

**COOPERATIVE CATECHESIS:  
A MODEL FOR EQUIPPING LUTHERAN PARENTS AND PASTORS  
TO CATECHIZE CHILDREN IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**

SELECTED EXCERPTS PREPARED FOR THE MARCH 16, 2016 WINKEL AT  
HUDSON, NEW YORK

Comments? **Rev. Phil Booe – philbooe@yahoo.com**

Parents catechize their children constantly. Despite the notion some parents hold that they are unable to teach, they are always teaching—good or bad. For example, consider a father who is a fan of the Green Bay Packers professional football team.

Whether he realizes it or not he is catechizing his children to be Packers fans. The father does not set aside an hour of each week to teach his children about the basics of football, the importance of team loyalty, or why rooting for the Packers makes sound logical sense. He does not send his children once a week to a class taught by an assistant football coach to learn about being football fans. When his children reach a certain age, he certainly does not contact the head coach of the Packers to evaluate his children to determine if they are ready to be Packers fans.

Instead, the father simply lives out his life as a fan and models what it looks like to be faithful to the Green Bay Packers for his children. He talks about football in casual conversation. He introduces his children to watching or attending football games and sits with them as they experience it together. He answers his children's questions about field goals, downs, and interceptions while also offering up his own commentary on what makes football and the Packers so great. As his children age, they begin to follow their father's example. At some point, they may be ready to play football, but even if not they have grown up hearing about it and seeing their father speak, act, and even dress like a Packers fan. More often than not, because of their exposure to their father's dutiful and continual catechesis, his children will eventually take on more responsibility for learning about football on their own. In time, like their father, they will don the green and gold jersey as they sit with their own children and pass down what they have learned.

Analogies have limits, but it holds true that parents teach their children every day. Children learn from their parents everything from social skills to work ethics to sports fanaticism. It is time that children learn from their parents what it means to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ and what it means to be a Lutheran. The church is here to help, but the parents

must do it. “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).

Martin Luther wrote his Small Catechism out of concern for what he described as “the deplorable, miserable condition” of Christian knowledge among common people and pastors in 1528-29 Electoral Saxony<sup>1</sup>. As a pastor in 21st century America, the researcher observed that little had changed from Luther’s day—at least among common people. It seemed apparent to him that parents had abdicated to the church their divine vocation to teach their children the faith. The temptation among pastors has been to blame parents for their lack of desire to impress upon their children the tenets of Christianity, and the researcher had certainly fallen into such a vice. Yet, Luther’s own words from the preface of his Small Catechism served as Law for the researcher. Luther pleaded with pastors, “I beg you all for God’s sake, my dear sirs and brethren, who are pastors or preachers, to devote yourselves to your office. Have pity on the people who are entrusted to you and help us teach the catechism to the people, and especially the young.”<sup>2</sup>

In casual conversations with parents over the years, the researcher discovered that there was not so much a lack of desire with parents, but feelings of inadequacy. Parents reported being unequipped to teach because of a lack of resources or simply feeling as though they were unable due to a lack of ability. That parents wanted their children to learn about their faith was apparent from the presence of children in catechesis classes and Sunday school. The researcher discovered that many parents did not know it was in their vocation to pass down the faith; they presumed that pastors and the church were more apt for the task. Conversations like these inspired the researcher to investigate how pastors might move from blaming parents to equipping them to serve as God intended.

It was in this spirit that the researcher embarked on this project. Despite the myriad of resources available for teaching children the faith, parents still felt ill-equipped. Despite most having taught their children to read, write, use a fork, walk, and a myriad of other things parents pass down to their children as they grow, parents still felt unable to teach. The researcher concluded that the church had done a great disservice to parents by enabling them to outsource an important part of their vocations. In this project, the researcher wanted to solidify what

---

<sup>1</sup> Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, (Philadelphia: Muhlenburg Press, 1959), 246.

