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EQUIPPING YOUNG PARENTS TO DISCIPLE THEIR
CHILDREN THROUGH CATECHESIS AT FIRST
BAPTIST CHURCH OF MOODY, ALABAMA

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EQUIPPING YOUNG PARENTS TO DISCIPLE THEIR
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To Stephanie: my beautiful wife and indispensable partner in ministry

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- BDAG Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed.
- NCC *New City Catechism: 52 Questions & Answers for Our Hearts & Minds*

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PREFACE

“The call to ministry is a call to prepare.” I remember when Dr. Albert Mohler Jr. exhorted a room filled with potential Southern Seminary students to consider higher education in response to God’s call to ministry. From that moment, God has afforded me the opportunity to grow in the pursuit of theological studies, but more importantly, to grow in love for him and his church. Above all, I am thankful that while I was dead in my trespasses and sins, God made me “alive together with Christ” (Eph 2:5).

Throughout this journey, I have come to appreciate my wife even more. Stephanie, you have been the strongest source of encouragement for me, and I am grateful for every earnest word of reassurance. You have helped me to see the “big picture,” and to not despair over imperfect drafts and looming deadlines. You truly are one of life’s sweetest comforts. I also want to express my appreciation for my two beautiful children, Luke and Emma Jane. You have been a living testimony of Psalm 127:5. God has blessed me richly through the gift of these two “arrows.” Your unending supply of smiles, hugs, and laughter has filled the heart of your earthly father with joy.

Moreover, this project could not have been completed apart from the assistance of Dr. Rob Plummer who graciously served as my doctoral supervisor. I was first introduced to Dr. Plummer in Greek syntax while studying as an mDiv student. I was grateful for his passionate teaching style and academic prowess; however, I have been most impacted by Dr. Plummer’s humble and pastoral posture. He has not only challenged me to grow in theological study, but more importantly has helped me to grow in devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Further, I want to thank my pastor, Dr. Brad Moseley, for encouraging me to

pursue this doctoral degree. You have shown by example what it means to love and shepherd the people God entrusts to our care. Thank you for your ministry to my family, and I'll never be able to fully express what you and your family have meant to us.

Austin Hunter Roe

Moody, Alabama

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

First Baptist Church of Moody, Alabama, exists in order to bring honor and glory to God. The church emphasizes the priority of worship, evangelism, and discipleship as the primary vehicles in which to bring God glory throughout the surrounding community. First Baptist Church Moody (FBCM) strives to replace an inactive “come and see” mentality in favor of a missional “go and tell” strategy. In order to accomplish this objective, the church must direct and strategically organize the various activities and programs in a manner that leads families to behold the glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The overall health of FBCM will be significantly impacted when parents are initiating formal times of Christian discipleship and instruction for their children. Christian parents are commissioned by God to be the primary disciple-makers in the lives of their children (Deut 6:1-9). The Lord produces spiritual growth; yet, he allows parents to partner with him to accomplish his purposes (1 Cor 3:7). FBCM aims to equip young families to disciple their children in obedience to God.

Context

Over the last 130 years, First Baptist Church of Moody, Alabama, has aspired to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ. Despite the rich and lengthy history of FBCM, the present-day church body has lacked proportionate representation among the twenties and thirties age demographic. Throughout the last year, FBCM has committed to pray specifically for its ministry to young families. Prior to this prayer initiative, FBCM has not offered any significant or specific ministries to young families with children. Young families will attend the large corporate service on Sunday morning; however, the families

are practically alienated from one another. The typical young family would gather for the worship service and depart without any meaningful interaction with other young families.

Recently, God has added more young families to the body of FBCM, and there have been various positive indications of spiritual growth. For example, young couples have begun to use their spiritual gifts in service to the church (1 Pet 4:10-11). The church had expressed an urgent need for gifted educators to teach children's Sunday school classes. God called many of the young parents at FBCM to fill those specific positions. Further, as God blessed FBCM with more young families, the nursery ministry quickly outgrew the current volunteer staff, and another opportunity for service was formed. Newly-joined young families fulfilled these ministry needs within the church. The young families of FBCM prioritize service to the local body (1 Cor 12:12-27), which has been a positive and encouraging indicator of God's work in the church's young families.

Another strength of the young family's ministry context at FBCM is the recent launch of the young couples' Sunday school class. In July of 2019, the pastoral staff of FBCM began an initiative to start a Sunday school class for families in their twenties and thirties. FBCM launched the "Life Together" young family's class in October 2019 with seven couples. Since October 2019, the class has grown to sixteen couples. The majority of the married couples within the class have children under the age of ten. The Life Together class promotes the primacy of God's word through expository teaching. The bulk of the one-hour class is characterized by an in-depth study and application of specific passages of Scripture. In addition, the remaining time of the class is spent in prayer for one another. Though a new spiritual discipline for many of the young families, this time of prayer has become a more meaningful part of the Life Together class as families have shared more earnest and vulnerable prayer requests.

Additionally, the young adults of FBCM have indicated a genuine desire for additional Bible study resources. The young families of FBCM are frequently probing into how to apply the wisdom of God's word to specific circumstances within their lives.

Several young families are discerning the sufficiency of God's word to address all of life's situations (2 Tim 3:16-17). Some of the new families are recent converts, and they are eager for instruction in how to adequately train their children in the fear of the Lord. However, they do not currently possess a practical methodology in how to disciple their children. These inquiries are an exciting indication of spiritual growth. Overall, the Lord has blessed the young family's ministry at FBCM; however, there are many challenges that will require a Bible-centered and God-exalting solution.

One challenge facing FBCM's young adult ministry is the lack of consistent church attendance. The majority of parents within the young adult ministry have young children, which frequently contributes to an overwhelming busyness of life. From chronically sick children to travel baseball teams, some of our young families have neglected to gather with the church due to other commitments and circumstances. Moreover, this apathy towards consistent church attendance is related to a defective ecclesiology. What is the role of the local church, and why should my family prioritize corporate worship with other believers? Currently, this question remains practically unanswered for many of the young families at FBCM. However, this indifference is largely due to an overall ignorance regarding the Bible's teaching on Christian fellowship. Without a system of accountability, young families will frequently be tempted to engage in trite worldly affairs on the Lord's Day. The young families of FBCM are in dire need of further Christian training and discipleship.

Rationale

The greatest need in the current ministry context was for families at FBCM to actively disciple their children. The future generation depends upon the faithful instruction from Godly parents. The primary discipleship for children must exist within the home. Much of the theological illiteracy among young adults can be mitigated in the future with the proper implementation of formal discipleship for children. The ministry of

the local church is an integral supplement to the ongoing work of training children in the ways of the Lord. Unfortunately, parents can assume the local church is solely responsible for the spiritual formation of their children. However, the Bible does not consign formal discipleship supremely to members of the clergy. Rather, the Bible's consistent testimony for Christian families is that the primary responsibility for a child's spiritual formation resides with the parents.

However, the weakness is composed of a two-part issue. The families of FBCM will not faithfully disciple their children until they have received adequate training and instruction in how to fulfill their God-given directive. Without proper instruction, parents also remain ignorant to the importance of local church service and involvement. Many of the young families at FBCM are relatively new believers. Consequently, several families were in need of specific teaching in the Bible's overall metanarrative. Parents who are equipped with a robust biblical worldview are better prepared to train their children in the fear of the Lord. The objective of FBCM is not to merely have young families content with casual commitment to the Lord; rather, FBCM aspires to "present everyone mature in Christ" (Col 1:28). Parents cannot disciple their children if they have not been properly disciplined and trained themselves. God's will for parents to disciple their children is evidently clear in the Bible, and FBCM is committed to equip parents with the training and biblical foundation necessary to walk in obedience to the Lord.

Ephesians 4:11-14 reinforced the biblical rationale for this project. The ultimate goal for this project was to "equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph 4:12). The parents of young children at FBCM have a God-ordained mandate to labor for the souls of their children. Parents in the Life Together class have inquired of resources to guide formal periods of Christian discipleship for their children. In order for the parents to be prepared for this task, the local church must come alongside parents to train them in uncompromising Christian doctrine so that "we may no longer be children, tossed to and

fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14). The local church has been designed by God as the training ground for ministry. According to Ephesians 4:11-14, one can discern the clear will of God for the church’s role in equipping the saints for ministry. FBCM must address this need with a firm resolve to walk in obedience to the Lord.

Yet, the young families of FBCM were in dire need of further training in understanding the entire purview of Scripture’s storyline. Theological instruction in this context is a prerequisite for parents to commence their duty of discipling their children. Deuteronomy 6 commissions parents to be the primary disciple-makers for their children. God does not relegate the responsibility for a child’s discipleship to a ministry staff. Rather, parents are commanded to “teach them [the words of God] diligently to your children” (Deut 6:7a). In order to faithfully teach their children the words of God, parents must be catechized and formally trained themselves.

Furthermore, God prescribes the means and frequency of family discipleship. You “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” (Deut 6:7b). For many parents, one spiritual conversation per week with their children could seem overwhelming; yet, God requires daily commitment from parents to instruct their children in the “fear of the Lord” (Deut 6:2).

Finally, the pedagogical practice of catechesis has supplied Christian parents throughout the history of the church with a practical method of educating their children in the words of the Lord.¹ The practicality of the catechism proves to be a straightforward instrument for Christian parents to disciple their children “when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” The

¹ Gerald L. Sittser, “The Catechumenate and the Rise of Christianity,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 6, no. 2 (2013): 180.

question and answer format of the catechism allows the parents to initiate spiritual discussions throughout each day.

This task was undoubtedly laborious; however, it proved vital. The previous typical complacency threatened tragic consequences if left unchecked. The biblical command for parents to disciple their children is irrefutable, and it served as the strongest rationale for the given project. Further, God has provided the local church as the means by which believers can grow in service to the Lord Jesus Christ and his church. May God be richly glorified as more young families faithfully train their children in the instruction and fear of the Lord

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip the young parents of First Baptist Church in Moody, Alabama, to disciple their children by means of catechesis.

Goals

Three specific goals were needed in order to equip the young families of FBCM to faithfully disciple their children. The goals systematically served the project by accurately assessing the current discipleship practices among young families at FBCM with the ultimate aim of assisting these same families to incorporate faithful models of discipleship based upon the practice of catechesis within their homes.

1. The first goal was to assess the current biblical knowledge of Christian doctrine and current discipleship practices among the young families of FBCM.
2. The second goal was to develop a six-week curriculum that utilized the *New City Catechism* in order to teach fundamental Christian doctrine to the young families of FBCM.² The curriculum instructed parents as to their foundational role in discipling their children and also covered doctrinal subjects such as God, man, the work of Christ, sanctification, and glorification. Additionally, each lesson instructed parents how to practically incorporate the material from the *NCC* to catechize one's children.

² *New City Catechism: 52 Questions & Answers for Our Hearts & Minds* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).

3. The third goal was to equip the young families of FBCM to employ the newly developed curriculum as an instructional framework for the active discipleship of their children.

To ensure the satisfactory accomplishment of these three goals, a specific research methodology was developed and implemented that measured the successful completion of these three goals.³ This methodology is described in the following section.

Research Methodology

The aforementioned goals served as the supportive framework for this entire ministry project. The first goal was to assess the current biblical knowledge of Christian doctrine and current discipleship practices among the young families of FBCM. This goal was measured by administering the Family Discipleship Practices and Theological Understanding Inventory (FDPTUI) to ten family units who had at least one child aged twelve months or greater residing in the home.⁴ The parent(s) were surveyed regarding current family discipleship practices within the home. Further, the survey ascertained the level of theological competency and confidence regarding core Christian doctrines. This FDPTUI functioned as a pre-test that established a baseline for the average young family's discipleship routine. This goal was considered successfully met when ten family units completed the FDPTUI and the inventory was analyzed yielding a clearer picture of the current discipleship practices and theological competency among the young families of FBCM.

The second goal was to develop a six-week curriculum that utilized the New City Catechism in order to teach fundamental Christian doctrine to the young families of FBCM. The curriculum instructed parents as to their foundational role in discipling their children and also covered doctrinal subjects such as God, man, the work of Christ,

³ All of the research instruments used in this project will be performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

⁴ See appendix 1.

sanctification, and glorification. Additionally, each lesson instructed parents how to practically incorporate the material from the *NCC* to catechize one's children. This goal was measured by an expert panel who employed a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.⁵ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90% of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. If the 90% benchmark was not initially met, the material was revised until it met the standard.

The third goal was to equip the young families of FBCM to employ the newly developed curriculum as an instructional framework for the active discipleship of their children. This goal was measured by the re-administration of the FDPTUI to ten family units who attended or viewed a minimum of four out of the six teaching sessions. This second FDPTUI survey measured the increase in family doctrinal knowledge and discipleship practices. This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre and post FDPTUI scores.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

Catechesis. The church's historical method of instructing "new believers in the rudiments of Christianity."⁶ The term derives from the Greek verb *κατηχέω* meaning "to teach or instruct."⁷

Catechism. The catechism refers to "the actual content in which persons are

⁵ See appendix 2.

⁶ J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 21.

⁷ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, Williams F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 534.

catechized.”⁸ This is typically accomplished through rote memorization of doctrinal material in a question and answer format. The catechism is often produced in the form of tracts or short books.

Family-equipping ministry model. A ministry model that emphasizes the unique spiritual influence parents have with their children. Rather than channeling ministry efforts solely through church programs, this model ensures that parents are “acknowledged, equipped, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children’s lives.”⁹ The church comes alongside parents to provide them the resources and opportunities to help shape the spiritual lives of their children.

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the reliability of the pre and post FDPTUI surveys were contingent upon honest responses from participants. Dishonest answers would threaten to preclude an accurate assessment of measurable growth in discipleship practices and doctrinal knowledge. To mitigate this limitation, each family unit selected a four-digit identification code in lieu of recording names. This increased the participants’ confidence that their answers would remain anonymous. Second, consistent attendance throughout the teaching sessions was imperative for the successful completion of the project’s goals. To mitigate this limitation, each of the six teaching sessions were video recorded and made available online.

Two delimitations applied to this project. First, participation in this project was confined to parents who had at least one child twelve months or older. Further, the participants were between the ages of twenty to fifty-nine. This delimitation arose in part due to the age-specific demographic of the Life Together Sunday School class at FBCM.¹⁰ Second, the teaching curriculum’s duration was restricted to six weeks. This

⁸ Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 26.

⁹ Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 132.

¹⁰ Twelve months was selected as the minimum age for children of participants in order that

limited timeframe allowed sufficient time to conduct pre and post surveys in addition to the development and implementation of the curriculum. Further, this delimitation allowed enough time to gauge a measurable change in family discipleship practices following the conclusion of the formal teaching period.

Conclusion

God has designed the Christian home to serve as the primary training ground for a child's discipleship. Unfortunately, many Christ-professing parents have abdicated their role in instructing their children in the fear of the Lord. The local church is required to come alongside parents to equip and hold them accountable for the discipleship of their children. Practically, where can a parent begin in this process? How can a parent faithfully pass on the fundamentals of the Christian faith to their children? The catechism is a time-tested resource utilized by the church throughout the last two millennia to saturate the minds of young children with the truth of God's word. Chapter 2 of this project explores the biblical testimony of a parent's fundamental responsibility to disciple their children.

the child would have enough cognitive ability to begin understanding basic concepts of the Christian faith. Further, the age of parents was restricted to focus on parents with young children. The majority of parents in the Life Together Sunday School class at FBCM have children younger than twelve.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL TESTIMONY CONCERNING DISCIPLESHIP WITHIN THE HOME

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, demonstrates the necessity of gospel proclamation for salvation (Rom 10:14-17). In contemporary vernacular, Paul may have articulated it like this: “If someone does not step up and preach the gospel, neither the Jew nor the Greek will believe in Christ.” God has prescribed the preached word to serve as the means for the general and effectual calling of his people, and he has also prescribed the Christian home to serve as the primary theological training ground for children. Few evangelical Christians would deny the importance of gospel proclamation for evangelism; however, some may find God’s prescription of discipleship within the home to be surprising. God has commanded Christian parents to engage their children in formal discipleship. The Lord’s statute is explicit. Christian parents are able to respond with either obedience or disobedience. Further, God has appointed the local church as the means to equip Christian parents to disciple their children. This second chapter will exegete four pivotal passages that disclose God’s design for a child’s discipleship.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

A key theme in the book of Deuteronomy is the importance of covenant faithfulness. Israel’s wilderness wanderings were drawing to a conclusion as Yahweh prepared his people for entrance into the Promised Land. Israel’s subsistence and success in the Promised Land was intricately tied to covenant faithfulness (Deut 30:16-18). How would Israel’s future generations be conscious of and committed to the covenant? Deuteronomy 6 explicitly identifies Israelite parents as the primary instruments for continued covenant fidelity. Motivated by a genuine love and fear of Yahweh, Jewish

parents were exhorted to labor diligently towards their children's discipleship in the Lord. God delineated a practical method for training children in the covenant fundamentals: repetition and rote memorization.

Mosaic Covenant

The concept of covenant is pervasive throughout the scope of Deuteronomy. Moses reminded the nation of Israel of her covenant obligations to Yahweh in the land of Moab on the outskirts of the Promised Land. Biblical scholars have classified the Mosaic covenant as analogous in form to other ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties.¹ Yahweh is the unique and supreme God of Israel, and he serves as the suzerain in the formal covenant with Israel.² As the initiator of the Mosaic covenant, Yahweh requires unqualified obedience from Israel. Within this conditional covenantal framework, Deuteronomy 6:1-9 expounds the means for covenant compliance. Similar to Deuteronomy 5:31, Moses directs the reader's attention to the singular "commandment" in the opening verse of chapter 6. The intentional use of the singular form clearly references the totality of the Mosaic Law. The specifics of the Law are fleshed out through the various "statutes and the rules" (Deut 6:1a). Peter Craigie contends that the "statutes and rules" are in apposition to one another "describing the general laws."³ Thus, the standard of covenant obedience would be measured by conformity to the entirety of the covenant commands, since the full purview of the Law is in view.

The latter half of Deuteronomy 6:1 recounts Yahweh's authorship of the Mosaic covenant. Moses reminded the nation of Israel that the covenant obligations were

¹ Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 167.

² Edward J. Woods, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 55.

³ Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 92.

a product of divine revelation (Deut 6:1b). Moses received the statutes and rules in a priestly manner. Namely, God entrusted him to serve as the mediator of the covenant. The previous generation in Israel had witnessed “Yahweh in his theophanic glory and responded in appropriate fear.”⁴ Fear was indeed the appropriate response of the early Israelite generation, and Moses demanded commensurate reverence from his contemporaries. The mediatorial role of Moses is an important consideration for how the covenant stipulations were to be transmitted. God entrusted Moses with the commands who in turn disseminated the statutes and rules among the people. To safeguard covenant fidelity, Moses instructed Israelite parents to mediate the covenant in their homes through faithful impartation to their children (Deut 6:7-9).

The theme of covenant obedience takes prominence in the ensuing phrase. Moses as the mediator was to instruct Israel in the statutes and rules “that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it” (Deut 6:1c).⁵ The intended objective of covenant instruction was not mere knowledge transfer, but rather love-informed obedience. This implication is manifested in the imperative “hear,” which means to hear resulting in obedience (Deut 6:4a).⁶ This distinction highlights the tension of Law and grace throughout Yahweh’s covenant with Israel. The covenant is predicated upon grace as evidenced by Yahweh’s provision of a bountiful land. The graciousness of this provision is perceived in God’s declaration that Israel had not accomplished anything to merit the land as a reward (Deut 6:11). Yet, Israel was repeatedly warned of the dire consequences for covenant infidelity (Deut 27:9-26). James Gordon McConville argues that Deuteronomy “exhibits a consistent and calculated balance between the ideas of

⁴ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 31.

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version.

⁶ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 139.

God's grace and Israel's response."⁷ Deuteronomy consistently posits the gracious character of the Mosaic covenant alongside its conditionality and expectation of submission.

The proper fear of the Lord is the covenantal bulwark against apostasy and disobedience. Deuteronomy 6:2 characterizes reverent fear for the Lord as the intended outcome of covenant instruction. The great refrain throughout the Bible's wisdom literature is that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov 1:7). This fear of the Lord is contagious in the sense that it is transmitted to others. Moses explained that through covenant instruction, one would grow in the fear of the Lord, but this fear did not remain solely with the individual. Rather, "your son and your son's son" would learn to fear the Lord (Deut 6:2). This discipleship pattern establishes the outline for the injunctions within Deuteronomy 6:7-9. The essence of Deuteronomy 6:1-2a, therefore, was for Israelite families to embrace the comprehensive commandment of God, to respond rightly with fear and obedience, and to commit themselves to the discipleship of the next generation.

Yahweh, as the faithful covenant-keeping God, promised blessing and good fortune in response to Israel's obedience. Deuteronomy is replete with appeals for covenant faithfulness. The promise of long life in Deuteronomy 6:2b is a strong motivational petition for covenantal obedience. "The Lord promises to bless Israel with children, fruitfulness in agriculture, and good health if they are obedient."⁸ God desires the success of his children, and the path to flourishing in the Promised Land is marked by unswerving allegiance to "the commandment, statutes, and rules" (Deut 6:1). The Lord provided a land suitable, spacious, and conducive for the prosperity of his people. Moses,

⁷ J. G. McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 33 (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1984), 10-11.

⁸ Thomas Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 92.

on the edge of the Promised Land, exhorted Israel to heed the words of God and to choose covenant blessings over covenant curses: obedience over rebellion.

Shema

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 expounds both the identity of Yahweh and the proper covenantal response imperative for the people of Israel. Known as the “*Shema*,” this section illustrates the “fundamental truth of Israel’s religion, and the fundamental duty founded upon it.”⁹ Who is God? How are we to respond to him? The *Shema* addresses these crucial questions as a condensed exposition of the Mosaic covenant. Notably, the Lord Jesus Christ summarized the chief principal of the Mosaic Law by quoting the *Shema* (Matt 22:37-38). Jesus’s high regard for the Law of God is observed in his unambiguous declaration of the Law’s permanence (Matt 5:17-20). The Lord Jesus did not purpose to “abolish the Law or the Prophets;” rather, his work directly “fulfilled” the Law (Matt 5:17). Therefore, the *Shema*, as a concise summarization of the Law’s essence is instructive for new covenant believers today. This implication directly informs how new covenant believers practically obey the Law of Christ.

The *Shema* is integral to a biblical theology of both Old and New Testaments. Perceiving the indispensable nature of the *Shema* to Jewish theology, Ming Him Ko describes the *Shema* as “an enduring theological horizon.”¹⁰ The *Shema* is not merely concerned with orthodox monotheism; rather, it also engages orthopraxy and how Israel is to relate and respond to Yahweh. The catechetical function of the *Shema* has engendered a “complete internalization. . .that penetrates every generation and every moment of action with symbolic remembrance.”¹¹ The significance of the *Shema* is

⁹ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 92.

¹⁰ Ming Him Ko, “Fusion-Point Hermeneutics: A Theological Interpretation of Saul’s Rejection in Light of the Shema as the Rule of Faith,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 7, no. 1 (2013): 62.

¹¹ Ko, “Fusion-Point Hermeneutics,” 60.

difficult to overstate.

Moses introduces the *Shema* with familiar language employed for the Decalogue (Deut 5:1). “Hear, O Israel” is an appeal for concentrated devotion and obedience to the subsequent commands (Deut 6:4). Despite its prominence in the Judeo-Christian conscience, the first verse of the *Shema* is profoundly difficult to translate into English. A plausible rendering of Deuteronomy 6:4 could read either “The LORD our God, the LORD is one,” or “The LORD our God is one LORD.” Eugene Merrill rightly recognizes the complexity that there is a “sufficient ambiguity” between the two alternatives that “allow the idea of God’s oneness as well as his uniqueness.”¹² Both translation’s unique nuances contribute to a more informed grasp of the context. The uniqueness of Yahweh, as stressed in the first translation option, is most convincing. The exclusivity and uniqueness of Yahweh as the only true God would have been axiomatic for the people of Israel. After all, the origin of their nation derived from Yahweh’s election of Abraham. Further, God established a covenant with Abraham, and the Lord remained committed to the patriarchs and their descendants. Yahweh alone had redeemed Israel from Egyptian bondage in order to usher them into the Promised Land. Yahweh is the true God, and there is no one like him. Though secondary, the oneness of Yahweh reflected in the second translation option is also constructive in teaching the younger Israelite generation the ontological nature of Yahweh’s being. Yahweh is one, and he has a “single purpose for creation and history.”¹³ The plural possessive “our,” in verse 4, underscores the corporate nature of Israel’s covenant with Yahweh. Yahweh is the true God of Israel contrary to the false gods of the Egyptians, Philistines, and other surrounding pagan nations.

