
- Make a bumper sticker or billboard based on Q&A 1 (supply paper and markers).

For easy reference, jot the instructions above on a sheet of newsprint. Give the groups about fifteen minutes to work, then have them share their responses with the rest of the class.

### <3. FOLLOW-UP>

(5-10 minutes)

Read the statement from the Catechism book on page 6 about "true comfort":


**True comfort is not a strong hand we can cling to when life's storms or death's floods sweep over our heads. It is a powerful hand that holds onto us with a grip that nothing can break. Comfort is Christ's holding on to us when we lack the strength to hold on to him. We know his power is greater than ours—greater than the devil's or death's—and that he will never let us go. We belong to him. That's our true comfort.**

Give students a couple of minutes to read through the responses to the statements and to select one or more that express their own views. They may also add a statement of their own, if they wish.

**How do you react to this picture of comfort?**

- I can see it clearly and know in my heart that it's true.
- I sometimes feel I'm holding on to Jesus, not vice-versa.
- I haven't felt much of "life's storms" so I really don't know what to make of this.
- I want to believe this but sometimes find it difficult.
- I'm living with the joy and security of knowing I belong to Jesus.
- Right now, I don't see how any of this relates to my life.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Invite students to pray silently, based on their response. Perhaps they want to ask God to be with them during a difficult time they know is coming; perhaps they want to thank God for helping them through a difficult time in the



past; perhaps they want to ask God to give them a stronger sense of comfort, of belonging to Jesus.

If you wish, conclude the time of silent prayer by inviting students to read answer 1 in unison, beginning with the words, “Dear God, I praise you that I am not my own . . .” and changing “he” to “you.”

Ask kids to write their names on the back cover or other prominent place on their Catechism books, and then collect them for next time.

## <OPTIONS>

### **1. Memory Work**

If you’re assigning memory work, have students learn Q&A 1 for this unit. Hand out copies of reproducible page 142 so they can leave their Catechism books in the classroom. Students have six weeks to learn this most familiar and most-memorized Q&A. It’s probably the one Q&A that has a chance of sticking with them for the rest of their lives.

See session 2 for some suggestions for helping students memorize (p. \*\*). And, of course, be sure that you “walk your talk” and learn the assigned memory work along with your students.

### **2. Every Bit of Who I Am**

This book of devotions by James C. Schaap is written for teens and follows the Heidelberg Catechism. It’s warm, personal, funny, and very helpful to kids in their daily living. Consider giving each student a copy to read at home. For this week, students should read pages 13-16 on Q&A 1. Please note that we are using the page numbers at the bottom of the page, not the devotional number at the top (it’s confusing, so be sure students get it right).

### **3. Guest**

As part of today’s session, you could invite someone to your class who has experienced God’s comfort and presence during a difficult time. Ask your guest to share this experience (for 2-3 minutes) and invite questions from the class.

### **4. Writing**

As an addition to or alternate to the last step, ask students to complete this statement: “Because I belong to Jesus, I . . .” Though they may consult answer 1, the statements should reflect their own words and convictions. Invite students to share their statements if they are willing to do so.