<sup>2</sup> Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 247.

cooperative catechesis looked like. He sought to discern the biblical foundation upon which catechesis should take place and what others had to say about the matter. The researcher also wanted to gauge the attitudes and opinions of pastors and parents in his immediate ministry context. With this information as the framework, the researcher developed a model for cooperative catechesis to implement in his own congregation. He commends this work to others who deeply desire a revival in effective catechesis and who will, with God’s help, be able to improve upon it. The task is not easy, but it is noble.

...

“The greatest good in married life, that which makes all suffering and labor worthwhile, is that God grants offspring and commands that they be brought up to worship and serve him. In all the world this is the noblest and most precious work, because to God there can be nothing dearer than the salvation of souls. Now since we are all duty bound to suffer death, if need be, that we might bring a single soul to God, you can see how rich the estate of marriage is in good works. God has entrusted to its bosom souls begotten of its own body, on whom it can lavish all manner of Christian works. Most certainly, father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel. In short, there is no greater or nobler authority on earth than that of parents over their children, for this authority is both spiritual and temporal.”<sup>3</sup> - Martin Luther, *The Estate of Marriage*, 1522.

...

Catechesis, or formal Christian education, has a long and rich history in the church. The Lutheran tradition holds catechesis in especially high regard. Martin Luther penned his *Small Catechism* and *Large Catechism* for the very purpose of equipping parents to teach their children

---

<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 45 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 46.

the basics of the Christian faith.<sup>4</sup> While catechisms and catechesis are not unique to Christianity, Luther wrote his catechisms for common people and not just for theologians. In his translation of the Bible into German, Luther also sought to put the words of Scripture in the plain, common language of the people. So committed were Lutherans to Christian education, in America, new Lutheran plants would often build schools before they built church buildings. In the past, parishioners owned their own hymnals and brought them to the divine service, and they recited the catechism in homes as a part of daily devotions. In more hectic and modern times, many parents have not opened their catechisms since their own confirmation days. With hymnals neatly tucked away in the pews, few have them at home from which to sing or use at the family altar. Parents have seemingly abdicated their God-given duties to raise their children in the faith over to the church and they themselves encounter the word of God but once a week at the most.

The problem this project addressed was the decline of parental involvement in and Responsibility for the Christian catechesis of their children in the context of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In response to this problem, the researcher took four paths.

The researcher:

- (1) examined biblical examples of expectations for inculcating future generations in the faith,
- (2) reviewed applicable literature dealing with catechesis in the church and home in both contemporary and historic contexts,
- (3) interviewed parents and pastors via telephone, face-to-face, and through the use of online and printed surveys,
- (4) synthesized the results to create a model of cooperative catechesis between parents and congregations for use in the researcher's immediate ministry context and broadly to the Lutheran church-at-large.

...

---

<sup>4</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 32.

### **Biblical and Theological Basis**

The belief that the Bible is the record of God’s revelation to humankind is the foundation of this research study.

The late dogmatician Edward Koehler described the true church as being where the confession of its members is consistent with the clear teachings of Scripture. He wrote, “It is the duty of every Christian to examine for himself whether the teachings of his church agree with the plain teachings of the Bible. We may not take another person’s word for it. This is a matter of personal conviction and personal responsibility.”<sup>5</sup>

Catechesis is a time of instructing children in the tenets of the Christian faith. Lutheran catechesis teaches Christianity according to the Lutheran confessions. Yet, if one takes Koehler’s assertion seriously, there must be an aspect of catechesis that equips young Christians to examine and explore what their church teaches according to the Scriptures.

At the time of this project, the current focus in many catechetical programs was on memorizing portions of Luther’s Small Catechism and select Bible verses. This alone would seem insufficient not only according to Koehler, who was a college professor in the early 20th century, but also for today’s postmodern-minded youth.

The task of catechesis, at least in part, is to shape the emerging attitudes of today’s youth toward the church. To be effective, the catechist must not insist catechumens believe certain doctrines out of obligation, but must provide them with the tools they need to examine the church’s teaching according to the Word of God.

It should not be surprising, then, that throughout the Bible, God consistently commanded prophets and pastors to share his words of revelation with others (Ezek. 3:17-19, Isa. 6:8, Mark 16:15, Acts 1:8). He also directed his people to pass down to their children both the stories of his salvific work throughout history and his teachings and statutes (Deut. 6:6-7 and 11:19, Prov. 22:6, Isa. 54:13, Eph. 6:4, 2 Tim. 3:14-15). The whole testimony of Scripture shows an ordering in the way God intended humans to pass down the stories and tenets of faith.

