

**Child Discipleship at CPC**  
**An Abbreviated Handout for Parenting Seminar**  
**Rev. Preston Graham Jr.**

**Introduction:**

**A Biblical Promise:**

*For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house.*

Excerpts from Acts 2:39; Gen. 17:7; Acts 16:31  
Compiled in BCO 65.5 pertaining to the promises of God to Covenant Parents

**A Parental Confession:**

1. *Do you acknowledge your child's need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?*
2. *Do you claim God's covenant promises in (his) behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for (his) salvation, as you do for your own?*
3. *Do you now unreservedly consecrate your child to God, and promise, in humble reliance upon divine grace, that you will endeavor to set before (him/her) a godly example, that you will pray with and for (him/her), that you will teach (him/her) the doctrines of our holy religion, and that you will strive, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring (him/her) up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?*  
The Vows Of Covenant Parenting (BCO 65.5)

**The Four Pillars of Child Discipleship:**

**I. The Importance of a Home and Church Cooperative:**

BCO

28-1. The spiritual nurture, instruction and training of the children of the church are committed by God *primarily* to their parents. They are responsible to the church for the faithful discharge of their obligations. It is a principal duty of the church to promote true religion in the home. True discipleship involves learning the Word of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit both at home and in the church. Without learning there is no growth and without growth there is no discipline and without discipline there is sin and iniquity (1 Timothy 4:7).

28-2. The home and the church should also make special provision for instructing the children in the Bible and in the church Catechisms. To this end Sessions should establish and conduct under their authority Sunday schools and Bible classes, and adopt such other methods as may be found helpful. The Session shall encourage the parents of the church to guide their children in the catechizing and disciplining of them in the Christian religion.

28-3. The church should maintain constant and sympathetic relations with the children. It also should encourage them, on coming to years of discretion, to make confession of the Lord Jesus Christ and to enter upon all privileges of full church membership. If they are wayward they should be cherished by the church and every means used to reclaim them.

**II. The Importance of Experiencing the Gospel in Family Relations:**

The gospel is as much “caught” as “taught.” There is a culture to the gospel that makes it safe to be morally flawed without digressing to moral licentiousness, where forgiveness and grace are the norm rather than the exception. To be sure, “law” and “grace” are not only compatible, but are also necessary components of the gospel wherein true confession and faith are nurtured. The culture of the Gospel will show itself when we “speak the truth” to one another about the gospel in love—which is to be one another’s greatest human advocate *for* grace. (Notice that I have interpreted the famous Ephesians 4:15 passage in its greater context as to NOT mean “be each others worse critic.”) The culture of the gospel will both cherish family “rules” in order to protect family identity and patterns of family interaction, but without a rigid and/or legalistic practice of these rules. The culture of the gospel relative to parenting covenant children will assume in them Christ’s Spirit by baptism, albeit awaiting and nurturing them to discern a personal and self-aware faith as an emerging adult.

## II. The Importance of *Family Worship* (not to be confused with Christian Education/Instruction)

There is perhaps no more single “program” that will nurture faith than for the whole family to practice that faith in the worship of God together. Family worship is not education or Bible School. It is not even primarily an exercise of parenting children, at least not directly. It is a time when we are all as children of God, remembering Him and cherishing His gracious gifts to us both in creation and redemption. Good family worship is simple, brief and God centered. It will include 1) singing a hymn or two (preferably one that will transcend age), 2) reading of a passage of scripture with minimal comment other than to get the gist of what we are to remember about God and our salvation, and 3) a season of corporate prayer (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication(intercession)—“ACTS”).