Yahweh’s unique and exclusive identity serves as the ground for Israel’s

¹² Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 139.

¹³ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 140.

covenant obligations. The imperative to “love the Lord” (Deut 6:5) is predicated upon the indicative of Yahweh’s ontology in Deuteronomy 6:4. The Lord is God; therefore, he is the supreme object of worship, love, and adoration. The conditionality of the covenant requires a response of obedience from corporate Israel. Though the second-person singular forms of “you” throughout Deuteronomy 6:4-9 likely reference Israel as a collective group, they also could “possibly stress the importance of the individual within corporate Israel.”¹⁴ The corporate entity is comprised by individual Israelites. Therefore, the preservation of the covenant is binding upon Israel as a whole; however, its promulgation is advanced through the faithful witness of individual Israelites.

Thus, the individual Israelite is exhorted in Deuteronomy 6:5 to “love the LORD your God.” The admonition to love the LORD maintains the imperatival force of “to hear” in Deuteronomy 6:4.¹⁵ Yahweh explicitly demands covenant obedience as a demonstration of love. The love described in the *Shema* is not primarily concerned with the “emotive or sensual,” but is rather committed to the “nature of obligation and legal demand.”¹⁶ However, the emotive and obligatory aspects are not mutually exclusive. Rather, obedience fills out the content of a genuine love for God. Love is demonstrated by obedience to the point where the two terms are interrelated. Jesus Christ advanced this covenantal obligation in John’s gospel. “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). The new covenant similarly endorses obedience as the proper manifestation of genuine love.

According to Deuteronomy 6, obedience to God’s Law was accomplished with the entirety of one’s personhood. Love for God “was to be demonstrated through joyful

¹⁴ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 132.

¹⁵ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 136.

¹⁶ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 140.

and consistent obedience to the Lord.”¹⁷ Again, genuine love for God is inseparable from obedience to his commands. The comprehensive scope of one’s obedience is indicated by the encompassing phrase “all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut 6:5b). The heart, soul, and might triumvirate include one’s “mind, will, emotions, inner self, resolve, and commitment.”¹⁸ In response to a lawyer’s question of the Law’s greatest commandment, Jesus rehearsed the *Shema*. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt 22:37). Obedient love for God is the only legitimate response to who he is and what he has done for his people.

Principle and Method for Covenant Transmission

Though Yahweh’s covenant with Israel is often described in terms of its corporate nature, the individual Israelite family unit would serve as the fundamental means for continued covenant loyalty. The essential principle derived from Deuteronomy 6:6-9 is that “these words that I command you today shall be on your heart” (Deut 6:6). The plural form of “words” most likely references all of the preceding material Moses had introduced up to this point in Deuteronomy.¹⁹ At minimum, the Decalogue and *Shema* were to be deeply engrained in the heart and psyche of each individual Israelite. The Hebrew idiom “upon the heart” refers to memorization.²⁰ The heart is the “seat of the intellect or rational side of humankind.”²¹ The memorization of these “words” concerns the intellect; however, the ultimate purpose is to affect the volition and affections. After

¹⁷ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 93.

¹⁸ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 136.

¹⁹ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 137.

²⁰ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

²¹ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

all, the covenant was not for Moses's contemporaries only; rather, the covenant was binding upon "your children after you" (Deut 4:40). Therefore, if each individual Israelite was to appropriate the Mosaic covenant, the Israelites' homes would necessarily serve as training bases for covenant instruction. This model of discipleship was conducive for covenant faithfulness through successive generations.

The greatest danger to covenant fidelity was idolatry. "Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make a carved image, the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you" (Deut 4:23). The logical defense against covenant forgetfulness was covenant catechesis. Moses articulates the method for covenant transmission in Deuteronomy 6:7-9. The singular form of "you" in Deuteronomy 6:7 accentuates the individual mandate upon Israelite families to ensure covenant conveyance. The imperatival force begun in Deuteronomy 6:4 continues to verse 7 as parents are commanded to "teach them diligently to your children" (Deut 6:7a). The prescribed frequency of catechesis is "when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise (Deut 6:7b). The implication is that Moses understands "this message is made indelible by constant repetition."²² Though laborious and painstaking, the cumulative effect of constant covenant catechesis is a faithful transmission of the covenant to the next generation. This intense discipleship is practically accomplished within the home. Thus, the family unit in Israel was indispensable for covenant faithfulness and instruction.

Deuteronomy 6:8-9 further augments the all-encompassing nature of covenant education. These verses suggest a metaphorical interpretation; however, Jews have traditionally understood these verses literally. The Jews acted upon their literal hermeneutic with their "phylacteries and Mezuzot boxes attached to the doorposts."²³

²² Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 143.

²³ Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 137.

Each of these boxes would contain portions of the *Shema* in order to highlight the *Shema* as the foundational text for covenant instruction. The injunction for covenant members to “bind them as a sign on your hand,” as “frontlets between your eyes” and “on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” reiterates the necessity of constant reminder and repetition (Deut 6:8-9).

Moses was the divinely appointed human mediator of the covenant. As God’s ambassador, Moses delivered the stipulations and warnings of Yahweh’s covenant. Deuteronomy 6:1-9 clearly ascribes Israelite households with the responsibility to mediate and oversee the transmission of the covenant to future generations. If one truly loves Yahweh, then he or she will respond with loving obedience to him (Deut 6:5). Deuteronomy 6:6-9 defines obedience for parents, in part, as diligently instructing their children in the fear of the Lord. This instruction involves intentional, constant catechesis, and the same command is binding upon new covenant parents today (Matt 5:17). The Christian home is God’s appointed means for the work of discipleship and spiritual formation. The work is strenuous and exacting; however, there is nothing more significant than training the next generation to declare the glory and majesty of Yahweh.

Psalm 78:1-8

Psalm 78 reiterates the duty for Israelite fathers to catechize their children. The context of the psalm involves a rehearsal of Israel’s history from Moses to David. Asaph, the psalmist, reminds the Israelites of their checkered past in order to foster a renewed attitude of covenant commitment. The continuity of faithful covenant transmission depends largely upon individual instruction within Israelite homes. This psalm exhorts the Israelite faithful to obey Yahweh’s instructions for discipleship as outlined in Deuteronomy 6.

Solemnity of Instruction

Psalm 78 is intended to instruct future generations of Israelites to learn from

the failures of their forefathers. The psalm is “not merely to record the past but to change people for the future.”²⁴ This emphasis serves the chief end of warning the current generation to heed the words and instruction of the Mosaic covenant. The psalm provides a covenantal and historical example in the distinction between Ephraim’s rejection and Judah’s election (Ps 78:67-68). Ephraim was unfaithful to Yahweh’s covenant and suffered the curse of rejection, while David and the city of Zion enjoy covenant blessing through obedience. Thus, the didactic function of the psalm primarily has obedience as the supreme goal.²⁵ The Israelites are reminded of the covenant’s promise of blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience.

The initial summons from the psalmist in verse 1 to “give ear. . .to my teaching” mixes the “language of the prophetic and the wisdom traditions.”²⁶ The people of Israel ascertained the prophetic undertones in Psalm 78:1 that heighten the sense of solemnity surrounding the subsequent words. As a result, the hearers would receive the ensuing instruction with reverence and respect. Consequently, this psalm establishes the necessary humble attitude for covenant instruction and catechesis. Likewise, a father must ensure a proper environment and posture of reverence during a child’s covenant instruction. The dire warnings and consequences for forsaking Yahweh necessitate a serious and committed attitude surrounding formal covenantal teaching within the home.

Additionally, the psalmist’s introduction of a parable highlights the inextricable connection of Psalm 78 to traditional wisdom literature. As seen in the ministry of Jesus in Matthew 13:34-35, parables serve to teach an object lesson with a

²⁴ John Goldingay, *Psalms 42-89*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 710.

²⁵ Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 289.

²⁶ Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2019), 74.

profound spiritual meaning.²⁷ In context, Psalm 78 underscores the value of formal catechetical instruction for the goal of continued covenant obedience. As one repeats the “glorious deeds of the LORD” to each successive generation, covenant ignorance and forgetfulness is mitigated (Ps 78:4b). The didactic parable of Psalm 78 depicts the sobering reality of Israel’s former apostasy in order to prevent future unfaithfulness.

Daniel Estes rightly discerns the catechetical nature of Psalm 78. He explains, “A catechism intends to train initiates in the facts necessary for their growth and development in the faith, but also in how to understand those facts in the proper way.”²⁸ This mode of instruction is to be accomplished in perpetuity. The wisdom parables are received from “our fathers” and “we will not hide them from our children” (Ps 78:3b-4a). John Goldingay classifies three stages to this mode of instruction. “First, ancestors tell their story. . .second, their descendants listen to this story. . .third, they acknowledge its truth, heed it, respond to it.”²⁹ This apt description reinforces the implication of obedience when one “gives ear” (Ps 78:1). The goal is not mere information transfer; rather, the goal is a transformation of the heart evidenced through joyful obedience.

***Shema* Informed Instruction**

How does the psalmist define the content of proper covenant instruction? What exactly is a father to “tell to the coming generation” (Ps 78:4a)? The discerning reader will notice striking parallels between Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and Psalm 78:1-8. The psalm strongly emphasizes the father’s obligation to train his children, which is directly related to the *Shema* in Deuteronomy 6. As in the *Shema*, the purpose of indoctrinating the younger generations in the “testimony” and “Law” of the Lord is to cultivate whole-hearted devotion to Yahweh (Ps 78:5). Both the Law of God and the testimony of the

²⁷ Goldingay, *Psalms 42-89*, 718.

²⁸ Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, 73.

²⁹ Goldingay, *Psalms 42-89*, 719.

tabernacle were inseparable in the religious and civic life of Israel. Within the tabernacle, the tablets of the Ten Commandments were housed as a perpetual reminder of the significance and governing authority of the Law. The “Law appointed in Israel” includes the totality of God’s revelation to Moses on Mount Sinai (Ps 78:5). The “Law” in Psalm 78:5 is rightly equated with “the commandment, the statutes, and the rules” from Deuteronomy 6:1. Therefore, the content of the “Law” in Psalm 78:5 is analogous to the content of the Law in Deuteronomy 6.³⁰ Psalm 78 reinforces the covenant obligations upon fathers to teach their children the commands of Yahweh.

The *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6 informs the introduction to Psalm 78. Accordingly, one is unsurprised by the resemblance of the psalm’s instructions to fathers with the directives outlined in Deuteronomy 6:7-9. Psalm 78:5b prescribes the obligation for fathers “to teach [the Law] to their children.” This prescription is not optional; rather, it is a “covenantal duty commanded by the Lord.”³¹ Regardless of Israel’s past failings, the covenant mandate for fathers remains authoritative and binding. From the context of Psalm 78 as a whole, one recognizes that an abdication of patriarchal instruction directly contributed to the widespread spiritual failing among Israel (Ps 78:8). The apostasy of Ephraim is explained by a refusal “to walk according to his Law” (Ps 78:10b). The Ephraimites “forgot his works and the wonders that he [God] had shown them” (Ps 78:11).

In order to safeguard covenant fidelity, God explicitly charges the Israelite fathers to oversee covenant instruction. As a child is trained in the instruction and fear of the Lord, they will, in turn, “arise and tell them to their children” (Ps 78:6b). This God-ordained model of discipleship resembles a “spiritual relay” as each successive

³⁰ Goldingay, *Psalms 42-89*, 716.

³¹ Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, 75.

generation faithfully transmits the Law of God.³² As in the *Shema*, the objective for this catechetical “relay” is a response of loving obedience to Yahweh. The father’s repetition of the Law will prevent a child from forgetting “the works of God” (Ps 78:7). The predisposition towards forgetfulness and complacency is the rationale for continual training. As Jesus taught the Pharisees that the whole Law is summed up by love for God and love for neighbor, so too, does this Psalm aim for a *Shema*-informed love for God (Matt 22:34-40).

As a result, the future generations will be exhorted to “keep his commandments” (Ps 78:7b). The exposition of Psalm 78 reiterates the consistent biblical theme of Law and gospel. The grace of God in Israel’s election is the indicative and foundation for the covenant. The imperative informed by the indicative of grace is to love God and obey his commands. Psalm 78 grounds the covenant demand of catechesis in the reality of “the glorious deeds of the Lord” (Ps 78:4). As Jesus reaffirmed in the New Testament, if we love him, “we will keep his commandments” (John 14:15). Fathers must instruct and exhort their children to remain faithful to the covenant. The contingent ramifications are clearly articulated: either a heart that places “hope in God” or a “stubborn and rebellious generation. . . whose heart was not steadfast” (Ps 78:7-8). The conditionality of the future generation’s commitment to Yahweh squares responsibility primarily upon the fathers to impress the Law of God upon the hearts and minds of their children.

Further, the communal aspect of Psalm 78 is an important consideration. Though individuals constitute the community, these commands were given to the “people” as a whole (Ps 78:1). The stipulations “concern the community and the distinctive relationship between Yahweh and Israel, not nations in general.”³³ The

³² Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, 75.

³³ Goldingay, *Psalms 42-89*, 717.

covenant community is responsible for ensuring the discipleship of the following generation. As God's progressive revelation unfolds, one begins to see the same obligation assigned to the new covenant community in Christ. The church community equips fathers to spiritually lead their households in order to train their children in the fear of the Lord. Psalm 78 comprises clear principles and exhortations towards the proper catechesis of covenant children.

Ephesians 6:1-4

The New Testament retains similar emphases regarding God's prescription for covenant instruction within the household. Moses exhorted Jewish fathers to train their children in the Law of God (Deut 6:1-9), and this explicit command's jurisdiction is extended to the New Testament as reflected in the Law of Christ. A child's discipleship is accomplished through the joint efforts of both a mother and a father (Eph 6:1). Ephesians 6:1-4 dictates the relational obligations between parents and their children. This portion of Paul's letter is positioned within the context of what is recognized as the "household code" section (Eph 5:22-6:9).³⁴ Prior to the formal introduction of the household code, Paul urged his readers to walk wisely and to make "the best use of the time, because the days are evil" (Eph 5:16). The Ephesian believers lived among a thoroughly pagan society, which warranted Paul's admonition to "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18).

This imperative naturally informs and expresses the content of the expected Christian ethic. Specifically, Paul identifies the household relationships as a primary target for Christians to align with God's revealed will. Contrary to typical Greco-Roman household codes, Paul addresses both subordinates as well as those in authoritative roles. The letter to the Ephesians would have been read orally to the gathered church, and Paul

³⁴ Benjamin L. Merkle, *Ephesians*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 195.

implies the expectation that wives, husbands, slaves, masters, and children would all be present to hear.³⁵ Each member within the Christian household has an obligation before the Lord. Knowing God’s design for roles within the home is requisite for faithfully discipling one’s children in the Lord.

A Child’s Familial Role (Eph 6:1-3)

Paul uses the plural vocative form of address “children” (τά τέκνα) to directly address the children within the gathered worship service (Eph 6:1a). This direct reference suggests that these children were still in the home, yet, mature enough to comprehend obligations and instructions.³⁶ God’s economy of family relationships stresses the important role and function of children. Paul, notably, expends twice the amount of literary space on instructions to children as compared to parents.³⁷ Paul expresses the role of children through a command of obedience, providing the moral justification for the command, and promising blessing for compliance.

Following the vocative address, Paul demands an unqualified obedience to one’s parents. The imperative “obey” (ὑπακούετε) possesses an inherent quality of action. This is unlike the passive nuance in the word “submit” (ὑποτάσσω), which Paul ascribed to the function of the wife within the marriage relationship (Eph 5:24).³⁸ The critical role of both husband and wife in a child’s discipleship is syntactically stressed by the inclusive reference to one’s “parents” (τοῖς γονεῦσιν). Paul will subsequently shift the focus to fathers as the leaders to whom the primary responsibility for a child’s discipleship belongs (Eph 6:4). However, this initial verse in chapter 6 accentuates the

³⁵ Merkle, *Ephesians*, 196.

³⁶ Thomas Yoder Neufeld, *Ephesians*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Waterloo, Ontario: Herald, 2002), 268.

³⁷ Merkle, *Ephesians*, 195.

³⁸ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 396.

joint effort of mothers and fathers. The human family is complementary by God's design. Therefore, a child needs instruction and discipline from both a mother and a father.

Significant scholarly disagreement surrounds the originality of the prepositional phrase "in the Lord" at the conclusion of Ephesians 6:1. Though the arguments that the phrase is a later scribal addition appear plausible, the most convincing judgment is that "in the Lord" is legitimate and original. Clinton Arnold is persuasive in his analysis that "not only is there early papyrus and uncial support, there are excellent witnesses from the Alexandrian, Western, and Byzantine text types." The present author is convinced of the phrase's authenticity and divine inspiration.

Yet, how is one to understand the function of this prepositional phrase? Thomas Neufeld understands this prepositional phrase to erect "implicit limitations on obedience."³⁹ Neufeld argues that the prepositional phrase narrows the command for obedience to the sphere of the believing community. However, the context of Ephesians 6:1-4 will not allow for such a restrictive meaning. Paul immediately follows this command with the justification that "this is right" (Eph 6:1b). Even the surrounding pagan culture in Ephesus affirmed the child's obligation of obedience to be incontrovertible. Despite the self-evident reality that children should obey their parents, Catholic theologian, Peter Williamson maintains that Paul was not simply rehearsing the acceptable societal norms and expectations. Rather, Paul carefully chose the word "right" (*δικαιον*) to mean "conduct that conforms to God's will."⁴⁰ God's revealed Law explicitly affirms the moral rightness of obeying one's parents (Deut 6:1-9). John Stott combines the axiomatic nature of this command with God's Law in claiming that Paul's declaration "it is right" is referencing the "natural law" that God has inscribed on the hearts of

³⁹ Neufeld, *Ephesians*, 269.

⁴⁰ Peter S. Williamson and Mary Healy, *Ephesians*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 285.

humanity.⁴¹

Therefore, contra Thomas Neufeld, God requires children to obey their parents, because this injunction is rooted in God's design for the family. Benjamin Merkle rightly contends that the dative prepositional phrase "in the Lord" modifies "obey" rather than "parents" (Eph 6:1). "Thus, Paul's injunction does not mean that children only need to obey Christian parents."⁴² Children who are united to the Lord Jesus Christ have a binding obligation to obey the Law of Christ. Ephesians 6:1 clearly outlines that one fundamental component of obeying the Lord Jesus is fulfilled by one's obedience to their parents.

Following Paul's unambiguous mandate for a child's absolute obedience, he grounds the command with the justification that "it is right" (Eph 6:1b). Further, Paul draws the children's attention to God's promises for faithful obedience in Ephesians 6:2-3. Paul introduces the Decalogue without any formal introduction (Eph 6:2). The implication of this assumed quotation is that the children of Christian parents would have been well-versed in the Ten Commandments.⁴³ Therefore, the precepts of God's moral Law are still binding upon Christian believers as the guide to walking in obedience to the revealed will of God. This concept is further substantiated as Paul commands fathers beginning in Ephesians 6:4 to "bring them [children] up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." The divine decrees that required Jewish parents under the Old Covenant to instruct their children in the Law of God are still applicable and relevant to contemporary believers.

Paul implores children to remember that the fifth commandment is the "first commandment with a promise" (Eph 6:2b). Identifying the exact meaning of "first

⁴¹ John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1979), 239.

⁴² Merkle, *Ephesians*, 196.

⁴³ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 398.

commandment” has engendered a significant amount of scholarly disagreement. The Decalogue’s second commandment contains the promise of judgment for covenant unfaithfulness and steadfast love for covenant obedience (Exod 20:5-6). The most satisfactory explanation is that “first” refers to the first commandment with an explicit promise attached to it. The promise following the second commandment is more general in scope; however, the promise attached to the fifth commandment is specific. Paul likely emphasized the specificity of this promise to heighten this command’s importance and practical application for Christian children. Although this view is not without difficulties, the most prominent objections are “alleviated if we see the Ten Commandments as the beginning of the various commands of the Mosaic code.”⁴⁴ Thus, the Ten Commandments serve as the commencement to additional Mosaic regulations in the Torah. Within the Ten Commandments, we see that Paul understands the fifth commandment as the “first commandment with a promise” (Eph 6:2b).

Paul contextualizes the promise for obedience to one’s parents by slightly modifying Exodus 20:12 in the Septuagint (LXX). Instead of the restrictive reference to “the land, which the Lord your God gives to you,” Paul abbreviates the verse to “upon the earth” (ἐπί τῆς γῆς). Paul’s adjustment intends to “highlight the relevance of the promise to the Gentiles as part of the new covenant people of God for whom there is no land promise.”⁴⁵ This promise is a general promise that is not to be rigidly understood as ensuring long physical life on earth without exception. Child mortality was exceptionally high, and this general promise that long life would accompany the God-fearing and obedient child would serve as a source of strong and practical encouragement.⁴⁶ Francis

⁴⁴ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 417.

⁴⁵ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

⁴⁶ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 400.

Foulkes argues the promise is not individual by necessity. Rather, “the strength of family life, and the training of children to habits of order and obedience” were essential for “the stability of a community or nation.”⁴⁷ God purposely designed the family structure in such a way that children’s obedience served as a fundamental foundation to societal sustainability and covenant faithfulness.

The Unique Role of the Christian Father (Eph 6:4)

Though children were commanded to obey both parents, Paul in Ephesians 6:4 narrows his concentration on the paramount role of the father. As the head of the wife (Eph 5:23), the father is the divinely-appointed leader of the household. Therefore, the father is primarily responsible for overseeing a child’s discipleship in the Lord. This familial economy is rooted in God’s work of creation (Eph 5:31-32). Foulkes insists that Paul’s reference to “fathers” includes both parents. Foulkes appeals to the use of (πατέρων) translated as “parents” in Hebrews 11:23.⁴⁸ However, in the context of Ephesians 6:1-4, the shift to “fathers” (πατέρες) is intentional. If Paul desired to include both the father and the mother in this reference, he could have used the term “parents” (τοῖς γονεῦσιν) as in Ephesians 6:1a.

In Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures, fathers were tasked with overseeing the education of their children.⁴⁹ Since this model of leadership was designed by the Lord, Paul gives instructions on how a Christian father is to obey this directive. Fathers are not to abuse their children or misuse their intrinsic authority. Rather, Paul states both negatively and positively how fathers are to rear their children in the fear of the Lord.

⁴⁷ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 169.

⁴⁸ Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 170.

⁴⁹ Merkle, *Ephesians*, 198.

First, Paul frames the injunction negatively by commanding fathers not to “provoke your children to anger” (Eph 6:4a). In a culture where children were not commonly addressed, the command for fathers to lead their children with respect is unexpected. “Readers might have expected this command to have been applied to the children, that children should not provoke their fathers to anger through disobedience and rebellion.”⁵⁰ Yet, Spirit-filled fathers are to be considerate and reasonable as they instruct and discipline their children. Fathers must be careful not to “exert authority over children in a manner that provokes resentment rather than obedience.”⁵¹ Undoubtedly, this command precludes outbursts, demeaning language, and excessive punishment.

Positively, Paul encourages fathers to “bring them [children] up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4b). Fathers are exhorted to expend great effort to disciple their children in the Lord. Paul charges fathers to “bring up” (ἐκτρέφετε) their children. This term is the same word Paul uses in Ephesians 5:29 to enjoin husbands to “nourish” their wives. This term depicts the care and affection fathers are to exhibit as they teach their children to love the Lord.

Specifically, the father’s discipleship plan includes both “discipline” (παιδεία) and “instruction” (νουθεσία). “The rearing of children in the Jewish tradition included physical needs and showing children affection and especially teaching them the Law of God.”⁵² The precept of teaching children the Law of God is certainly included in both “discipline” and “instruction.” Thielman further contends that “discipline” carries an aspect of punishment, but its execution is motivated by mercy and love.⁵³ The instruction and discipline that a father oversees is to be rooted in the Word of God. Christian fathers

⁵⁰ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 417.

⁵¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 178.

⁵² Thielman, *Ephesians*, 401.

⁵³ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 402.

are obliged to teach their children the whole counsel of God. The final genitive “of the Lord” (*κυρίου*) is best understood as a subjective genitive (Eph 6:4b). The Lord has sovereignly appointed the Christian household as a means of educational grace for children. The Lord himself provides discipline and instruction for children in the context of a Christian home. Fathers are instructed to be the spiritual leaders of their homes by the good design of God.⁵⁴ Stated both positively and negatively, Paul informs Christian fathers how they are to glorify God through exercising their derived authority.