...

---

<sup>5</sup> Edward W. A. Koehler, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, Third Revised Edition ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 324.

## Old Testament Catechesis Imperatives

### *Spiritual Leaders and Community Catechesis*

The very first spiritual leader was also the first man, Adam. God gave his law directly to Adam (Gen. 2:16) before he created Eve. Adam and his wife were to live according to that law for their own benefit. In the garden, when Satan tempted Eve to doubt God's Word, Adam was with her (Gen. 3:6). God held both Adam and Eve responsible for their sin. Eve had sinned against God's command, but Adam had failed in his vocation as the spiritual leader of his family. The Bible explains that Eve was deceived, but Adam was not (1 Tim. 2:12-14), yet God proclaims Adam as culpable for the fall of all humankind (Rom. 5:19). His failure was twofold: he sinned against God by breaking the command and he did nothing as Satan led his wife away from God's truth into temptation (Gen. 3:17). Luther pointed out that God gave the command not to eat of the tree in the midst of the garden directly to Adam and he, in turn, delivered the Law to Eve. Adam, therefore, was not Satan's target, but Eve, who God called to trust in Adam's headship.<sup>6</sup> Adam was the first spiritual leader of a faith community, albeit a very small one, and the first to fail miserably at the task. The temptation of the serpent was an invitation to Eve and Adam to doubt God's Word, "Did God really say?" The doubting of God's revealed Word is an instrumental cause of sin today and the basis for apostasy. This event underscores why God is so adamant about faithfulness to the Word in his commands to the leaders and parents who came after the Fall.

Where Adam failed, God called others to be faithful and, until Christ, none were. From Abraham, the first man God called "prophet" (Gen. 20:7) to the apostles and the pastors they trained to follow in their footsteps (2 Tim. 2:2), God entrusted the proclamation of his Word to the leaders of the various faith communities he established. Accompanying this noble task (1 Tim. 3:1) was a great responsibility. God charged each of his emissaries to remain faithful to his instruction.

God established spiritual leaders to safeguard his statutes and deliver the message of hope to the faith community as a whole. Prophets served as those charged with speaking on behalf of God to the people. A continual exhortation from the lips of the prophets throughout the Old

---

<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 28: 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Corinthians 15, Lectures on 1 Timothy*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 28 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 278.

Testament was, “Hear the Word of the LORD!” God called prophets to testify against the transgressions of humankind and to point them to the redemption found only through God’s intervention (Amos 3:7, Hosea 12:10, Rom. 1:1-2). God also established other offices, including judges and kings, to rule over the people. To Aaron and the priesthood, the instructions from God through Moses were clear, “You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses” (Lev. 10:10-11). One might describe the purpose behind all of these spiritual leaders as a call to catechize the larger congregation to keep the chain of God’s revelation unbroken for the benefit of future generations.

...

Moses was a leader called by God directly (Exod. 3:4) and tasked to be God’s representative to Pharaoh to bring the people of Israel out of Egypt. Moses would not speak on his own, but only what God commanded him (Exod. 4:12). Later, Moses served as the spiritual leader of the redeemed community. To him, God gave the Ten Commandments and directed him to deliver them to the congregation. In Deuteronomy 4, God prevented Moses from entering the Promised Land, but he remained the spiritual leader of the Israelites. From his own impassioned sermon, Moses was confident in his duty to teach the people the ways of God.

And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you. See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. (Deut. 4:1-5)

Moses, in this same message, later pointed to the duty of parents to take that same unadulterated Word of God and deliver it in the framework of their families.

To the people of Israel, God promised a prophet to replace Moses. He fulfilled this promise by the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth. Knowing that many would arise claiming to be

prophets, God was clear about the accuracy he expected from his representatives, “The prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die” (Deut. 18:20). God warned Ezekiel,

Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, “You shall surely die,” and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand” (Ezek. 3:17-18).

