

Bread of life

Workbook for spiritual growth
Gereformeerde Kerke in SA



BREAD Of LIFE

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SECTION 1



THE ORDER OF SALVATION

1. INTRODUCTION


- 1.1 Upon instruction by the Father, Christ saved us once and for all from our sins through his sacrifice. God bestows on us this salvation. The path along which we receive and are assured of this is called the Order of Salvation. This path is the work of the Holy Spirit.

THE ORDER OF SALVATION IS THE PATH ALONG WHICH GOD BESTOWS ON US, THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE BOUNTY OF CHRIST'S SALVATION.

1.2 **Are we capable of bringing about our own salvation?**

Eph. 2:3-5  (The symbol  in the workbook indicates that you are to look up the passage in the Bible.)

1.3 **Who engenders or brings about our salvation?**

Eph. 2:8-9 

THE HOLY SPIRIT BRINGS ABOUT OUR SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST.

2. A LOGICAL ARRANGEMENT OF THE ORDER OF SALVATION IS:
(This is an order of faith and not a chronological order.)


CALL OF THE GOSPEL
REGENERATION
FAITH
CONVERSION
JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH
SANCTIFICATION
PERSEVERANCE
GLORIFICATION

2.1 **Call of the gospel**

2.1.1 **Who is calling?**

1 Pet. 5:10; Matt. 11:28 


2.1.2 **How does God call?**

Rom. 1:20; Rom. 10:14, 15, 17 


2.1.3 **Who is called?**

Is. 45:22; Matt. 28:19 

2.1.4 **Who answers God's call?**

1 Cor. 1:23, 24; Acts 16:14; Acts 13:48 

2.1.5 **Are you able to answer God's call on your own?**


Rom. 9:16; Eph. 2:8-10; Phil. 2:13 

GOD MAKES THE CHOSEN WILLING AND ABLE TO ANSWER HIS CALL.


2.2 Regeneration

REGENERATION IS THE AWAKENING OF NEW LIFE IN THE DEAD HEART OF A SINNER. JUST LIKE PHYSICAL BIRTH IS NOT A CHOICE, REGENERATION IS BEYOND ONE'S CONTROL – IT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKING INSIDE THE SINNER.

2.2.1 Why is regeneration essential?

John 3:3-6; Eph. 2:1-5; Rom. 8:7 

2.2.2 When and through what does regeneration take place?


Tit. 3:5; 1 Cor. 2:13-15; Philem. 2:13 

THIS COMPLETE RENEWAL OF MAN IS CALLED REGENERATION. THIS IS THE POWERFUL INNER WORKING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHEREBY THE LORD COMPLETELY TRANSFORMS YOU INTO A NEW PERSON, IN ORDER THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE IN AND TURN TO HIM.


2.3 Faith

THE HOLY SPIRIT CREATES NEW LIFE WITHIN YOU IN ORDER THAT YOU MAY ANSWER GOD'S CALL TO FAITH AND REPENTANCE.

2.3.1 What is true faith?

Heb. 11:1; HC - ans. 21 


2.3.1.1 Is faith only knowledge?

Jas. 2:19 


2.3.2 How do you know that you believe?

Rom. 8:16; Lk. 6:44 

2.3.3 Where does faith come from?

Gal. 3:2; Eph. 2:8; Philem. 1:29; HC - ans. 65 

2.3.4 How does the Holy Spirit evoke faith in us?


Rom. 10:17; HC - ans. 65 

FAITH IS THE HAND GOD GIVES YOU TO RECEIVE SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST.


FAITH IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ME AND CHRIST – Belgic Confession - art. 22.

2.4 Conversion


2.4.1 Is conversion part of (a) knowledge of sin, (b) redemption or (c) gratitude?

HC - ans. 86 


2.4.2 **What is the dying of the old nature?
What is the coming to life of the new nature?**

Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:5-10; HC - Sun. 33 


2.4.3 **How does conversion/repentance take place?**

Phil. 2:13; Jer. 31:18, 33 


2.4.4 **Can you turn to God on you own?**

Rom. 8:7 


2.4.5 **Does God demand conversion/repentance?**

Acts 17:30; Lk. 24:47 

2.4.6 **Is there more than one way of converting/repenting?**


2 Chron. 33:12-13; Acts 9:1-19; Acts 16:14-15 

2.4.7 **Should you be able to give the exact day and time of your conversion/repentance?**

2 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 3:15 

THIS REFERS TO CONVERSION/REPENTANCE WITHIN THE COVENANT.


2.4.8 **Is conversion/repentance a continuous process?**

Heb. 6:1-3; Rom. 7:21-24 


CONVERSION/REPENTANCE IS THE RESULT OF THE NEW LIFE THE SPIRIT EVOKES IN YOU (SPIRITUAL REBIRTH BRINGS ABOUT FAITH; FAITH BRINGS ABOUT CONVERSION/REPENTANCE).

2.5 **Justification through faith**


2.5.1 **What is righteousness?**

Gal. 2:16; 2 Cor. 5:2 


2.5.2 **How can you be righteous before God?**

HC - ans. 60 

2.5.3 **Are all people righteous before God?**

Gal. 2:16; HC - Sun. 22; ans. 20 

2.5.4 **Does your faith make you righteous before God?**

HC - ans. 60 

2.5.5 **Does the righteousness bestowed on you by God not make you indifferent?**


Matt. 7:18; John 15:5 

JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH IS THE VERDICT GOD PRONOUNCES OVER US, DECLARING US INNOCENT THROUGH THE REDEMPTION FOUND IN


CHRIST.

2.6 Sanctification

2.6.1 What is sanctification?

2 Cor. 6:17; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:13-16 


2.6.2 Is it possible to live a holy life?

2 Cor. 5:17; Gal 2:20; Eph. 4:24-25 

2.6.3 Who effects sanctification within us?

Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:2 

2.6.4 Do we play no part in God's sanctifying work within us?

Jer. 31:18; Phil. 2:12-13 

SANCTIFICATION MEANS GROWING DEVOTION, THROUGH THE POWER OF GOD, TO THE SERVICE OF GOD IN OBEDIENCE TO HIS WORD.


2.7 Perseverance

2.7.1 Are you able to persevere on your own?

1 Pet. 1:5; Phil. 1:6 

2.7.2 Does a believer continue sin?


(Think of David, Peter and yourself)

Thus: 1 John 1:8; Lk. 22:31-32 


2.7.3 What about apostates?

Rom. 9:6; 1 John 2:19 


2.7.4 Is it your responsibility to persevere?

Lk. 13:24; 1 Tim. 6:12; Matt. 24:13 

2.7.5 How do you know you will persevere?

1 Pet. 1:5; John 6:37-40 


2.7.6 What awaits you at the end of your struggle to persevere?

2 Tim. 4:7-8 

PERSEVERANCE IS STAYING ON THE ROAD TO SANCTIFICATION THROUGH THE POWER OF GOD.

2.8 Glorification

2.8.1 What do the following passages tell us about glorification?

Phil. 1:21-23; Phil. 3:21; Rev. 21:3-7; HC - Sun. 22 

GLORIFICATION IS RECEIVING THE FULL BOUNTY OF GOD'S REDEMPTION IN

CHRIST.

WE DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN TWO MOMENTS OF GLORIFICATION:

1. UPON OUR DEATH
2. UPON THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

2.9 **Conclusion**

2.9.1 **Write down in your own words the meaning of the Order of Salvation.**

2.9.2 **Complete item 2.**

THE ORDER OF SALVATION IS THE WAY IN WHICH GOD BESTOWS ON US, THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE BOUNTY OF CHRIST'S SALVATION.

THE HOLY SPIRIT ENABLES US TO ATTAIN SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST.

SECTION 2

“I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES” (Job 19:25) IN FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH (Heb. 10:22)


1. CAN YOU TRULY BE SURE THAT YOU ARE A CHILD OF GOD WHO HAVE ALREADY ATTAINED ETERNAL LIFE?

- 1.1 Many people say: “No, we are too sinful and someone who claims to already have eternal life is arrogant”.
Some say: “It is dangerous to be sure because if one is overconfident you lose the drive to live a good life”.
Others say: “I try my utmost to be a Christian and live a good life. I hope this will be enough for the Lord”.
There are also those who say: “I know I’m going to heaven, because I have always lived a good life. I go to church regularly. I read the Bible. I do good to my neighbour. The Lord has no choice but to reward me with eternal life”!


What do you think? Could you every truly be sure that you already have eternal life?

