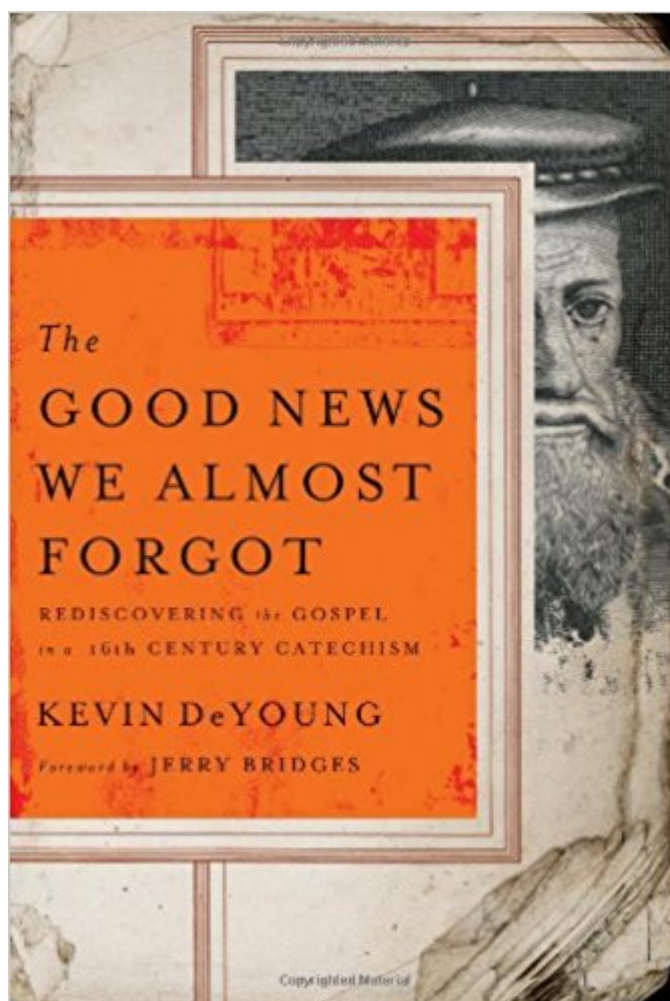


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The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering The Gospel In A 16th Century Catechism



Synopsis

If there is "nothing new under the sun," perhaps the main task now facing the Western church is not to reinvent or be relevant, but to remember. The truth of the gospel is still contained within vintage faith statements. Within creeds and catechisms we can have our faith strengthened, our knowledge broadened, and our love for Jesus deepened. In *The Good News We Almost Forgot*, Kevin DeYoung explores the Heidelberg Catechism and writes 52 brief chapters on what it has shown him. The Heidelberg is largely a commentary on the Apostle's Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer, and deals with man's guilt, God's grace, and believers' gratitude. This book is a clear-headed, warm-hearted exploration of the faith, simple enough for young believers and deep enough for mature believers. DeYoung writes, "The gospel summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism is glorious, its Christ gracious, its comfort rich, its Spirit strong, its God Sovereign, and its truth timeless." Come and see how your soul can be warmed by the elegantly and logically stated doctrine that matters most: We are great sinners and Christ is a greater Savior!

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Customer Reviews

KEVIN DEYOUNG is the Senior Pastor at University Reformed Church (PCA) in East Lansing, Michigan, located near Michigan State University. He serves as a council member at The Gospel Coalition and blogs on TGC's *DeYoung, Restless and Reformed*. Kevin is Chancellor's Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary and a PhD candidate at the

University of Leicester. He has authored several books, including *Just Do Something*, *The Hole in Our Holiness*, *Crazy Busy*, *Taking God at His Word*, and *The Biggest Story*. Kevin and his wife, Trisha, have seven children: Ian, Jacob, Elizabeth, Paul, Mary, Benjamin, and Tabitha.