...

Several times God urged his people to not “go to the left or to the right” of his teachings and commands (Deut. 5:32, 28:14, Josh. 1:7, Prov. 4:27). The prophets and other spiritual leaders, such as the Levites, were God’s means to provide instruction to the faith community. Horace Hummel wrote,

All the evidence we have indicates that in addition to their liturgical responsibilities, it was the priests’ obligation to “teach,” or, literally, “cause [people] to know” Yahweh’s Torah. The pedagogical duties of the priests come through clearly at points: Lev 10:11; Deut 33:10; Hos 4:6; Hag 2:11; Mal 2:6–8.<sup>7</sup>

The role of the spiritual leader was to be faithful to God’s revealed will, which demonstrates that God considered doctrine important as well as the duty to pass it down to future generations.

...

### *Parents and Family Catechesis*

The importance of the priest and prophet for delivering and safeguarding God’s Word cannot be underestimated. However, nowhere in Scripture does God command parents to leave the spiritual training of their child up to the faith community or the spiritual leader. Instead, God commanded parents to raise up their children to treasure the history of his activity on earth and

---

<sup>7</sup> Horace Hummel, *Concordia Commentary: Ezekiel 21-48* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 691.

strive to walk according to his will and ways. In the fourth commandment, children are commanded to obey their parents (Exod. 20:12, Eph. 6:1). When one understands the role of parents as representatives of God to their children, the fourth commandment becomes all the more noteworthy.

In *The Large Catechism*, Luther touted the special distinction parents have in their vocation to raise up children in the faith. Luther explained that God has directed children to revere parents because mothers and fathers are his representatives.<sup>8</sup>

Franklin Painter, in his book *Luther on Education*, wrote that since parental authority comes from God, he holds them accountable for how they raise their children. He explained that Luther saw the primary function of parents was to train up children to be good citizens and faithful Christians.<sup>9</sup>

Moses directed the people of Israel as their ordained spiritual leader to learn and obey the statutes of God. He also reiterated something the Israelites already knew: parents have the duty to teach God's Word to their children (Deut. 4:1-9). In this passage, there is not only the command for parents to take responsibility for catechizing their children, but also the reasoning behind it. God chose parents to pass down the faith to assure that there would not a gap in the teaching of his revelation. Individual spiritual leaders would come and go, but the family made up the basic building blocks of life.

...

One of the clearest examples of God's will for parents to pass down the faith comes from Deuteronomy 6:4-7:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

---

<sup>8</sup> *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 379.

<sup>9</sup> F. V. N. Painter, *Luther on Education* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1928), 116-117.

Chapter 11 repeats this. One further observes that religious training does not take place only during morning devotions, or just before bedtime, but is a continual process that should permeate every aspect of family life.

In verse seven, the word translated “diligently” comes from the Hebrew word שָׁנַן and contains the nuance of repetition as from sharpening a knife on a whetstone.<sup>10</sup> The parental duty to teach children about the faith God bestowed upon them in their baptisms happens through example and direct and repetitive teaching. In verse 20, Moses prepared parents for the time when children would want to know more. He wrote, “When your son asks you in time to come, ‘What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God commanded you?’ Then you shall say...” One inference here is that children would not have known to ask about the deeper meanings of the commands and statutes if their parents had not exposed them to God’s teachings in the first place. Furthermore, children will be looking to their parents to provide the answers and God, through Moses’ instruction here, expects that parents will be able to answer.

...

By the time of Martin Luther, the general population—and even many priests—had been ignorant about the tenets of the faith. In his preface to the *Small Catechism*, Luther wrote, “The deplorable conditions which I recently encountered when I was a visitor constrained me to prepare this brief and simple catechism or statement of Christian teaching.”<sup>11</sup> Luther’s suggested catechetical style mimicked that of the repetition encouraged in Deuteronomy 6:4-7. Luther also promoted the concept that a time would come for parents to inject meanings into previously memorized word and concepts as illustrated in Deuteronomy 11:20. Luther wrote,

Begin by teaching them the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, etc., following the text word for word so that the young may repeat these things after you and retain them in their memory. ... In the second place, after the people have become familiar with the text, teach them what it means. For this purpose, take the explanations in this booklet, or choose any other brief and fixed explanations which you may prefer,

---

<sup>10</sup> Francis Brown, Samuel R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000), 1041.