1.2 How does the Bible answer this question?


1.2.1 Why did John write this letter?

1 John 5:13 


1.2.2 When do you obtain eternal life?

John 6:47 

1.2.3 Of what was Paul sure?


Rom. 8:38 

1.2.4 Of what was Job sure?

Job 19:25 


1.2.5 What does Heb. 11:1 teach us about faith?

1.2.6 Of what does the Holy Spirit assure us?


Rom. 8:16 

1.3 Have a look at how the Articles of Faith answer this question:


1.3.1 What is your only comfort?

HC - ans. 1 


1.3.2 What is true faith?

HC - ans. 21 

1.3.3 How does it benefit you to believe?


HC - ans. 59 

- 1.3.4 **Can you already now have the assurance that that you are a chosen child of God and will have complete salvation in life after death?**

CoD 1:12 


2. **ASSURANCE BASED ON WHO YOU ARE OR WHAT YOU DO?**

- 2.1 **What do the following passages say about the above?**


Rom. 3:20; HC - ans. 5; HC - ans. 62 

- 2.2 Many people say: "I know I'm not perfect, but at least I try my best. I hope this will be enough for God".

Why can't God be satisfied with our good works?


Gal. 3:10; HC - ans. 62 

- 2.3 **Why does even a newborn baby already deserve to be condemned, cursed and rejected by God?**

Rom. 5:12, 18, 19; Ps. 51:7; HC - ans. 7 

- 2.4 Many people think that God is so loving that He will simply forgive all our sins. He can't possible be so cruel as to send people to hell.

What does the following indicate?

Nah. 1:3; HC - ans. 11 

- 2.5 Some people reason: "I come from a good family, a Christian community and a very Christian family. My father sat on the church council for years. The Lord has no choice, but to allow me into heaven!"

What is the Bible's perspective on this?

Matt. 3:9; 2 Cor. 5:10 


3. **GOD'S RESPONSE TO THE SIN OF THIS WORLD**

- 3.1 Although we all deserve rejection, it is not what God wants. He has boundless love for this world.


How did He solve our problem (i.e. that we all deserve to go to hell)?

John 3:16; CoD 1:2, 2:2 


- 3.2 **Who is Jesus?**

John 1:1, 14; Gal. 1:4; HC - ans. 16, 17 


- 3.3 **What has God already done with all our sins?**

2 Cor. 5:21; HC - ans. 39 


- 3.4 **How did Jesus suffer?**

Phil. 2:6-8; Matt. 26:67-68; HC - ans. 37 


- 3.5 **What was the aim of Christ's suffering?**

Gal. 1:4 

- 3.6 **How does the resurrection of Jesus benefit you?**


1 Cor. 15:54, 55; HC - ans. 45 

3.7 **How does the ascension of Jesus benefit you?**

John 14:2; HC - ans. 49 

4. **HOW DO YOU ATTAIN ETERNAL LIFE FROM HIS HAND?**


4.1 **What are the means and path by which you attain eternal life?**

Acts 16:31; HC - ans. 20 


“TRUE SANCTIFYING FAITH IS THE ONLY KEY WHICH UNLOCKS THE GATEWAY TO HEAVEN.” (Calvin)

FAITH IS THE HANDS YOU ARE GIVEN TO RECEIVE GOD’S GRACE (GIFT).

4.2 **Why is knowing that there is a God and that Jesus Christ lived and died not enough?**

Jas. 2:19 

4.3 **Why is it unacceptable to only trust in God in times of trouble?**


1 Cor. 15:19 

4.4 **What is true faith?**


Heb. 11:1; HC - ans. 21 

“TRUE FAITH IS THE EMPTY HAND OF A BEGGAR WITH WHICH HE RECEIVES THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE.” (Maarten Luther)

4.5 What makes you capable of faith?

Eph. 2:8b; HC - ans. 65a 


4.6 **What does the Holy Spirit enable us to do through the true faith He evokes in our hearts?**

Belgic Confession – art. 22a 


4.7 **Who is delivered from God’s wrath and from destruction to receive eternal life?**

CoD 1:4; John 6:47 

4.8 **What happens to those who don’t believe in Jesus Christ?**

John 3:36; Heb. 3:19; CoD 1:4 

4.9 **What have those who embrace Jesus as their Lord and Saviour received since the earliest of times?**

Acts 2:47b 

4.10 **What obligation does every believer have?**

Belgic Confession – art. 28 

In prayer you must sincerely repent; confess your faith in Jesus Christ your Saviour;
and declare yourself willing to henceforth live for Him with all your heart.
(He makes you willing through the workings of the Holy Spirit.)

SECTION 3


ENDURING ASSURANCE OF FAITH

1. ASSURANCE OF FAITH

1.1 Isn't assurance of faith something you could lose again?

In Section 2 we learned from Scripture and the confession that someone who believes in Jesus Christ is a child of God; won't be condemned but is assured of eternal life; and is enlivened with a whole new nature through the Holy Spirit. Since you as Christian continues to sin, the question may arise whether you are truly and will remain a child of God.

1.1.1 Is it true that anyone who truly believes in Christ automatically stops sinning?


Rom. 7:18-19; HC - ans. 114 

1.1.2 What is sin?


Ps. 51:5-6; 1 John 3:4 

The Greek word for "sin" literally means to "miss the mark".


What is the purpose of your life?

1 Cor. 10:31 

1.1.3 What impact does your continued sinning as Christian have on your relationship with God?


Eph. 4:30 

1.1.4 What emotion does sin evoke in a child of God?


Ps. 51:13, 14; Belgic Confession – art. 15 (penultimate sentence) 

1.2 How the Christian can retain assurance of faith:


1.2.1 What should a Christian do when he has sinned?

Ps. 32:3, 5; CoD 5:2 (2nd sentence) 


1.2.2 In what way should you repent your sins?

Joel 2:13 

1.2.3 What does God do if we repent our sins?

1 John 1:8, 9 


1.2.4 Why doesn't our humble admission of guilt deserve God's forgiveness?

Rom. 3:23, 24; HC - ans. 60 


1.3 Faith is like a plant that needs to be watered regularly – the water of the Word.

1.3.1 A muscle that is not exercised will grow weak. The same goes for faith in Jesus Christ.


What does Paul say about spiritual growth?

1 Tim. 4:7; 1 Tim. 6:20 


What does the Lord say about Peter's spiritual growth?

2 Pet. 1:5-8 


What does the writer of Hebrews say about growth?

Heb. 6:11, 12 


1.3.2 What do the following passages say about faith without deeds?

1 Thess. 1:3; Jas. 2:14 

1.3.3 What means did God give us to help us grow in faith?

Acts 20:32; Eph. 6:18; HC - ans. 65 

1.3.4 What should be the purpose of spiritual growth?

Eph. 4:12-16 

SECTION 4

COMMUNICATION WITHIN RELIGION THE BIBLE



In Ps. 115 (v. 5-6) the Psalmist reflects on the senselessness of idolatry and states *inter alia* the following:

“They have mouths, but cannot speak, ... ears, but cannot hear.”

In contrast thereto we worship a living God who talks to us through his Word and to whom we talk through prayer.

1. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT GOD?

How does God reveal Himself to us according to the following passages?

Heb. 1:1, 2; Ps. 19:2-4; Belgic Confession - art. 2; Rom. 10:13-15  

The Fall of Man made people weak-sighted and we need the glasses of God's Word to see creation as the work of God. We need the Bible to learn about God through His work in order for us to truly understand Him.

2. THE BIBLE AS SOURCE OF REVELATION

2.1 The Bible is the Word of God:

God, the Holy Spirit, is the actual Writer of the Bible (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Belgic Confession – art. 3). He used the writers of the Bible (inspired) to in their own way accurately and honestly record the Word of God. A good example of this is the description of the life and work of the Lord Jesus in the four gospels. Guided by the Holy Spirit the four writers describe the same events, but each according to his own unique personality and objective.

The Bible is the highest authority in our lives because it is the Word of God. Read **Luke 4:1-21** to see how even the Lord Jesus treats the words of the Bible as authoritative. What does this tell us about our interaction with the Bible (cf. also Belgic Confession - art. 5)?

The Bible is not a scientific or historical handbook wherein information is rendered chronologically, in scientific language and according to cause and effect. It does, however, indicate to us that God put aside certain things in His creation for man to discover and develop as well as that God is guiding world history in a specific direction.

2.2 The Bible contains God's complete revelation of the Word:

The purpose of the Bible is not to record everything about God, all His words and deeds (cf. John 20:30, 31; 21:25). The Lord only had that recorded which is necessary for us to know Him as well as how we can and are to live changed lives, in His honour and in gratitude for our salvation. Since the Bible contains God's complete revelation, God forbids us to exclude any part thereof or add all kinds of texts and revelations to it. Read what the Lord says about this in **Rev. 22:18, 19; Deut. 4:2** (cf. also Belgic Confession - art. 7).