Ephesians 4:11-13

The examination of the previous three passages establishes the unquestionable obligation for Christian parents to instruct their children in the ways of the Lord. Specifically, fathers are commissioned to spearhead this initiative in discipling their children. Although the exegetical support for this position has been sufficiently demonstrated, Christian couples often fail to put their orthodoxy into practice. Reasons for this abdication of discipleship responsibilities can be attributed to both ignorance and a lack of consistent accountability. God’s gracious mandates for parents to instruct their children were never intended to be fulfilled in isolation from a community of believers. Ephesians 4:11-13 demonstrates the church’s indispensable role in training parents for the work of discipling their children.

Christ’s Gifts to the Church (Eph 4:11)

Christ, the victorious warrior, conquered his enemies and dispensed gifts to his people. The immediate context of Ephesians 4:8-10 recounts the divine victor theme from Psalm 68. After vanquishing his foes, the victor “led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men” (Eph 4:8b). Paul’s Old Testament quotation is highly Christological in that the

⁵⁴ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 402.

Lord's divine victory in Psalm 68 is equated with Christ's victory through his death and resurrection. In keeping with the analogy, Paul shows that "Christ as the triumphant Divine Warrior, after he ascended to his throne, blesses his people with gifts."⁵⁵ Immediately, Paul explains the content of Christ's gifts to his church in the subsequent verse. In the sovereign economy of God, the Lord blesses his church with individuals who have been equipped and tasked with leadership functions within the body. "These functions do not appear as particularly 'spiritual gifts' but as gifts which the Lord, as Head of the Body, gives to his church."⁵⁶ Schnackenburg rightly understands that Christ graciously provides gifted individuals to lead, teach, and shepherd the people of God.

Paul attests to the paramount role of apostles (*ἀποστόλους*) and prophets (*προφήτας*) as gifts to the church from the Lord (Eph 4:11). The primary function of both apostles and prophets was supplanted by the permanent scriptures that codified the revealed will of God for the New Testament church. Foulkes correctly notes "the written word took the place of the authoritative spoken word of apostles and prophets making the essential nature of the gospel plain."⁵⁷ Further, Christ gave the evangelists (*εὐαγγελιστάς*) to his church in order to propagate the message of the gospel alongside the apostles and prophets. Evangelists labored to preach the gospel in similar manner to the apostles. The function of the evangelist is indispensable to the growth of the church. The evangelists diligently proclaim the gospel to unbelievers with an aim towards both individual conversion and acquisition to the church body. Paul completes the list of leadership gifts to the church with pastors (*ποιμένας*) and teachers (*διδασκάλους*). The office of pastor inherently includes the duty of teaching as part of the ministry (1 Tim 3:2). Therefore, the

⁵⁵ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 252.

⁵⁶ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Epistle to the Ephesians: A Commentary*, trans. Helen Heron (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 180.

⁵⁷ Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 125.

governing article “τούς” likely equates “pastor-teacher” as one position.⁵⁸ The pastor is a gift from Christ to God’s people to teach the congregation all that Christ has commanded his church (Matt 28:19-20).

The Function of Christ’s Gifts (Eph 4:12-13)

Our conquering king has ascended to the throne, and he has distributed gifts to his church according to his good counsel and plan. What is the purpose of Christ’s gifts of leaders to his church? Paul succinctly informs his readers that these gifts were given “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph 4:12a). Each individual believer is obligated to live in accordance with the revealed will of God and to engage in the work of ministry (*διακονίας*). God has purposed that the assembled body of saints would serve as the primary training ground for his children to be equipped and sent out for the work of ministry. Christ has gifted his body with individuals who teach, exhort, and shepherd the flock. Consequently, the gathered body of believers is imperative for a Christian to walk in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 4:12 contains three prepositional phrases whose syntax has been the subject of much scholarly debate. Rudolf Schnackenburg, a German Catholic priest, understands these prepositional phrases to be coordinate with one another emphasizing the primacy of the gifted leaders within the church. Schnackenburg maintains that “we are bound to limit the *διακονία* to the ‘ministry’ of the preachers, pastors, and teachers.”⁵⁹ According to this view, the leaders of the church are solely responsible for executing the ministry of the church. However, the syntax and sentence structure of Ephesians 4:12 provides credence to the view that the prepositional phrases are not coordinate.

⁵⁸ Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 159.

⁵⁹ Schnackenburg, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 183.

Regarding the contested prepositions, Foulkes contends that the second preposition depends “closely on the first, and the third on the two that precede: to [Gk. pros] equip the saints for [Gk. eis] the work of ministry, for [Gk. eis] building up the body of Christ.”⁶⁰ Therefore, a thorough exegesis of Ephesians 4:12 reveals that Christ gave gifts to the church in order to “equip the saints” (Eph 4:12a). The purpose in equipping the saints is “for the work of ministry” (Eph 4:12b). The ministry of the church is not to be solely completed by the clergy. Rather, each individual member of the body is expected to serve the ministry towards the goal of “building up the body of Christ (Eph 4:12c). Thus, “those gifted in the ministry of the word and those whom they equip for ministry work together to build up the body of Christ.”⁶¹

As outlined above, God has designed the Christian home to serve as the primary training ground for children to be disciplined in the ways of the Lord. The implications of an appropriate exegesis of Ephesians 4:11-13 are profound for the means by which parents fulfill this ministry mandate. Christ sovereignly appoints gifted pastors for his church in order to equip the saints for the work of ministry. For parents, one of the most critical works of ministry is to faithfully disciple one’s children in accordance with God’s command (Eph 6:4). The church is the God-appointed means for parents to be adequately trained and held accountable to labor for their children’s discipleship.

Paul reveals that the goal for the work of ministry is to “attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Eph 4:13a). Thielman perceives that “the unity of the faith refers to unity in acknowledging a particular body of doctrine, the ‘one faith’ of Ephesians 4:5.”⁶² This body of doctrine is faithfully expounded by the pastor-teachers that the Lord Jesus gives to his church. Accordingly, Paul identifies

⁶⁰ Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 126.

⁶¹ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 280.

⁶² Thielman, *Ephesians*, 281.

“mature manhood” as the logical consequence of the “unity of the faith” (Eph 4:13). As church bodies are faithfully taught the revealed will of God by gifted leaders, parents are better suited to pass this teaching on to their children. Without commitment to a local body of believers, parents forego God’s appointed means for spiritual growth and instruction. “There is one unified and proper understanding of Christ and the core elements of the faith. . .the church is to help impart this correct knowledge.”⁶³ The true Christian faith possesses objective content, and the saints need the teaching ministry provided in the church to grow into “the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13b).

God, in his wisdom, designates the family unit as the fundamental social structure for raising children in the fear of the Lord. An exegesis of Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalm 78:1-8, and Ephesians 6:1-4 unequivocally establish parents as those primarily responsible for ensuring the discipleship of their children. Yet, God has not neglected to furnish parents with the resources they need to fulfill this mandate. Ephesians 4:11-13 identifies the believing community as the indispensable domain for equipping parents to transmit the faith to their children. Christ has graciously given gifts of leadership to his church, and by God’s grace, Christian parents will continue to disciple their own children so that the next generation “should set their hope in God” (Ps 78:7a).

⁶³ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 265.

CHAPTER 3
HISTORICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL
CONSIDERATIONS FOR DISCIPLESHIP
WITHIN THE HOME

We do not have to imagine or speculate what God's will is for family ministry. God has spoken through his Word and revealed that the individual family unit is to serve as the foundational structure for a child's discipleship and Christian training. The biblical testimony unambiguously acknowledges parents as the child's primary discipleship influencer and assigns chief responsibility to parents "to teach them diligently" (Deut 6:7). God's designation of the parents' paramount role is straightforward and uncontroversial. Further, the critical role of the local church in a child's faith formation is deduced from careful biblical exposition, and it is revealed to be the indispensable means for equipping parents to fulfill their parental duties. Doctrinal orthodoxy in these matters is relatively uncomplicated.

Yet, how is a Christian parent to theoretically undertake this task? Shall a Christian household "reinvent the wheel," or does church history provide a tested path for faithful Christian child-rearing? What methodological systems best serve parents as they seek to impress the full contours of God's revelation upon the minds and hearts of their children? This chapter concerns the *praxis* or practical outworking of the conviction that parents must not abdicate their God-ordained duty to disciple their children. Doctrinally sound orthodoxy is deficient in and of itself apart from a biblically-informed ethic. The goal is to pass on "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). God has revealed in his word that the person and work of Jesus Christ is "the climax of history"

and the supreme content of this blessed faith.¹ Parents are exhorted to exalt the risen Lord Jesus in their homes both in word and deed, while trusting and relying upon the Spirit of God to illuminate the minds and hearts of their children to personally behold the beauty and glory of Christ.

Family-Equipping Ministry as a Viable Theoretical Foundation for Training Our Children

Throughout Christian history, the church has recognized the significance of a child's educational instruction within both the home and the church. The *Shema* in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 serves as the preeminent prototype for parents to model their discipleship efforts within the home. Following the Apostolic Age, the development of catechumenal schools emphasized the need for converts to be instructed in the doctrinal foundations of the Christian faith.² The customary method for Christian education throughout the first eighteen hundred years tended to incorporate intergenerational collaboration in both the family and church spheres.

However, over the last two centuries an unconventional development has arisen in family ministry practice and educational philosophy. Due to the rapid industrialization of the Western world in the late eighteenth century and the resulting fragmentation of the nuclear family unit, a substantial segmentation wedged between parents and children.³ The rapid shift from a primarily agrarian society to a developing industrial economy reallocated the typical family's disposable time. This seismic societal transformation also impacted the Western church's methodology for family ministry.

¹ Vern S. Poythress, "An Overview of the Bible's Storyline," in *Understanding the Big Picture of the Bible: A Guide to Reading the Bible Well*, ed. Wayne Grudem, C. John Collins, and Thomas R. Schreiner (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 8.

² Kevin E. Lawson, "Historical Foundations of Christian Education," in *Introducing Christian Education: Foundations for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 19.

³ Lawson, "Historical Foundations of Christian Education," 22-23.

Though the late nineteenth century Western church continued to insist upon the invaluable role of parents in the discipleship of their children, the turn of the twentieth century brought “a more segmented approach to ministry.”⁴ The introduction of age-graded programs characterized the family ministry strategy of the twentieth century. Mirroring the cultural developments of the society at-large, these segmented programs were designed to offer an age-specific ministry to each member of the family; however, these ministries had “little interaction or continuity between them.”⁵ Not only were children spending less time with their immediate families, but Christian youth also were escorted to separate ministries that practically operated divorced from the life of the intergenerational church. Mark DeVries laments, “if our youth programs are well attended, it’s easy for us to be satisfied with childish faith.”⁶ The unfortunate byproduct of the contemporary segmented-programmatic family ministry model is that children and teenagers are largely sheltered from the influence of mature Christian believers in exchange for an environment primarily attended by their peers. Though the short-term excitement of inflated attendance numbers among youth seems to favor the supremacy of the segmented-programmatic model, church retention statistics among these same youth have revealed a sobering reality.

Since 1970, there has been no appreciable change in the proportion of adults who attend church services at any time during the week. This is true in spite of a growing number of churches, increased church spending for advertising and promotion, and the availability of more sophisticated techniques for informing people of a church’s existence.⁷

⁴ Bryan Nelson and Timothy Paul Jones, “Introduction: The Problem with Family Ministry,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 19.

⁵ Nelson and Jones, “Introduction,” 20.

⁶ Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 27.

⁷ George Barna, *Marketing the Church* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988), 22.

The segmented-programmatic ministry model has proven deficient both in theory and practice. Though this model should not be charged with singularly contributing to the dismal reality of current youth ministry trends, Bryan Nelson and Timothy Paul Jones warn, “the growth of professional, age-focused ministers may have made it easier for parents to perceive that the training of their children in the fear of God must be someone else’s responsibility.”⁸ However, a recent interest to revive the primary role of the parents in a child’s spiritual formation has begun to take shape. God’s word explicitly outlines the Christian home as the primary training camp for children, and the church is to be the means in which parents are equipped to obey. Therefore, the church must promote and implement family ministry models that are biblically faithful and methodically practical in order to align Christian families with the revealed will of God.

Coordinative-Comprehensive Family Ministry Theories

Christian parents who acknowledge their responsibility to disciple their children are often unsure how to practically oversee and engage the process. Reflecting on this common frustration, Mike McGarry emphasizes, “the importance of the church’s calling to disciple parents in order that they may disciple their families.”⁹ The corrective recoil to the segmented-programmatic model of family ministry has recalibrated the ministry philosophies of many churches to restore the family to its unique position in discipleship. In contrast to the segmented-programmatic model, Timothy Paul Jones and Ryan Steenburg have identified “the comprehensive-coordinative approach” as a more biblically faithful philosophy for family ministry.¹⁰ This approach is characterized by an

⁸ Nelson and Jones, “Introduction,” 20.

⁹ Mike McGarry, “Building a Foundation with the Parents: Partnering with Parents in Youth Ministry,” in *Gospel-Centered Youth Ministry: A Practical Guide*, ed. Cameron Cole and Jon Nielson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 94.

¹⁰ W. Ryan Steenburg and Timothy Paul Jones, “Growing Gaps from Generation to Generation: Family Discipleship in Modern and Postmodern Contexts,” in Stinson and Jones, *Trained in*

unapologetic commitment to the elevation and celebration of parents in their efforts to disciple their children. Yet, within this overarching approach, three different models represent distinct nuances: family-integrated, family-based, and family-equipping.¹¹

The strongest backlash to the segmented-programmatic ministry model is the family-integrated model. Perhaps a slight overreaction, this model advocates a complete disintegration of “nearly all age-organized classes and events...including youth group, children’s church, and even age-graded Sunday school classes.”¹² The resolute response from those favoring a family-integrated model reflects the conviction that all age-segmented ministries undermine the priority of the family in a child’s discipleship. Families are expected to worship together when the local church is gathered. This intergenerational unity within the church helps to foster an understanding of the church as “a family of families.”¹³

Under the family-integrated model, the individual Christian home becomes not only the center for discipleship but also the means for evangelistic outreach. Further, adherents to the family-integrated model appeal to the Bible’s presupposition that families would be gathered together for corporate worship (Eph 6:1-3). The novel model of age-segregated programs has dominated an era of contemporary American Christianity in which the “failure rate [is] somewhere around eight (almost nine) out of ten when it comes to raising children who continue in the faith.”¹⁴ The family-integrated model proposes an entire overhaul of the typical American church’s ministry philosophy in order to champion God’s design for families.

the Fear of God, 159.

¹¹ Steenburg and Jones, “Growing Gaps from Generation to Generation,” 157.

¹² Nelson and Jones, “Introduction,” 23.

¹³ Voddie Baucham Jr., *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 191-95.

¹⁴ Baucham, *Family Driven Faith*, 10-11.

The family-based ministry model represents the opposite end of the coordinative-comprehensive ministry spectrum. Whereas the family-integrated ministry philosophy supports the elimination of all age-segmented programming, the family-based ministry model contends that age-specific ministries are necessary. Mark DeVries, a renowned proponent for family-based ministry, warns that the total abolition of youth programs fails to recognize “the adolescent need for individuation.”¹⁵ Therefore, youth need to be surrounded by like-minded Christian peers in an environment appropriate for their faith formation. However, defenders of family-based ministries recognize the futility of youth programs dissociated from the partnership of both the nuclear family and corporate church body. Mark DeVries summarizes,

Teenagers have a paradoxical task in faith development. On the one hand, they need continuity with tradition, a faith community to be nurtured in. But on the other hand, they need to step away from their inherited tradition and develop a faith of their own – not their mother’s faith, the pastor’s faith, or their best friend’s faith. These two tasks often seem to work against each other. But unless we address both of these needs, our youth ministries will be limited in their long-term effectiveness.¹⁶

The family-based ministry philosophy maintains that the age-segmented programming characteristic of the mid-twentieth century has virtue and should be preserved.

Nonetheless, this preservation warrants slight reformation. Family-based ministry, therefore, upholds age-segmented programs while attempting to “empower the parents to participate in the discipleship of their children.”¹⁷

Both the family-integrated and family-based ministry models stress important distinctions. The family-integrated model rightly emphasizes the nuclear family as the God-ordained structure for a child’s discipleship, while the family-based model continues to honor the important formative role of peers in a child’s discipleship journey. However,

¹⁵ DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 132.

¹⁶ DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 133.

¹⁷ Nelson and Jones, “Introduction,” 25.

the family-equipping model of ministry has proven to be the most satisfactory model that both recognizes the strength of adequate peer interaction while staunchly defending the parents' essential responsibility to train up a child in the way of the Lord.

Age-graded ministries can serve a God-honoring function in the life and ministry of the local congregation; however, the bulk of training and instruction must occur within the home. Jay Strother helpfully summarizes, "God designed church and household to serve as the two faces of one intentional process of proclaiming and practicing the gospel."¹⁸ This perspective precludes a short-sighted ministry focus, because the purpose for age-segregated ministries becomes a means to an end rather than an end in itself. But what is the ultimate end for a family-equipping ministry methodology? Timothy Paul Jones contends that the entire structure of a ministry's "proclamations and practices" be designed "so that parents are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives."¹⁹ The role of the parents is not relegated to a level of secondary importance in a family-equipping model. Church programs are not run simply for the sake of offering entertaining age-segmented events. Rather, every activity or program on a church's calendar is reassessed by a rubric that ascertains parental recognition and support. If a church program does not properly partner with families, then it is deemed superfluous.

The family-equipping ministry philosophy is surmised from a healthy theology of both the family and the church. Jones and Nelson compare the indispensable reality of the church and the family for a child's discipleship to a river flowing between two banks. Both banks are necessary to guide the water to the appropriate destination.²⁰ The family-

¹⁸ Jay Strother, "Making the Transition to Family-Equipping Ministry," in Stinson and Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God*, 255.

¹⁹ Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011), 33.

²⁰ Nelson and Jones, "Introduction," 27.

equipping model suggests that the greatest return on the church's ministry investment is realized by equipping parents to shepherd their own children. On average, an actively attending child will receive roughly forty hours of instruction from the church annually. Yet, that same child will live more than three thousand hours under the care and supervision of his or her family.²¹ The indisputable implications are that every program, activity, event, or outing must assist parents in training their children in the fear of the Lord. The organized ministries of the local church are unable to adequately disciple our children, and God did not intend for discipleship to be accomplished detached from the family. Family-equipping ministry is an aggressive culture-impacting shift and not merely a two-step program. Among the various ministry philosophies for how to most effectively train children and youth, the family-equipping model emerges as the most biblically grounded and practically sustainable. Yet, how is the abstract philosophy of family-equipping ministry best put into practice? Is there an historical methodology employed by the church to equip parents to disciple their children at home?

Catechesis: A Time-Tested Process for Training Children and New Converts in the Fear of the Lord

Family ministry throughout the last 150 years has been susceptible to an overemphasis on streamlined programs. Novel segmented programs alleged to establish an efficient system for child discipleship and retention; however, the promises of progress were revealed to be sorely lacking. In an age that exalts the virtues of originality and innovation, the recommendation to return to an ancient pedagogical practice seems absurd. Nevertheless, if churches are to faithfully equip Christian parents to disciple their children, the path to success lies in imitating the primitive church practice of catechesis. Catechesis derives from Greek verb *κατηχέω* meaning “to teach or instruct”²² The term

²¹ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide*, 35.

²² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian*

occurs eight times throughout the New Testament, and it “involves passing on a fixed body of knowledge the learner (catechumen) is expected to learn.”²³ Catechesis systematizes the content of the Christian faith in order to pass on the fundamentals to the next generation. G. A. Parrett and S. S. Kang further elaborate,

Catechesis is one of many New Testament terms for teaching. In the New Testament itself, the term often seems simply to refer to instruction. But very early in the life of the church, it came to mean instruction of a particular sort in terms of both form and substance. In terms of form, catechesis was generally verbal instruction that involved a great deal of repetition and memorization. In terms of substance catechesis came to refer to instruction in the basics or essentials of the faith.²⁴

The process of catechesis does not simply aim to enlarge the intellect; rather, the intended objective is to reform the heart.

The contemporary evangelical church is spiritually anemic. The seeker-sensitive movement characteristic of the twenty-first century has predominantly witnessed a dramatic decrease in “biblical literacy and theological competence.”²⁵ The prevailing challenges, which square against the faith once and all delivered to the saints will be best addressed through an unswerving commitment to the whole counsel of God’s word. The modern church is not in need of more shallow catchphrases and pithy slogans, but instead needs a robust theological foundation provided by the historic practice of catechesis. Kevin DeYoung astutely observes, “The only thing more difficult than finding the truth is not losing it.”²⁶ The church’s longstanding tradition of catechesis has served well to pass on the truth of God’s word from one generation to the next. Throughout

Literature, ed. by Frederick William Danker, Williams F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 534.

²³ Darwin K. Glassford, “The Future Is behind Us: Catechesis and Educational Ministries,” *Christian Education Journal* 9, no. 3 (2012): 176.

²⁴ G. A. Parrett and S. S. Kang, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 88.

²⁵ Glassford, “The Future Is behind Us,” 178.

²⁶ Kevin L. DeYoung, *The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16th Century Catechism* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 13.

church history, various developments contributed to the frequency and efficacy of catechesis.

Historical Precedent for Catechesis

The Roman emperor, Constantine, enacted the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313, which extended legal protection to Christianity as an officially acknowledged religion throughout the Roman Empire. Prior to this legislative reform, Christianity remarkably maintained substantial growth in spite of the lack of governmental protection. However, perseverance in orthodoxy would present quite the challenge in the midst of the polytheism of paganistic Rome. The pagan value of religious pluralism was a direct threat to the exclusive claims of the Christian gospel. Therefore, early Christianity was compelled to develop a pedagogical system conducive for maintaining doctrinal purity and stability in the midst of this religious pluralism. Church historians have identified the ancient church's practice of catechesis as an undeniable catalyst for Christianity's widespread growth.²⁷

Moreover, the process of catechesis was primarily utilized to prepare converts for baptism. This Christian training program became known as the "catechumenate," and its purpose was to "form people in the faith" and "communicate very clearly that conversion implies a commitment to discipleship and that discipleship is not for the few but for the many, not an option, but an expectation, not an addition to conversion but an essential feature of conversion."²⁸ Christianity was entirely incompatible with the rampant paganism of the Roman Empire. The following section will trace the historical development and progress of a selected assortment of Christian catechisms.

²⁷ Gerald L. Sittser, "The Catechumenate and the Rise of Christianity," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 6, no. 2 (2013): 180.

²⁸ Sittser, "The Catechumenate and the Rise of Christianity," 181.

The Apostolic Tradition

The catechumenate developed into a more methodical program by the turn of the third century. *The Apostolic Tradition* is widely considered to have been in circulation throughout the third century; however, its final form was likely compiled in the fourth century.²⁹ Hippolytus, a controversy-prone bishop of Rome, produced *The Apostolic Tradition* as both a polemic and as a means to “cleave to the old ways, rejecting every innovation.”³⁰ Hippolytus affirmed the necessity of theological fidelity for potential baptismal candidates. Rather than an immediate baptism upon profession of faith, the early church promulgated a program of intense discipleship that culminated in the new believer’s public baptism.

The Apostolic Tradition commenced by addressing the church’s appropriate method for ordaining bishops and presbyters. The manual prescribed both liturgical prayers and the pouring of oil upon the ordained ministers.³¹ In the second section, Hippolytus stressed the importance of examining a potential candidate for baptism. In the initial enlistment process, the convert would be questioned extensively “as to their reason for embracing the faith, and they who bring them shall testify that they are competent to hear the word.”³² Personal references to one’s spiritual competency demonstrated the evangelistic methodology of the early church. Gerald Sittser concludes, “the Christian movement grew at the grassroots level, at least in the second and third centuries, Christians reaching their relatives, friends, and neighbors through daily interaction in public places.”³³ Throughout the examination, converts would be dismissed if they

²⁹ Sittser, “The Catechumenate and the Rise of Christianity,” 196.

³⁰ Burton S. Easton, trans., *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* (1934; repr., Ann Arbor, MI: Archon Books, 1962), 25.

³¹ Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 36-37.

³² Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 41.

³³ Sittser, “The Catechumenate and the Rise of Christianity,” 197.

refused to abandon pagan professions such as: idol sculptors, actors, gladiators, charioteers, magicians, or military commanders.³⁴ The exclusivity of Christianity required a wholehearted denouncement of practices that were antithetical to God's word. Converts in the early church period were urged to consider the true cost of following Christ.

