

Keeping
Covenant
and
Catechizing
Our Children



The Christian Faith Delivered

An exposition of the Children's Catechism

(The Rev. Dr. Curtis I. Crenshaw, Th.D.)

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Keeping Covenant and Catechizing Our Children

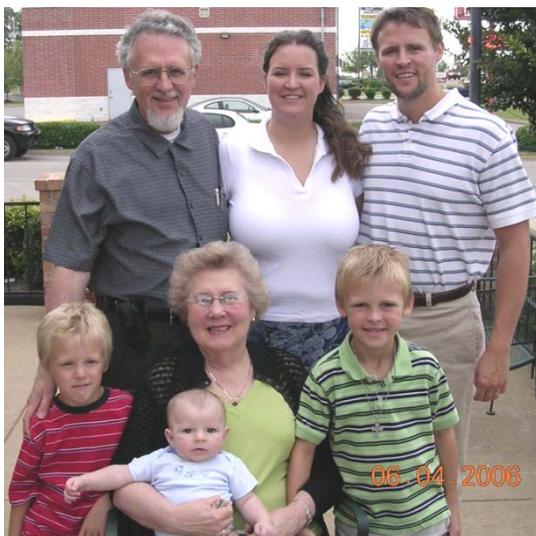
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(Slightly edited, August 2011)

**To my beloved mother, Frances Deckard
Gillespie, who taught me the faith**

My mother made me memorize hundreds of verses growing up, took me to church every Sunday ("took me," not sent me), taught me the faith, encouraged me, believed in me, and has lived a godly example before me. I have been exceedingly blessed.

God bless you mother. By His grace we will spend eternity together, for you will take me with you, and also take with you the other two generations in this picture:



(top, left to right: Yours truly, daughter Chandra, son Trace; below: grandsons Ryan and Donovan, mother, and grandson Evan. New granddaughter just added but not seen!)

INTRODUCTION: **(must read)**.

Who Teaches Our Children?

God requires the parents to teach their children the faith. All parents do, either by default or self-consciously. Most teach them by default, by which I mean that just by their example they teach them, which is usually a weak substitute. A few will consciously teach their children the faith out of love for God, His covenant, and their children. The title of this booklet, *Keeping Covenant and Catechizing Our Children*, is meant to awaken in parents the need, the biblical requirement, to teach them who God is, who they are, about His creation, and about His commandments. The words "Keeping Covenant" mean that when we faithfully teach our children the faith, we are keeping God's covenant to be our God and the God of our children. In other words, it means that we are extending the faith to the next generation. It is not primarily the Church's responsibility to teach children the faith but the parents' responsibility. The Church is a helper, and hopefully this booklet will be a help. Notice what God says about teaching His children in these verses:

He [God] seeks **godly offspring** (Malachi 2:15).

⁴ "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!

⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ⁶ And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷ **You shall teach them diligently to your children**, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." (Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

And you, **fathers**, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged (Colossians 3:21).

From the Malachi passage,¹ notice that God is the one who seeks godly offspring. We as parents are to remain faithful to Him to bring the "godly offspring" to fruition, which means to pray *for* them, *with* them,

¹ The translation of the passage is not easy, but other translations follow the NKJ with the same sense: "godly offspring."

Aid to Parents in Teaching the Children's Catechism / 6

to *take* them to church (not send them as too many parents do), to be their teachers of God. And the earlier we can begin this the better it will be.

The passage from Deuteronomy was one of the main passages in the Bible the Jews used before Christ came (and still use) as a confession of faith (there is only one God) and to teach their children the faith. In an earlier passage Moses had commanded the Israelites to “teach them to your children and your grandchildren” (Deuteronomy 4:9; see also Deuteronomy 11:19). It is, of course, still binding on us, the main way we can be sure that God will be the God of our seed, of our children and grandchildren, is that we keep His covenant to train them. God told Abraham that He would be the God of Abraham's seed, but then He also commanded him:

For I [the LORD] have known [Abraham], in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him (Genesis 18:19).

If we parents do not obey God to teach our children, we are disobedient and tempt God not to be the God of our children. If we believe Him that our baptized children are in covenant with Him, we will teach them the faith.

And no doubt Paul had the Deuteronomy 6 passage in mind when he commanded the fathers to catechize their children. And notice that Paul especially addressed the “fathers” to do the teaching. In our day of feminism, of the feminization of Christianity, it is especially important that fathers take the lead in this, though the mothers can also teach. James Dobson in his book, *Bringing Up Boys*, states that it is virtually unknown for a man who has had a healthy, meaningful relationship with his human father (or some father figure) to become homosexual. Conversely, those who have not had a good relationship with their fathers often do become homosexual, and for the girls to become lesbians.