The Bible has been written in such a way that children are able understand it and learn about the Lord (Matt. 11:25). Yet there is no end to the depth and richness of the Bible as the Word of God (Rom. 11:33-36). Through devoted study of the Scriptures as well as prayer we grow in knowledge about and in our relationship with God.

2.3 What is the essence of the Bible?

The Bible tells us Who God is. We also learn about ourselves. The whole Bible is aimed at revealing God's love for us reflected in our Lord Jesus Christ who came to save us from our sins and restore our relationship with God. Every Biblical book is in some way focussed on Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus says so himself in John 5:39: *"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me ..."*

2.4 The Scriptures and Confession of Faith

Why is a confession necessary?

Matt. 16:15-16; Rom. 10:10-11 

Across the centuries, the Articles of Faith came into being during times when it was necessary to confess our beliefs, led by the Holy Spirit and in accordance with the Word, to each other or to the world. The Articles of Faith has authority because it is in accordance with the Word of God. It summarises the important teachings of the Bible.

3. CREATION AS SOURCE OF REVELATION


What does creation reveal about God?

Rom. 1:20; Ps. 19:2 

In terms of the Word, creation reflects how God not only created this exceptionally crafted world, but also upholds it in His grace.

4. RESPONSE TO GOD'S REVELATION

4.1 Do all people respond similarly to God's revelation?

Acts 17:12, 32 

4.2 How does the Lord want a believer to respond to the revelation of his grace?

John 14:1; 2 Tim. 3:14 

5. HOW DO YOU LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD?

5.1 Prayerfully

Firstly, it requires approaching the Word of God in humble prayer. In other words to prayerfully open ourselves up to the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit who pours the Word into our hearts; and humbly since we are so small and God is so great. We are weak and sinful, but God is holy and almighty.

5.2 Quietly

Somewhere quiet and private is best.

5.3 Attentively

The Bible is not recreational reading, but God talking to you. God's voice is most clearly heard when you are completely focussed on Him.

5.4 Systematically

Read your Bible systematically and searchingly. A fast and loose approach to the Bible can rob you of the overall and full meaning of the Bible; water down the richness of the Word; or dim the greatness of God's grace and might.

- 5.5 **Regularly**
God wants to talk to you regularly. Make time to listen to God every day. God demands devoted and conscientious interaction with his Word.
- 5.6 **Introspection**
The relevant Scriptural passage must be applied introspectively.
- 5.7 **Searchingly**
Determine what the Lord is telling you with a particular passage. Ask yourself what God is revealing about Himself in the relevant passage. What does it mean to you and for your life?
- 5.8 **Submissively**
Since you recognise the authority of the Word, you are to subject yourself to it completely and live in obedience to the Lord.

SECTION 5

COMMUNICATION WITHIN RELIGION

A. PRAYER


THE PASSIONATE PRAYER OF A BELIEVER IS VERY POWERFUL.

1. WHAT IS PRAYER?


Prayer is the open-hearted conversation of a devoted child of the Lord with his heavenly Father.

Read: [Heb. 10:19-24](#) and answer the following questions:


1.1 Who do we pray to?

[HC - ans. 117](#) 

1.2 On what basis do we pray?

[John 16:23, 24](#) 


1.3 What is the role of the Holy Spirit in prayer?

[Rom. 8:15](#) 


1.4 How often do we have to pray?

[Rom. 12:12; 1 Thess. 5:17](#) 


1.5 How do our prayers relate to God's promises?

[Is. 62:6, 7](#) 

1.6 Why do we need to pray?


[HC - ans. 116; 1 Thess. 5:18](#) 

2. WHICH IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF PRAYER IS CONTAINED IN THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES?

[Ps. 50:14; Ps. 122:4; 1 Tim. 2:1, 2](#) 


3. CONDITIONS OF PRAYER

3.1 What conditions are set in Heb. 10:19-24?

[HC - ans. 117](#) 


4. ANSWER TO PRAYER

4.1 When are prayers answered?


[1 John 5:14; Jas. 4:3](#) 

4.2 How does God answer prayers?


4.2.1 How did God answer Hezekiah?

[2 Kgs. 20:2](#) 


4.2.2 **How did God answer Paul?**

2 Cor. 12:8, 9 

4.2.3 **What was God's response to Elijah?**

1 Kgs. 19:4-7 

4.3 **Why does God answer prayers?**

Lk. 11:11-13; Rom. 8:34 


5. **INTERCESSION**

5.1 **What is prayed for in the following Scriptural passages?**

2 Thess. 3:1; Eph. 6:18, 19; Jas. 5:14-16; 1 Tim. 2:1, 2 

6. **WHAT DOES CHRIST TEACH US IN THE LORD'S PRAYER?**

6.1 **What are the first words of the Lord's Prayer and what does it mean to you?**

HC - ans. 120, 121; Matt. 6:9a 

6.2 **What is the first petition and what does it mean to you?**

HC - ans. 122; Matt. 6:9b 

6.3 **What is the second petition and what does it mean to you?**

HC - ans. 123; Matt. 6:10a 


6.4 **What is the third petition and what does it mean to you?**

HC - ans. 124; Matt. 6:10b 

6.5 **What is the fourth petition and what does it mean to you?**

HC - ans. 125; Prov. 30:8, 9 


6.6 **What is the fifth petition and what does it mean to you?**

HC - ans. 126; 1 John 2:1 

6.7 **What is the sixth petition and what does it mean to you?**

HC - ans. 127; Rom. 7:23 

6.8 **How does the prayer end?**


Rom. 11:33-36 

SECTION 6

THE CHURCH

1. WHAT IS THE CHURCH

1.1 What images are used in the following passages to describe the church?

1 Cor. 3:9, 16; 1 Cor. 12:27; 1 Pet. 4:17; 1 Pet. 5:2 

1.2 What do the following two sections of the Articles of Faith relate about the church?


HC - ans. 54; Belgic Confession - art. 27 

1.3 Who is the Head of the church?

Eph. 1:22; HC - ans. 50 

1.4 Who is part of the church?

Do only exceptional people, possessing certain extraordinary qualities, form part of God's church? Sinless people? Holy people? Who is part of the church?


Eph. 1:1; 1 Pet. 2:9, 10; John 17:16 

2. THE DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE WORD "CHURCH"

Sometimes "church" refers to a local church, i.e. the congregation of a particular area (1 Thess. 1:1). "Church" can also refer to believers as a whole, regardless of where they live (Matt. 16:18). A good metaphor for the difference between a local church and the universal church is the electrical grid of a city or town. Electricity is invisibly transported underground and through aboveground cables (the universal church) to various places. Electricity becomes visible when a light is switched on (the local church).


3. THE NECESSITY OF BELONGING TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

3.1 What do the following images relate about the abovementioned necessity?

John 15:5-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; John 10:14-15 

3.2 What does Christ pray for in John 17:20-21?

3.3 What word in the Catechism describes becoming part of the church?

HC - ans. 20 

The Bible does not recognise the concept of "believers" who are not grafted into the (body) church of Christ. Separated from the body of Christ (church) your faith would die, like your finger would die and decompose severed from the rest of your body. It loses its life-blood. A glowing coal dies if you remove it from the fire. God works with the individual as part of the whole.


4. WHICH CHURCH IS THE TRUE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

4.1 What do the following passages relate about a false church?

Matt. 7:15-16; John 16:1-3 


4.2 **Is there a difference between a true and a perfect church?**

4.3 **What are the characteristics of a true church?**

Belgic Confession - art. 29 

5. **MEANS OF GRACE**


5.1 **What is true administering of the Word?**

1 Cor. 2:2-5 


5.1.1 **How does a sermon differ from a political speech?**

5.2 **True administering of the sacraments**

5.2.1 **What are the sacraments?**


HC - ans. 66; Rom. 4:11 

5.2.2 **Why are there, aside from the Word, also sacraments?**


HC ans. 65; Ps. 111:4a; 1 Cor. 11:25, 26 

5.3 **The true administering of the baptism**


5.3.1 **Who shares in the covenant God made with Abraham?**

Gen. 17:7 


5.3.2 **When does Abraham receive the circumcision as symbol and seal of the covenant? And his son Isaac? What can you conclude about children's involvement in the covenant?**

Gen. 17:1; Gen. 21:4; Acts 16:15; 16:31-33 


5.3.3 **What is baptism a seal and symbol of to you?**

Acts 3:29; Rom. 4:11; Gen. 17:7, 11 

5.3.4 **What does God promise with baptism?**

Baptism Formulary (salvation) 

5.3.5 **What does God demand in relation to the baptism?**

Baptism Formulary (gratitude) 

5.4 **The true administering of the Lord's Supper:**

5.4.1 **What do the following passages teach about the Lord's Supper?**

1 Cor. 10:16; 1 Cor. 11:23, 27 

Signs:



The bread and wine refer to the body and blood of Christ. Just like the bread is broken and the wine is poured, Christ's body and blood were given in complete redemption of all our sins.

