

Introduction to the Program

The Bible tells us of a dark chapter in Israel's history when the children of Israel did whatever seemed right in their own sin-darkened eyes. As a result of this rebellion, the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people and they soon found themselves caught in a vicious and unrelenting cycle of divine chastisement.

The second chapter of the Book of Judges explains the process of Israel's apostasy:

And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.

As soon as Joshua and the rest of his generation died (*i.e.*, as soon as all external restraints were removed), the children of Israel rushed headlong into sin and self-destruction. The Bible says that they did this because *they did not know the Lord or the works which he had done for Israel*.

God's people are always destroyed because of their lack of knowledge; and as the foundations of modern evangelicalism continue to crumble we must repent of our spiritual sloth and take practical measures toward the reformation of our families and our churches; lest we too lose our children to Baal.

The session of Grace Reformed Church therefore offers this intensive program of family devotion and catechetical training as a modest help for families who fear the Lord and who desire to see their children's children walking in the ways of knowledge and of righteousness.

Introduction to the Shorter Catechism

This packet contains the text of the Westminster Shorter Catechism which was agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, with the assistance of commissioners from the Church of Scotland as a part of the covenanted uniformity in religion between the churches of Christ in the kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland.

The Shorter Catechism was approved by the Church of Scotland in 1648 through the following act of the General Assembly:

The General Assembly having seriously considered the SHORTER CATECHISM agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines sitting at Westminster, with assistance of Commissioners from this Kirk; do find, upon due examination thereof, That the said Catechism is agreeable to the word of God, and in nothing contrary to the received doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Kirk: And therefore approve the said Shorter Catechism, as a part of the intended uniformity, to be a Directory for catechizing such as are of weaker capacity.

The Assembly also included this appendix (which explains the intent of the Assembly in formatting the catechism as it did):

So much of every question, both in the Larger and Shorter catechism, is repeated in the answer, as maketh every answer an entire proposition of sentence in itself; to the end the learner may further improve upon it upon all occasions, for his increase in knowledge and piety, even out of the course of catechizing, as well in it.

For centuries the Shorter Catechism has proven to be most useful in the biblical and theological training of the covenant youth. It sets forth the system of doctrine which is taught in the Holy Scriptures, it encourages practical holiness through its piercing application of the Ten Commandments, and it teaches us to pray more earnestly and effectually through its explanation of each part and petition of the Lord's Prayer.

Therefore the session of Grace Reformed Church not only continues to recommend its use in the churches today, but also issues this Catechism Challenge.

