

Why Learn a Catechism?

Catechesis refers to the ancient Christian practice of systematically teaching essential biblical truths. The word *catechesis* is rooted in the Greek of the New Testament and is most often translated into English as “teaching” or “instruction” (Lk. 1:4; Acts 18:25; Gal. 6:6). Over the centuries the church developed *catechisms* which were simple booklets of questions and answers designed to ground learners in the truths of God’s Word.

So, why learn them? Why return to this ancient practice when there are so many fresh and exciting approaches to Christian education today? The answer is quite simple. Catechesis is a proven biblical practice that helps each new generation “remember” who God is and how He saves.

The greatest challenge the church faces in each new generation is not the challenge of reinventing itself over and over again in order to be relevant. Instead, it is the distinct challenge of remembering... remembering God, His law, and His mighty acts of salvation. The practice of catechesis helps the church remember God from one generation to the next.

The truths in these catechisms are the truths that ignited reformation and revival. These truths have brought life and salvation to dead, dark hearts. These truths show us God in His infinite glory and holiness, and they show us God in His condescending mercy and grace. These truths show us the glory of the gospel. These truths show us Jesus. These truths help us and our children to remember.

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.... Take care lest you forget the Lord.

Deuteronomy 6:5-7



The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* may be broadly divided into three major categories touching on the essential elements of the Christian life. First, the catechism addresses doctrine, what one ought to know and believe about God. Second, the catechism addresses obedience, how one ought to live under God’s commandments. Third, the catechism addresses communion, how one may commune in intimate fellowship with God through prayer and the sacraments. In this way the catechism provides a solid biblical foundation for all who wish to know God, obey his Word, and enjoy close communion with Him.



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GROUNDING in the GOSPEL



Training Our Children in the Way They Should Go

The Christian nurture and spiritual formation of our children is a shared responsibility between parents and church. Fathers, mothers, pastors, elders, and teachers partner together to teach our children the truths of God’s Word in the hope that they would grow up embracing Christ, loving the gospel, and living for the glory of God.

To that end Calvin PCA offers this simple, structured guidance to help parents daily lead their children in the truths of God’s Word. Our prayer is that through daily worship in the home and through faithful study and memorization our children would indeed be “grounded in the gospel.”



Participating with Your Children in “Grounded in the Gospel”

Our goal: Our goal in “Grounded in the Gospel” is to raise children and youth that are able to understand, articulate, and embrace the Reformed Biblical faith. Specifically we are encouraging our covenant children and youth to memorize the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (WSC) by the time they reach High School.

How it works: Each catechism (*First Catechism* and *WSC*) is divided into 10 thematic sections. When he or she is ready a pastor or elder will quiz the student over that section. When a student memorizes a section the church will celebrate the accomplishment with a certificate, special acknowledgment before the congregation, and a small gift. When a student learns an entire catechism the church will celebrate that significant accomplishment with an after-church reception and a special gift.

Which catechism? The *First Catechism* is targeted toward younger children (toddlers and early elementary). Some parents may choose to start with the *First Catechism* and then move on to the *WSC*. Regardless, the ultimate goal is to learn the *WSC* by High School.

What about learning the Bible? Learning the catechisms is not an end in and of itself. The greater end is always to better know God and His Word. The catechisms help to explain and apply God’s Word. Faithful catechesis should ultimately point to Scripture. Your periods of family worship and teaching should be grounded first in God’s Word, and the catechisms may then be used to better understand Scripture.

Where do I find the catechisms? Copies of both the *First Catechism* and the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* are available for free from the church office. They can also be ordered from the PCA bookstore: www.cepbookstore.com.

First Catechism

1. **Q. 1-22:** Knowing God, His Word, His Creation
2. **Q. 23-39:** The Fall: Sin and It’s Consequences
3. **Q. 40-57:** Regeneration; The Covenant of Grace; Justification; Sanctification
4. **Q. 58-75:** Repentance; Faith; The Offices of Christ
5. **Q. 76-83:** God’s Moral Law
6. **Q. 84-94:** The Ten Commandments: Love God
7. **Q. 95-108:** The Ten Commandments: Love Neighbor
8. **Q. 109-125:** The Lord’s Prayer
9. **Q. 126-140:** Baptism and the Lord’s Supper
10. **Q. 141-150:** The Resurrection and the Last Day

Westminster Shorter Catechism

1. **Q. 1-11:** Knowing God, His Word, His Creation
2. **Q. 12-20:** The Fall: Sin and It’s Consequences
3. **Q. 21-28:** Christ’s Person and Work
4. **Q. 29-38:** The Benefits of Redemption
5. **Q. 39-44:** God’s Moral Law
6. **Q. 45-62:** The Ten Commandments: Love God
7. **Q. 63-81:** The Ten Commandments: Love Neighbor
8. **Q. 82-87:** God’s Wrath; Repentance; Faith in Christ
9. **Q. 88-97:** The Means of Salvation
10. **Q. 98-107:** The Lord’s Prayer

*Train up a child in the way he should go;
even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

Proverbs 22:6