This parallels Romans 1:18ff where Paul states that the reason some people go into homosexuality and lesbianism is that they have a wrong view of God. In other words, if they get it wrong about God (the vertical relationship as it were) then the tendency is to get it wrong regarding mankind (the horizontal relationship). In other words, one's view of God (or lack of view) determines one's view of everything else. If one is

confused about God, especially God as Father, he will often get it wrong about humans. To put it bluntly, if God is feminized to the children, which can be done by the mothers doing all the teaching about God, or if there is no teaching about God, or the father is just a wimp, or the culture is assumed to be normal in its sexual orientations today, the children will be oriented the wrong way. They will feminize their human relationships so that boys will prefer boys and girls will prefer girls. One way out of this is catechizing, especially the fathers taking the lead. Be men, fathers, teach the faith with conviction, love, compassion, and then spend a lot of time with your children just playing games (or something) with them and loving them.

I have two children, a boy born first and then a girl. As of this writing (August 2011), my son is 36 and my daughter 32. They are both happily married, and my son has two sons and my daughter one son and a baby girl. When my son was small and still at home, there were times when he was not responding to my teaching, but was resentful. I recognized that it was my fault, that I was just being the professor and not the companion. After all, we spell love to our children with the four letter word T-I-M-E. Thus I took my son on a weekend hunting trip several times, just the two of us. I never said a word to him why I was doing it. I also would do other things at times with him. Both times we returned from hunting, he was a new son for a while, wanting to learn about God again. Teaching without love, without spending time with our children, is harsh. Love without teaching is presumption and just so much mush. We must have both.

The Approach of this Booklet:

This booklet is not meant to be a theology, but only an aid to help parents explain these wonderful truths to their children. Therefore, after each Question, you will find in smaller print my comments. Please help me to make this better with your suggestions. I've tried to make this easy to use, and to help parents with small children and with somewhat older children.

This catechism is **not just for small children**, but can be used with teens. Even adults will profit from it, and Bishop Fincke uses it with his adults. This catechism is a wonderful summary of the Christian faith. If you will take a moment to review it, you'll find that it has a well thought out order. It begins with God and moves to mankind. Here is the general outline:

Aid to Parents in Teaching the Children's Catechism / 8

	Questions
I. Creation & God	1-13
II. The Bible	14-15
III. Mankind	16-21
IV. Covenant	22-27
V. Salvation	28-71
A. Sin	28-38
B. Change of Heart	39-40
C. Not by Our Works	41-42
D. Person of Christ	43-48
E. Work of Christ	49-54
F. Application of Redemption	55-71
VI. God's Commandments	72-104
VII. The Lord's Prayer	105-121
VIII. The Church	122-157
IX. The Creeds	158-172
X. Second Coming, Hell, & Heaven	173-182

One can see that the Catechism is Trinitarian, creational, Incarnational, and Reformational in its understanding of salvation as a free gift, with emphasis on God's morality as seen in the Ten Commandments, ending with the Lord's Prayer, the Church and Sacraments, the Creeds, and the Second Coming. Thus it begins with creation and God (just like Genesis) and ends with the Last Day judgment (just like Revelation 20). This could be used for Confirmation classes.

One word about my explanations: they are not meant to be exhaustive theological explanations, but hopefully enough to help you teach your children. Sometimes my answers are very simple (sometimes perhaps not!), and usually they are for parents, but sometimes for the kids. You will have to digest my discussions and then give the teaching in your own words. Make your children stick with the literal answers, and then you explain what they mean.

Where did this Catechism come from? I used it to teach my kids when I was a Presbyterian minister. It is Presbyterian, but revised throughout (by one REC bishop and one REC minister, not me) to conform to the Anglican way of thinking, especially in the areas on the Church and the sacraments. I'll comment on any Presbyterian distinctive that may get in the way as we go along.

Aid to Parents in Teaching the Children's Catechism / 9

At what age should we begin teaching our kids about God? From the moment of birth, if not while in the womb, we are teaching them, whether we are aware of it or not. But as soon as they can communicate on a meaningful level I would suggest it. I have recordings of my daughter at age four and my son at age three saying the catechism.