Seal (guarantee):



Just as surely as I can see the bread being broken and the wine being poured; and

just as surely as I am eating the bread and drinking the wine into my body, I am sure that Christ was sacrificed for my sins and is a part of my life through the working of the Holy Spirit.

5.4.2 **Is the Lord's Supper only a reflection of a past event?**

Matt. 26:29  

5.4.3 **What is the actual preparation for the Lord's Supper?**

HC - ans. 81; 1 Cor. 11:28  

Formulary for the Lord's Supper:

“Firstly: Each of us must ponder his sin and damnation in order that he may be penitent and humble before God; since God's wrath against sin is so great that rather than allowing it to go unpunished, He punished His only begotten son, Jesus Christ, with the bitter and undignified crucifixion.

Secondly: Each of us must examine his heart to ensure that he believes in God's promise that sin is only forgiven through the suffering and death of Jesus and that the complete righteousness of Christ has been granted and bestowed on him. Indeed to the extent that it is almost as if he paid for his own sins and thereby achieved complete righteousness.

Thirdly: Each one of us must search his conscience for the resolve to, from this point forward, reflect his true gratitude to God with his whole life and walk in His ways; to truly let go of all hostility, hate and envy and henceforth live in true love and harmony with his neighbour.”



“For whom did the Lord institute the Lord's supper?”

“He instituted it for those who are humbled in their sin, but still believe that they are forgiven for Christ's sake and that the remaining weakness is covered with His suffering and death; for those who desire to continuously strengthen their faith and improve their lives. Hypocrites and those who don't turn to God with a sincere heart eat and drink judgement upon themselves.”



5.4.4 **Who must be excluded from the Lord's Supper?**

HC - ans. 82; 1 Cor. 11:27  

5.4.5 **How did Jesus institute the Lord's Supper?**

Matt. 26:20-28  

5.4.6 **Would it be right to participate in the Lord's Supper if you don't attend church on a regular basis?**

HC - ans. 65  

5.4.7 **What are you actually doing when you take part in the Lord's Supper?**



Read the exultation and concluding prayer of the formulary for the Lord's Supper.

5.5 **Administering of church discipline**

Imagine: A family without any discipline or a country without a police force to maintain order or a vine that is never pruned back. Complete chaos! The same goes for the church. Without discipline it becomes wild and fruitless.


CHURCH DISCIPLINE MEANS TO PULL SOMEONE BACK FROM THE EDGE OF A CLIFF IN TIME.

5.5.1 **The nature of church discipline**

Heb. 12:5-8  

Keep in mind that the most basic form of the Greek word we have translated as “discipline” is more related to *educating* than the usual association of *punishment*.

5.5.2 What is the aim of church discipline according to the following passages?


1 Cor. 5:7, 13; Acts 5:3-5 

5.5.3 Whose duty is it to impose this discipline?

Matt. 18:15-17; Matt. 16:16-20 

Instruction to elders according to the installation formulary:
“You are to scrupulously oversee the instruction of every congregant and support all Christians with counsel and comfort. You are to act, with admonition and discipline, against those who don’t repent and continue to live in sin and welcome back the repentant into the community of the church.”

5.5.4 How is disciplinary action carried out?

Matt. 18:15-17 (as above) 

6. A PERFECT CHURCH?

A church reflecting all three the above characteristics is the true church. Please don’t think that you will ever find a perfect church on earth.
No church is perfect in its ministering, administering of sacraments or imposing of discipline.
No church consists 100% out of believers.

What does the Belgic Confession - art. 29 say about this? 

The question is: What is the church’s position regarding its own deficiencies? Is it a matter of great sorrow for the church and considered of great importance to reform itself continuously?

A CHURCH OF THE REFORMATION ALWAYS REMAINS A REFORMATIVE CHURCH.

7. WORSHIP SERVICES

7.1 What is a worship service?

A worship service is a holy meeting between God and His people.
The minister and congregation should, therefore, eagerly anticipate this meeting with God.


7.2 What happens during a worship service?

God speaks – man answers.
This conversation takes place according to various “agenda items” or elements that make up the liturgy of a worship service.
The liturgy usually consists of the following:

7.2.1 Votum:

Worship begins with the confession by the congregation.

Write down the following two verses in full:


Ps. 124:8; Ps. 95:6 

Just like the chairman of a meeting calls a meeting to order with a gavel, the votum (originally dedicate) indicates that a holy meeting between God and His people has been called to order.

7.2.2 **Salutation:**

God greets His people through the minister and pronounces His blessing of grace over His people.

What does this blessing contain?

Rev. 1:4, 5 

7.2.3 **Song:**

God's people respond with a hymn of praise, penitential Psalm, confession of guilt, hymn of thanksgiving, etc. throughout the worship service, in accordance with God's Word. These are preferably versifications of Scriptural passages, for example Psalms. Eph. 5:19, Ps. 150:1 as order.

"NO ONE CAN SING A SONG WORTHY OF GOD, UNLESS IT CAME FROM GOD."
(Augustine)

7.2.4 **Confession of Faith:**

This is a brief and systematic summary of the congregation's beliefs. Early on in the history of the church believers expressed the need for this.

Why is there a need for confession?

Tit. 1:9; 1 Tim. 6:3 

7.2.5 **The Decalogue (Exod. 20 and Deut. 5):**

This is read to the congregation for two reasons, viz. as reflection of our misery and as precedent for our life of thanksgiving.


Upon conclusion of the Decalogue the congregation responds with a hymn of humiliation or a hymn of salvation or a petition for obedience, e.g. Skrifberyming 26:11.

Comment [hss1]: Engelse kerke het nie Skrifberymings nie.

7.2.6 **Scripture prelection:**

This is the most important part of the liturgy. God himself is speaking. The believer's attitude should be: Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.

Why is Scripture prelection such an important part of worship?

Acts 13:15, 27 

7.2.7 **Prayer:**

Usually before Scripture prelection and after the sermon.


When it precedes the sermon it is a prayer for enlightenment from the Holy Spirit and upon conclusion of the sermon it is a response to the ministering of the Word as well as an expression of the general needs and desires of the Lord's people (for all people).

7.2.8 **Declaration and application of the Word = sermon**

7.2.9 **Benediction:**


A wonderful thought: Before the congregation goes their separate ways, a blessing is bestowed on them from the triune God.

How does this blessing go?


Num. 6:22-27; 2 Cor. 13:13 

- 7.2.10 There are also other solemn rituals that take place during worship services:
Sacraments, public confession of faith, public disciplinary action, installation into offices and collections.


Have you noticed that every part of a worship service is taken from the Word? What elements of a worship service do you recognise in the following passages?

Acts 2:42, 46; Eph. 5:18-20; 1 Cor. 16:2; HC - ans. 103 

- 7.3 Church attendance
Read the following and explain why regular church attendance is essential:

Heb. 10:25; Rev. 3:6, 13; Ps. 42:3 


8. HOW SHOULD THE CHURCH OF CHRIST BE MAINTAINED?

1 Cor. 14:33; Belgic Confession - art. 32 

SECTION 7

THE GOVERNANCE OF THE CHURCH

1. WHO IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH?

Col. 1:18 

As Head of the church, God calls on believers to perform the work of His church. Believers spread the gospel of peace and redemption to others and thereby God evokes faith in their hearts and welcomes them to His church.

The converted then also carry out the work of His church. Not by their own power or wisdom, but imbued with the fervour, insight and words of the Holy Spirit (Is. 59:21; Rom. 8:9). The Head of the church also made a great promise in relation to this in Matt. 28:20.

The promise of Matt. 16:18 assures us that the church will never be destroyed and that all the members of the church may go on to inherit eternal life.

1.1 The congregation


These believers become members of the church and also involved in church activities. It is every congregant's obligation to live a life that reflects his/her devotion to the Lord. This is what Jesus refers to when He instructs believers to be the salt and the light of the earth (Matt. 5:13-16).

Believers must serve God always, not only on Sundays at church. What is the purpose of service according to 1 Cor. 10:31?