<sup>11</sup> Tappert, *Book of Concord*, 338.

and adhere to them without changing a single syllable, as stated above with reference to the text.<sup>12</sup>

...

In Joshua 4, God provided not only the command to parents to teach their children, but even provides them a physical means—the twelve memorial stones—as a reminder. In verses 21 and 22, Joshua emphasized the command, “And he said to the people of Israel, ‘When your children ask their fathers in times to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ then you shall let your children know.’” Commentator Adolph Harstad wrote,

Joshua 4:21 reiterates Joshua’s earlier command to teach children the meaning of the twelve-stone memorial (4:6–7). The repetition underscores the critical need for continuing catechesis in the saving acts of the Lord. There dare be no gaps in the chain of teaching lest there be a lost generation that has not been taught to fear and love their Lord. The stone memorial will endure for years as a visible teaching tool, but its stones themselves will be silent. Parents must do the talking!<sup>13</sup>

Proverbs 1:7-9 also serves as a beautiful example of not only how believers are to view God’s instruction, but also how children are to learn from their parents. It teaches, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.”

Likewise, Proverbs 22:6 is well known, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” This verse speaks not only to the duty of parents, but also the efficacy of God’s Word (Isa. 55:11).

This theme is also present throughout the Psalms. In particular, Psalm 78 provides a vivid rationale for passing down the instruction and the history of God. The first eight verses speak directly about the duty of fathers to pass down the faith to the coming generation. This Psalm not

---

<sup>12</sup> Tappert, *Book of Concord*, 339-340.

<sup>13</sup> Adolph L. Harstad, *Concordia Commentary: Joshua* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 215.

only points to the necessity for fathers to teach their children, but the act of the Psalm itself is an act of a faith community leader inculcating those under his care. Allen Ross explained,

Asaph called the people to hear his instruction (v. 1) about the Lord’s deeds, power, and wonders (v. 4) that He would make known to his generation. Earlier generations handed these down as God had commanded. The LORD planned this so that the nation might trust Him and obey the Law (v. 7), not stumbling in unbelief and rebellion like their unfaithful forefathers.<sup>14</sup>

These passages represent the larger testimony of God throughout the Old Testament that witnesses to the duty of parents to be the primary catechists for their children— supported by spiritual leaders and encouraged through the faith community as a whole.

...

Unfortunately, parents today are not fulfilling their responsibilities. This has been the concern for quite some time. In 1951, Arthur Repp wrote,

It is a deplorable fact that even Christian homes are not showing the expected interest in their children during confirmation instruction. Perhaps the church should re-emphasize the fact that the home has the primary responsibility in the education of the children and that the church has no intention of replacing the home. But the home needs help from the church in seeing its responsibility.<sup>15</sup>

...

## **New Testament Catechesis Imperatives**

### *Spiritual Leaders and Catechesis*

Frequently, Jesus chastised the religious leaders of the day for failing in their duty to preserve the Word of God and to teach it properly. In Matthew 23, Jesus delivered seven woes against the Pharisees for their dereliction of duty. In verses 2 and 3, Jesus said, “The scribes and

---

<sup>14</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Psalms: The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, eds. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, Vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 851.

<sup>15</sup> Arthur Repp, “Manual for the Confirmation Instruction of Children” *Concordia Theological Monthly* August 1951.

the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice.” The teaching authority of the spiritual leader is evident in this admonishment. To sit on Moses' seat was to serve as Moses did: as a representative and spokesperson of God. Jesus upheld the office of spiritual overseer while condemning the abuse. When Nicodemus was confused about the language of being “born from above,” Jesus replied, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?” (John 3:10). Beyond illuminating the failure of the Pharisees and Sadducees, Jesus' concern demonstrated that it is God's will for spiritual leaders to teach and that correctly.

...