Some people think that little kids cannot learn technical words like "justify," "sanctify," "covenant," and so on, but they indeed can! One goal I had for my kids as they grew up was to learn the normal words for things, so we taught them "defecate," not "number two," or "go potty." At this age, their minds are capable of absorbing a huge amount of new material, and all words are new, so why not help them get a good start in life with good vocabulary? They can learn one word as well as another. Moreover, just as in every area of life there are technical words to learn (such as hard drive, screen, computer, RAM, ROM, flash drive, CD, DVD, and so on), so the same is true of Christianity. If we avoid the technical words, we essentially eliminate the truth. How could we speak about computers in a meaningful way without the words just mentioned? Thus teach them the big words, but then explain them, which is what this little book is about.

Do not get in a hurry to have your children learn this. We do not want to impress anyone but God, and it is better to learn something well than just to have unknown words and ideas in one's head. Each time you have your time of catechizing, be sure to review what you've learned, or at least part of it. I would also caution, especially the fathers, that you spend quality time with your kids doing other things. We can become so zealous for the faith that we forget to have fun with them, and so we become the professor and not the one who loves them in a practical way. They will rebel against this approach.

I give a lot more explanation for you parents than children need to know on many of the questions, depending on their age and maturity. It is for you to decide how much content they should learn, though for sure learn the answers as given. I'm just trying to help you help them.

Most of the Questions will have memory cues, and these are designed to help your kids remember an answer. If no memory cue is given, either I don't have one or none is needed. The suggested verses to memorize are just that—suggestions. I urge you to use the New King James version, which is easy to read but also accurate. I have used it in this book except where stated otherwise. But **I strongly advise** you to have your children memorize many of them, especially around the

Aid to Parents in Teaching the Children's Catechism / 10

cardinal doctrines of the faith, such as God as Trinity, the person and work of Christ, and salvation. The verses underlined to memorize are very important!

Some parents are overly anxious that they will tell their kids something wrong, or misunderstand the Question or Answer. Cheer up—you will say some things wrong; so did I, but God the Holy Spirit will overcome. BUT we must take our responsibility seriously enough to make the effort (Ephesians 6:1-4; Deuteronomy 6:4-7).

In general I have used simple language to help you with your kids, though some words are technical and thus should be retained. Sometimes I have slightly changed the wording of the Question or of the Answer, but these have been rare.

THE QUESTIONS:

1. Q: Who made you. A: God.

No one made God. He has always been. Don't worry if small kids don't get this—who does! I would explain that God did not need us, but that He wanted us so He created us out of nothing. He just said the words, and we came into existence.

➤ Verses to memorize: John 1:1-3:

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

2. Q: What else did God make? A: God made all things.

There is nothing that God did not make, including you and me. People make cars, but God made the things that we use to make cars. I used to ask my daughter what God did not make—was it the furniture? Was it cars? Was it trees? This helped to drive it home.

➤ Verses to memorize: John 1:1-3 (See above.)

3. Q: Why did God make you and all things? A: For His own glory.

When we say God made us “for His own glory,” we mean so that we can see how great God is. God did not need for us to praise Him or to

Aid to Parents in Teaching the Children's Catechism / 11

honor Him, but He desired it. When you win at a game, don't you like for others to know it? They don't have to know it, but it is nice.

➤ Verse to memorize: Revelation 4:11:

You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.

4. Q: How can you glorify God? A: By loving Him and doing what He commands.

One way you can love your dad and mom is by obeying them when they tell you to do something or not to do something. We can love God in the same way, which is by doing what He tells us to do, as in the Ten Commandments.

➤ Verse to memorize: Ephesians 6:1:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

5. Q: Why should you glorify God? A: Because He made me and takes care of me.

If you have a pet dog, don't you want him to show that he likes you feeding him by wagging his tail and rubbing against you? So God likes for us to tell Him that we love Him. He made us, and He gave us parents to take care of us, which means that He takes care of us through our parents.

➤ Verse to memorize: Psalm 100:3

Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

6. Q: Are there more gods than one? A: There is only one God.

There is only one God, not two, or three. Wouldn't it be sad if people worshipped a tree, or a bush, or a dog, or money, or toys, or something God made?

➤ Verse to memorize: 1 Corinthians 8:4:

Aid to Parents in Teaching the Children's Catechism / 12

Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one.

7. Q: In how many persons does this one God exist? A: In three persons.

But God is like a family: He has three Persons who can and do talk to one another. He is not like a family when we know that the divine persons cannot be separated as we can. Children often say God is three "people," and we must correct that—God is not human!

8. Q: What are the Persons? A: The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

These three Persons in God have names: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is very important to remember their names, and in that order. There is only one God who exists, and this one God exists in three Persons, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and these three Persons are equal in every way to one another. In other words, no one of the Persons is more God than the others.

