

## Training Up Our Children in the Faith

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When parents in our church present their children for baptism, they express their commitment to seeing to the Christian nurture of their children by answering the following questions in the affirmative:

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/her behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for his/her salvation, as you do for your own?
3. Do you now unreservedly dedicate 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?

**Here is the counsel that we give to the parents of our church relating to how to nurture their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord:**

Cultivate the habit of **family worship**. You can do this around the dinner table each night or at another convenient time in the day. This does not need to be lengthy, especially with younger children. It is simply a time to read a portion of Scripture together, briefly discuss it, pray together, and perhaps sing a hymn.

Spend regular time **reading** good Christian literature together. We recommend Kevin DeYoung's *The Biggest Story* as a story Bible because it provides a faithful summary of the biblical message and avoids the use of full images of Christ. There are a number of simplified versions of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (the Great Commission Publications version for younger children; the Crossway version for older children). Simonetta Carr's Christian biographies for children are an excellent resource. These books are available at [wtsbooks.com](http://wtsbooks.com), or you can order them through our website by filling out a book request form on the "GPC Members" page.

Be **wise stewards of electronic devices and media**. Studies show that being immersed in electronic media from an early age has a detrimental effect on a person's attention

span, which will obviously have negative ramifications for Christian discipleship. Emphasize reading over distraction. Wait as long as you can before introducing electronic devices to your children. When your children do begin to use them, set up time restrictions and be sure that more time is spent reading, having conversations, and engaging in other activities than using devices. When older children begin using the internet, make sure to use filters and accountability software (such as Covenant Eyes) to protect against harmful material.

Help them **memorize Scripture** (especially portions of the Psalms and many of the passages that are used during the silent meditation time before worship).

Use the **catechisms** to teach them the faith. Help them memorize the First Catechism (ages 2-8) and the Westminster Shorter Catechism (ages 6 and up). Free copies of both are available on the table in the entryway to the sanctuary.

As soon as they begin to read, **get them a Bible** and help them memorize the books of the Bible in order. Have them bring their Bible to church. As they get older, teach them how to make personal daily Bible reading and prayer a regular habit.

Bring them to **Sunday School** and talk about what they are learning.

Lastly, **bring them to worship each week**. Public worship on the Lord's Day is at the very heart of the Christian faith because it is the context in which the Lord nourishes his people in the faith through the ministry that he has given for that purpose. While we provide a nursery for young children during the morning worship service, we encourage you to begin having your children with you in worship as soon as you feel you can do so in order that you may teach them how to worship the Lord. **The following suggestions can help you prepare your children (and yourself) for worship:**

- Cultivate the habit of attending **morning and evening worship** each Lord's Day.
- Explain the meaning of the various **parts of the worship service**.
- Cultivate a **sense of anticipation and expectancy** in your children as they think about worship. Christians should come to worship with a spirit of expectation, in hopes "that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts 3:20) We should say with the psalmist, "How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God." (Ps. 84:1-2)

- **Prepare** for worship ahead of time. Spend time on Saturday evening reading the next day's sermon text (printed in the previous week's bulletin) and praying for the preacher and all the hearers. Get to bed at a decent hour. Wake up early enough to be able to get to church on time without being rushed.
- Visit the **restroom** before the start of worship.
- **Sit together** as a family. If you have a large family with several young children, consider asking a single adult or older couple to sit with you to help the children participate in the service.
- Teach your child that he should prepare for worship by getting himself quiet and **focusing on the Lord** after the announcements have been given. Remind him that he is in the presence of the Lord.
- Encourage your child to **participate** in all the parts of the service by singing, praying and reading along. Teach him how to find hymns, creeds, and Bible passages. Help him memorize the Lord's Prayer.
- Take note of when we celebrate the **sacraments** of baptism and the Lord's Supper and regularly explain their meaning to your child, using questions 91-97 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism as a guide. The Lord's Supper is celebrated every week at the evening service and on the first Sunday of the month at the morning service.
- Encourage your child to **take notes on the sermon**. Children who have not yet learned to write can draw pictures related to the sermon. Discourage the drawing of pictures that have nothing to do with the sermon. Have your child share with you what he has written or drawn after the service. Discuss and pray about the sermon later on the Lord's Day (perhaps over a meal). Praise your child's attempts to listen to the sermon and participate in the service.

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*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 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.*

~ Deuteronomy 6:5-7 (ESV)