In the third section, *The Apostolic Tradition* outlined the practice of the Lord's Supper. No one in the catechumenate program was permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Table was strictly reserved for those who were baptized believers; however, the catechumens were appropriately instructed as to the significance of the Lord's Supper.³⁵ Additionally, the third section outlined the expectation of Christian service to widows and the poor. *The Apostolic Tradition* concluded its final section with instructions for prayer, domestic devotions, and the work of Christ's Spirit in the "signing" of one's forehead.³⁶ *The Apostolic Tradition* was one of the earliest catechetical documents employed for the instruction and discipleship of new Christian converts.

Baptismal Instructions

John Chrysostom, former patriarch of Constantinople, reiterated the significance of the process of catechesis in his *Baptismal Instructions*. This compendium of sermons was composed for the purpose of instructing the minds and hearts of new Christian converts in preparation for baptism. *Baptismal Instructions* was likely penned around 390 AD and delivered to catechumens in Antioch.³⁷ Like his contemporaries, John Chrysostom underscored the necessity of persevering in one's Christian pilgrimage.

³⁴ Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 42.

³⁵ Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 50-51.

³⁶ Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, 54-57.

³⁷ Paul W. Harkins, trans., *St. John Chrysostom: Baptismal Instructions*, Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation 31 (New York: Newman, 1963), 15.

Chrysostom appropriated athletic metaphors to capture the determination needed for faithfulness to Jesus. Chrysostom's charge continues to elicit inspiration over 1600 years later: "Young athletes, the stadium is open, there are the spectators on the tiers of the amphitheater, in front of them is the leader of the games. Then, there is no middle ground, either you fall like a coward and leave covered with shame, or you act bravely and win the crown and the prize."³⁸ Discipleship was not merely an empty profession of faith in Jesus; rather, it was a wholesale offering of one's entire life.

Chrysostom's *Baptismal Instructions* established a strong foundation upon the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ from the outset. The ethical commands delivered to the catechumens were the response to grace and not the cause for grace. Chrysostom reminded the catechumens, "He (Jesus) does not have her (church) come to him as his bride because he has longed for her comeliness, or her beauty, or the bloom of her body. On the contrary, the bride he has brought into the nuptial chamber is deformed and ugly, thoroughly and shamefully sordid, and, practically, wallowing in the very mire of her sins."³⁹ God's grace was the unquestioned source for one's commitment to Christ.

Yet, the catechumens were exhorted and expected to guard orthodox doctrine as the vital wellspring, which poured forth into positive Christian ethics. "Such is the strictness we wish you to show in regard to the dogmas of the church, and we desire you to keep them fast fixed in your minds. It is also fitting that those who manifest such faith shine forth by their good conduct."⁴⁰ John Chrysostom exerted much ministerial effort toward the successful catechizing of pre-baptismal converts. Chrysostom's historical model illustrated the correlation between faithful doctrine and faithful practice. From the earliest centuries of church history, the practice of catechesis has served as a profitable

³⁸ Michel Dujarier, *A History of the Catechumenate: The First Six Centuries*, trans. Edward J. Haasl (New York: Sadlier, 1979), 96.

³⁹ Harkins, *St. John Chrysostom*, 24.

⁴⁰ Harkins, *St. John Chrysostom*, 32.

pedagogical tool for instructing converts in proper doctrine and expectations for discipleship.

Catechetical Instructions of St. Thomas Aquinas

By the Middle Ages, Christianity had revolutionized Europe and permeated every societal structure. Unlike the former evangelization of Roman pagans throughout the first five hundred years of church history, Europe in the Middle Ages was defined as a Christian culture in which Christianity was the principal religious establishment. Moreover, the rise of the practice of infant baptism contributed to the furtherance of a Christianized Western world. As a result, the church's practice of catechesis shifted from pre-baptismal instruction, which focused on the authenticity of one's commitment towards a post-baptismal educational model that promoted growth and perseverance in the Christian faith. "It was assumed that people were Christian largely because they were born and baptized into the faith, and then sustained in the faith through a lifetime of church education and sacramental participation."⁴¹ Catechesis in the Middle Ages marked a decisive shift from initiating evangelism to maintaining discipleship.

Saint Thomas Aquinas, born in 1225 near Naples, continued the ancient church practice of catechetical instruction. Aquinas developed his catechetical lectures chiefly around the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments.⁴² This tri-fold perspective would influence the more recognizable catechisms of the subsequent Reformation period. In addition, Aquinas addressed the Hail Mary and the Seven Sacraments of the church. Although Aquinas's *Instructions* do not resemble the familiar question and answer format of later catechisms, his purpose nonetheless was to instruct

⁴¹ Sittser, "The Catechumenate and the Rise of Christianity," 201.

⁴² Joseph B. Collins, trans., *The Catechetical Instructions of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Joseph Wagner, 1939), xi.

students in the fundamentals of the Christian religion.

Aquinas introduced his *Instructions* by stressing the exercise of faith as foundational for the Christian life. If misunderstood, faith can suggest to have an elusive subjective nature; however, Aquinas fills out the objective biblical content of faith. Aquinas demonstrated that faith: unites us to God, allows us to possess eternal life by truly knowing God, provides guidance for our lives, and enables us to persevere through tempting trials.⁴³ Though catechisms would become more polemical in subsequent centuries, Aquinas also trained his students in Christian orthodoxy by warning of erroneous theological heresies. After expositing various subsections of the Apostle's Creed, Aquinas would admonish his students to beware of heretical aberrations. Aquinas denounced Arian theology when explaining the second article of the Apostle's Creed.

Arius, although he would say that Christ was before the Blessed Virgin and that the Person of the Father is other than the Person of the Son, nevertheless made a three-fold attribution to Christ: (1) that the Son of God was a creature; (2) that he is not from eternity, but was formed the noblest of all creatures in time by God; (3) that God the Son is not of one nature with God the Father, and therefore that he was not true God. But this too is erroneous and contrary to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.⁴⁴

Aquinas's *Instructions* would prove to be one of the chief forerunners of the catechisms of the Reformation period. Aquinas continued the longstanding church emphasis on cultivating a sturdy Biblical foundation for new and young Christian believers.

The Golden Age of Catechesis

The sixteenth-century Reformation period witnessed a "golden age" of church education and catechesis.⁴⁵ Building upon the church's longstanding catechetical foundation, the Reformers assigned prominence to the use of catechisms within the home

⁴³ Collins, *The Catechetical Instructions of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 3-4.

⁴⁴ Collins, *The Catechetical Instructions of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 16.

⁴⁵ Tom J. Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life* (Amityville, NY: Calvary, 1998), 17.

as a pedagogical tool to instruct children. The great catechetical works of the Reformation resembled the medieval curriculum of the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. Unlike the ancient and medieval church understanding of catechesis to primarily involve the ecclesiastical sphere, the golden age of catechesis recognized the utility of the catechism for domestic discipleship.

John Calvin's ministry vision for reforming Geneva depended significantly upon the practice of catechesis within both the church and the home. John Calvin was keenly aware of the importance of catechizing children for the spiritual vitality of future generations. Calvin was convinced that "the best way to instruct children was to set forth in a clear, simple way the central topics of doctrine, according to the order of law, creed, prayer, and sacraments."⁴⁶ Calvin's convictions reflected that systematizing fundamental Christian doctrines in a manner accessible to both adults and children was both practical and warranted by church history. Consequently, John Calvin produced his *Geneva Catechism* in 1542, which was comprised of 373 questions and answers that outlined the predominant themes of God's revelation.⁴⁷

Though catechetical sermons would reinforce the themes espoused in the catechism's contents, the bulk of instruction was expected to transpire within Genevan households. The fathers were enjoined to oversee the catechizing of their children. "The use of the catechism at home was mainly a paternal responsibility, which required of the family weekly meetings for the discussion and memorization of the catechism, as well as set-aside times for prayer and biblical reading."⁴⁸ Under Calvin's ministry paradigm, the church's formal catechesis provided a supplement to the consistent catechesis within the

⁴⁶ Randall C. Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 135.

⁴⁷ Jean Francesco A. L. Gomes, "Reforming the Church, Home, and School: The Strategic Role of Catechesis in Calvin's Geneva," *Fides Reformata* 24, no. 1 (2019): 91.

⁴⁸ Gomes, "Reforming the Church, Home, and School," 102.

Christian home.

Yet, Calvin's method of catechesis was not content with mere knowledge transfer. As the catechism's first question and answer demonstrated, the "chief end of human life" is "to know God."⁴⁹ However, one cannot truly know God unless he or she knows the one true God who has revealed himself in the scriptures. Therefore, Calvin rightly cautioned the church that "the Church of God will never preserve itself without a catechism, for it is like the seed to keep the good grain from dying out, and using it to multiply from age to age. And therefore, if you desire to build an edifice which shall be of long duration...make provision for the children being instructed in a good catechism."⁵⁰ Faithful theological training and catechesis within the home contributed significantly to the legacy of the Reformation.

Martin Luther also defended the necessity and legitimacy of catechetical instruction. Luther composed his iconic *Small Catechism* in 1529 in order to safeguard the integrity of the gospel among the laity and clergy. Luther lamented in the preface to his *Small Catechism*, "the ordinary person, especially in the villages, knows absolutely nothing about the Christian faith, and unfortunately many pastors are completely unskilled and incompetent teachers."⁵¹ The use of an orthodox catechism ensured the preservation of the central tenets of the Christian faith.

For Luther, the proper understanding of law and gospel was critical. The medieval emphasis on the sacrament of penance corrupted the biblical testimony of justification through faith alone in Christ alone and left many ignorant as to the true

⁴⁹ Thomas F. Torrance, *The School of Faith: The Catechisms of the Reformed Church* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 5.

⁵⁰ John Calvin, "Letter to the Protector Somerset, Geneva, October 22, 1548," in *Selected Works of John Calvin*, ed. Henry Beveridge and Jules Bonnet (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 5:191.

⁵¹ Timothy J. Wengert, *Martin Luther's Catechisms: Forming the Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 13-14.

gospel message. Luther contended the chief function of God's law was to bring a clear recognition of sin and our unworthiness before God. Moreover, Luther's conception of the law flowed naturally into pure gospel streams. Rather than continuing in the erroneous ruts of medieval penance and legalism, Luther's catechism lauded the true and sufficient righteousness of God as received through faith in Christ. The whole of the Christian life "is marked by the daily drowning of the old creature and raising up of the new by faith alone."⁵² Therefore, Luther's catechism accentuated the significance of the Lord's table and baptism as means of God's grace to be appropriated by faith.

Luther's *Small Catechism* continued the traditional three-part organizational structure of the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. Like Calvin, Luther also upheld the role of the Christian family in the practice of catechesis. As Luther's *Small Catechism* was being published, each section would be introduced: "How the head of the household is to present the Ten Commandments [or Creed etc.] to the members of the household."⁵³ Luther admonished fathers and mothers to take responsibility for the discipleship of their children through consistent catechesis. Luther instructed families that "every father of a family is a bishop in his house and the wife a bishoppess. Therefore, remember that you in your homes are to help us carry on the ministry as we do in the church."⁵⁴ The catechism proved to be an invaluable resource for training children in the home throughout the Reformation period.

Yet, the merit of the catechism was not exclusive to children. As Luther testified, "each morning. . . I do as a child who is being taught by the catechism and I read and recite word for word the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Psalms, etc. I must still read and study the catechism daily, and yet I cannot master it as I

⁵² Wengert, *Martin Luther's Catechisms*, 7.

⁵³ Wengert, *Martin Luther's Catechisms*, 16.

⁵⁴ Wengert, *Martin Luther's Catechisms*, 17.

wish, but must remain a child and pupil of the catechism.”⁵⁵ The catechisms of Calvin and Luther paved the way for some of the most recognized catechisms in the contemporary age: *The Heidelberg Catechism* and the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*. These two catechisms would substantially influence the later development of the Baptist catechisms of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

The Legacy of Catechisms in Baptist Life

Although modern Baptists might object to the efficacy of a catechism, Baptist history reveals a rich legacy of catechetical implementation. Tom Nettles explains, “some who profess the Christian faith are so experience-oriented that their view of spirituality makes them antagonistic to precise doctrine. Any attempt to inculcate systematic arrangement of truth is considered either divisive or carnal.”⁵⁶ Despite this widespread reluctance, Baptist forebears recognized the longstanding usefulness of an orthodox catechism for instructing children and adult believers. Hercules Collins, a seventeenth century Particular Baptist, compiled his *Orthodox Catechism* by building upon the framework of the *Heidelberg Catechism*.⁵⁷ Collins wanted to connect his congregation to the “old Gospel” rather than settling “for a new.”⁵⁸ Collins perceived the benefit of a catechism as a helpful tool to preserve orthodox Christianity through a systematic presentation of core Christian doctrines.

The Shorter Catechism, which derived from the Westminster Assembly, served as an impetus for the strong heritage of Baptist catechisms. Both Charles Spurgeon’s

⁵⁵ Wengert, *Martin Luther’s Catechisms*, 22-23.

⁵⁶ Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts*, 15.

⁵⁷ Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts*, 18.

⁵⁸ Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts*, 18.

catechism and *The Baptist Catechism* were founded upon *The Shorter Catechism*.⁵⁹ Other Baptist catechisms included: Henry Fish's *The Baptist Scriptural Catechism*, John Broadus's *Catechism of Bible Teaching*, Thomas Grantham's *St. Paul's Catechism* (1687), Dan Taylor's *A Catechism of Instructions for Children and Youth*, W.W. Evert's *Compend of Christian Doctrines Held by Baptists*, and J.P. Boyce's *A Catechism of Bible Doctrine*.⁶⁰ This limited list of Baptist catechetical works uncovers a deep-rooted heritage of the catechism for Baptist faith and practice.

Educational Concerns of the Catechism

However, the prevalent apprehension among Baptists toward the use of catechisms is likely an overreaction to a legitimate concern. Sensible suspicions against the use of catechisms underscore the possibility that “catechisms tend to produce mere intellectual assent where true heart religion is absent.”⁶¹ However, these concerns are not unique to Baptists. In studying the Lutheran practice of confirmation and catechesis, Geoffrey Boyle contends, “we are faced with the reality that what should secure our children in the Christian faith and spur on a life of faithfulness is not working. As with most things, however, simply fixing the form will not solve the problem. Form and content go together.”⁶² Boyle recognizes the futility of educating the mind apart from the heart. The threat of simply transferring doctrinal knowledge devoid of personal transformation is conceivable and undesirable.

Yet, the opposite extreme is equally if not more grievous. Darwin Glassford has sounded the alarm that “biblical literacy and theological competence is waning in

⁵⁹ Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts*, 19.

⁶⁰ Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts*, 20-26.

⁶¹ Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts*, 15.

⁶² Geoffrey R. Boyle, “Confirmation, Catechesis, and Communion: A Historical Survey,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (2015): 123.

most churches.”⁶³ Doctrinal shallowness directly contributes to the erosion of necessary biblical frameworks for understanding the metanarrative of the Bible and its central message. To know God, we must know him as he has revealed himself in his word. Though inadequate catechesis has the potential to collapse into mere rote memory, a holistic approach to the ancient practice of catechesis affords a sturdy theological structure in which both the mind and affections are reformed. It is to this latter objective that the contemporary church ought to pursue.

That catechesis is only concerned with memorizing the correct theological responses to given questions is a strawman objection to the ancient practice. Rather, holistic catechesis “involves modeling a way of life.”⁶⁴ John Pless defines catechesis as “the process of transmitting the word of God so that the mind and life of the one who receives it grows up in every way into Jesus Christ, living in faith toward him and in love toward the neighbor.”⁶⁵ Catechesis intends to transform both the heart and mind by applying the word of God through instruction and application. Nettles writes, “The design of the catechism is, under God, to chase the darkness from a sinner’s understanding, so that he may be enlightened in the knowledge of Christ and freely embrace him in forgiveness of sin.”⁶⁶

The early church also recognized this potential failure to grasp the true purpose of catechetical instruction. Augustine of Hippo’s “catechetical approach was a lifelong process of growing, learning, and engaging the truths of the Christian story for the continual formation and transformation of individuals and communities.”⁶⁷ Right doctrine

⁶³ Glassford, “The Future Is behind Us,” 178.

⁶⁴ Glassford, “The Future Is behind Us,” 178.

⁶⁵ John T. Pless, “Catechesis for Life in the Royal Priesthood,” *Logia* 3, no. 4 (1994): 3.

⁶⁶ Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts*, 20.

⁶⁷ Beverly C. Johnson-Miller and Benjamin D. Espinoza, “Catechesis, Mystagogy, and Pedagogy: Continuing the Conversation,” *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 2 (2018): 161.

applied always reforms the heart. “For Luther, the point of catechesis was holy living, not merely correct beliefs.”⁶⁸ The historical legacy of catechesis within the life of the church is admired and to be applied because of its demonstrated ability to apply God’s word in a personal and systematic method.

Yet, how is the practice of catechesis to avoid educating the mind to the neglect of reforming the heart? Johnson-Miller and Espinoza reference “mystagogical catechesis” as the term that best captures the ancient church’s methodology for true heart transformation in catechesis.⁶⁹ Mystagogical catechesis is not applied apart from the revealed Word of God. Simply put, mystagogical catechesis is “the experiential process of leading Christians into the mysteries of the faith.”⁷⁰ To not merely hear that the Lord is good, but to also taste and see for one’s self that he is indeed good. Catechesis rightly applied has long sought to avoid a cold intellectualism that breeds pride but fails to humble one’s heart. Though the emphasis of mystagogical catechesis is on experiencing God, this pedagogical method also defends the necessity of applying doctrinal truths to one’s life and practice.

The ancient church practice of educating the affections, in contrast to post-Enlightenment intellectual indoctrination, requires mystagogical immersion of the human heart and life in the love of God. Mystagogical catechesis prevents the formation of superficial faith through pedagogical practices that: recognize the liturgical nature of faith and life, engage the whole person, aim for the heart, envision the journey, provoke wonder, and cultivate worship.”⁷¹

Mystagogical catechesis is impervious to a subjective emotionalism, because it rightly affirms the liturgical content of biblical faith. However, it strongly condemns the elevation of intellectual cognizance to the detriment of reforming one’s affections and volition. Ultimately, one’s affections cannot be reformed apart from the work of God’s

⁶⁸ Johnson-Miller and Espinoza, “Catechesis, Mystagogy, and Pedagogy,” 161.

⁶⁹ Johnson-Miller and Espinoza, “Catechesis, Mystagogy, and Pedagogy,” 156.

⁷⁰ Johnson-Miller and Espinoza, “Catechesis, Mystagogy, and Pedagogy,” 163.

⁷¹ Johnson-Miller and Espinoza, “Catechesis, Mystagogy, and Pedagogy,” 156.

Spirit in the new birth (John 3:5-6). Still, mystagogical catechesis aims to apply theology to the whole of one's mind, heart, and will.

God authorized the Christian household as the principal conduit for a child's discipleship and instruction. Though numerous theoretical propositions have been proposed for the most effective model of family ministry, the family-equipping ministry model is best suited to champion parents to fulfill their parental responsibilities of discipling their children. This model upholds the partnership between parents and the local church in the pursuit of training children in the fear of the Lord. Practically, the catechism is a profitable pedagogical tool that is well-suited for the family-equipping ministry model. Further, church history substantiates the efficacy of the catechism to instill the fundamentals of the Christian faith. As our churches seek God's will for the way forward in family ministry, may he open our eyes to see that the path before us likely lies in our rearview.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

This project implementation was the practical outworking of a desire for the families of First Baptist Church Moody to joyfully shepherd their children in accordance with the revealed will of God. One controlling question that guided the project's genesis and framework was how parents could practically disciple their children. Convincing the parents of FBCM that their role in their child's discipleship was paramount was accomplished through expositing the Bible's clear testimony concerning this responsibility for parents. However, the how-to component remained practically unanswered for the young families of FBCM. An in-depth analysis of the Christian church's historic use of catechisms unearthed a time-tested aid for parents committed to honoring the Lord through the discipleship of their children. This chapter details the process of implementing the ministry project among the young families of FBCM.

History

God called me to serve as the associate and student pastor of FBCM in July 2018. My family and I left Ninth and O Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, to pursue God's call to pastor students and their families in Moody, Alabama. One of the many strengths of Ninth and O Baptist Church was the emphasis on community among young families. The value of community was engrained in us as we began our new ministry assignment in Alabama. One year into the ministry at FBCM, God initiated a strong desire among our pastoral staff to encourage community among the young families of our church. In God's providence, there were already numerous young family units who attended the main worship gathering on Sunday mornings; however, there was an

absence of connection and community.

In October of 2019, our church launched the Life Together class for the purpose of connecting young families with one another. This initiative sought to foster an environment of genuine community that was grounded in our common salvation. Our class initially studied the book of Romans in order to lay a strong foundation of comprehending the work of Jesus Christ accomplished for us. The class also greatly benefitted from Matt Chandler's teaching series on marriage entitled, "The Mingling of Souls." The early months of the Life Together class bore much fruit, and God added more families to our class.

In the beginning of 2020, one common question and concern that frequently surfaced was in regards to how to lead our families and children in the fear of the Lord. Personally, I had benefitted from the *NCC* and its intentional design to be utilized for discipling children. The catechism was structured to instill fundamental Christian doctrine and to present a pragmatic model for passing on these doctrinal fundamentals to children. Each question of the catechism included a shorter answer that allowed for easier memorization for children. Further, through the doctoral project methodology class, God refined my ministry vision to seek to address our class's need for being equipped to faithfully disciple the children entrusted to our care. Thus, the vision for the implementation of this project was organically shaped on the ministry needs and desires among the members in our Life Together class. The central objective was to be faithful to God's prescription that parents disciple their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

Preparation

Throughout the preparation process for the project implementation, the main objectives for the project became crystallized. The utilization of the *NCC* would both instruct our parents in basic Christian doctrines and then also equip them with a practical

resource to personally disciple their own children.

Project Timing

The most conducive time for optimal participation from our young families was during the existing 9:00 AM Sunday School hour. Since I oversaw our Life Together class, I was able to utilize the existing time structure as the vehicle for implementing the project. Due to outside time constraints, adding an additional time period for the project would have proven unfruitful. Further, the class period was already restricted to a one-hour time slot. In preparation for the project curriculum, I elected to design the lessons to fit manageably within the existing one-hour period. Therefore, the class structure of instruction, discussion, and application would be devised in an appropriate manner that considered the time constraints. Also, our Life Together class had a private Facebook group in which we shared prayer requests and information pertinent to the group. I planned to video record each lesson as a live session during the 9:00 AM Sunday School hour for the benefit of participants who were absent during various weeks. The Facebook live option also allowed the video lecture to be saved to the group indefinitely for later viewing. With the Life Together class framework already in place, I did not have to add an additional time period for participants to attend.

After determining the length of time available for each lesson, I considered the overall length of the teaching program. I established six weeks as a satisfactory time period for implementing the teaching portion of the project. This would allow sufficient time to compose a curriculum as well as record pre- and post-surveys. Six weeks also provided enough time to sufficiently cover the range of topics required for the instruction period. Initially, I settled on an eight-week program; however, I opted for six weeks when considering the standard practice of our church's pastor was to preach sermon series that ranged from four to six weeks.

After consulting the church calendar, I resolved to implement the six-week

teaching series between July and August 2021. By God’s grace, many of our church members had begun to return to regular in-person worship services by the beginning of the year. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily impacted the attendance of our Life Together class, the vast majority returned promptly as faithful participants. Our Life Together class also enjoyed the addition of several families throughout the pandemic period. Historically, June is one of the busier months for our church programming; therefore, a six-week period between July and August 2021 proved to be the most feasible time for the project implementation.

Project Format

Prior to the six-week instructional period, I planned the format and design of the curriculum. Using the *NCC* as a tool to equip the parents of FBCM was clear in my ministry vision; however, I needed to devise a model and teaching strategy to accomplish this goal. I decided to dedicate the first lesson to expounding the biblical warrant for parents to take primary ownership of discipling their children. In addition, the first lesson would lay the groundwork for the use of the catechism by outlining its historical usage throughout the centuries. For the remaining five sessions, I sought to employ the *NCC* as a framework for teaching fundamental Christian doctrine. The five lessons would focus on the doctrines of God, man, the work of Christ, sanctification, and glorification.

For each lesson, the intended objectives included: meaningful instruction, practical prompts for stimulating at-home discipleship, and adequate discussion time for participants to ask questions. The rough structure for each lesson included: an introduction portion where the major themes of the lesson were delineated, a testimonial section where participants could share how the project encouraged them to lead discipleship times at home, question and answers from the *NCC* to outline the doctrinal matters covered, and a “boots on the ground” section, which encouraged practical implementation along with concrete examples of how to lead our families throughout the

following week. Some of the family units in the Life Together class did not have children. Therefore, the design of the curriculum was created with the intention of being accessible to families with different compositions. Once the format was finalized, I wrote the lesson outlines over a period of several weeks. I used different questions in the *NCC* to structure the teaching outline for each lesson. One of my goals was for parents to see how the *NCC* is advantageous as a springboard for God-centered discussions with their children.