Sometimes people ask me about Judaism or Islam that believes in only one God, wondering if we all really believe in the same God. The answer is emphatically No. Our God, the true and living God, is three persons. God is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. If that is denied, then we have idolatry.

➤ Verse to memorize: Matthew 28:19:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

9. Q: What is God? A: God is a Spirit and does not have a body like us.

When we say God is a Spirit, we do not mean that He is a ghost, but that He does not have a human body, or any kind of physical body that we can see. This further means that God can be in more places than one at a time. Indeed, He is everywhere all the time! Jesus, however, has a human body that can only be at one place at a time. But someone might ask, "Is Jesus not God?" Yes, Jesus is God, but as God He does not have a body and as man He does.

Aid to Parents in Teaching the Children's Catechism / 13

➤ Verse to memorize: John 4:24:

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

"In spirit" means we can worship Him anywhere, and "truth" means we must worship Him according to His way, not our way.

10. Q: Where is God? **A:** God is everywhere.

The idea is that God is everywhere all the time. There is no place where God is not, and there all the time. We do not mean that God's "arm" is on the moon and His "foot" on some distant planet, but that all of God is everywhere all the time. Explain how good it is never to be left alone.

➤ Verses to memorize: Psalm 139:7-8:

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? ⁸ If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

11. Q: Can you see God? **A:** No, I cannot see God, but He always sees me.

Since God does not have a body, we cannot see Him, but He sees us all the time. I would not want to make a comparison to Santa Claus as if he had divine characteristics of being able to be everywhere at once and thus to see everything, rewarding the child for his good works and punishing him for his bad works. This may confuse the child. Rather, let us say that God sees us because He loves us and wants to take care of us, that He gives us all that we need because He loves us, not because we deserve it.

12. Q: Does God know all things? **A:** Yes, nothing can be hidden from God.

There is nothing God does not know about you, such as how many hairs are on your head, how many toys you have, how many clothes are in your closet, what kind of friends you have. He is interested in everything about you.

➤ Verses to memorize: Psalm 139:4, or John 21:17 where Peter says to Jesus: "Lord, you know all things."

Aid to Parents in Teaching the Children's Catechism / 14

In our day of ever increasing heresies, **this question should be emphasized.** One new heresy that is gaining in popularity even among "evangelicals," called the "Openness of God" movement, is that God allegedly does not know all things. He is limited in His knowledge of the future. The motivation for promoting such nonsense is to protect the "free will" of mankind, for these men rightly note that if God knows all things, then all things are certain. Thus, to eliminate certainty and to protect mankind's pretended sovereignty, they sacrifice God's omniscience, presenting to us an ignorant God. Of course, this necessarily eliminates God's omnipotence, for an ignorant God who cannot anticipate the future, much less know it, cannot possibly have all power. They cannot live with the mystery of God's sovereignty and man's accountability, but they are trying to solve the unsolvable.

13. Q: Can God do all things? **A:** Yes, God can do all His holy will.

God can do just about everything, such as make all the stars in the sky, make the fish in the water, make the birds in the air, take care of us, give us people who love us. But there are some things that even God can't do, such as sin. He can't lie, or steal, or be mean to you and me. Also, God can't contradict Himself, like making a square circle, or make a triangle with four sides. So can God do anything? No, He can only do that which is holy and which is consistent with Himself.

➤ Verse to memorize: Titus 1:2:

"God cannot lie."

14. Q: Where do you learn how to love and obey God? **A:** In the Bible alone.

The word "alone" is important. God's love letter to us is the Bible. It is there alone that we learn about God. If someone at school tells you what God is like, ask him how he knows that. The only way to know people is if they tell us what they are like, or we live around them and learn how they act. You cannot make up ideas about God and pretend they are true.

➤ Verses to memorize: 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for

Aid to Parents in Teaching the Children's Catechism / 15

instruction in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

15. Q: Who wrote the Bible? **A:** Holy men who were taught by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible is like the Son of God coming to the earth: He was both God and human yet one person. The Bible was written by both God and humans, yet it is one book, not two, or three or sixty-six. The holy prophets and Apostles wrote as God the Holy Spirit enabled them (2 Peter 1:19-21), so the result was one Book that has no mistakes. The humans used their minds and sometimes did research (Luke 1:1-4), but what they wrote was by the Holy Spirit so that it was without error.

➤ Verses to memorize: 2 Peter 1:20-21:

²⁰ knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.