This service to God is encapsulated in the term "Christian". "Christian" is derived from the name Christ which means that He is our highest Prophet, only High Priest and eternal King. Christians, as his followers, are also obliged to act as prophet, priest and king.

How must a believer act:


1.1.1 as prophet?

Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8; 1 Pet. 2:9, 10 

1.1.2 as priest?

Rom. 12:1; Lk. 22:24-27 

1.1.3 as king?

Rom. 6:6; 11-13; Lk. 22:29 

One aspect of the work of a believer is to always produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23). This is very difficult for sinful man (Rom. 7:7-25), but guided by the Holy Spirit and with the strength of God we can grow and improve as indicated in Jas. 4:8.

Apart from the gift of faith, there are also people who have been particularly equipped and gifted to fulfil a leading role within the church. 1 Tim. 5:17 and Acts 6:3-4 (also Belgic Confession - art. 30) tells us that services are divided into three different offices.

The task of every one of these offices is beautifully set out in Belgic Confession - art. 30. It explains that the ministers are to administer the Word and the Sacraments, while the elders oversee the church as well as maintain order and the deacons promote the community of believers.

2. WHO DOES CHRIST CALL ON TO GOVERN HIS CHURCH?

Believers have been called on and equipped by Christ. They do not carry out their duties based on their own abilities, but are in truth representatives of Christ acting in His Name (2 Cor. 5:20) and must, therefore, be heeded (Lk. 10:16).

Let's have a look at the different offices.

2.1 **The minister** (The teaching elder)


Ministers are described, in terms of Jesus' words, as shepherds of their flock. During *inter alia* preaching, parish-visiting and catechism they are the servers (servants) of God's Word. Many of the instructions Paul gave Timothy is applicable to ministers, like 1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:2.

What is the main task of a minister?

In conjunction thereto, there are also a number of general tasks (like Matt. 28:19 to spread the gospel to the world) required of all believers and, therefore, also applicable to ministers. Furthermore, everything related to elders are also applicable to ministers since the minister is in effect an elder – a teaching elder.

2.2 **The elders** (the supervisory elders)

Jesus gave John an instruction which reflects the typical nature of elders' task.

John 21:16 

Gifts are bestowed on elders to enable them to perform their task. They should, therefore, not be obligated to perform their task, but do so willingly (1 Pet. 5:2). The loving way in which Jesus, when he was on earth, led those who were searching, stubborn or had gone astray back to the flock should be an example to the elders on how to conduct their work.

2.3 **The deacons**


The office of deacon was established because the elders could no longer adequately attend to the care of the poor. The diaconate was instituted to assist those in need, both members of the church and also people outside the church.

Acts 6:1, 4; Gal. 6:10 

Belgic Confession - art. 31 indicates that the election or appointment of individuals to the three offices of the church occurs through the congregation, upon praying for guidance.

What should your attitude be towards these office-bearers?

The Word contains a number of guidelines in this regard:

Heb. 13:7, 17, 18 

Scripture teaches us that we must show respect to these leaders of the church. We must obey them because they guard and protect the faithful and will be accountable for their actions (or lack thereof).

Especially the elders, who supervise and govern the church, have to be respected. They regularly meet, under leadership of the minister, to discuss the state of the congregation, to bring back those who have strayed and to lovingly admonish hardened sinners with discipline.

3. CHURCH ORDER

God is not a God of chaos, but one of peace and order (1 Cor. 14:33). In order to establish peace and order within the Lord's church it has to be governed according to the Bible and for this reason the Church Order was instituted. Let's have a look at its most important principles.

What does art. 1 of the Church Order indicate as the objective of the Church Order? (See Church Order on the GKSA website)

Comment [hss2]: Net in Afrikaans beskikbaar

In addition, Belgic Confession - art. 32 states the following: The Church Order is by no means on the same level as the Bible or even the Articles of Faith. The Church Order was compiled to ensure unity and harmony.

The words "Church Order" contain two important concepts. On the one hand it is an order that originated from the church itself. On the other hand this order adapted to the character of the church, viz. the body of Christ and, therefore, its principles are based on the Bible, especially the New Testament.

The church, therefore, does not only have a Scriptural doctrine (confession), but the Scriptures are also the foundation for the governance of the church. Since the Church Order only provides the general principles of good church governance, the synod needs to make decisions from time to time on guidelines for practical application based on Scripture, the confession and in accordance with the principles of the Church Order.

4. CHURCH GOVERNANCE SYSTEM


The *Gereformeerde Kerk* is governed according to the presbyterial system, derived from the word "presbiteros" meaning elder.

The main principles of the presbyterial system of church governance are:

- 4.1 Christ is the only Head of any church.
- 4.2 A church is established when a number of believers congregate, upon instruction by Christ (by virtue of faith), to institute offices and all the other elements necessary to establish a church as an institution for the administering of the Word and the Sacraments.
- 4.3 The body of Christ is complete where an independent (local) church is established.
- 4.4 Christ governs through the church council (elders) in the Name of Christ.
- 4.5 The government has no authority over the governance of the church, just like the church has no authority over the government.
In other word, the church and the government are not to interfere with each other. They are two separate governing systems which should co-exist. Since the church and its members are also subject to the government, they have to adhere to the laws of the country while the government on the other hand has to allow the church room to serve God in accordance with the Bible. (Belgic Confession - art. 36, specifically par. 2, explains the relationship between church and government.)

5. MAJOR ASSEMBLIES

Apart from the church council there are also other assemblies within the church. They are:

CO - art. 41; 47; 50; 51 

Major assemblies are meetings related to local churches. They only deal with matters which can not be finalised in minor assemblies, viz. disciplining of office-bearers or matters of concern to all the churches collectively (e.g. Articles of Faith).

A local congregation, together with its church council, remains the only visible form/structure of the church of which Christ is the Head. These major assemblies were instituted to promote unity and harmony amongst the various congregations.


The delegates of these assemblies don't have permanent appointments, just like these assemblies don't have permanent or legal status. They only exist for the duration of the meeting, upon which they disband only retaining the decisions made during the meeting.

These major assemblies don't constitute a hierarchical management structure and don't have greater authority than the church council, but rather a more balanced insight and decision-making ability due to a greater number of participants.

In general, the deputies (delegates) of a number (on average about 10) of neighbouring congregations gather to form a classis. A classis usually meets twice a year. Once a year the delegates of a number of neighbouring classes meet to form a regional synod (of which there are 7 within the GKSA). All the delegates of the GKSA also meet once every three years to form the national synod. In each of these assemblies different ministers and elders are elected as deputies (delegates).

6. ATTESTATION

6.1 What is an attestation?

CO - art. 82 

6.2 What does an attestation contain?

Acts 18:2; Philem. 1:10-13, 17 and 3 John 1:3 provide examples of attestations. These examples clearly show that an attestation is a description of an individual's spiritual life and behaviour.

When a member of a congregation moves to another congregation an attestation is written by the one church council to the other. An attestation is not proof of membership, but a testimonial of the behaviour and spiritual life of a member. It is the member's responsibility to inform his old congregation of his plans to move in order for an attestation to be arranged in time.

Remember, you can only be a member of a congregation. You are not a member of the *Gereformeerde Kerk* as a whole. Thus: You will be "churchless" if you move away from one congregation and don't join another.


7. FINANCES

The church is not funded by the state, taxes or membership fees. It functions on the contributions (also called alms or thanks-offerings) made by its members to the church (and by extension to God).


The Bible teaches, on different occasions, that our possessions actually belong to the Lord (*inter alia* Gen. 28:22; 1 Chron. 29:14; Ps. 24:1; Mal. 3:8). A part of our service to God is to give back some of that which we have received. The people of the Old Testament did this by regularly bringing offerings to the temple as well as paying temple tax. The believers of the New Testament started the practice of gathering contributions and sending it to those in need.

A number of concerns of many believers –

How much should one contribute?

2 Cor. 9:7, 8 

Are you still obliged to contribute when you yourself have too little? (What is too little?)

1 Cor. 8:2-4 

How are these funds spent?

The contributions made to the church are not for the enrichment of the church, but

enables a congregation to continue with the administering of the Word and Sacraments to its members, i.e. the stipend paid to the minister as well as the upkeep and maintenance of the church building including other facilities.

Some of the funds are distributed, through the administrative bureau, to other churches for financial support, missionary work, theological training of ministers, care of retired ministers and their dependents – just to name a few.

SECTION 8

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CHURCH HISTORY

In order to understand the present, one has to have insight into the past. It also provides perspective on the future.