Following the completion of the six teaching outlines, I coordinated an expert panel consisting of four members to judge the doctrinal consistency and practicality of the teaching series. The panel was comprised by four men in full-time vocational ministry: Dr. Brad Moseley, DMin, Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church in Moody, Alabama; Reverend Caleb Nedimyer, Lead Pastor of Monument Hill Church in Monument, Colorado; Reverend Michael Dick, Associate Pastor of Gospel Fellowship of Sussex in Sussex, Wisconsin; Brent Finchum, Southeast Regional Coordinator for Word of Life Ministries. Each of these men graciously agreed to review the content of the teaching outlines in order to provide constructive feedback. From the subsequent feedback, I was able to make minor adjustments to the curriculum in order to equip parents with children of varying ages. Further, the feedback assisted me in clarifying the vision for the *NCC* to serve as a tool to utilize in conjunction with regular Bible reading and prayer. The *NCC* would be insufficient as a singular discipleship tool for parents in discipling their children. The expert panel advised me to reiterate the usefulness of the *NCC* as an indispensable tool while recognizing the primary importance of regular Bible intake and focused prayer. Simply put, I would not desire the implementation of the *NCC* to displace regular Bible reading in a family's discipleship routine. Further, the curriculum evaluations were received in a timely manner allowing for the necessary revisions to take place.

Promotion

The ministry project was promoted to the entire church beginning on June 8, 2021. In our church bulletin, we included an announcement outlining the parameters of those who would qualify to participate: having at least one child a year or older living at home. The promotional announcements continued through the end of June. Though the announcement referenced involvement in my project, I attempted to emphasize the personal benefit each family would receive from participating in the project. In addition to our church bulletin, we also included an announcement slide that played on a loop during our services as well as on our church website. The largest concentration for the demographic who would qualify for my project's parameters were already members of the Life Together class. Therefore, the greatest efforts to promote the project were through the existing announcement mediums tailored to our class. I posted two different videos to our private Facebook group explaining and outlining the details of the project and its intended outcomes. Finally, at the conclusion of each Sunday School hour through the month of June, I allocated a brief period of time to promote the upcoming six-week teaching series.

Pre-Surveys

The project's promotion proved to be beneficial and several families expressed interest in participating in the research portion of the project. The survey utilized for the pre-assessment had been completed early in 2020 during the Project Methodology course. Therefore, the survey was available for immediate distribution to families who desired to participate. The survey sought to gauge the current discipleship practices as well as the doctrinal understanding of the families within our Life Together class. Though numerous families expressed interest in participating in the project, I only received twelve completed surveys by the July 8, 2021 deadline. This established deadline ensured that all surveys would be completed and turned in by the first class on Sunday, July 11, 2021. Each survey represented one family unit. The majority of the family units were

comprised of a married husband and wife; however, a small minority represented single parents who retained primary custody of their children. As the surveys were distributed, I continually reminded parents to answer the questions to the best of their ability and to not feel guilt-stricken for the ways in which they may neglect to disciple their children. To mitigate any potential embarrassment or shame, participants selected an anonymous four-digit code to link their pre-surveys and post-surveys. After receiving the completed pre-surveys, implementing the project's six-week teaching portion was ready to commence.

Implementation

For each of the teaching sessions, I printed out a participant guide with fill-in-the-blank sections to aid in sustaining attention and to encourage maximum participation. The teaching lessons were also video recorded on my iPhone and streamed live directly to Facebook for those who were absent. For those absent, I was able to email the lecture notes and participation guides.

Session 1

On Sunday, July 11, 2021, I taught a one-hour lesson on the biblical testimony of the parents' primary role in a child's discipleship. In addition, this introductory lesson highlighted the usage of the catechism throughout church history. This lesson was intended to be highly educational and to lay the appropriate groundwork for introducing the *NCC* as a practical tool to incorporate into family discipleship practices. The lesson opened with a brief overview of the impact of industrialization on the American family. The modern family has less disposable time together than previous generations. As a result, our class learned about the impact of industrialization on the church with the birth of segmented-programmatic ministries. This novel ministry paradigm inadvertently delegated the primary role of discipleship to youth pastors instead of parents.

The cultural phenomenon of the professionalization of ministry was compared to the biblical testimony that parents are to be the chief agents in a child's discipleship.

Our class studied Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalm 78:1-8, Ephesians 6:1-4, and Ephesians 4:11-13. After reading through Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and offering brief commentary, I asked our class about the role of parents in covenant transmission. The responses revealed that the parents of our Life Together class understood that God intended the covenant to be faithfully transmitted from one generation to the next primarily through the efforts of Israelite parents. Further, the frequency and manner of instruction outlined in Deuteronomy 6:1-9 revealed God's pattern for parents to be consistent in discipling their children. After establishing the role of parents in a child's discipleship, our class learned about the role of the church and specifically the leaders of the church to equip parents to disciple their children. Ephesians 4:11-13 demonstrated that Jesus provided leaders to his church in order to equip the saints for the work of ministry. From this passage, our class learned that the leadership of the church is God's appointed resource to train parents for the ministry of discipling their children.

The latter portion of the first lesson highlighted the historical use of catechisms throughout the church's history. The purpose of the catechism was not only to instruct the mind but to also impact the whole person with the gospel. The parents were encouraged to use the *NCC* to instill worldview-shaping categories into their children that by God's grace would be appropriated personally by these same children in response to the Holy Spirit bringing regeneration and conversion at some point in their lives. The lesson concluded with our "boots on the ground" section, which focused on how to practically apply the principles outlined in our meeting time. This section encouraged parents to memorize the question and answer for the first catechism question in the *NCC*. Additionally, families were instructed to use the question and answer as a guide for discussion and prayer.

Session 2

The second session was offered on Sunday, July 18, 2021. This session aimed

to equip the parents of the Life Together class with a biblical doctrine of God. Prior to the formal instruction period, the class was encouraged to share the previous week's successes in using the first *NCC* question with their family. A few parents excitedly endorsed the usefulness of the *NCC* for prompting spiritual discussions with their children. In this lesson, the *NCC* was implemented to frame the teaching outline for the doctrine of God. The second question and answer in the *NCC* provided the entire instructional format for the lesson. From the answer to the second question, we learned about God's role as the creator of all things, his eternal attributes, and his divine providence and sovereignty. In addition, the class was exhorted to consider the implications of God's work of creation: The Lord is self-sufficient, all of creation belongs to him, and all of humanity is accountable to him. The final portion of the class was dedicated to strategically incorporating the *NCC* in family worship. We committed to memorizing the second question and answer in the *NCC*, and the class was encouraged to download the free *NCC* application on their smart phones.

Session 3

The goal of the third session was to utilize the *NCC* to equip our class with a proper understanding of mankind. This class was taught on Sunday, July 25, 2021. The class commenced with a discussion of the common cultural assumptions about the nature and purpose of man. Questions 4, 14, and 18 constituted the teaching outline for session three. Contrary to modern conceptions of man, the *NCC* captured and explained the biblical testimony that man is uniquely created in the image of God, culpable in active rebellion against God, and under God's just wrath. Question 4 in the *NCC* clearly delineated God's creative genius in making mankind male and female. Our class dialogued about the value of the *NCC* to instruct our children on God's design for gender. God's word has spoken clearly to the issue of gender, and our parents were encouraged to use the catechism as a tool to explain the uniqueness of mankind, the nature of our sin,

and the resulting condemnation warranted by our sin.

Session 4

The previous lesson summarized the grave predicament of mankind. On August 1, 2021, session 4 highlighted the glorious person and work of Jesus Christ. Our class launched with a discussion on contemporary perceptions of salvation. Questions 19, 20, and 29 in the *NCC* framed our discussion on the justice and mercy of God as demonstrated in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the eternal son of God. This lesson focused on the exclusivity of the work of Christ as an atoning sacrifice for sins. Additionally, the application of salvation by grace alone through faith was expounded at length. At the conclusion of this lesson, I strongly urged our families to memorize Ephesians 2:8-9. Further, I demonstrated to the class how to use questions 20 and 29 in the *NCC* to frame a hypothetical discussion with children around the dinner table. Parents appreciated the recommendation to listen to “O the Blood” by Gateway Worship as a family activity to elicit additional conversations about the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Session 5

Session 5 ensued on Sunday, August 8, 2021. The primary aim of this lesson was to educate our class on the nature of justification and sanctification and their inseparable link. Questions 32 and 34 in the *NCC* served as sufficient resources for our class discussion. These two catechetical questions assisted us in understanding the objective nature of justification. God’s gracious work of justifying the sinner is a legal declaration dependent on the basis of Christ’s meritorious work. Moreover, sanctification is progressive throughout the Christian’s life. The work of the Holy Spirit transforms the believer gradually into the image of Christ. In our class conversation, we discussed the danger of confusing justification with sanctification. A sizeable group in our Life Together class had expressed a struggle with the assurance of salvation. Throughout the

dialogue, it became apparent that progress in one's sanctification can become erroneously confused with the definitive work of justification. I reminded our class participants that we are justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone; however, the one God saves by his grace, he always grants the Holy Spirit who gradually sanctifies the believer. At the conclusion of the lesson, parents were urged to articulate the doctrine of justification and sanctification to their children in accessible language by using the *NCC*.

Session 6

The final session of the project implementation was taught on Sunday, August 15, 2021. The concluding session used questions 50 and 52 in the *NCC* to instruct our Life Together class on the biblical doctrine of glorification. The class time commenced with a group discussion on the overall reception among our families to implementing the *NCC* in a regular time of family devotions. The overall feedback was positive regarding the helpfulness of the *NCC* for both doctrinal growth and assistance in discipling one's children. Session 6 emphasized the believer's union with Christ through faith. Through faith, we receive the benefits of Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection. Christ's resurrection guarantees our future resurrection to eternal life. The Christian believer derives much comfort from a consideration of his or her inseparable union with Christ. Our class also discussed the perils of the present life. The promised bodily resurrection for believers directs our hope to life on the renewed earth. The hope of Romans 8:29-30 also delivered much reassurance that all whom God predestines, calls, and justifies will certainly be glorified. The participants in the Life Together class were encouraged to discuss the hope of the resurrection with their children. Specifically, parents were pointed to question 52 in the *NCC* as an invaluable resource for discussing the Christian's hope of the resurrection and the age to come. The session concluded with prayer for God to bless the efforts of our class participants as we continued to seek to honor his name by training our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

Post-Surveys

At the end of the sixth session, post-surveys were administered to those participating in the research portion of the project. The deadline for receiving the post-surveys was Sunday, August 22, 2021. I allotted time during our Life Together class for those who needed to complete their surveys. Additionally, I created a Google Form comprised of the entire post-survey so that families could complete the survey online at their own convenience. The participants were instructed to use the same four-digit anonymous code in order for their pre-surveys to be linked together. Unfortunately, I only received eight eligible post-surveys.

Conclusion

Each of the family units received a free print copy of the *NCC* and were encouraged to continue using it as a springboard for spiritual conversations with their children. The *NCC* is divided into fifty-two questions and answers making the structure conducive for studying throughout the year. The six weeks of instruction equipped our families with a more robust biblical theology that assisted them in taking greater ownership in discipling their own children. The *NCC* proved to be a practical tool for forming biblical categories in the minds and hearts of our children. The concluding chapter will assess the goals and success of the overall project.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church contains these Spirit-inspired words: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31). The entire framework and implementation of this ministry research project has had the glory of God as the supreme goal. The project aimed to train the young families of FBCM to glorify God by taking primary responsibility for their children's discipleship. Though a growing conformity to God's design for in-home discipleship was the goal, a clear strategy with measurable benchmarks was critical for discerning the project's efficacy. This final chapter will objectively evaluate the project's purpose and goals followed by a summary of the inherent strength and weaknesses. The latter part will disclose theological and personal reflections gleaned throughout the completion of this project.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip the young parents of FBCM to disciple their children by means of catechesis. The core rationale for this purpose derived from the particular God-given instructions for parents to actively train their children in the fear of the Lord. A selected exegetical study of Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalm 78:1-8, Ephesians 6:1-4, and Ephesians 4:11-13 revealed God's will for parents to train their children consistently in the instruction of the Lord. Further, the most conducive training environment for parents to be equipped to obey these directives occurs within the context of the local church. The Lord Jesus Christ has gifted pastors and teachers to his church for the purpose of equipping "the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph 4:12a).

Moreover, the church's historic practice of catechesis has proven to be an effective tool for fulfilling the command to teach our children "when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (Deut 6:7b). Therefore, the fulfillment of the project's purpose was intended to be both biblical and practical. As the following evaluation of the project's goals will disclose, the project did satisfactorily fulfill its purpose. The young families of FBCM benefitted from receiving additional theological training and demonstrated a positive change in discipling their children from the use of the *NCC*.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The purpose of this project was satisfied through the strategic fulfillment of three distinct goals. These goals served to inform, guide, and measure the progress of the project from its inception to final conclusion. The first goal was to assess both the current biblical perceptions of basic Christian doctrine and the current discipleship practices among the young families at First Baptist Church Moody. The second goal was to develop a six-week curriculum that incorporated the *NCC* as an instructional framework to teach parents basic Christian doctrine as well as the biblical warrant for parents to serve as the primary disciple-makers for their children. The third goal was to equip the young families of FBCM to use the lessons learned from the curriculum and *NCC* to actively disciple their children within the home.

First Goal

The first goal was designed to gather pertinent data. For the project to make a measurable change, the reality of the pre-existing theological perceptions and discipleship practices had to be assessed and recorded. The Family Discipleship Practices and Theological Understanding Inventory (FDPTUI) proved to be an advantageous medium for gauging the current theological comprehension and discipleship practices among the families of FBCM. The FDPTUI was administered both before the project's

implementation and following the conclusion of the final session. The importance of fulfilling this first goal was paramount to crafting an effective curriculum that would be tailored for the young families of FBCM and would shape the remaining direction for the project.

The FDPTUI was administered to each eligible family unit within our Life Together class. I received twelve completed pre-surveys by the due date. Initially, I had designated ten completed surveys as the minimum number for the successful completion of this first goal. From a quantitative perspective, the first goal was successfully accomplished with the reception of these twelve completed pre-surveys. Qualitatively, the pre-surveys provided valuable insight into the current discipleship practices and overall doctrinal understanding among the young families of FBCM.

The initial FDPTUI demonstrated a widespread lack of consistent family devotional times throughout the week. Additionally, the survey revealed that parents cited busyness as the principal deterrent for intentional discipleship. The average family's schedule is overextended and leaves little disposable time for meaningful spiritual engagement with one's children. For example, many survey responses indicated that families struggled to eat meals together without distractions or time constraints. This realization underscored the urgency of emphasizing the premium God's word places on the parent's role in discipling their children. If parents are not persuaded that their responsibility in discipling their children is supreme, then the family's schedule will be dictated by sports and other extracurricular activities.

Another discovery from the initial survey was that many parents had not had a church-provided plan for their child's spiritual growth. As the student pastor of FBCM, this finding channeled and fueled the direction for my ministry efforts. According to Ephesians 4:11-13, the church is the primary training ground for parents to be equipped to disciple their own children. This specific survey response indicated that parents needed help and practical training for implementing a discipleship plan for their children. The

use of the *NCC* would prove to be an encouraging and accessible resource for parents to gain confidence in spiritually leading their children. Without a clear strategy for how to begin discipling one's children, parents would face frustration and discouragement.

Finally, the results of theological comprehension reflected in the first survey were above average. After the initial survey, I anticipated that a larger potential statistical change would occur in the practices portion of the subsequent survey rather than the perceptions portion. Overall, the success of the first goal was validated by acquiring an accurate assessment of the biblical knowledge and discipleship practices of the young families at FBCM.

Second Goal

The second goal was to design a six-week curriculum that utilized the *NCC* for the purpose of training parents in basic Christian doctrine. Further, this doctrinal comprehension would be appropriated within the individual homes of the families of FBCM. Each of these lessons were designed so that parents would be equipped to practically incorporate biblical doctrine in the discipline of catechizing one's children. The first lesson of the curriculum was entirely dedicated to the biblical testimony for parents to disciple their children and the church's historic use of a catechism.

For the remaining five weeks of the course, I elected to expound on the following doctrines: God, man, the work of Christ, sanctification, and glorification. These five doctrines established a healthy foundation for a comprehensive biblical theology. The curriculum intended to elucidate these core doctrines to serve as a framework for the weekly intake of the *NCC*. Therefore, the five doctrinal lessons were written using different questions and answers directly from the *NCC*. I wanted the parents both to see the theological richness of the *NCC* as well as its versatility in prompting spiritual discussions with their children. Class discussions and a concluding practical section helped the parents of FBCM to internalize and apply the information learned throughout

the course.

The sufficiency of the designed curriculum was dependent upon an expert panel's review. The most important section within the evaluation rubric was the project's biblical fidelity. Each evaluator judged the content of the six lessons to ensure its theological soundness. Secondly, the scope of the six lessons was judged. The evaluators discerned whether each lesson sufficiently covered the doctrinal subject under review. The *NCC* proved to be a viable resource for adequately covering basic components of each theological subject. The third criteria of the rubric assessed the project's methodology. This section measured the adequate use of different learning techniques in order to address diverse learning styles. The final consideration was the project's practicality. This portion of the rubric sought to ascertain the level of interaction with the material that each lesson provided participants.

After each evaluator perused the six lessons, a grade was assigned for each section within the curriculum. The grading scale was outlined as follows: 1 = insufficient, 2 = requires attention, 3 = sufficient, and 4 = exemplary. This four-point scale served as an appropriate grading metric to determine the sufficiency of the curriculum. The goal of composing an adequate teaching curriculum was sufficiently met. The expert panel unanimously deemed the biblical fidelity portion to be exemplary. The grade for both the curriculum's scope and methodology also merited a sufficient mark. The average score for the practicality section was also judged to be exemplary by the panel.

The expert panel's additional comments and suggestions proved to be invaluable for revising the curriculum. Concerning the scope of the curriculum, one reviewer recommended age-specific resources for parents using the *NCC* as a tool for in-home discipleship. Parents of teenagers will require a different emphasis from that of parents of young children. This helpful suggestion was integrated during the "boots on the ground" discussion portion. For example, discussing the implications of what it means to belong to God will be more developed with a pre-teen in contrast to a four-year-

old child. During the group discussion portion of each lesson, parents of children with various ages were able to collaborate and share ideas of how to implement the lessons with different age groups. The ability to contextualize the lesson's principles was dependent upon a firm grasp of the theology taught throughout the curriculum. As parents grew in their doctrinal understanding, they would be better equipped to instruct their children at an appropriate level. The second goal was completed successfully with the design of a peer-reviewed curriculum.

Third Goal

The third goal was to equip the young families of FBCM to employ the newly developed curriculum as an instructional framework for the active discipleship of their children. In order for the young families to be equipped, their doctrinal understanding needed to increase. As our young families increased in their theological competency, they would be better prepared to effectively disciple their children. This goal was measured by re-administering the FDPTUI to the participating family units in order to gauge the statistical improvement in both doctrinal comprehension and discipleship practices. The generation of a t-test recorded the statistical changes that were directly attributable to the project's implementation.

I received ten completed post-surveys. However, two of them could not be linked to a pre-survey. From the original twelve pre-surveys collected, eight post-surveys were able to be successfully linked. In addition to the in-person class offering, the Facebook live recording of each lesson allowed for the participants to view each of the six lessons. Therefore, the eight family units who completed the research portion were eligible and qualified for analysis. Unfortunately, I designated ten surveys as the threshold for measuring the effectiveness of the overall project. However, each survey represented an individual family unit. Accounting for single-parent homes, these eight surveys reflected 14-15 young parents in our Life Together class. Though my final

research sample was slightly smaller than initially desired, the group was large enough to measure legitimate progress.

The third goal was successfully completed with a t-test for dependent samples, which confirmed a positive statistical change from the pre- and post-survey scores: $t_{(7)} = -4.052, p < .002$.¹ The overall mean score increased from the pre-test survey to the post-test survey. The score increased from 236.5 to 265.6. This statistical analysis validated the efficacy of the overall project to fulfill its purpose of training parents in Christian doctrine and improving discipleship practices within the home using the *NCC*. The first eight questions specifically measured the discipleship practices within the homes of the young families at FBCM. An independent t-test for the practices portion was conducted, which also confirmed a positive statistical change: $t_{(7)} = -3.175, p < .008$. The mean score for the practices portion increased from 65.0 to 75.9. This positive statistical improvement indicated that the project's implementation had a direct influence on growing in-home discipleship. Finally, another t-test was conducted for the doctrinal comprehension portion of the pre- and post-surveys. This t-test also revealed an encouraging positive statistical improvement: $t_{(7)} = -4.180, p < .002$. The six-week curriculum generated a greater doctrinal foundation among the young families of FBCM. The mean score improved from 171.5 to 189.8.²

The intention of designing the six-week curriculum based off the *NCC* was for the young families of FBCM to increase in their doctrinal comprehension in order to be better equipped to engage their children in formal times of discipleship within the home. The *NCC* proved to be an effective tool for both training parents in basic Christian doctrine as well as a practical tool for training their children in the faith. The third goal was successfully met with a positive statistical improvement in both doctrine and

¹ All statistics were performed with an Excel spreadsheet.

² See appendix 4.

practices from the pre- to post-surveys.

Strengths of the Project

The project's greatest strength was its biblical foundation. God has clearly revealed in his word his intention for parents to disciple their children within the home. This biblical warrant invigorated the entire project from its genesis to completion. The young families of FBCM affirm both the sufficiency and authority of God's word, and this project's commitment to the word contributed to its overall success. Further, this project encouraged a greater comprehension and application of God's word. Not only did the project have a purpose aligned with the revealed will of God, but it also increased the regular use of God's word among the families.

This increased scripture intake was also accompanied by a more robust hermeneutic. The project's use of the *NCC* helped to train parents how to both interpret and teach the Bible's core doctrines. Many of the themes covered throughout the curriculum were practically unexplored prior to the project's implementation. For example, the session on glorification and God's consummation of the present dispensation generated much discussion as we learned about our resurrection bodies. The project did not aim to simply increase reading the Bible among the participants; rather, it sought to increase the practice of reading the Bible well.

In addition to the biblical warrant for the project, another strength was the project's practicality. The expert panel commended the curriculum's emphasis on implementing the doctrine learned within the homes. Further, the use of the *NCC* was an ideal resource for practically utilizing the teaching material. The use of a catechism has been historically verified as an instrumental pedagogical tool that effectively teaches children the contents of the Christian faith. The "boots on the ground" section of each teaching lesson produced a tangible guide that could be adapted and transferred into the discipleship program of any family. In addition, each practical section included

supplementary resources such as books, articles, or blogs that supported the principles learned from the lesson. The strength of practicality proved to be paramount, because the design of the project was for parents to have practical training from the local church to disciple their children in accordance with the will of God.

Another strength of this project was the awareness it engendered among the parents in our congregation to disciple their children. Complacency is a familiar pitfall we all must war against. This project served to rebuke the status quo of discipling our children to worship sports and other activities instead of the Lord. Without a proper awareness and understanding of the precepts found in God's word for parents to disciple their children, a wholesale rejection of this duty will follow. As reflected in the t-test portion for the practices section, this project helped to improve both the awareness and practice of discipling children among the families of FBCM.

Weaknesses of the Project

Some of the most significant weaknesses of the project concerned issues with the surveys. There was much confusion over many of the questions within the theological perceptions portion. The six-point Likert scale was cited as contributing to increased confusion. Many of the survey participants interpreted the scale as a hindrance to confidently answering the survey questions. More than issues with the scale, I believe the confusion was generated by unclear questions within the theological perceptions portion. For example, one of the theological statements was "God is one." One particular survey response circled "strongly disagree." On the surface, this is a very troubling doctrinal statement that warrants additional biblical instruction. However, in the margin of the survey, the participant wrote, "I disagree, because God is three in one." Unfortunately, this response negatively impacted the survey's t-test results, because the desirable survey response was "strongly agree." However, one can see how the wording of this statement could be confusing and its difficulty was exacerbated by the six-point Likert scale.