In Paul's discussion of the importance of the variety of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, he wrote, “God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers.” It is this third office, teaching, that most connects to today's pastoral office. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Gregory Lockwood explained the difference between the three offices. He wrote that unlike apostles who walked physically with Jesus and prophets who received direct revelations from God, he calls pastors teach and preach according to his special revelation found in the Scriptures.<sup>16</sup> Lockwood also emphasized that, according to 1 Timothy 3 and 2 Timothy 2, pastors must be “apt to teach.” Furthermore, the pastor must also be able to read and expound on the scriptures publicly (1 Tim. 4:13). This was especially important when people were unable to read the scriptures for themselves.<sup>17</sup>

In the general and pastoral epistles, God has provided direction for spiritual leadership. Paul described the pastoral task as a “noble” one (1 Tim. 3:1). Perhaps because of the failures of Adam as the spiritual leader of his household, God commanded through Paul that a pastor “must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?” (1 Tim. 3:4-5). According to Paul's letters, a pastor's job is to “guard the deposit” entrusted to him (1 Tim. 6:20) and “teach sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1), to “rightly handle the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15), and to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and

---

<sup>16</sup> Gregory Lockwood, *Concordia Commentary: 1 Corinthians* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 452.

<sup>17</sup> Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 453.

exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2). In other words, the task of the pastor as a spiritual leader is to catechize the faith community.

Just as Moses commanded obedience to his teaching because it was not his own but the Word of God, Paul urged the same regarding spiritual leaders in the New Testament church: “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb. 13:17).

Jesus equipped his disciples with the Holy Spirit who empowered them to be his representatives to the world (Acts 1:8). Just as God warned against prophets speaking words he had not given them, he tasked pastors with the duty of remaining true to God’s revelation and teaching. Just as the people did not always receive God’s prophets enthusiastically, especially when they carried a message of judgment, the first century disciples faced a world in which human reason began to be elevated above God’s Word. The Pastoral Epistles addressed to Timothy and Titus are direct about the pastor’s responsibility to be faithful to the message-as-taught. While the eternal fate of the human is outside of a person’s ability to judge (James 4:12), one’s confessed doctrine is open to scrutiny. So, Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy, “If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing” (1 Tim 6:3-4). Paul further explained that the “man of God’s good work” is teaching, reproof, and correction according to the revealed Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16). To Titus, Paul urged that pastors “must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9). Moreover, Paul reminded Timothy, “As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:3).

In the early 21st century, there are still those with “itching ears” who seek after new and novel teachings. Thus, it is all the more important that the Christian leader understand how important pure and unadulterated doctrine is to God. It is evident from Scripture that God called prophets, apostles, and pastors for the very purpose of safeguarding the truth and perpetuating—aided by the Holy Spirit—the Gospel, which God uses to bestow faith. This is consistent with Article V of the Augsburg Confession, through which the first Lutheran confessors taught,

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits, but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this. Condemned are the Anabaptists and others who teach that the Holy Spirit comes to us through our own preparations, thoughts, and works without the external word of the Gospel.<sup>18</sup>

...

### *Parents and Catechesis*

The account of Jesus in the temple when he was twelve (Luke 2) is the only biblical account of Jesus as an adolescent. After staying behind, much to the worry of Mary and Joseph, Jesus seemed unconcerned about the stressful ordeal his mother and guardian endured. Instead, he replied in verse 49, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” In this statement, the reader learns something about Jesus’ divinity and his cognizance of it. Yet, Jesus surprises the reader again when Luke reveals in the next two verses that even though Mary and Joseph did not understand what Jesus had meant, he became submissive to them as his parents. Luke wrote of the result in verse 52, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” Arthur Just wrote in his commentary on Luke, “And so the infancy narrative ends with Jesus now living in the proper order of relationship, ‘being obedient’ (ὕποτασσόμενος, as in Titus 3:1; cf. ὑπακούω in Ephesians 6:1) to his parents and in Nazareth, advancing in wisdom and stature and grace before God and people.”<sup>19</sup>

...

Paul pointed to the influence of Timothy’s mother and grandmother: “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well” (2 Tim. 2:5). Paul explained,

---

<sup>18</sup> Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 31.