Church history gives us a glimpse of the work of Jesus Christ over the centuries. He has gathered the chosen from all nations, languages and peoples throughout the centuries. He does this through His Spirit and Word, from the beginning of the world to its end. Despite sin, disloyalty, narrow-mindedness and disobedience Christ protects and upholds His church.

Like a bird in the air we will cover the entire period from Pentecost to the present through a series of questions and answers. It goes without saying that this brief summary of church history will only be an overview and rather incomplete. We want to strongly recommend that you do a more in-depth study of church history on your own. The more you know about the history of the church, the more you will know about the church and admire God for His unshakeable loyalty and love throughout the centuries.

1. When does church history begin?

The history of the church already begins with the first humans, Adam and Eve, in the garden. The New Testament church was, however, only established on Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out to dwell in the church.

2. What characterises the first three centuries of church history?

The first three centuries is characterised by the triumph of God's Word and Spirit, despite obstacles and unrelenting persecution.

3. Who declared Christianity legal in the year 313AD?

Emperor Constantine the Great. It is said that one afternoon he saw a shining cross against the heavens inscribed with the words: "Triumph through this sign". Subsequently a drastic change in attitude towards Christianity emerged.

4. How did Christianity become the official religion?

Emperor Theodosius the Great declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in 380AD.

5. What were the disadvantages of the state church?

Masses of heathens, uninformed on the Christian faith, flooded the church with their heathen beliefs. The Roman Empire obtained the decision-making power over the church, whereby the authority of the emperor and empire dominated the church and religion. Laziness, idleness, self-indulgence and frivolity replaced testing and refining.

6. Which events and people contributed to the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church in Rome?

6.1 Rome increasingly became the centre of religious life.

6.2 Bishop Gregory the Great (590-604) of Rome was a powerful influence. He did missionary work amongst the Longobards and restored church discipline. He was a shrewd diplomat and his influence reached far and wide. During his time the bishops of Rome started referring to themselves as papa or father, from which the title pope originated.

6.3 Pope Innocentius III even managed to make the empire subject to the church and pope in the thirteenth century. He arbitrarily appointed and dismissed emperors. He declared at a major church assembly in 1215AD that the Lord made Peter not only the ruler of the church, but also the world. He went on to say that just like all must bow before Christ, all should obey the pope.

7. Name a few of the heresies of the Roman Catholic Church during the Middle Ages.

- 7.1 The greatest heresy asserted that the authority of the Bible is subject to the traditions and pronouncements of the pope.
- 7.2 The doctrine of purgatory, whereby the soul of a person who has died is first cleansed with fire before going on to heaven. Such a soul could still be saved through the prayers and money offerings of loved ones.
- 7.3 The altar instead of the pulpit.
- 7.4 Sacraments performed as “medicine” containing “magic”, in the belief that the sacraments themselves brought salvation. They had seven sacraments.
- 7.5 Mary, the saints and other images were also worshipped.
- 7.6 The pope is as powerful as Christ.

8. What was Maarten Luther’s great discovery?

In his studies of the Bible he discovered that man is saved only through the grace of God and not on merit (Rom. 1:17; Rom. 3:21-28; Ps. 71:2).

9. What date is considered to be the birth of the Reformation and why?

31 October 1517. Maarten Luther affixed his 95 theses, condemning the Roman Church, to the Wittenberg church door. His work was truly trailblazing and laid the foundation for the Reformation (i.e. a return to the truth of the Bible).

10. Why was the work of John Calvin of such value?

- 10.1 Calvin emphasised the honour and sovereignty of God as the ultimate life goal and described the meaning of Christ’s gospel in every facet of man’s life.
- 10.2 He wrote commentaries on almost every Biblical book and in his *Institutes of Religion*, consisting of four bulky volumes, he masterfully described the reformed doctrine and related it to every aspect of human life.
- 10.3 He wrote a catechism and established a university in Geneva where people from all over Europe came to study.

11. How did the Roman Catholic Church react to the Reformation?

They fought the Reformation with all their might. The Inquisition imposed the power of the state whenever possible and Protestants were brutally murdered.

12. What heresy developed in 1600AD in the Netherlands?

The doctrine of the Remonstrants led by Arminius.

13. Briefly summarise the heresy of the Remonstrants.

- 13.1 They completely refuted the concept of original sin, whereby man is already doomed at birth.
- 13.2 They claimed that man chooses to believe in Christ of his own free will.
- 13.3 They conceded that God had indeed predestined certain people prior to the creation of the world, but that He had done this based on his foreknowledge of their belief in Christ.

14. How was the heresy of the Remonstrants refuted?

During a synod in Dortrecht, December 1618 to April 1619, the Canons of Dort were compiled in response to the heresy of the Remonstrants.

15. What other important documents were also adopted at this synod?

The three Reformed Articles of Faith (the three Formularies of Unity) was adopted as the Confession of Faith of the reformed churches, viz. the Canons of Dort, the Heidelberg Catechism (compiled by Ursinus and Olevianus in 1563) and the Belgic Confession (compiled in 1561 by Guido de Brés). Furthermore, the Dortian Church Order was compiled containing the Biblical principles according to which the church is to be governed.

16. What deviating spiritual trends developed in Europe after the Reformation – especially in the second part of the eighteenth century – which had a significant impact on the church?

- 16.1 Humanism: a glorification of man.
- 16.2 Rationalism: only that which can be determined through intellectual reasoning is valid.
- 16.3 Pietism: only that which evokes human emotion, whether it is Biblically true or not, is valid.
- 16.4 Liberalism: human freedom is boundless.

17. What were the spiritual tenets of the church Jan van Riebeeck brought to South Africa on 6 April 1652?

The first Christian church in the Cape was Scriptural and Reformed. The three Reformed Articles of Faith were upheld and implemented. The first recorded prayers contained a petition for the establishment of the Reformed religion in this country. Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism were often read and preached. The elders and deacons had to sign a formulary wherein they agreed to the Reformed Articles of Faith. The ministry was regulated by the Classis Amsterdam in the Netherlands for the first 13 years.

18. Who was the first minister in the Cape?

Rev. Johan van Arckel from 18 August 1665-January 1669 and then unexpectedly passed away.

19. What negative influence did the church experience in the 18th century?

Since the church was so closely connected to the church in the Netherlands Rationalism, Humanism, Liberalism and Pietism (cf. Question 16) also strongly influenced the church in the Cape.

20. What further contributed to the decline of the church?

The songbook of the Netherlands was introduced in 1814. Under British rule in 1806 a great number of English and Scottish clergymen, who greatly emphasised an emotional religion, entered the country. In 1824 the first synod decided to adopt the Regulations of the Netherlands Church Order of King Willem I of 1816.

21. Who were the “Doppers” prior to 1859?

They were a group of conservative and extremely devout frontier farmers who, due to their isolation, were not as greatly influenced by Liberalism or Pietism and lived closely in accordance with the Bible, the Articles of Faith and the fundamental Calvinistic traditions. This made them especially opposed to the evangelical hymns and deviation from the ancient Dordtian Church Order. In their view this new direction no longer proclaimed the gospel of freely given grace and the predestining love of God. A significant number of these “Doppers” were part of the “Groot Trek” to the Free State and Natal.

22. How did Rev. Dirk Postma come to South Africa?

In human terms, quite by accident. The synod of the Separated Christian Reformed Church delegated him to provide assistance to the people of Transvaal in their need for ministers and teachers. The objectors within the *Hervormde Kerk* of Transvaal considered Postma heaven-sent and the response to an open call letter sent to the Netherlands.

23. What transpired at the General Church Assembly of 11 January 1859, during an investigation into the doctrine and life of Rev. Dirk Postma?

Postma's response to the question on his viewpoint of doctrine was that he considered the Bible and the Three Formularies of Unity as the foundation for truth. He also provided a sound Biblical summary of what the relationship between the church and the state should be. In response to the query as to his viewpoint on the singing of hymns, Postma clearly indicated that he had no objection to the sinning of

orthodox hymns. He did, however, consider it desirable to only sing hymns of which the original text can be referred back to the Bible. Every minister should, however, have the freedom to act according to his own conscious and the situation of the particular congregation.

This standpoint of Postma was rejected by Rev. van der Hoff and it was decided to try and force Postma to only allow the singing of hymns. Postma could not accept this and 15 members of the Rustenburg congregation, led by Paul Kruger, separated from the *Hervormde Kerk* to establish a free *Gereformeerde Kerk* based on the Bible, the three Reformed Articles of Faith and the Canons of Dordt.

24. Where and when was the *Gereformeerde Kerk* of South Africa established?

Under a Syringa tree in Rustenburg on 10 February 1859 after a lot of prayer and consideration – 300 adults joined that day.