In addition to the survey's perplexities, some participants encountered emotions of shame and guilt from the practices portion of the survey. I intended to mitigate this possibility from the outset of the project by reminding participants to answer truthfully without a fear of judgment. Part of the intention of the project was to inform parents of God's good design for children to be disciplined within the home. Therefore, the project participants needed to know that progress could only occur once we accurately diagnosed the current state of discipleship within the homes of our families at FBCM. However, a few participants still vocalized feelings of shame since they did not have formal times of discipleship in their existing schedules.

Another stark weakness of the project was the retention of participants. I continually reminded project participants of the importance of receiving both the pre- and post-surveys; however, I only received eight completed post-surveys that could be linked to its pre-survey counterpart. The post-survey was made available digitally to increase participation; however, the motivation to finish the project waned significantly by the end of the six-week curriculum. Therefore, the research sample size was considerably smaller than what I had intended; however, the data yielded from the surveys still proved to be insightful.

Further, the one-hour time slot dedicated for the lessons' implementation proved to be too short. In reality, the class had forty-five minutes due to the start of our main worship service at 10:00 AM. For the majority of the lessons, I felt rushed to cover all of the material within the curriculum. This, in turn, negatively impacted the amount of time for group discussions. Some of the lessons had to skip certain group discussion questions altogether due to the time constraint. A lack of group discussion prevented a healthy circulation of testimonials and additional ideas that would have aided the implementation of a discipleship plan for children within the home.

Finally, an uncontrollable weakness of the project was the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic upon church attendance and involvement. The majority of our

Life Together class had already begun to return to a normal pattern of church attendance following the pandemic; however, many of the original families in the launch of the Life Together class did not participate due to a failure to attend. Unfortunately, these same families also did not participate in the online format of the project.

What I Would Do Differently

Overall, the implementation of this ministry project was worthwhile and impactful. However, if I were to implement the project again in the future, I would make several changes. For one, I would consider adopting a different catechism for the structure of the project. The New City Catechism is very helpful in its theological clarity, organization, and digital application. However, a Baptist-specific catechism would serve our church well in the future. An adaptation of Keach's Baptist Catechism would have proven helpful.

In light of the weaknesses cited in the previous section, I would overhaul the pre- and post-surveys. I would rewrite many of the questions in the theological perceptions category in order to ensure greater clarity and precision. I would revisit any questions that were unhelpfully vague. Further, I would reiterate the importance of answering the surveys honestly and without fear of shame. I would begin those discussions several weeks prior to handing out the initial surveys.

Also, I would contemplate changing the time structure for the class. Forty-five minutes proved to be much too brief to cover the necessary information. In a future project implementation, I would consider an hour and a half time slot on a Sunday evening. To garner additional participation, I would provide a meal and childcare for each lesson. This would also provide a more casual environment that would increase group discussions and participation. FBCM did not have set evening services in the normal weekly calendar; therefore, Sunday evenings may have proved to be a better time slot for the class.

Additionally, I would provide more resources for parents to assist them in practically implementing a discipleship pattern in their homes. One of the curriculum reviewers noted the inaccessibility of some of the recommended resources. For example, one of the recommended resources for the sixth session about glorification was a lengthy book on heaven. This large corpus would not be realistic for many busy parents to access. I would propose a wider range of resources that would appeal to families with different capacities. In addition to lengthier theological treatises, I would suggest shorter blogs on parenting and discipleship. An important aspect to these additional resources would also be their ability to reach parents with children in different life stages. Discipling a four-year-old boy would prove to be vastly different from catechizing a teenage girl. A similar project in the future would incorporate more diverse resources that would be understandable to a wider audience.

Finally, I would not set as strict of delimitations for the project's participation in the future. One of the delimitations I installed was that each participating family unit must have a child at least twelve months or older living within the home in order to participate. Some of the families in our Life Together class had children younger than the one-year mark who would have benefitted from participating in the research. Further, the class would have proven helpful to grandparents as well as foster parents.

Also, I announced the class to the entire church; however, the main communication channel for the class's advertisement was through our Life Together social media pages. Our church still has many young families with children who have not joined the Life Together class. Unfortunately, the participation of the project was primarily limited to those who had already established a pattern of attending the Life Together class during the regular 9:00 AM Sunday School hour. If a future class occurred on Sunday evenings, more involvement might follow from those not already involved in the Life Together class. I would be more cognizant of this reality and more intentional in inviting those not already involved in one of the Sunday School classes at FBCM.

Theological Reflections

“For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose’” (Isa 46:9-10). God ordains the end; yet, he also ordains the means to accomplish his intended end. In the wisdom and providence of God, he ordained that Christian parents would serve as the primary disciple makers for their children. This reality was not an afterthought; rather, God wisely ordained the Christian home as the preeminent ministry responsibility for parents. Deuteronomy 6:7 establishes the urgency for parents to disciple their children: “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.” Psalm 78:7-8 warns of the dangers of forsaking God’s command to teach our children diligently. If we refuse to train our children in the fear of the Lord, they will be susceptible to becoming a “stubborn and rebellious generation” (Ps 78:8a). God has demonstrated in his word his will for training the next generation to fear the Lord. His will is carried out as parents faithfully disciple their children within the home.

Yet, God’s command for parents to disciple their children does not occur in a vacuum. God’s good design for the function of the church body is that parents would be prepared to carry out their God-given duties by the training received from church leadership. The ascended Lord Jesus graciously gifted his church “the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-12). Reflecting on God’s purpose for church leadership to help equip the saints galvanized the desire to carry out this ministry project. As a pastor, God has called me to equip parents through his word to faithfully shepherd their children to the glory of God.

The common neglect among Christian families in the realm of discipling their children has fostered an alarming immaturity among Christian youth. One of the purposes

of God in gifting leadership to his church is that we would “all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). Rediscovering the pivotal role of Christian parents in discipling their children will promote Christian maturity. God has revealed through his word that he desires his children to grow into unity, knowledge, and maturity. We learn from God’s word that he desires the body of Christ to be built up. One day, the Lord Jesus will “present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27). As the Lord guides his people through his word and his Spirit, he accomplishes his intended end through various means. As revealed through the former passages, one of these means through which God carries out his purposes is through the efforts of Christian parents to faithfully disciple their children in the fear of the Lord. God both calls and equips parents to disciple their children.

Personal Reflections

This project both encouraged and humbled me as a pastor and father. I have experienced a renewed zeal for training parents to disciple their children in response to God’s clear instructions. However, I have been humbled in my recognition of how often I fail to honor God by consistently prioritizing times of discipleship with my own children. This recognition has helped me to strike a necessary balance when encouraging parents to take the initiative in discipling their children. By God’s grace, I want to continue communicating the importance of parents discipling their children without burdening these same parents with feelings of shame and guilt. God has freed us to obey his word through the provision of his Spirit, and I long for parents to grow in joy as they obey God’s directives to disciple their children.

In addition, this project helped to recalibrate my personal priorities. God has called me to serve as an undershepherd for the people he has entrusted to my care;

however, the children in my home have an even greater priority. I will one day give an account before God for how I disciplined my children, and this project has helped me to examine my own ministry efforts to ensure I am not neglecting my primary calling as a Christian father. The daily call to invest in my children's spiritual growth has revealed a sinful disposition of laziness in my soul. Many nights I rush through the catechism questions and prayer in order to retreat to bed or to languish on the couch. By recognizing this sinful tendency, repenting of my parental sluggishness, and trusting in the promises of God's word for training one's children, I am spurred on to obedience. I pray God will continue to guide my family and the families of FBCM to persevere in training our children in the fear of the Lord.

Conclusion

The overarching aspiration for this project was for God to be glorified. The sixth question in the *NCC* asks, "How can we glorify God?"³ The shortened answer is "by loving him and by obeying his commands and law."⁴ God has revealed in his commands the necessity for parents to faithfully disciple their children. We respond to the commands of God in love and express this through obedience. This project glorified God as the families of FBCM responded in faith and sought to grow in obedience by training our children to "love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut 6:5).

³ *New City Catechism: 52 Questions & Answers for Our Hearts & Minds* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 26.

⁴ *New City Catechism*, 27.

APPENDIX 1

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PRACTICES AND THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING INVENTORY

The following instrument is the Family Discipleship Practices and Theological Understanding Inventory (FDPTUI).¹ Some generic questions are followed by a fifty-question survey with a six-point Likert scale. This instrument's purpose was to assess each family unit's attitude and practice of family discipleship. Further, the latter part of the survey measure's the theological competency of each family unity. The survey was administered before and after the project implementation to measure any statistical change.

¹ This survey is adapted in part from Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 2011); and from Brian Timothy Dempsey, "Equipping Members of Washington Baptist Church in Dillsboro, Indiana, With the Foundations of Christian Doctrine" (DMin project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 86-89.

Family Discipleship Practices and Theological Understanding Inventory

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess your practices of family discipleship and theological understanding of various Christian doctrines. This research is being conducted by Hunter Roe for the purpose of assessing the value of a doctoral ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions in the way that best corresponds to your practices of family discipleship. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from this study at any time.*

By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Directions

This survey is intended for family units with at least one child aged twelve months that is living at home. Further, participants are to be involved in the young adult ministry at First Baptist Church Moody. For purposes of this survey, “church leaders” includes any member of the pastoral staff, deacons, Sunday School teachers, or adult volunteer leaders.

To ensure your privacy, instead of using your name, please use a 4-digit code that is unique to you and that you will be able to easily recall for a future survey. To help avoid duplicate codes, please avoid using repetitive or linear 4-digit codes, such as “0000” or “1234”.

Your 4-Digit Code

General Questions

What is your age range?

_____ 18-24

_____ 45-54

_____ 25-34

_____ 55-64

_____ 35-44

_____ 65+

How many children live in your household (aged 18 or younger)

_____ 1

_____ 4

_____ 2

_____ 5+

_____ 3

What best describes the age range of your children?

_____ Nursery

_____ Middle School

_____ Preschool

_____ High School

_____ Elementary

How often do you attend worship service at FBCM?

_____ rarely

_____ two or three times a month

_____ once a month

_____ four or more times a month

How many hours a week do you read your Bible for personal study or devotions? _____

Part 1: Parental Perceptions

Directions: Mark your agreement with each statement using the following scale.

SD = strongly disagree
 D = disagree
 DS = disagree somewhat
 AS = agree somewhat
 A = agree
 SA = strongly agree

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. Our family prioritizes consistent family devotional or worship times in its schedule. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. We would like to have consistent family times of devotion, but our family is just too busy for that right now. It will probably be that way for quite a while. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. The church is where children ought to receive most of their Bible teaching. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. When my child asks a biblical or theological question, I really wish that my child would have asked a minister or other church leader instead of me. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. We want to do whatever it takes for our child to succeed in certain sports or school activities - even if that means my family is too busy some weeks to eat any meals together. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. Parents, and particularly fathers, have a responsibility to engage personally in a discipleship process with each of their children. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. Church leaders are the people primarily responsible for discipling my children and teaching them to share the gospel with others. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. My church has helped develop a clear plan for my child's spiritual growth. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

PART 2: Parental Practices

Directions: Mark your agreement with each statement using the following scale.

- 0 = Never
- 1 = One Time
- 2 = Two Times
- 3-4 = Three or Four Times
- 5-6 = Five or Six Times
- 7+ = Seven or More Times

9. Besides mealtimes, how often in the past <i>week</i> have you prayed aloud with any of your children?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	7+
10. How many times in the past <i>week</i> has your family eaten a meal together without distractions (tv, phone)?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	7+
11. How many times in the past <i>month</i> have you read or discussed the Bible with your children?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	7+
12. How many times in the past <i>month</i> have you discussed any spiritual matters with your children while engaging daily activities?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	7+
13. How many times in the past <i>two months</i> has your family engaged in a family devotion time?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	7+
14. How many times in the past <i>two months</i> have you discussed your child's spiritual development with someone?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	7+
15. How many times in the past <i>year</i> have you participated with one or more of your children in witnessing to a non-Christian?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	7+
16. How often in the past <i>year</i> has any church leader made any contact with you to help you to engage actively in your child's spiritual development?	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	7+

PART 3: Parental Doctrinal Understanding

Directions: Mark your agreement with each statement using the following scale.

SD = strongly disagree
 D = disagree
 DS = disagree somewhat
 AS = agree somewhat
 A = agree
 SA = strongly agree

17. Mankind is basically good.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. God desires that each of His children be materially wealthy.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. God continues to give special revelation to His people.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. If I have enough faith, God will grant a positive answer to my prayer.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21. God will resurrect our physical bodies.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22. God desires the joy of his children.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23. Suffering is never a spiritually purposeful experience.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24. I can clearly articulate the gospel and lead someone to salvation in Christ.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25. Nothing happens outside of God's control.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
26. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are the same in substance, equal in power and glory.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
27. Scripture is the authoritative Word of God.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

28. To disobey Scripture is to disobey God Himself.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
29. There is a chance that someone who does good things in this life will enjoy eternal life in heaven even if he has not trusted in Christ for salvation.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
30. God's Law requires perfect and personal obedience.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
31. Man is able to keep the Law of God perfectly if he tries hard enough.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
32. The Law reveals the holy nature of God and the sinful nature and disobedience of our own hearts.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
33. Christ had to be truly human and truly God to offer a sufficient sacrifice for our sins.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
34. Christ did not have to actually die to save us from our sins.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
35. The death of Christ was primarily an expression of love from God towards man.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
36. The death of Christ was primarily a sacrifice of atonement that fulfilled the punishment of death on behalf of God's people.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
37. We can be saved by cooperating with God and being more obedient.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
38. We can only be saved by God's free grace through the gift of faith in the One eternal Son of God.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
39. We are justified and declared righteous in God's sight through faith in Jesus Christ. As a result, God's declares us legally "not guilty."	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

40. Christ is now reigning in heaven in His resurrected and glorified body at the right hand of the Father.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
41. I am confident in my understanding of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
42. Anyone who does not repent and believe the gospel will spend eternity in hell suffering the wrath of God.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
43. The security of my salvation is dependent upon the amount of my faith.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
44. Once we are saved, we no longer struggle with sin.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
45. God calls us to accomplish good works for His glory.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
46. Gathering with the church body is essential to live a Christian life pleasing to God.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
47. God is one.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
48. When struggling with the assurance of my salvation, I look back to the level of genuineness in my choice to follow Jesus.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
49. Those who have died already in Christ still await their bodily resurrection.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
50. Christ was crucified for our sins, buried, and raised on the third day by the power of the Holy Spirit.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 2

BASIC CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE CURRICULUM EVALUATION TOOL

The following evaluation will be administered to an expert panel. This panel will evaluate the proposed curriculum to ensure its biblical fidelity and sufficiency to train the young families of FBCM to increase in their own doctrinal understanding as well as to be equipped to catechize their children in the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Basic Christian Doctrine Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Fidelity					
Each lesson was sound in its hermeneutic or interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was theologically sound in its faithfulness to Scripture.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
Methodology					
The curriculum sufficiently implements a variety of learning techniques such as lecture, group discussion, question and answer periods, homework, and suggested further readings.					
Practicality					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 3

EQUIPPING PARENTS THROUGH CATECHESIS CURRICULUM

The following curriculum was designed to inform parents in basic Christian doctrine and to equip them to disciple their children. The curriculum was based on the New City Catechism. In consultation with the recommendations from an expert panel, this curriculum reflects a high commitment to biblical fidelity, practical implementation, and appropriate instructional methodology.

Session 1: The Parents' Primary Role in Discipleship

1) Introduction

- a) Whose job is it to disciple my child?
 - i) Industrialization and the birth of segmented-programmatic ministry
 - (1) **Professionalization** of ministry
 - (2) Decrease in disposable time for family
 - ii) **Family-equipping** model of ministry
 - (1) **Parents** as primary disciplers of their children
 - (2) **Church** as a means and resource to equip families to train their children

2) But what does the Bible teach?

- a) The role of the **parents** in the discipleship of children is supreme in both Old and New Testaments
 - i) Deuteronomy 6:1-9
 - (1) Covenant **transmission** dependent on teaching children
 - (a) Motivated by fear of the Lord
 - (b) Results in covenant blessings
 - (2) Parents are to teach children who the true God is
 - (a) God is revealed to Israel through his **word**
 - (b) There is one God. The gods of the nations are pagan idols.
 - (i) Without instruction in who God is, children would be tempted to forsake the one true God.
 - (ii) The same danger and temptation is a reality **today**.
 - (c) The posture of response is one of **genuine** affection for God.
 - (i) Not simply filling head knowledge
 - (ii) Ultimate aim is to educate the **mind** and the **affections**
 - (3) What means or frequency does God prescribe for the discipleship of children?
 - (a) Talk about the word of God with your children
 - (i) When you **sit** at home
 - (ii) When you **walk** along the road
 - (iii) When you **lie** down
 - (iv) When you **get up**
 - (b) Comprehensive scope of the aim of discipleship
 - (i) Doorframes of home
 - (ii) On the gate

Question: What is the importance of the parents in covenant transmission?

- ii) Psalm 78:1-8
 - (1) The posture of **humility** in the work of discipling one's children
 - (2) The importance of **content** in what we teach our children
 - (a) Praiseworthy deeds of the Lord
 - (b) Law, statutes, and commands
 - (3) Purpose in training our children
 - (a) So the next generation would know
 - (b) That our children would put their **trust** in God
- iii) Ephesians 6:1-4
 - (1) The Christian **household** identified as foundational within the house church
 - (a) Ephesians written to the church
 - (b) Paul specifically mentions **fathers** as primarily responsible for training children in the instruction of the Lord.
 - (2) Do not provoke your children
 - (a) Discipleship in child rearing is not demeaning and abusive
 - (b) Recognizing God has given us children to **steward** and not own
 - (3) Instruction and discipline of the Lord
 - (a) Instruction necessarily involves right **content**
 - (b) Discipline is firm yet motivated out of love and concern
- b) What is the **role of the church** in discipling our children?
 - i) Ephesians 4:11-13
 - (1) Christ gives gifts to his church
 - (a) Church belongs to Christ
 - (b) Importance of the church for people of God
 - (2) Purpose of the gifts is to “**equip the saints** for the work of ministry”
 - (a) Ministers are not a “show and tell” but rather an “equip and go”
 - (b) The church functions to equip all the saints to carry out the will of God in their lives
 - (3) One of the most significant works of ministry for a Christian is to **disciple their children**
 - (a) Helps accomplish the corporate maturity in 4:13
 - (b) By deduction, we understand the **church** comes alongside **parents** to **equip** them to do their God-ordained role of **discipling** their children?

Q: According to the above passages, what is the role of the church in a child's discipleship?

3) But how?

- a) **Catechesis**- The church's historical method of instructing "new believers in the rudiments of Christianity."¹ The term derives from the Greek verb *κατηγέω* meaning "to teach or instruct."²
 - i) Worldview forming
 - ii) **Historical** precedent
 - (1) From Hippolytus to the Reformers to Baptists
 - (2) Need a recovery of catechesis due to doctrinal shallowness
 - iii) Purpose of training the **mind** and **heart**
 - (1) Gospel categories for our children
 - (2) Lord willing, the heart will be regenerated by the Holy Spirit
 - iv) How to Use
 - (1) Question/Answer memorization
 - (a) **Repetition** (when you wake up, along the way, lie down)
 - (b) **Sing** the questions and answers to aid with memory
 - (2) **Explain** the catechism's answers appropriate for your child's age and development
 - (3) **Pray** the catechism's contents
 - (4) **Apply** how the catechism calls us to align our lives with God's word

4) Catechism Appetizer

- a) Q: What is our only hope in life and death? A: That we are not our own but belong, body and soul, both in life and death, to God and to our Savior Jesus Christ. Romans 14:7-8
 - i) Worldview Shaping
 - (1) We are not a product of chance or evolution
 - (2) Our lives do not belong to us. They ultimately belong to God
 - (a) Both my body
 - (b) And my soul
 - (3) My hope is centered in my belonging to God and my Savior Jesus Christ
 - (a) No other created thing will provide me hope
 - (b) Truly the gospel is the foundation for my purpose in life
 - ii) Pray this great truth
 - iii) Explain how this clear Scripture teaching impacts me when I think my life is meaningless

¹ J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 21.

² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. by Frederick William Danker, Williams F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 534.

5) **Conclusion**

- a) The **call** of God on our lives to disciple our children
- b) The **means** of the church to equip parents for the task
- c) The beneficial **resource** of the catechism that is God-honoring and time-tested
- d) Where we are heading in the next five sessions

6) **Boots on the Ground**

- a) **Memorize:** The question and answer for *NCC* Question 1 on p.16-17.
- b) **Discuss:** Talk with your family about the meaning of Romans 14:7-8.
- c) **Apply:** Ask your family how this truth shapes the way we view our ultimate purpose in life.
- d) **Pray:** Pray that God would form in your family a greater trust in Him and a recognition that all of our lives belong to Him.

7) **Question and Answer Period**

For Further Study: John Piper, *Don't Waste Your Life*

Session 1 Handout: The Parents' Primary Role in Discipleship

1) Introduction

- a) Whose job is it to disciple my child?
 - i) Industrialization and the birth of segmented-programmatic ministry
 - (1) _____ of ministry
 - (2) Decrease in disposable time for family
 - ii) _____ model of ministry
 - (1) _____ as primary disciplers of their children
 - (2) _____ as a means and resource to equip families to train their children

2) But what does the Bible teach?

- a) The role of the _____ in the discipleship of children is supreme in both Old and New Testaments
 - i) Deuteronomy 6:1-9
 - (1) Covenant _____ dependent on teaching children
 - (a) Motivated by fear of the Lord
 - (b) Results in covenant blessings
 - (2) Parents are to teach children who the true God is
 - (a) God is revealed to Israel through his _____
 - (b) There is one God. The gods of the nations are pagan idols.
 - (i) Without instruction in who God is, children would be tempted to forsake the one true God.
 - (ii) The same danger and temptation is a reality _____.
 - (c) The posture of response is one of _____ affection for God.
 - (i) Not simply filling head knowledge
 - (ii) Ultimate aim is to educate the _____ and the _____
 - (3) What means or frequency does God prescribe for the discipleship of children?
 - (a) Talk about the word of God with your children
 - (i) When you _____ at home
 - (ii) When you _____ along the road
 - (iii) When you _____ down
 - (iv) When you _____ up
 - (b) Comprehensive scope of the aim of discipleship
 - (i) Doorframes of home
 - (ii) On the gate

Question: What is the importance of the parents in covenant transmission?

- ii) Psalm 78:1-8
 - (1) The posture of _____ in the work of discipling one's children
 - (2) The importance of _____ in what we teach our children
 - (a) Praiseworthy deeds of the Lord
 - (b) Law, statutes, and commands
 - (3) Purpose in training our children
 - (a) So the next generation would know
 - (b) That our children would put their _____ in God
- iii) Ephesians 6:1-4
 - (1) The Christian _____ identified as foundational within the house church
 - (a) Ephesians written to the church
 - (b) Paul specifically mentions _____ as primarily responsible for training children in the instruction of the Lord.
 - (2) Do not provoke your children
 - (a) Discipleship in child rearing is not demeaning and abusive
 - (b) Recognizing God has given us children to _____ and not own
 - (3) Instruction and discipline of the Lord
 - (a) Instruction necessarily involves right _____
 - (b) Discipline is firm yet motivated out of love and concern
- b) What is the _____ in discipling our children?
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 - (1) Christ gives gifts to his church
 - (a) Church belongs to Christ
 - (b) Importance of the church for people of God
 - (2) Purpose of the gifts is to “_____ for the work of ministry”
 - (a) Ministers are not a “show and tell” but rather an “equip and go”
 - (b) The church functions to equip all the saints to carry out the will of God in their lives
 - (3) One of the most significant works of ministry for a Christian is to disciple their children
 - (a) Helps accomplish the corporate maturity in 4:13
 - (b) By deduction, we understand the church comes alongside parents to _____ them to do their God-ordained role of discipling their children?

Q: According to the above passages, what is the role of the church in a child's discipleship?

3) **But how?**

- a) _____ - The church's historical method of instructing "new believers in the rudiments of Christianity."³ The term derives from the Greek verb *κατηχέω* meaning "to teach or instruct."⁴
 - i) Worldview forming
 - ii) _____ precedent
 - (1) From Hippolytus to the Reformers to Baptists
 - (2) Need a recovery of catechesis due to doctrinal shallowness
 - iii) Purpose of training the _____ and _____
 - (1) Gospel categories for our children
 - (2) Lord willing, the heart will be regenerated by the Holy Spirit
 - iv) How to Use
 - (1) Question/Answer memorization
 - (a) _____ (when you wake up, along the way, lie down)
 - (b) _____ the questions and answers to aid with memory
 - (2) _____ the catechism's answers appropriate for your child's age and development
 - (3) _____ the catechism's contents
 - (4) _____ how the catechism calls us to align our lives with God's word

4) **Catechism Appetizer**

- a) Q: What is our only hope in life and death? A: That we are not our own but belong, body and soul, both in life and death, to God and to our Savior Jesus Christ. Romans 14:7-8
 - i) Worldview Shaping
 - (1) We are not a product of chance or evolution
 - (2) Our lives do not belong to us. They ultimately belong to God
 - (a) Both my body
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 - (3) My hope is centered in my belonging to God and my Savior Jesus Christ
 - (a) No other created thing will provide me hope
 - (b) Truly the gospel is the foundation for my purpose in life
 - ii) Pray this great truth
 - iii) Explain how this clear Scripture teaching impacts me when I think my life is meaningless

³ J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 21.

