

Family Worship & Catechism

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The Bible bestows the unspeakably high and gloriously rich privilege upon parents to lovingly shepherd, intentionally teach, and consistently educate their children in the works, ways, and Word of God. One way that many throughout church history have done this specifically in the local church and in the family is by means of catechizing each other. To catechize means to instruct someone through a question and answer format. This enhances memorization, internalization, and application (and discussion).

I want to suggest a number of benefits that may arise when a family intentionally teaches the children the Word and works of God through a good, solid, theologically-solid catechism.

1. Parents Have the Wonderful Responsibility of Teaching the Children the Glories of Christ and His Saving Gospel.

When Israel crossed the Jordan River and entered the long-awaited Promised Land, Joshua says that when the children ask their 'fathers' what the stones represent and the fathers then must teach their children of the works of God's mighty deliverance (Josh 4.21). Fathers are the ones specifically mentioned in Ephesians 6.4 to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. The Fathers are the ones Paul particularly speaks to in Colossians 3.21 not to exasperate their children so that they will not lose heart. Undoubtedly, both father and mother have the wonderful opportunity to invest spiritually into the children. But the Word of God gives the primary responsibility to the head of the household, namely, the father. The glorious gospel of Christ and His saving work accomplished at Calvary must be constantly taught to the children. It can take various forms and it may be discussed at different times and in a handful of ways but the fundamental precept remains – parents must teach their children about the gospel of God's grace as found in the person of Jesus Christ. One way that this can be constantly brought to bear in the home is by means catechizing the children.

2. Children from the Youngest of Years Are Able to Memorize, Internalize, and Comprehend More Than We May Expect.

It is a sad reality in our world today that many have the persuasion that young children cannot memorize, internalize, and comprehend divine truth. This is not only the case in the world system but how sad it is that this has infected the church. The youngest of children from the youngest of years can learn the most basic catechism questions that teach unspeakably solid theology. For instance, one question is: "who made you?" The answer: "God." That answer alone goes completely contrary to the tide of our current culture's viewpoint on how humans came into being. Yet the youngest of children can understand that God has made them in His image, by His marvelous grace, and out of His sovereign love. Never suppose that your children are too young to learn theology. They already have formed a theology in their heart and mind. Their god might be themselves, or dad, or mom, or some superhero. But we must take the powerful, living, and supernatural Word of God and shape their theology so that the children learn theological truth. A fabulous vehicle by which to do this is a catechism.

3. Repetition Remains One of the Keys in Imprinting a Particular Truth on a Person's Mind and Heart. Repetition Breeds Internalization.

Catechizing demands that one repeat the questions and answers to theological questions over and over again. The more a young child repeats the catechism, the more God will imprint theological truth on the person's mind and heart. The catechizing of people by constantly going over questions and answers (with Scriptural support) breeds the internalization of theological truth. Of course, God the Spirit must take the theological knowledge and sovereignly bestow regeneration but we must play our part and obediently follow Him by investing the works and words of God in our children.

4. The Fathers Particularly Have Been Given the Privilege of Teaching, Instructing, and Educating the Children in the Home.

Psalm 78.3 reveals that the fathers have told the children about the sayings of old (cf. Ps 78.1-8). The fathers should lead in family worship. They should lead in teaching the children, they should preside over the instruction of the children. They should guide the education of their children. This means that the fathers must be actively and intentionally engaged with their children so that he guides, guards, and shepherds them as they grow up and mature. Even when the father works and is gone much of the day, he can still lead the educating of the children through the mother so she might invest into the children during the day as he is at work. He should know what they are learning. He should strive to have times of deliberate teaching with each of the children. He is called to bring them up in discipline and instruction (Eph 6.4). A wonderful opportunity exists daily for fathers to teach and educate the children in the ways of God during the family worship times. And when a family engages in catechism (during family worship or during other discipleship opportunities), this only enhances the father's instruction of his children.

5. A Wonderful Venue for Catechizing the Family Might Consist of Setting Aside Some Time for Catechizing During Family Worship.

Family worship is the deliberate that is consistently set aside by each family to regularly engage in the singing of God's Truth, the reading of God's Word, and the taking a hold of God through prayer. Another element that some have incorporated through church history is the catechizing of children. The time that a family may devote to catechizing may be gauged by the children's ages and how many children are present. Nevertheless, going over one or a few catechism questions regularly can teach theological truth to everyone present.

6. God Gives the Whole Bible so that We Would Know Him and Have a Full, Well-Rounded Theology. We Must Teach the Whole Spectrum of Systematic and Biblical Theology to Our Children Without Neglecting Hard or Uncomfortable Doctrines.

Going through a catechism allows a family to deliberately work through the entire spectrum of theological truth. A good catechism will cover topics such as God, man, Satan, angels, the gospel, the ordinances, the church, eternal destinies, and practical Christian living. There are some harder theological concepts (e.g., election, predestination, God's eternal nature) or uncomfortable concepts (e.g., reprobation, hell, Satan) that might easily be overlooked if a family does not have a guide. But to faithfully work through a good catechism enhances the joy of working through the entirety of God's Word. As it has been said, God gave the whole Bible to make a whole Christian. We should examine all of Scripture to have a well-rounded theology. We must teach this theology to our children and an excellent aid to this is the catechizing of the young people.

For the Catechism that Christ Fellowship Bible Church uses, go to www.CFBCSTL.org