25. How did the *Gereformeerde Kerk* develop further?

Since there were a great number of “Doppers” across the country, further congregations developed rapidly. During 1859 congregations were established in Pretoria, Waterberg (Nylstroom), Lydenburg, Potchefstroom and Reddersburg in the Free State.

In 1860 congregations were founded in Burgersdorp, Middelburg (CP) and Colesberg.

A theological school was opened in 1869 in Burgersdorp. In 1905 it was moved to Potchefstroom and gave rise to the Potchefstroom University of Christian Higher Education.

26. What should the attitude of a member of the *Gereformeerde Kerk* be toward a member of another of church?


The Lord requires of us great love and tolerance of as well as all possible cooperation with all who truly love Him and obey His word. We have to pray that the Lord will restore to unity his body and create true harmony, i.e. amongst all his children, for sincere cooperation. We have to guide those who have deviated from the Bible with the greatest of love and patience as well as continuously reform in order to be even truer to the Lord and His Word.

SECTION 9

SERVICE OF CHURCH MEMBERS

1. YOUR LIFE OF GRATITUDE WITHIN THE BODY (CHURCH OF CHRIST)

1.1 Why should we live in gratitude to God?

Rom. 6:13 

We are by no means able to live a life of true gratitude, but according to Rom. 12:1, 2 (also CoD 5:14) God works His grace within us to renew our lives. It is the Holy Spirit living inside of us who moulds us into the image of God (HC - ans. 86; Belgic Confession - art. 24).

This gratitude is directed at God for providing in such abundance and since He provides us with more than we truly need, we have to show our gratitude by extending it towards our neighbour. God has bestowed on us an abundance of gifts and abilities for that as well. Part of our life of gratitude is applying these gifts for the benefit and well-being of the members of Christ's body (HC - ans. 55).

Rom. 12:9-21 teaches us a few of the characteristics of a new and active member of the congregation.

Gal. 5:22-23; Col. 3:12-17 

2. EXTENDING GRATITUDE OUTWARD

Matt. 5:13 teaches us that our duty as believers extends even further than our own congregation. Since we are the salt of the earth and a light for this world, we have to guide people to new insight through our words and deeds (John 13:35).


We can advocate God's love, goodness and greatness (1 Pet. 2:12; 3:15) by always answering the bad with the good and not repaying evil with evil (1 Pet. 3:9).

Christ must be our example. Just like Him we are to act as prophets, priests and kings (HC - ans. 12).

As prophet – profess His Name and proclaim Him as the resurrected Lord who will return on the clouds (Acts 1:8).

As priest – devote yourself as living sacrifices to Him (Rom. 12:1, 2).

As king – rule over sin with Christ (Rom. 6:6, 11-13)

Which services can you render with your specific gifts related to a) service to God, b) support of your fellow believers and c) assisting in guiding those who have lost their way back to Christ and His church? 

3. THE ROLE OF THE LORD'S LAW IN OUR LIVE OF GRATITUDE


According to the Old Testament we have to obey the Law in its finest detail. Yet, Paul proves in Rom. 7:15, 16, 21 that believers are not capable of adhering to the Law of God. In Christ we have not only been freed of this death, but have instead been granted eternal life. The Law remains essential, no longer as a way to stand righteous before God, but as guideline of how to live a life of gratitude.

4. THE LAW

4.1 The preface to the Law

The liberation from slavery in Egypt (Exod. 20:1) lays the principles for a life according to God's will. Since He has also freed us from the slavery of sin, we should in gratitude be obedient to the Ten Commandments.

This life of gratitude can be summarised in two parts:

Matt. 22:37-40 (references to Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18) 

How is the word love to be understood? The love God expects is love that comes from the Father (John 3:16), the Son (John 13:34) and the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). It even includes love for the enemy (Matt. 5:43-48). Love is not simply about experiencing an emotion, but involves action like in Matt. 22:37-40 above.


The Ten Commandments can be divided into two main groups (two tablets):
Exod. 20:2-11 = Commandments 1-4 – the relationship (love) to God.
Exod. 20:12-17 = Commandments 5-10 – the relationship (love) to one's neighbour.

4.2 **The first commandment**

Exod. 20:3 – *You shall have no other gods before me.*

A Christian may not worship any other god.

In the first commandment we acknowledge that God has no equal. He is the only God (Deut. 6:4) and is the Creator, the Upholder and Governor of everything and everybody (HC - ans. 9, 10). God our Father, Saviour and Comforter has the exclusive right to us. Believers may not be loyal or dependent on anybody else and no other god may exist in the minds of believers. If we place something/somebody on the same level as God, we are undermining the power and authority of God and indulging in idolatry.


How does 1 Cor. 10:19, 20 describe idolatry? 

How does HC - ans. 95 describe idolatry? 

While in many parts of the world statues are still worshipped, Western society has become more subtle. The Westerner has created abstract and invisible idols. Examples of these are *inter alia* Satanism, the occult and the New Age movement (Deut. 18:10-13 condemns all of these). Satan also very subtly introduces other idols like egoism (greed and ambition), racism, nationalism, capitalism, hedonism, humanism, alcoholism, technoism, naturism, etc.

An idol is simply something we give more attention and energy to than God. It becomes idolatry when it is more important to us than our relationship with God.

We have to be like a child in our dependence and obedience to God. We have to study God every day (John 17:3) so that our trust in Him may grow (Jer. 17:5-7) (even in times of trouble). We have to increasingly subject ourselves to Him (Matt. 10:37). We have to do His will (Matt. 10:37; Lk. 8:21), even as we grow wiser and more advanced. We have to seek His assistance (Ps. 37:5), even as we come more independent. He is the one who provides material prosperity and health (Exod. 15:26; Ps. 103:1-3). Every talent and perfect gift is from Him (Jas. 1:17).

What does the Belgic Confession - art. 1 tell us about God the Provider? 

We must love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and all our strength (Matt. 22:27). We have to direct all our energy and strength towards Him and be tired at the end of the day as a result of all the work we do for Him. What is written in **Matt. 6:33**? REMEMBER – Religion is about the God of gifts, not about gifts from God. We may never shift our attention away from him, but must always focus on Him in gratitude and worship.

4.3 **The second commandment**

Exod. 20:4-6 – *You shall not make for yourself an idol ... You shall not bow down to them or worship them ...*

We may not worship God any way we please.

God is an unseen, spiritual God (2 Cor. 3:17, 18) and He must be worshipped in a manner which befits his unequalled magnificence (1st Commandment). Making an

earthly image of Him demeans his omnipotence, exaltedness and omni-presence. God's chosen people follow and worship him through obedience to His Word and Spirit.

God is holy and no image in this sinful world could ever reflect His perfect holiness. Yet, the Bible teaches us that we are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). Christ is the perfect image (Col. 1:15) as well ultimate revelation of God. He came to restore the tarnished image of man.

What does John say about those who believe in the unseen (John 20:29)?



What does the second part of this commandment (i.e. the 3-4 generation in contrast to thousands of generations) teach us about God?



How can we worship God correctly?

There are a number of aspects we should address. Not individually, but in a healthy balance with each other. What does the Bible tell us about the following?

The study of God's Word

1 Pet. 1:19; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17

Prayer for assistance, insight

Is. 45:20; Ps. 69:14; Is. 30:19; Phil. 4:6

Guidance from the Holy Spirit

John 16:13; Rom. 8:14

In gratitude we apply what we have learned

Matt. 7:21, 22; Lk. 6:45-47

4.4 **The third commandment**

Exod. 20:7 – *You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.*

The Name referred to is the Name God gives Himself in Exod. 3:14.

What is this Name? How did the Israelites use this name? What does this Name mean?

This is not just about one Name. It includes all His names, His essence, character, works and miracles. No aspect of God may be misused or demeaned. Taking God's name in vain is devoiding it of meaning.

What happened to the man in Lev. 24:10-23 who misused the Name of God?



What, according to HC - ans. 100, are the consequences of misusing the Name of God?



Yet mankind is blithely taking the Lord's Name in vain on all levels, like in courts (swearing of oaths), with army and bar language, superficial jokes, political power games, etc. Additional examples of blasphemy are: using God's name or derivations thereof as expletive (also in prayer), to lend power to human arguments or by failing to address blasphemy.


What specific form of blasphemy does Matt. 12:31, 32 warn against?




4.5 **What is the fourth commandment?**


Exod. 20:8-11 – Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work.

Why do we observe Sunday as a day of rest?


Exod. 20:11; Deut. 5:15; Ezek. 20:12, 20; Heb. 4:9, 10; HC - ans. 103 (last sentence)



Our day of rest (and church) is on the first day of the week, whilst God rested on the seventh day (Gen. 2:3). Why is that (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10)?