⁴ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. by Frederick William Danker, Williams F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 534.

5) **Conclusion**

- a) The _____ of God on our lives to disciple our children
- b) The _____ of the church to equip parents for the task
- c) The beneficial _____ of the catechism that is God-honoring and time-tested
- d) Where we are heading in the next five sessions

6) **Boots on the Ground**

- a) **Memorize:** The question and answer for *NCC* Question 1 on p.16-17.
- b) **Discuss:** Talk with your family about the meaning of Romans 14:7-8.
- c) **Apply:** Ask your family how this truth shapes the way we view our ultimate purpose in life.
- d) **Pray:** Pray that God would form in your family a greater trust in Him and a recognition that all of our lives belong to Him.

7) **Question and Answer Period**

For Further Study: John Piper, *Don't Waste Your Life*

Session 2: What is God?

1) Recap

- a) The Bible clearly identifies **parents** as the primary disciple-makers
- b) The **church** equips parents for their role of discipling their children.
- c) The **catechism** is a time-tested resource conducive for family discipleship.

2) Testimonial

- a) Describe this past week's use of memorizing, explaining, and praying through Q1 of the *NCC*. (**discussion time**)

3) Introduction

- a) First things first
 - i) Goal: To equip our class with a **high view** of God in order to praise God more intensely and to adequately instruct our children.
 - (1) "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." – A.W. Tozer in *The Knowledge of the Holy*

Question: How does our view of God impact our lives and our worship?

(2) Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning, God"

(a) We cannot understand ourselves unless we first begin with **God**.

b) What is God? (*NCC* Question 2)

i) Answer: "God is the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything. He is eternal, infinite, and unchangeable in his power and perfection, goodness and glory, wisdom, justice, and truth. Nothing happens except through him and by his will."

(1) We come to understand God in terms of:

(a) his role as the **Creator** of all things

(b) his eternal **attributes**

(c) his **sovereignty** in ordaining all things that come to pass

4) Creation

a) Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"

i) In the beginning, there was already God. God is **eternal**.

(1) Psalm 90:2 "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."

ii) God created all things out of **nothing** by the **word** of his power.

(1) Ex nihilo

- (2) Hebrews 11:3 “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”
- (3) Romans 4:17 “As it is written, I have made you the father of many nations – in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.”

b) Implications of Creation

- i) God is entirely **self-sufficient**, dependent on no one or nothing outside himself (Acts 17:25)
- ii) All of creation **belongs** to the Lord (Psalm 50:10-12)
- iii) All of creation is **accountable** to God (Psalm 33:8-9)

5) God’s eternal attributes

- a) How does the *NCC* catechism help us to better understand the God who is there?
 - i) God’s **eternity**
 - (1) Psalm 93:2 “Your throne has been established from the beginning; you are from eternity.”
 - ii) God’s **infinitude**
 - (1) Psalm 139:7-8 “Where can I go to escape your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.”
 - iii) God’s **immutability**
 - (1) Psalm 102:27 “But you are the same, and your years will never end.”
 - iv) God’s **omnipotence**
 - (1) Jeremiah 32:27 “Look, I am the LORD, the God over every creature. Is anything too difficult for me?”
 - v) God’s **perfection**
 - (1) 1 Samuel 2:2 “There is no one holy like the LORD. There is no one besides you! And there is no rock like our God.”
 - vi) God’s **goodness**
 - (1) Psalm 145:9 “The LORD is good to everyone; his compassion rests on all he has made.”
 - vii) God’s **glory**
 - (1) Ephesians 1:5-6 “He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the Beloved One.”
 - viii) God’s **wisdom**
 - (1) Romans 11:33 “Oh, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and untraceable his ways!”
 - ix) God’s **justice**
 - (1) Revelation 20:14 “Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.”
 - x) God’s **truth**

(1) John 17:17 “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

6) **The sovereignty of God**

- a) How does the *NCC* help us to understand the sovereignty of God?
 - i) **Nothing** happens except through him and by his will.
 - (1) God works all things according to the **counsel** of his will (Eph 1:11)
 - (2) God **governs** all of creation by his providential will (Ps 33:6-9)
 - (3) God controls **all** of the affairs of people and nations (Ps 33:10-11)
 - (4) God works all things for the **good** of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose (Rom 8:28)
- b) Implications of God’s Sovereignty
 - i) God is the giver of **every** good gift in our lives (James 1:17, Eph 1:3)
 - ii) God is in control of **every** pain, tear, and suffering we experience also (Job 2:10)
 - iii) 1 Peter 4:19 “So then, let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator while doing what is good.”

Question: Which portion of the catechism’s Q/A has stood out to you the most?

7) **Boots on the Ground**

- a) **Memorize:** The question and answer for *NCC* Question 2 on p.18-19
 - i) **Pro Tip:** Use the free *NCC* app on your smart phone to play the memory song.
 - (1) Have children recite the answer before going to bed or when waking up (or both!)
- b) **Discuss:** What does it mean that God is the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything?
- c) **Apply:** Go for a family walk through the neighborhood. Read Psalm 8 and ask family members how considering both God’s work of creation and his love for his children impact their understanding of God. Also, ask each family member what is one thing they learned about God that will help them trust him more this week?
- d) **Pray:** Pray that God would grant you and your family the resolve to praise him in the good and tough circumstances of life. Pray that God would increase your faith and trust in him by recognizing that nothing happens except through him and by his will.

8) **Question and Answer Period**

For Further Study:

D.A. Carson, *The God Who is There*

A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

Article

“Does Doctrine Really Matter?” by John MacArthur

<https://www.gty.org/library/articles/A142/does-doctrine-really-matter>

Session 2 Handout: What is God?

1) **Recap**

- a) The Bible clearly identifies _____ as the primary disciple-makers
- b) The _____ equips parents for their role of discipling their children.
- c) The _____ is a time-tested resource conducive for family discipleship.

2) **Testimonial**

- a) Describe this past week's use of memorizing, explaining, and praying through Q1 of the *NCC*. (**discussion time**)

3) **Introduction**

- a) First things first
 - i) Goal: To equip our class with a _____ of God in order to praise God more intensely and to adequately instruct our children.
 - (1) "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." – A.W. Tozer in *The Knowledge of the Holy*

Question: How does our view of God impact our lives and our worship?

(2) Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning, God"

(a) We cannot understand ourselves unless we first begin with **God**.

b) What is God? (*NCC* Question 2)

i) Answer: "God is the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything. He is eternal, infinite, and unchangeable in his power and perfection, goodness and glory, wisdom, justice, and truth. Nothing happens except through him and by his will."

(1) We come to understand God in terms of:

(a) his role as the _____ of all things

(b) his eternal _____

(c) his _____ in ordaining all things that come to pass

4) **Creation**

a) Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"

i) In the beginning, there was already God. God is _____.

(1) Psalm 90:2 "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."

- ii) God created all things out of _____ by the _____ of his power.
 - (1) Ex nihilo
 - (2) Hebrews 11:3 “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”
 - (3) Romans 4:17 “As it is written, I have made you the father of many nations – in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.”

b) Implications of Creation

- i) God is entirely _____, dependent on no one or nothing outside himself (Acts 17:25)
- ii) All of creation _____ to the Lord (Psalm 50:10-12)
- iii) All of creation is _____ to God (Psalm 33:8-9)

5) God’s eternal attributes

- a) How does the *NCC* catechism help us to better understand the God who is there?
 - i) God’s _____
 - (1) Psalm 93:2 “Your throne has been established from the beginning; you are from eternity.”
 - ii) God’s _____
 - (1) Psalm 139:7-8 “Where can I go to escape your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.”
 - iii) God’s _____
 - (1) Psalm 102:27 “But you are the same, and your years will never end.”
 - iv) God’s _____
 - (1) Jeremiah 32:27 “Look, I am the LORD, the God over every creature. Is anything too difficult for me?”
 - v) God’s _____
 - (1) 1 Samuel 2:2 “There is no one holy like the LORD. There is no one besides you! And there is no rock like our God.”
 - vi) God’s _____
 - (1) Psalm 145:9 “The LORD is good to everyone; his compassion rests on all he has made.”
 - vii) God’s _____
 - (1) Ephesians 1:5-6 “He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the Beloved One.”
 - viii) God’s _____
 - (1) Romans 11:33 “Oh, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and untraceable his ways!”
 - ix) God’s _____

- (1) Revelation 20:14 “Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.”
- x) God’s _____
- (1) John 17:17 “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

6) The sovereignty of God

- a) How does the *NCC* help us to understand the sovereignty of God?
 - i) _____ happens except through him and by his will.
 - (1) God works all things according to the _____ of his will (Eph 1:11)
 - (2) God _____ all of creation by his providential will (Ps 33:6-9)
 - (3) God controls _____ of the affairs of people and nations (Ps 33:10-11)
 - (4) God works all things for the _____ of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose (Rom 8:28)
- b) Implications of God’s Sovereignty
 - i) God is the giver of _____ good gift in our lives (James 1:17, Eph 1:3)
 - ii) God is in control of _____ pain, tear, and suffering we experience also (Job 2:10)
 - iii) 1 Peter 4:19 “So then, let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator while doing what is good.”

Question: Which portion of the catechism’s Q/A has stood out to you the most?

7) Boots on the Ground

- a) **Memorize:** The question and answer for *NCC* Question 2 on p.18-19
 - i) **Pro Tip:** Use the free *NCC* app on your smart phone to play the memory song.
 - (1) Have children recite the answer before going to bed or when waking up (or both!)
- b) **Discuss:** What does it mean that God is the creator and sustainer of everyone and everything?
- c) **Apply:** Go for a family walk through the neighborhood. Read Psalm 8 and ask family members how considering both God’s work of creation and his love for his children impact their understanding of God. Also, ask each family member what is one thing they learned about God that will help them trust him more this week?
- d) **Pray:** Pray that God would grant you and your family the resolve to praise him in the good and tough circumstances of life. Pray that God would increase your faith and trust in him by recognizing that nothing happens except through him and by his will.

8) Question and Answer Period

For Further Study:

D.A. Carson, *The God Who is There*

A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

Article

“Does Doctrine Really Matter?” by John MacArthur

<https://www.gty.org/library/articles/A142/does-doctrine-really-matter>

Session 3: What is Man?

1) **Recap**

- a) God is our **creator**.
- b) The word of God reveals his eternal **attributes**.
- c) God **sovereignly** controls all things.

2) **Testimonial**

- a) What have been some successes and struggles over the last week with your family devotional time? (**discussion time**)

3) **Introduction**

- a) First things first
 - i) Goal: To equip our class with a proper biblical understanding of what **man** is, how sin has devastated all men, and the **position** of man before our holy and righteous God.
 - (1) Who are we? Why do we exist? Is there any purpose for my life? Why is there so much evil both in the world and within my own heart?
 - (a) These questions can be adequately addressed by a study of the biblical doctrine of man.

Question: What are the most common views of what man is in our culture and society?

- (2) Genesis 1:27 “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

- (a) The biblical account of creation identifies the creation of man as the **pinnacle** creative work of the triune God.

4) **How and why did God create us?** (*NCC Question 4*)

- a) Answer: “God created us male and female in his own image to know him, love him, live with him, and glorify him. And it is right that we who were created by God should live to his glory.”
 - i) In Q4 of the *NCC*, we come to understand man in terms of:
 - (1) his **nature**
 - (2) his **purpose**
- b) The nature of man
 - i) God created us **male and female**
 - (1) The creative genius of God as reflected in the **binary** distinctions between male and female

- (a) Both **equal** before God
 - (b) Both serving **distinct** roles
- (2) Gender distinctions throughout Scripture are centered in **creation** (1 Tim 2:13)
- c) Purpose of man
 - i) **Intentional** creation
 - (1) God created us
 - (a) Not a product of mindless **evolution**
 - (b) Direct creative work of the Triune God
 - ii) Uniqueness of man
 - (1) Created in his own **image**
 - (a) Includes communicable attributes of God, but not just that
 - (b) Being created in God's image is directly tied to our **purpose**
 - iii) Created to **glorify** God
 - (1) To know him, love him, live with him, and glorify him
 - (2) Purpose rooted in Genesis 1:28
 - (a) To **serve** as God's vice-regents, to **multiply** image-bearers, **subdue** the earth for the **glory** of God
 - (b) Man's function is to live his life in total dependence upon God

Question: How does this catechism question help us to teach our children about gender? Why is it important for us to begin these conversations?

- 5) **Did God create us unable to keep his law?** (*NCC Question 14*)
- a) Answer: "No, but because of the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, all of creation is fallen; we are all born in sin and guilt, corrupt in our nature and unable to keep God's law."
 - b) Romans 5:12 "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned."
 - i) In Q14 of the *NCC*, we come to understand how sin has devastated all of mankind:
 - (1) The **fall** of Adam and Eve
 - (2) Subsequent **condemnation** and active rebellion of all descendants
 - c) Adam and Eve
 - i) Created **good** (in nature and in ethics)(see. Genesis 1:31 "everything was good")
 - ii) Disobeyed the revealed word of God
 - (1) **Doubted** God's word (Gen 3:1)
 - (2) Trusted in their own formulation of what is true and beneficial (Gen 3:6)
 - d) Death spread to **all** men
 - i) **Active** rebellion against God (Rom 3:10-12)
 - ii) **Impossible** to please God in the flesh (Rom 8:8)
 - iii) **Unable** to keep God's law (Rom 8:7)

Question: According to Q14, what is a common experience shared by all of mankind?

6) **Will God allow our disobedience and idolatry to go unpunished?** (*NCC Question 18*)

- a) Answer: “No, every sin is against the sovereignty, holiness, and goodness of God, and against his righteous law, and God is righteously angry with our sins and will punish them in his just judgment both in this life, and in the life to come.”
- b) Ephesians 5:5-6 “For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”
 - i) In Q18 of the *NCC*, we come to understand our position before our holy and righteous God:
 - (1) The **anger** of God against sin
 - (2) The sure promise of righteous **judgment** against sin
- c) God’s anger against sin
 - i) Psalm 11:5 “The LORD examines the righteous, but he hates the wicked.”
 - ii) Psalm 5:5-6 “The boastful cannot stand in your sight; you hate all evildoers. You destroy those who tell lies; the LORD abhors violent and treacherous people.”
 - iii) John 3:36 “The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who reject the Son will not see life; instead, the **wrath of God** remains on him.
 - (1) All of us are **born** in sin and by nature rebel against God. Consequently, God’s wrath remains upon us.
- d) God’s promise to judge sin
 - i) Romans 1:32 “Although they know God’s just sentence – that those who practice such things deserve to die – they not only do them, but even applaud others who practice them.”
 - ii) Galatians 6:7 “Don’t be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap.”
 - iii) Revelation 20:15 “And anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”
 - (1) God’s righteous anger against sin will be **justly** poured out in proportionate measure.

7) **Summary**

- a) Mankind is created in God’s image to **glorify** him.
- b) We have **all** rebelled against God like our parents, Adam and Eve and are born unable to please God.
- c) The just condemnation of sin hangs over **every** person.

8) **Boots on the Ground**

- a) **Memorize:** The question and answer for *NCC* Question 4 on p.22-23
- b) **Discuss:** As you discuss Q4, reference Q 14 and 18 to discuss who we are, why we are here, and what is wrong.
- c) **Apply:** Before bedtime one night, gather your family and read Romans 3:10-12. Use Q 16 in the *NCC* (p.46-47) to explain what sin is. Ask your children to confess different sins they commit against God. Tell them that through trust in Christ, our sins are forgiven.
- d) **Pray:** Pray that God would help you and your family to live lives that are centered in his purposes. Pray for forgiveness for the many ways you continue to rebel against God. Spend time thanking God for the love and mercy given to us in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

9) **Question and Answer Period**

For Further Study:

Jerry Bridges, *Respectable Sins*

Session 3 Handout: What is Man?

1) **Recap**

- a) God is our _____.
- b) The word of God reveals his eternal _____.
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2) **Testimonial**

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3) **Introduction**

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 - (1) his _____
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- b) The nature of man
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 - (a) Not a product of mindless _____
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 - (1) Created in his own _____
 - (a) Includes communicable attributes of God, but not just that
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 - iii) Created to _____ God
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 - (a) To _____ as God's vice-regents, to _____ image-bearers, _____ the earth for the _____ of God
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Question: How does this catechism question help us to teach our children about gender? Why is it important for us to begin these conversations?

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Question: According to Q14, what is a common experience shared by all of mankind?

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(1) The _____ of God against sin

(2) The sure promise of righteous _____ - against sin

c) God's anger against sin

i) Psalm 11:5 "The LORD examines the righteous, but he hates the wicked."

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(1) All of us are _____ in sin and by nature rebel against God. Consequently, God's wrath remains upon us.

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(1) God's righteous anger against sin will be _____ poured out in proportionate measure.

7) **Summary**

a) Mankind is created in God's image to _____ - him.

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8) **Boots on the Ground**

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9) **Question and Answer Period**

For Further Study:

Jerry Bridges, *Respectable Sins*

Session 4: The Person and Work of Christ

1) **Recap**

- a) God purposely created us male and female in his **own image**
- b) Created in order to **glorify** God
- c) God is righteously **angry** against sin and will certainly punish all sin exhaustively

2) **Testimonial**

- a) In what ways have you gained confidence to lead your family and children in family times of study and worship? (**discussion time**)

3) **Introduction**

- a) First things first
 - i) Goal: To equip our class with a proper biblical understanding of the **person** of Christ and his **work** of redemption.
 - (1) How can God be both **just** and merciful towards sinners?
 - (2) The work of Christ is **essential** for our salvation.
 - (a) These questions will be adequately addressed by relying on the progression of redemption outlined within the *NCC*.

Question: Does the world we live in proclaim a need for salvation? According to the world, what, if anything, comprises our greatest need(s)?

4) **Is there any way to escape punishment and be brought back into God's favor?**

(NCC Question 19)

- a) Answer: "Yes, to satisfy his justice, God himself, out of mere mercy, reconciles us to himself and delivers us from sin and from the punishment for sin, by a Redeemer."
 - i) In Q19 of the *NCC*, we come to understand God's provision for salvation in terms of:
 - (1) his **justice**
 - (2) his **mercy**
- b) The justice of God in salvation
 - i) God's holiness and perfect righteousness **requires** justice
 - (1) We have an infinitesimal conception of required justice in our own legal system
 - ii) God is **glorified** in judgment
 - (1) Romans 9:22-23
 - (2) Revelation 19:1-2
- c) The mercy of God in salvation
 - i) God's mercy is **righteous** mercy

- (1) Undeserved mercy is not without payment
 - (a) Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb 9:22)
- (2) Justice is **upheld** in God's mercy by means of a Substitute, a Redeemer.

5) **Who is the Redeemer?** (*NCC Question 20*)

- a) Answer: "The only Redeemer is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, in whom God became man and bore the penalty for sin himself."
 - i) In Q20 of the *NCC*, we learn about the person and work of Christ. Namely that Christ is:
 - (1) The **exclusive** Redeemer
 - (2) The eternal **Son** of God
 - (3) Truly **man**
 - (4) The one who atoned for sins by dying as a **substitute**
- b) The exclusive Savior
 - i) Acts 4:12 "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
 - (1) The work of Christ is unique
 - (2) **God** has provided his sacrifice
 - (a) Just like the ram in the account of Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22)
 - (3) 1 Timothy 2:5 "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."
- c) The eternal Son of God
 - i) By his **divine** nature, he would
 - (1) Be perfectly obedient to the point of death (Phi 2:8)
 - (2) Be able to bear the righteous anger of God against sin (Acts 2:24)
 - ii) **Equal** with God
 - (1) John 10:30 "I and the Father are one."
 - (2) John 1:10 Jesus is the one through whom all things were created.
- d) Truly man
 - i) By his **human** nature, he would
 - (1) Obey perfectly the law of God on our behalf
 - (2) Suffer the punishment for human sin
 - (3) Be able to **sympathize** with our weaknesses (Heb 2:17)
- e) Substitutionary atonement
 - i) The **wages** of our sin is death (Rom 6:23)
 - (1) God's justice upheld in the death of Christ (Rom 3:25-26)
 - ii) Reconciliation **through** Christ's death
 - (1) Colossians 1:21-22 "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him."
 - (a) No reconciliation in any other name but Jesus
 - (b) Reconciliation **accomplished** through the death of Christ
 - (c) The great exchange

- (i) Our sin **imputed** to Christ
- (ii) His righteousness **imputed** to us (2 Cor 5:21)

Question: Why could God not just have forgiven his people apart from the death of His Eternal Son?

- 6) **How can we be saved?** (*NCC Question 29*)
- a) Answer: “Only by faith in Jesus Christ and in his substitutionary atoning death on the cross; so even though we are guilty of having disobeyed God and are still inclined to all evil, nevertheless, God, without any merit of our own but only by pure grace, imputes to us the perfect righteousness of Christ when we repent and believe in him.”
 - i) Salvation applied:
 - (1) By **grace** alone
 - (a) “without any merit of our own”
 - (b) Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”
 - (2) Through **faith**
 - (a) No works or deeds
 - (b) The **object** of our faith
 - (i) “by faith in Jesus Christ”
 - (3) Response
 - (a) Trust and repentance
 - (i) Acts 3:19 “Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out.”

Question: How can we begin to teach our children about their need of Jesus? What are ways we can discuss faith and repentance in ways accessible to young children?

- 7) **Summary**
- a) God is both **just** and **merciful** in the giving of his Eternal Son as the substitutionary sacrifice for his sinful people
 - b) Salvation is by **grace** alone through **faith**.
- 8) **Boots on the Ground**
- a) **Memorize:** Ephesians 2:8-9 as a family.
 - b) **Discuss:** Talk through *NCC* questions 20 & 29. Discuss among your family why it was necessary for Jesus to die for our salvation.

- c) **Apply:** One evening after dinner, listen to “O the Blood” by Gateway Worship. Use the moments after the song to ask each member of the family why they are thankful for the sacrifice of Jesus. Use Q 24 in the *NCC* (p.64-65) to explain in depth what Jesus accomplished.
- d) **Pray:** Thank Jesus for his obedience to the Father even to the point of death on a cross. Read Philippians 2:8 out loud and use the words as a springboard for family prayer.

9) **Question and Answer Period**

For Further Study:

Article: “Why is it important to understand penal substitutionary atonement?”

By: John MacArthur

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/qas/why-is-it-important-to-understand-penal-substitutionary-atonement/>

Session 4 Handout: The Person and Work of Christ

1) Recap

- a) God purposely created us male and female in his _____
- b) Created in order to _____ God
- c) God is righteously _____ against sin and will certainly punish all sin exhaustively

2) Testimonial

- a) In what ways have you gained confidence to lead your family and children in family times of study and worship? (**discussion time**)

3) Introduction

- a) First things first
 - i) Goal: To equip our class with a proper biblical understanding of the _____ of Christ and his _____ of redemption.
 - (1) How can God be both _____ and merciful towards sinners?
 - (2) The work of Christ is _____ for our salvation.
 - (a) These questions will be adequately addressed by relying on the progression of redemption outlined within the *NCC*.

Question: Does the world we live in proclaim a need for salvation? According to the world, what, if anything, comprises our greatest need(s)?