As my friend Buddy likes to say, the subtitle of a book means more than the title. That is certainly true of Kevin DeYoung's newest book, *The Good News We Almost Forgot*. The add-on is, "Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16th Century Catechism." See what I mean? Buddy was right. I feel like C. J. Mahaney when he states in his review, "I'm sure this will be the best book on the Heidelberg Catechism I've ever read. I know it will be the first." Like most people, I have never read a book on this or any other catechism. I'm glad I did, though. For those of you who have not heard of the Heidelberg Catechism, it was published in 1563 as a way to help with a systematic study of the teaching of the Bible. It takes readers through important theological concepts framed within the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostles' Creed. Ladened with Scripture references, the Heidelberg Catechism helps Bible students to get a bird's-eye view of Reformed Christian doctrine. As for DeYoung's book, it is organized in a similar format as the Catechism. DeYoung divides the Catechism into 52 readings, one for each Lord's Day. In addition to the original text, he provides a short, 2-3 page commentary exploring the themes and offering practical applications in an engaging, readable way. From the virgin birth to the resurrection, from the Trinity to divine providence, from the Sabbath to justice, this book offers a brief discussion on a variety of topics pivotal to the Christian life. The one point of criticism that I have of this book is the chapter on infant baptism, and it is not because I'm a believer-baptism proponent. I am eager to find out why others believe in infant baptism, and search for lucid pieces that explain it. This was not one of them. DeYoung falters here in his confusing, rambling, and (in my opinion) illogical connection of circumcision to paedobaptism. He has to make too many logical jumps and assumptions about entering into "covenantal communities" that he appears to ignore too many passages in the New Testament about baptism. As I reread what I wrote, perhaps my critique is more with infant baptism as a whole rather than DeYoung's defense of it. While it may be odd to read a commentary of a commentary of the Bible, but I highly recommend this book for devotions, public reading, or as an introduction to Christianity. I think that you'll enjoy this work, and gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of both the Heidelberg Catechism and the Bible.

The Good News We Almost Forgot - by Kevin DeYoung
Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?
A. That I am not my own, but belong - body and soul, in life and in death - to my faithful

Savior Jesus Christ" Thus opens the ancient Heidelberg Catechism, and those beautiful lines are known and loved by Christians who have never read the catechism beyond that point. In doctrine the Heidelberg Catechism agrees with the Westminster Catechism, but is warmer and more personal. Kevin DeYoung, author of this book on the Heidelberg Catechism, explains in the introduction his reasons for writing it. He sees that people in the church are often able to give verbal assent to the great doctrines of the Christian faith, but are not really moved by them. He states, "What starts out as new and precious becomes plain and old. What begins as a thrilling discovery becomes a rote exercise. . . . The chief theological task now for the Christian church is not to re-invent or to be relevant but to remember." He then proceeds to divide the catechism into 52 Lord's Day Studies, each containing from 1 to 5 questions. This breakdown makes it ideal for a week-by-week yearlong study, especially suited for personal or family devotions. Does he succeed in somehow bringing new life to this ancient catechism? Yes, he does! He manages to relate these questions to issues facing Christians today. - ("What we don't want are Christians who are admirably trying to relieve suffering in the world but are indifferent toward eternal suffering.") There is a bit of humor, also, in his teaching, ("if people run out of the room crying whenever you talk to them about sovereignty, try using the word providence.") The Heidelberg is a Reformed document - not Lutheran, not Baptist, not emergent, and certainly not Roman Catholic. In dealing with issues raised by these, he offers chapter titles like "Vivacious Baby-Baptizing" - "A Real Presence?" - "The Church of the Reckoned Righteous" - and "The Lord's Supper - How Wide The Divide?" His love and respect for historic Protestant doctrine is evident. It is amazing to see how 16th century Heidelberg covers all of the questions modern Christians may be asking. But it says nothing about homosexuality, which has become a huge issue in today's culture. DeYoung deals with this in a separate Appendix: "Does the Heidelberg Catechism Forbid Homosexual Behavior?" He explains that in the 16th century it was considered inappropriate and obscene to even mention such deeds. Since the catechism was meant first of all for children, they should not be corrupted by learning of such unnatural behavior. "Adults would understand that Answer 87 forbids all vice mentioned in 1 Cr.6:9-10, including homosexuality, which is left out as "too unseemly to mention." I think that answers the question.

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