



## Why Use the Children's Catechism Anyway?

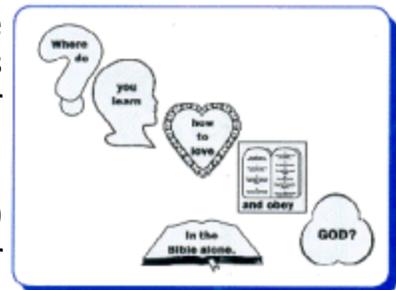
Often I am asked why we use the *"Catechism for Young Children"* taken from the essentials of the Westminster Confession of Faith for the basis of our teaching materials. The word "catechism" scares many people because they relate it to teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Actually, it is a great way to systematically teach the basics of the Christian faith using a question and answer format.

As many of you know the *"Catechism for Young Children"* was originally written by a Bible-believing, Presbyterian elder named Joseph P. Engels in the late 1830's. Mr. Engels saw that children needed a simplified catechism format. His catechism for children was expanded beyond the "Shorter Catechism" by adding questions about Christ's coming again.

The *"Catechism for Young Children"* catechetical work was never adopted officially by any Reformed or Presbyterian denomination, but parallels the *"Shorter Catechism"*. It has been used over the years to help children grasp biblical truths. CMI has put the Engels' original work into modern English by dropping the "thee's" and "thou's" and other antiquated "King James English" words. The essence of the original meaning has stayed the same. It seems that every year another translation or paraphrase of the *"Catechism of Young Children"* is published by someone. We have kept our changes to the original 145 questions to a minimum.

The substantive changes from the original *"Catechism for Young Children"* are:

1. Adding a few questions about the Bible taken from the Shorter and Larger Catechisms in Series C: "God's Wonderful Library" in order to make it a complete topical series.
2. Rewording the answer in questions #20 about how we know we have a soul (our answer "Because we can think about God and the world to come").



3. We added a question-What is Glorification (answer: It is God's making His people, at last, perfect in body and soul.)

4. We also changed question #130 on "Why should infants be baptized?" because we wanted to ensure baptismal regeneration is not embraced with the baptism of the infant. Our answer is: "Because the covenant God made with Abraham is still in effect." (Note: For our Baptist friends this lesson can be easily removed without losing the impact of the lessons on the Sacraments.)

But, again, to answer the question on why we are using the "Catechism for children" as a basis for our "Bible Building Blocks of the Faith", it is good to go to Deuteronomy 6.

As Deuteronomy 6 states - we are to diligently teach our children the commands of the Lord because we are: (1) a forgetful people, (2) likely to go after other gods, (3) men pleasers rather than God fearers, and (4) challenged to consider the truth that things will go better for us if we follow God's commands.

The word "catechism" comes from the Greek "to instruct" (Luke 1:4). In Deuteronomy 6:20-21 it states "In the future when your son asks you, 'What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you', tell him. It is apparent in this Scripture and throughout the chapter that the parent must be ready for the questions that our covenant children will ask us.

We see also in this chapter (Deuteronomy 6:7-9) that we are to teach our children when we sit at home (formal teaching-catechetical approach), when we walk along the road (informally), when we lie down and when we get up (repeatedly-a habit forming principle), symbolically tying the truths as symbols on their hands and binding them on their foreheads (memorizing the truths), and finally writing them on the door frames of our houses and on our gates (prominently displaying them around our home - this can be done with CMI's crafts which always relate to the catechetical truths).

The catechism is clearly a superior method of ensuring that the basic doctrines of the Bible are systematically taught. This is accomplished through our biblical approach to Christian education - line upon line, precept upon precept.

And the wonderful thing is that it is ready for you in CMI's "Bible Building Blocks of the Faith." We have divided the children's catechism into 14 topical series.

Our **Teacher's Guide** (\$14.95) is a great way to get an overview of the entire program. Each question and answer, along with the related Bible verse, is visualized in the **Teacher's Guide**. We also list the Bible lesson that we use to underline the truth found in the catechism question. Each of the 14 series can be taught separately or in sequence (the recommended method). All of the major doctrines of the Bible are found within these 14 series and can be taught over six year period.

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