

The Compact Orthodox Catechism: Part 1

Before we start...

What are the goals of this Compact Orthodox Catechism?

This course attempts to provide a broad but very basic understanding of Orthodox Christian faith and practice focusing on where Orthodoxy runs counter to western Christian teaching. Other goals are:

To correct and strengthen the basis on which we understand our lives and make decisions as Orthodox Christian brothers and sisters in Christ, as families and as individuals;

To inform and guide the student toward further study of the Orthodox faith; and

To equip the student to answer basic questions about our Orthodox faith.

This course is designed for people with a biblical Christian background who want to understand how the Orthodox Christian faith differs from Roman Catholic and protestant teaching. Therefore, a good biblical Christian foundation is assumed.

This is not a deep or thorough exploration of Orthodox teaching and tradition. The depth and richness of Orthodox doctrine and tradition cannot be covered in the intentionally limited timeframe of this study. A list of books is provided to guide the student to deeper knowledge and understanding of Orthodox theology and practice. These books were chosen because they are very readable and are faithful in their representation of the Orthodox faith.

What are we planning to cover?

The basis of Orthodox teaching: God's revelation to man; man's experience of God

The teaching of the Orthodox Church on:

The Triune God

The Creation...including man and the angels

The "why" and "what" of creation

Angels and man; the order of creation

Paradise and the Fall

Man, as God created us in the beginning in paradise

The Fall: what it was and what it wasn't

Life of man and the creation after the falling away

Righteousness and salvation before Christ's coming

The advent of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, the God-Man

Wholly God and wholly man

Brief survey of Christological heresies

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Before we start...

What His coming means

His acts and ministry during His life

His death, burial, resurrection and ascension

What's different about Orthodox teaching?

Jesus Christ, the God-man, today

Salvation in the Orthodox faith

What does it mean to be saved?

To be restored to communion with God and to eternal Life

To live in and increase in God's grace

To become gods by grace

To live the Orthodox Life in the Holy Orthodox Church

How are we saved?

Faith and action/works (keeping His commandments)

Confession of faith

Prayer and fasting

Orthodox spirituality

Orthodox process and understanding

Purification, illumination and deification

How do we know God?

Life after death and the end of the Age

What happens when we die?

Jesus' return and the final judgment

Who will be saved?

The Church and the Sacraments

Who is in the Church?

The Clergy and the Laity

The Sacraments of the Orthodox Church

Preparation for the Eucharist

Church attendance

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Before we start...

Overview of Orthodox Worship

Why we worship

The Divine Liturgy

Other services of the Church

Great Feasts of the Lord

We will...

Note how Orthodox teaching is different from Western Christian teaching on each topic

Focus particularly on the aspects of Orthodox spirituality not considered essential by contemporary Protestant and Roman Catholic faiths.

Add a little history to give context and process to how Orthodox teaching was established

Skip ahead if everyone already understands the topics and slow down and discuss the issues and teachings that are more challenging

Provide just a summary of the teaching of the Orthodox Church where it is held in common with the Western Church

Provide a reading list for further exploration of Orthodox teaching

This study was prepared by a convert to the Orthodox faith who has studied and engaged Orthodox teaching and practice for little more than 15 years and makes no claim to successful emulation of those who have truly and fruitfully lived this Orthodox faith. There has been limited review and correction of this study by clergy and others who have also studied Orthodox faith and practice many years. However, this is a new resource which almost certainly contains errors, omissions and/or poorly-stated explanations. Therefore, please be encouraged to raise questions about this study and to make suggestions for improvements.