What should Sundays really be about?


Col. 2:16, 17 

What is the most important thing we should do on Sundays?

HC - ans. 38 


What does Heb. 10:25 teach us? 

What four things should you do when going to church?


HC - ans. 38 

Are we not allowed to do any work on Sundays? 

May we buy the newspaper, play sports or do homework on Sundays?

Heb. 12:1, 2 

How can we determine what may or may not be done on Sundays?

Gal. 5:16 

4.6 **The fifth commandment**

Exod. 20:12 – Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.


God is the source of all authority (Rom. 13:1) – the sovereign Creator, Protector and Provider.

The fifth commandment involves our relationship with all authority placed over us, not only parental authority. This commandment is so important that it even contains a promise. Lack of respect for authority will lead to anarchy and chaos. The first type of authority that humans encounter is that of parental authority. This authority widens into all authority (1 Tim. 2; 1 Pet. 2:13) until it eventually includes the church, employer as well as the government (Rom. 13). All people in positions of authority have been appointed by God, but absolute authority still remains in Him.

Are there limits to the level of subordination (Eph. 5:21) we are required to show?


Matt. 10:37; Acts 5:29 

Why is one required to be subject to the authorities?

Rom. 13:17 

What should your attitude be towards a non-Christian government?

What is the church's responsibility toward the youth of the church?

Eph. 4:11-16 

The absolute freedom of an individual limits the freedom of another. Since we live in a complex and sinful society peaceful co-existence is not possible without rules, discipline and authority. God only imposes one rule: Love your neighbour.

Obedience to the authority God has instituted is based on the love commandments. True leaders don't oppress and threaten, but support and assist their followers with love.

Obedience to God's ordered path is to be apparent in all power relationships.

4.7 **The sixth commandment**

Exod. 20:13 – *You shall not murder.*

It is God who gives life and only He can take it away. Since man is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26, 27) that image may not be destroyed (Gen. 9:6).

God bestowed the right to kill on the authorities (Rom. 13:4 et sqq.; HC ans. 105). It is the government's responsibility to protect its citizens and the death penalty serves as a scare tactic to those who plan murder.

Furthermore, we may not deprive someone of his dignity. Hate or prejudice is also transgression of this commandment.

Can words "kill"?

Matt. 5:21-22; 1 John 3:15, 20 

May abortion be legal?

May euthanasia be practiced?


May one fight in a civil war, freedom movement?

May one kill in revenge (Rom. 12:19)?

May one acquire a gun for self-defence?

What about suicide (1 Cor. 3:17)? (How does suicide differ from endangering yourself?)

What is the alternative? What is a positive approach to the sixth commandment?

Matt. 5:44 

Love for your neighbour is essential. It can become apparent on three levels.

Prov. 19:8; Eph. 5:28; Matt. 7:12; 22:39 

4.8 **The seventh commandment**

Exod. 20:14 – *You shall not commit adultery.*

This commandment relates to sexual relationships, an aspect of life overlapped by our relationship with God.

Since God instituted marriage (Gen. 2:18, 21-24) and God's relationship with His people (and Christ and His church) is often elucidated in marital terms (Eph. 5:32), marriage is a holy institution. God instituted marriage for very specific reasons:


1. Gen. 1:28 – To ensure reproduction and inhabitation of the earth

2. Gen. 2:18 – To keep man from being alone


3. Cant. 1:2-4 – To enable enjoyment of this aspect of our lives

The Catechism is vocal on chastity.

What is said about unchasteness?

HC - ans. 108 

What does unchasteness include?


HC - ans. 109 

In contrast to the above, modern man wants to disregard marriage as unnecessary and senseless. Unchasteness and indecency is portrayed as “normal” in movies and on TV. It should be clearly understood, all forms of sexual interaction before or outside of marriage are forbidden by God. Neither adultery (in marriage) nor unchastity (outside marriage) may occur.

In Deut. 22:22 different adulterous/unchaste scenarios are listed including the punishment for each. Other types of immorality like homosexuality is also forbidden (Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9f).

One should rather listen to the words of Paul in the Word where he refers to the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit. We may not share this temple – house of God – with an adulterous woman or a lustful man. Just like God watched over the temple of Solomon and Jesus purified it, you are to watch over your body.


How long does a marriage last?

1 Cor. 7:39 


It does, however, happen that marriages fail. What concession does Moses make?

Matt. 19:7  **Why?** Matt. 19:8 

What does Jesus say about divorce?

Matt. 5:28; 19:9 

Is living together before/without marriage wrong?


1 Cor. 7:36 

4.9 The eighth commandment

Exod. 20:15 – *You shall not steal*

This relates to your relationship with earthly possessions. Material possessions are gifts from (1 Chron. 29:12) and the property of God (Ps. 24:1). When you take what doesn't belong to you, you're not stealing from another person but from God.

How should you use the possessions God has given you?

Lk. 16:10, 12 

This commandment should be viewed in a wider context than just theft. Read HC - ans. 42. Deception, greed, cunning or other kinds of dishonesty in terms of profiteering, inadequate salaries and unproductivity must not be part of your life. The same goes for excessiveness, wastefulness or extravagance.

As a steward of God's creation and property, you must treat His gifts economically and sensibly. You must continue to work in order that you may have enough for yourself and also for others (Eph. 4:2). Abundance should be distributed in assistance of the poor and the oppressed.

Honest and conscientious work will lead to increased productivity, reduction in

unemployment and poverty as well as an end to theft and hijacking. The opposite is clearly set out in 2 Thess. 3:10 and Prov. 10:4.


Yet life is not only about material prosperity (Lk. 12:20). Read the passage about the rich fool and the wise manager for further insight (Lk. 12:13-48).

4.10 **What is the ninth commandment?**

Exod. 20:16 – *You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.*


Truth is a fundamental characteristic of God. He loves the truth and expects the same attitude towards truth from us.

How do you recognise truth?

John 14:6; 17:17 


The Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Truth) leads you to the truth (John 16:13). He instructs you to live in truth towards God, your neighbour and yourself (Gal. 2:5, 14).


The question is: How does the Holy Spirit lead you to truth?

2 Tim. 3:14-17 


In contrast thereto we learn about the devil (John 8:44 in terms of Gen. 3:4, 5):


His fate AS WELL AS that of all liars is well-known.

Rev. 21:8 

What does Eph. 4:25 teach you? 

Gossiping and other false judgement is not permissible (Matt. 7:1, 2, 35). Pay close attention to James' words on "taming" the tongue.

Jas. 3:6 

How sincere are we in the promises we make during confirmation, baptism, marriage and installation as office-bearer?

Consider and comment on the following situations:

Many newspapers or advertisements bend, partly omit or over inflate the truth? Why must judges be objective? Do these principles pertain to us? How are we presented in our testimonials or CV's? How truthfully do we complete our annual tax returns? Is there such a thing as a white lie (Exod. 1:19 or Josh. 2:5)? Can a lie be justified (HC - ans. 43)?


In the end we learn (John 8:32) that the truth will set us free. If we tell the truth, we needn't worry about who we've lied to and what lies we've told.

4.11 **What is the tenth commandment?**


Exod. 20:18 – *"You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.*

Where does sin, transgression of the Ten Commandments, begin?


Jas. 1:14, 15; Rom. 7:7 

The essence of the tenth commandment relates to feelings of *inter alia* greed, envy and jealousy. How does HC - ans. 13 explain the tenth commandment?


The root of all injustice is found in the thoughts/heart of man.


Prov. 4:23 

When did the events of Adam and Eve's expulsion from the garden start?

Gen. 3:7 


While Exod. 20:18 describes coveting in relation to a house, wife and animals, we have to put coveting into the modern context of money, power, knowledge, sex, sport, etc.

What else? How can we live according to God's Law?

Gal. 5:16-18 

Yet not all thoughts and desires are sinful. We are allowed to desire doing good or not to sin, to have that which does not belong to another or to be like God. However, any desire that is negative towards God or our neighbour can turn into sin and must be abandoned immediately.

What does Paul teach us in Phil. 4:6? 

How did Jesus resist Satan's temptations in Matt. 4? 

Negative desires have to be suppressed with self-control.

Gal. 5:22; 1Pet. 2:16 

The tenth commandment protects man's character from sin. The heart and mind must be guarded against sinful desires. According to Prov. 4:23 we must guard our hearts more than anything.

We must guard our thoughts and the desires of our hearts (Prov. 4:23).

Allow God's Law to be the road markings for a safe path through life. Let's follow it in gratitude and in so doing exalt God.