## IV. The Importance of Catechism Training:

Catechism is simple question/answer summaries of what the Bible principally teaches according to the consensus of the church over the ages. We use the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, specially written to instruct children in the faith, albeit in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Notwithstanding some difficult and/or outdated language, we feel that it is important that our children grow up to not only learn the teachings of the Christian faith, but also to do this with the confidence that comes from sharing in the same faith, even with the same language, that was shared in by the greater Christian family over a 2000 year history. While words like “justification” and “effectual calling,” are not often heard today, they are words none the less that served to anchor the hopes and convictions of our spiritual mothers and fathers, even as to allow us to participate in a living conversation with them. To be sure, our young children may not understand the concepts completely, or hardly at all in some cases. But don’t be mistaken into thinking that nothing is happening. Quite the contrary, by catechism instruction the church/parent is placing important categories into the child’s memory, categories (or files of facts) that will become the basis of distinguishing and understanding things taught in sermons, Sunday School instruction, and the various “waves” of catechism review and instruction that will be repeated throughout our curriculum (see below for three distinct “waves” or stages of catechism instruction that are roughly patterned after the classical categories of “grammar, dialectic and rhetorical” stages of learning-- wherein each stage is vital to the others).

The best way to teach catechism is to break the sentences up into short phrases, and take time to teach each phrase in succession to the other. Typically, no more than one catechism question can be learned per week, and then as more and more are learned, a careful review of previous catechism will require perhaps more weeks per catechism. The parent is encouraged

to begin each new catechism by a reading of scripture (these are also provided in the *Westminster Catechism*, but of course other pertinent scriptures can be read as well—the important thing is to keep it to 1 or 2 short passages, less we overwhelm.) Again, the parent is encouraged to KEEP IT SIMPLE! There will be other contexts for the truths to be understood more deeply and personally. Also be encouraged that “memorization” is much easier for younger children than parents given that they are not yet print oriented in their learning. That being said, catechized children will find it easier and easier to memorize as the process continues. You may also want to reward children for their diligence with a special outing or treat with the family upon completion of a certain number of catechisms. We should learn to celebrate their work and accomplishments!

*A Suggested Age-Specific Program of Catechism Instruction:*

At Home:

- *The First Catechism*: Starting at around 2-2.5 years of age. They are very simple and good for getting your child started. However, you will not be able to finish all 145 of these questions before starting the more traditional Westminster questions. You will want to reduce them to no more than 52—a recommendation of appropriate questions is here attached to include the more fundamental teachings of a confessional theology, albeit at a very basic “level” in preparation for the *Westminster Shorter Catechisms*.  
(Another resource for scripture is Susan Hunt’s ABC Bible Verses, presently being used during the “Young Mom’s Bible Study” every Tuesday at church)
- *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*: Beginning around 4-6 years old (somewhat dependent on your child), which is when they also begin to attend the Children’s Assembly for brief catechism review and instruction. (see below) The Pastor recommends that each covenant child memorize questions 1-42, 84-88, 94, 96, and 98. It is recommended that the student become familiar with all the remaining questions, perhaps reading them with parents followed by a brief explanation.

Warning! Throughout the catechism process, DON’T FORGET THE GOSPEL! Most especially, the gospel is taught in the catechisms by the order of doctrines themselves.. For instance, notice that the “chief end of man” to “glorify God and enjoy Him forever” is immediately followed by the reality that we, in our sin, don’t do this—such that as the order continues as to accomplished this “chief end” by faith in Christ and applied to us in justification and then followed by the grace of God that enables us more and more to glorify and enjoy God forever in sanctification, etc. The point of the order is significant, that we are ultimately assured of God’s love not by means of our ability to glorify God, but by means of Christ’s work to glorify God on our behalf. This fundamental “order of salvation” that is displayed throughout the Shorter Catechisms cannot be lost at any single point throughout, lest the whole program deteriorate into a legalistic venture of works righteousness, even as puffed up with the pride of memorizing catechisms answers!

At Church: *Children’s Assembly for ages 4 through 6<sup>th</sup> grade*

Catechism’s are reviewed with a content related hymn, brief instruction and memory review.)

V. Children’s School of Discipleship at CPC: (A Sunday School Curriculum & Other Age Specific Discipleship Opportunities through the Church) SEE UPDATES ON CHILDREN TABLE