4) Is there any way to escape punishment and be brought back into God's favor?
(*NCC Question 19*)

- a) Answer: "Yes, to satisfy his justice, God himself, out of mere mercy, reconciles us to himself and delivers us from sin and from the punishment for sin, by a Redeemer."
 - i) In Q19 of the *NCC*, we come to understand God's provision for salvation in terms of:
 - (1) his _____
 - (2) his _____
- b) The justice of God in salvation
 - i) God's holiness and perfect righteousness _____ justice
 - (1) We have an infinitesimal conception of required justice in our own legal system
 - ii) God is _____ in judgment
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- i) God's mercy is _____ mercy
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 - (a) Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb 9:22)
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5) **Who is the Redeemer?** (*NCC Question 20*)

- a) Answer: "The only Redeemer is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, in whom God became man and bore the penalty for sin himself."
 - i) In Q20 of the *NCC*, we learn about the person and work of Christ. Namely that Christ is:
 - (1) The _____ Redeemer
 - (2) The eternal _____ of God
 - (3) Truly _____
 - (4) The one who atoned for sins by dying as a _____
- b) The exclusive Savior
 - i) Acts 4:12 "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
 - (1) The work of Christ is unique
 - (2) _____ has provided his sacrifice
 - (a) Just like the ram in the account of Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22)
 - (3) 1 Timothy 2:5 "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."
- c) The eternal Son of God
 - i) By his _____ nature, he would
 - (1) Be perfectly obedient to the point of death (Phi 2:8)
 - (2) Be able to bear the righteous anger of God against sin (Acts 2:24)
 - ii) _____ with God
 - (1) John 10:30 "I and the Father are one."
 - (2) John 1:10 Jesus is the one through whom all things were created.
- d) Truly man
 - i) By his _____ nature, he would
 - (1) Obey perfectly the law of God on our behalf
 - (2) Suffer the punishment for human sin
 - (3) Be able to _____ with our weaknesses (Heb 2:17)
- e) Substitutionary atonement
 - i) The _____ of our sin is death (Rom 6:23)
 - (1) God's justice upheld in the death of Christ (Rom 3:25-26)
 - ii) Reconciliation _____ - Christ's death
 - (1) Colossians 1:21-22 "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him."
 - (a) No reconciliation in any other name but Jesus

- (b) Reconciliation _____ - through the death of Christ
- (c) The great exchange
 - (i) Our sin _____ to Christ
 - (ii) His righteousness _____ to us (2 Cor 5:21)

Question: Why could God not just have forgiven his people apart from the death of His Eternal Son?

6) **How can we be saved?** (*NCC Question 29*)

- a) Answer: “Only by faith in Jesus Christ and in his substitutionary atoning death on the cross; so even though we are guilty of having disobeyed God and are still inclined to all evil, nevertheless, God, without any merit of our own but only by pure grace, imputes to us the perfect righteousness of Christ when we repent and believe in him.”
 - i) Salvation applied:
 - (1) By _____ alone
 - (a) “without any merit of our own”
 - (b) Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”
 - (2) Through _____
 - (a) No works or deeds
 - (b) The _____ of our faith
 - (i) “by faith in Jesus Christ”
 - (3) Response
 - (a) Trust and repentance
 - (i) Acts 3:19 “Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out.”

Question: How can we begin to teach our children about their need of Jesus? What are ways we can discuss faith and repentance in ways accessible to young children?

7) **Summary**

- a) God is both _____ and _____ in the giving of his Eternal Son as the substitutionary sacrifice for his sinful people
- b) Salvation is by _____ alone through _____.

8) **Boots on the Ground**

- a) **Memorize:** Ephesians 2:8-9 as a family.
- b) **Discuss:** Talk through *NCC* questions 20 & 29. Discuss among your family why it was necessary for Jesus to die for our salvation.
- c) **Apply:** One evening after dinner, listen to “O the Blood” by Gateway Worship. Use the moments after the song to ask each member of the family why they are thankful for the sacrifice of Jesus. Use Q 24 in the *NCC* (p.64-65) to explain in depth what Jesus accomplished.
- d) **Pray:** Thank Jesus for his obedience to the Father even to the point of death on a cross. Read Philippians 2:8 out loud and use the words as a springboard for family prayer.

9) **Question and Answer Period**

For Further Study:

Article: “Why is it important to understand penal substitutionary atonement?”

By: John MacArthur

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/qas/why-is-it-important-to-understand-penal-substitutionary-atonement/>

Session 5: Sanctification

1) **Recap**

- a) God's **justice** must be satisfied.
- b) God's **mercy** is displayed in the cross of Jesus Christ
- c) Salvation is only by **grace** alone through **faith** alone in Christ alone.

2) **Testimonial**

- a) How has your understanding of God's will for family worship changed over the last five weeks? (**discussion time**)

3) **Introduction**

- a) First things first
 - i) Goal: To equip our class with a biblically-informed understanding of sanctification and its **relationship** to justification.
 - (1) Why is justification and sanctification inseparably linked? How are we to understand the progressive and practical outworking of God's work of sanctification in our lives?
 - (a) These questions will be adequately addressed by relying upon the framework presented on sanctification in the *NCC*.

Question: When you think about sanctification, what comes to mind?

4) **What do justification and sanctification mean?** (*NCC Question 32*)

- a) Answer: "Justification means our declared righteousness before God, made possible by Christ's death and resurrection for us. Sanctification means our gradual, growing righteousness, made possible by the Spirit's work in us."
 - i) In Q32 of the *NCC*, we learn:
 - (1) Our standing before God is **definitive**
 - (2) The one God declares holy, he begins to make **holy**
- b) God declares us just
 - i) God removes the **guilt** of our sin
 - (1) Paid for by Christ
 - (2) Punishment is **lifted**
 - ii) This is a **legal** declaration
 - (1) We are not just in and of ourselves (*see lesson 3*)
 - (2) Based on the **merits** of Christ alone
 - iii) Romans 4:23-25 "But the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification."

- iv) Yet, this work of God's justification is **always** accompanied by his work of sanctification.
- c) The one God declares to be holy, he begins to make holy
 - i) In one sense this is also **definitive**
 - (1) **Sanctify**- "to set apart"
 - (a) We are made holy by **Christ's** completed work.
 - (i) Through faith union with him, we are sanctified in a definitive sense.
 - (ii) 1 Corinthians 1:2 "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours."
 - (2) We have been set apart from the domain of sin and sanctified
 - (a) Hebrews 10:10 "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."
 - ii) Sanctification is also **progressive**
 - (1) Whereas justification dealt with our guilt and punishment, sanctification deals with our remaining **corruption**
 - (2) "Gradual growing righteousness"
 - (a) Romans 6:19 "For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification."
 - (b) Romans 13:14 "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."
 - (3) Gradual growth in holiness and righteousness as we grow in **obedience** and faith towards God.
 - (4) This sanctification is empowered by the **Holy Spirit**
 - (a) Philippians 2:12-13 "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for *it is God* who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."
 - (i) God empowers us by his Spirit to progressively grow in holiness.
 - (b) Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, against such things there is no law."
 - iii) The **imperatives** are informed by the **indicative**
 - (1) God declares us just, righteous, holy in his sight
 - (2) Therefore, we are called to grow in holiness

Question: Why is it important to not confuse justification and sanctification?

- 5) **Since we are redeemed by grace alone, through Christ alone, must we still do good works and obey God's Word?** (*NCC Question 34*)
- a) Answer: "Yes, because Christ, having redeemed us by his blood, also renews us by his Spirit; so that our lives may show love and gratitude to God; so that we may be assured of our faith by the fruits; and so that by our godly behavior others may be won to Christ."
 - i) In Q 34 of the *NCC*, we learn that sanctification involves growth in good works that:
 - (1) Show **love** and gratitude to God
 - (2) Increase our **subjective** assurance
 - (3) Point **others** to the glory of God
 - b) **Obedience** to God's commands demonstrates our love for him
 - i) John 14:15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."
 - ii) 1 John 5:3 "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."
 - (1) Obedience to God reveals our **heart** loyalties
 - (2) The one who has the Spirit of God will grow in obedience
 - (3) Part of sanctification is growing in love and obedience for God
 - c) The fruits of sanctification and increased obedience bolsters our **assurance**
 - i) Assurance is ultimately grounded in the objective completed work of Christ
 - ii) Yet, the presence of genuine faith evidenced by good works grows our **subjective** assurance
 - iii) 1 John 2:3 "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments."
 - d) Our growth in holiness **glorifies** God
 - i) Since sanctification is a work of God's Spirit, growth in obedience is ultimately attributable to the **grace** of God.
 - (1) Ephesians 1:6 "to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."
 - ii) Our good deeds performed by faith out of love for God glorifies God among nonbelievers.
 - (1) 1 Peter 2:12 "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."
- 6) **Summary**
- a) God **declares** us righteous by faith alone in the completed work of Christ alone.
 - i) We are justified because of Christ and receive the benefits of his completed work through the gift of faith.
 - b) Sanctification is inseparably **linked** to justification. The one God justifies, he also sanctifies.
 - i) Sanctification is both **definitive** and progressive.
 - ii) All of sanctification is ultimate a work of God's **grace**.

7) **Boots on the Ground**

- a) **Memorize:** *NCC* Q32 as a family.
- b) **Discuss:** Talk through *NCC* question 32. Explain to your children how by grace alone God justifies the sinner through faith in Christ. Explain how growing in our relationships with Jesus is empowered by God's Spirit.
- c) **Apply:** Share with your family how God has grown you over the last year. Allow each family member to share their own testimony of God's faithfulness to sanctify them.
- d) **Pray:** Ask God for strength to put sin to death and to grow in holiness.

8) **Question and Answer Period**

For Further Study:

John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*

Session 5 Handout: Sanctification

1) **Recap**

- a) God's _____ must be satisfied.
- b) God's _____ is displayed in the cross of Jesus Christ
- c) Salvation is only by _____ alone through _____ alone in Christ alone.

2) **Testimonial**

- a) How has your understanding of God's will for family worship changed over the last five weeks? (**discussion time**)

3) **Introduction**

- a) First things first
 - i) Goal: To equip our class with a biblically-informed understanding of sanctification and its _____ to justification.
 - (1) Why is justification and sanctification inseparably linked? How are we to understand the progressive and practical outworking of God's work of sanctification in our lives?
 - (a) These questions will be adequately addressed by relying upon the framework presented on sanctification in the *NCC*.

Question: When you think about sanctification, what comes to mind?

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 - i) In Q32 of the *NCC*, we learn:
 - (1) Our standing before God is _____
 - (2) The one God declares holy, he begins to make _____
 - b) God declares us just
 - i) God removes the _____ of our sin
 - (1) Paid for by Christ
 - (2) Punishment is _____
 - ii) This is a _____ declaration
 - (1) We are not just in and of ourselves (see lesson 3)
 - (2) Based on the _____ of Christ alone
 - iii) Romans 4:23-25 "But the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him

who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”

- iv) Yet, this work of God’s justification is _____ accompanied by his work of sanctification.
- c) The one God declares to be holy, he begins to make holy
 - i) In one sense this is also _____
 - (1) _____ - “to set apart”
 - (a) We are made holy by _____ completed work.
 - (i) Through faith union with him, we are sanctified in a definitive sense.
 - (ii) 1 Corinthians 1:2 “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.”
 - (2) We have been set apart from the domain of sin and sanctified
 - (a) Hebrews 10:10 “And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”
 - ii) Sanctification is also _____
 - (1) Whereas justification dealt with our guilt and punishment, sanctification deals with our remaining _____
 - (2) “Gradual growing righteousness”
 - (a) Romans 6:19 “For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.”
 - (b) Romans 13:14 “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”
 - (3) Gradual growth in holiness and righteousness as we grow in _____ and faith towards God.
 - (4) This sanctification is empowered by the _____
 - (a) Philippians 2:12-13 “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for *it is God* who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”
 - (i) God empowers us by his Spirit to progressively grow in holiness.
 - (b) Galatians 5:22-23 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, against such things there is no law.”
 - iii) The _____ are informed by the _____
 - (1) God declares us just, righteous, holy in his sight
 - (2) Therefore, we are called to grow in holiness

Question: Why is it important to not confuse justification and sanctification?

5) **Since we are redeemed by grace alone, through Christ alone, must we still do good works and obey God's Word?** (*NCC Question 34*)

- a) Answer: "Yes, because Christ, having redeemed us by his blood, also renews us by his Spirit; so that our lives may show love and gratitude to God; so that we may be assured of our faith by the fruits; and so that by our godly behavior others may be won to Christ."
- i) In Q 34 of the *NCC*, we learn that sanctification involves growth in good works that:
- (1) Show _____ and gratitude to God
 - (2) Increase our _____ assurance
 - (3) Point _____ to the glory of God
- b) _____ to God's commands demonstrates our love for him
- i) John 14:15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."
- ii) 1 John 5:3 "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."
- (1) Obedience to God reveals our _____ loyalties
 - (2) The one who has the Spirit of God will grow in obedience
 - (3) Part of sanctification is growing in love and obedience for God
- c) The fruits of sanctification and increased obedience bolsters our _____
- i) Assurance is ultimately grounded in the objective completed work of Christ
- ii) Yet, the presence of genuine faith evidenced by good works grows our _____ assurance
- iii) 1 John 2:3 "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments."
- d) Our growth in holiness _____ God
- i) Since sanctification is a work of God's Spirit, growth in obedience is ultimately attributable to the _____ of God.
- (1) Ephesians 1:6 "to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."
- ii) Our good deeds performed by faith out of love for God glorifies God among nonbelievers.
- (1) 1 Peter 2:12 "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."

6) **Summary**

- a) God _____ us righteous by faith alone in the completed work of Christ alone.
- i) We are justified because of Christ and receive the benefits of his completed work through the gift of faith.
- b) Sanctification is inseparably _____ to justification. The one God justifies, he also sanctifies.
- i) Sanctification is both _____ and progressive.
- ii) All of sanctification is ultimate a work of God's _____.

7) **Boots on the Ground**

- a) **Memorize:** *NCC* Q32 as a family.
- b) **Discuss:** Talk through *NCC* question 32. Explain to your children how by grace alone God justifies the sinner through faith in Christ. Explain how growing in our relationships with Jesus is empowered by God's Spirit.
- c) **Apply:** Share with your family how God has grown you over the last year. Allow each family member to share their own testimony of God's faithfulness to sanctify them.
- d) **Pray:** Ask God for strength to put sin to death and to grow in holiness.

8) **Question and Answer Period**

For Further Study:

John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*

Session 6: Glorification

1) Recap

- a) God **declares** us righteous by faith alone in the completed work of **Christ** alone.
- b) Sanctification is inseparably **linked** to justification.
- c) Sanctification is both definitive and **progressive**.

2) Testimonial

- a) What has been the general response from your family as you all have sought more intentional times to discuss God and His word together? (**discussion time**)

3) Introduction

- a) First things first
 - i) Goal: To equip our class with a Biblical understanding of the culmination of God's work of salvation in our lives and to derive practical comfort and direction for our lives.
 - (1) What hope does Christ's resurrection hold out for us, and what does eternal life look like?
 - (a) These questions will be adequately addressed by relying upon the framework presented on glorification in the *NCC*.

Question: When you think about heaven, what comes to mind?

4) What does Christ's resurrection mean for us? (*NCC Question 50*)

- a) Answer: "Christ triumphed over sin and death by being physically resurrected, so that all who trust in him are raised to new life in this world and to everlasting life in the world to come. Just as we will one day be resurrected, so this world will one day be restored. But those who do not trust in Christ will be raised to everlasting death."
 - i) In Q50 of the *NCC*, we understand our glorification in terms of:
 - (1) **Union** with Christ by faith
 - (2) Guarantee of physical **resurrection**
- b) All the benefits of Christ's work are ours through **faith**
 - i) "so that all who trust in him"
 - (1) Ephesians 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us *in Christ* with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."
 - (2) John 3:18 "Whoever *believes* in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

- (3) Romans 3:28 “For we hold that one is justified by *faith* apart from works of the law.”
- ii) “are raised to new life in this world and to everlasting life in the world to come”
 - (1) 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”
 - (2) John 3:5-6 “Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’”
 - (a) Jesus is not merely reforming our hearts, he is giving us a **new** heart. It’s a new birth. A new creation.
 - (i) Ezekiel 36:26 “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”
 - (ii) All of this is accomplished on the **basis** of Christ’s work and received through **faith**.
- c) Guarantee of **physical** resurrection
 - i) God has promised an eternal physical existence with physical glorified bodies for his people to **enjoy** him forever
 - (1) Romans 8:11 “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”
 - (2) 1 Corinthians 15:12 “Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”
 - ii) Once again, physical resurrection is inseparably linked to faith **union** with Christ.
 - (1) Romans 6:5 “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”
 - iii) Physical resurrection from the dead is **indispensable** to Christian doctrine
 - (1) John 6:40 “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”
 - (a) Connection of trust, completed work of Christ, and future glorification
- d) God accomplishes **all** of salvation, and he promises to bring his children home
 - i) Romans 8:29-30 “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”
 - (1) All the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places are ours **in Christ**.
 - (2) **No one** who is foreknown, predestined, called, and justified will fail to be glorified by God.
 - (a) Unbreakable **chain**
 - (b) Undeniable promise of eternal life.

Question: What does Paul mean when he describes the one in Christ as a “new creation?”

- 5) **What hope does everlasting life hold for us?** (*NCC Question 52*)
- a) Answer: “It reminds us that this present fallen world is not all there is; soon we will live with and enjoy God forever in the new city, in the new heaven and the new earth, where we will be fully and forever freed from all sin and will inhabit renewed, resurrection bodies in a renewed, restored creation.”
 - b) The pains of this life are without comparison to the joy of enjoying God **forever**
 - i) Romans 8:18 “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”
 - (1) **Recognition** that this fallen world is filled with painful trials
 - (2) Sturdy **hope** in guarantee of glorification
 - (3) Enjoying God forever in the new heaven and new earth
 - (a) Revelation 21:1-4 (READ)
 - (i) New heaven/New earth/New city
 - (ii) Dwelling place of God is **with** man
 - (iii) The former things have passed away
 - c) A final aspect of glorification/eternal life is not only physical glorified bodies, but also **conformity** into the image of Christ.
 - i) “We will be fully and forever freed from all sin”
 - (1) **Already, but not yet**
 - (2) Called to grow in holiness (sanctification), but promise of glorification is conformity to Christ
 - (3) 1 John 3:2 “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”
 - (4) 2 Corinthians 3:18 “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

Question: According to the Bible, how can the Christian believer know for certain he/she will be raised from the dead? How is this practically helpful as you live your life?

- 6) **Summary**
- a) God promises bodily resurrection for the one united to Christ by **faith**
 - b) God **promises** ultimate conformity to Christ beginning now through faith union and culminating when we “see him as he is” (1 Jn 3:2)

7) **Boots on the Ground**

- a) **Memorize:** *NCC* Q52 as a family.
- b) **Discuss:** Talk through *NCC* question 52. Discuss how the catechism's question and answer focuses all of our hope and longing on God rather than the temporary pleasures here in this life.
- c) **Apply:** Watch "The Difference Between Our Sanctification and Our Glorification" as a family. Discuss how this gives you hope.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSN2r_BpxdY
- d) **Pray:** Ask God to sustain your family's discipleship routine for His glory and your good.

8) **Question and Answer Period**

For Further Study:

Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*

Session 6 Handout: Glorification

1) **Recap**

- a) God _____ us righteous by faith alone in the completed work of **Christ** alone.
- b) Sanctification is inseparably _____ to justification.
- c) Sanctification is both definitive and _____.

2) **Testimonial**

- a) What has been the general response from your family as you all have sought more intentional times to discuss God and His word together? (**discussion time**)

3) **Introduction**

- a) First things first
 - i) Goal: To equip our class with a Biblical understanding of the culmination of God's work of salvation in our lives and to derive practical comfort and direction for our lives.
 - (1) What hope does Christ's resurrection hold out for us, and what does eternal life look like?
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Question: When you think about heaven, what comes to mind?

4) **What does Christ's resurrection mean for us?** (*NCC Question 50*)

- a) Answer: "Christ triumphed over sin and death by being physically resurrected, so that all who trust in him are raised to new life in this world and to everlasting life in the world to come. Just as we will one day be resurrected, so this world will one day be restored. But those who do not trust in Christ will be raised to everlasting death."
 - i) In Q50 of the *NCC*, we understand our glorification in terms of:
 - (1) _____ with Christ by faith
 - (2) Guarantee of physical _____
- b) All the benefits of Christ's work are ours through _____
 - i) "so that all who trust in him"
 - (1) Ephesians 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us *in Christ* with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."
 - (2) John 3:18 "Whoever *believes* in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

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- (a) Jesus is not merely reforming our hearts, he is giving us a _____ heart. It’s a new birth. A new creation.
- (i) Ezekiel 36:26 “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”
- (ii) All of this is accomplished on the _____ of Christ’s work and received through _____.
- c) Guarantee of _____ resurrection
- i) God has promised an eternal physical existence with physical glorified bodies for his people to _____ him forever
- (1) Romans 8:11 “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”
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- (1) John 6:40 “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”
- (a) Connection of trust, completed work of Christ, and future glorification
- d) God accomplishes _____ of salvation, and he promises to bring his children home
- i) Romans 8:29-30 “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”
- (1) All the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places are ours _____.
- (2) _____ who is foreknown, predestined, called, and justified will fail to be glorified by God.
- (a) Unbreakable _____

(b) Undeniable promise of eternal life.

Question: What does Paul mean when he describes the one in Christ as a “new creation?”

5) **What hope does everlasting life hold for us?** (NCC Question 52)

- a) Answer: “It reminds us that this present fallen world is not all there is; soon we will live with and enjoy God forever in the new city, in the new heaven and the new earth, where we will be fully and forever freed from all sin and will inhabit renewed, resurrection bodies in a renewed, restored creation.”
- b) The pains of this life are without comparison to the joy of enjoying God
 - i) Romans 8:18 “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”
 - (1) _____ that this fallen world is filled with painful trials
 - (2) Sturdy _____ in guarantee of glorification
 - (3) Enjoying God forever in the new heaven and new earth
 - (a) Revelation 21:1-4 (READ)
 - (i) New heaven/New earth/New city
 - (ii) Dwelling place of God is _____ man
 - (iii) The former things have passed away
- c) A final aspect of glorification/eternal life is not only physical glorified bodies, but also _____ into the image of Christ.
 - i) “We will be fully and forever freed from all sin”
 - (1) _____, but _____
 - (2) Called to grow in holiness (sanctification), but promise of glorification is conformity to Christ
 - (3) 1 John 3:2 “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”
 - (4) 2 Corinthians 3:18 “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

Question: According to the Bible, how can the Christian believer know for certain he/she will be raised from the dead? How is this practically helpful as you live your life?

6) **Summary**

- a) God promises bodily resurrection for the one united to Christ by _____
- b) God _____ ultimate conformity to Christ beginning now through faith union and culminating when we “see him as he is” (1 Jn 3:2)

7) **Boots on the Ground**

- a) **Memorize:** *NCC* Q52 as a family.
- b) **Discuss:** Talk through *NCC* question 52. Discuss how the catechism’s question and answer focuses all of our hope and longing on God rather than the temporary pleasures here in this life.
- c) **Apply:** Watch “The Difference Between Our Sanctification and Our Glorification” as a family. Discuss how this gives you hope.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSN2r_BpxdY
- d) **Pray:** Ask God to sustain your family’s discipleship routine for His glory and your good.

8) **Question and Answer Period**

For Further Study:

Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*

APPENDIX 4
STATISTICAL RESULTS

This appendix reports the statistical changes from the pre- and post-surveys. The surveys were composed with a six-point Likert scale to measure the responses of participants. Further, this appendix records the overall mean change, t-stat, and p-stat measurements. The research data indicates a positive statistical change from the pre- and post-surveys.

Table A1. Statistical results from pre- and post-surveys

Section	Pre-Class Mean	Post-Class Mean	Mean Change	t-stat	p-stat
Comprehensive	236.5	265.6	+29.1	-4.05	0.002
Practices	65.0	75.9	+10.9	-3.18	0.008
Doctrine	171.5	189.8	+18.4	-4.18	0.002

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING YOUNG PARENTS TO DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN THROUGH CATECHESIS AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF MOODY, ALABAMA

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This project's purpose was to equip the young parents of FBCM to disciple their children through the method of catechesis. However, before simply exhorting the parents to engage their children's spiritual lives, the parents needed to grow in their doctrinal understanding. The project included a pre- and post-series survey that measured a statistical change in the parents' perception of discipleship and their theological proficiency.

Chapter 1 introduces the ministry context as well as the rationale for the given project. This initial chapter outlined the project's goals, research methodology, purpose, definitions, delimitations, and limitations. Chapter 2 supplies strong biblical support for the parents' primary role in a child's discipleship and the church's primary responsibility to equip these parents for the work of ministry. The chapter provides an exegesis of Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalm 78:1-8, Ephesians 6:1-4, and Ephesians 4:11-13. Chapter 3 demonstrates the long-standing pedagogical strategy of catechesis throughout church history. Further, this chapter advocates the family-equipping model of ministry as ideal for catechesis. Chapter 4 recounts the preparation and implementation of the curriculum. Chapter 5 concludes the project with an evaluation of the project's goals and purpose.

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