<sup>19</sup> Arthur A. Just, *Luke 1:1-9:50* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 132.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:14-15).

This passage is illustrative of how God uses parents, and sometimes grandparents, to raise up believers through their own acts of catechesis.

...

In his *Treatise on Good Works*, Martin Luther wrote, “The first work is that we should honor our own father and mother. This honoring does not consist in merely showing them all deference. It means that we obey them, have regard for what they do and what they say, esteem them highly, give way to them, and accept what they say.”<sup>20</sup>

...

Another *sedes doctrinae* for understanding the godly relationship between children and parents is in Ephesians 6. Immediately following Paul’s instructions that followers of Christ are to “walk in love,” he applied this to the family unit, first to husbands and wives and then to children and parents. Paul wrote,

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph. 6:1-4)

...

## **History and Development of Catechesis in the Church**

### *Early Church and Roman Catholic*

*The Early Church.* While a systematized method of catechesis was absent from the New Testament-era church, the Scriptures make it clear that doctrine and teaching were important to the early Christians. Formal catechesis began in response to persecution that later arose in the church’s history and out of fear that spies and hypocrites would attempt to infiltrate the church

---

<sup>20</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, eds. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann, Vol. Vol. 44 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 81.

during periods of tyranny. The editors of the *Christian Cyclopaedia* explained that prior to a rise in persecutions around 200 AD religious instruction was informal. The systemization of church doctrine became more important as the church developed a cautious attitude when accepting new members.

The writings of Origen reflect the creation of the “catechumenate” where not only formal Christian instruction but also an investigation into the catechumen’s character and life took place prior to acceptance into the church. Christian instruction waned again between the seventh and the twelfth centuries due to mass numbers of baptisms and conversions, the logistics of which made systematic catechesis difficult.<sup>21</sup>

In the Early Church, formal catechesis took place for youth and adults prior to baptism and then continued informally as they grew in maturity. For those baptized as infants, formal catechesis would follow their baptism. Massy Shepherd noted that by the mid-second century, baptisms took place annually during the vigil of Easter. These baptisms followed a period of instruction and investigation into the life of the catechumen.<sup>22</sup> D. H. Williams compared the catechumenate to an Early Church version of Sunday school with the goal of leading new believers to a deeper understanding of their faith. He explained that the process was rudimentary and variable across Christendom.<sup>23</sup>

As the church grew and began to encounter novel and sometimes heretical ideas about the faith, the need for thorough and systematic catechesis continued to grow. Many of the doctrines outlined in the catechisms and canons of the church arose out of a need to defend the faith against heresy. As a result, the teachings and tenets that set the Christian faith apart from others increased in complexity. Williams wrote that, among other things, debates about the Holy Trinity and the nature of Christ gave rise to both sophisticated doctrine and generations of highly

---

<sup>21</sup> Lueker, Erwin L., and Luther Poellot, eds. *Christian Cyclopaedia*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000. Accessed October 7, 2014. <http://cyclopaedia.lcms.org/display.asp?t1=C&t2=a>.

<sup>22</sup> Massey H. Shepherd, "Confirmation: The Early Church," *Worship* 46, no. 1 1972, 15.

<sup>23</sup> D. H. Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition: The Formative Influence of the Early Church* (Ada, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005), 40.

educated Christian thinkers. These erudite leaders then created more systemized procedures for teaching the faith to converts.<sup>24</sup>

Everett Ferguson, who has also written much on the life of the Early Church, wrote about the content of catechetical instruction. He affirmed that a dramatic shift occurred in the fourth century. Ferguson contended that in the first three centuries after the New Testament church catechesis focused less on doctrine and instead aimed to initiate converts into the Christian way of life.<sup>25</sup> The rapid growth of the fourth and fifth century church brought with it a change in catechetical focus. Ferguson wrote that Cyril in Jerusalem and Ambrose in Milan concentrated on expositing the creed prior to baptism and afterward engage in mystagogy, or the act of leading the catechumen into the “mysteries” or sacraments. Augustine’s catechetical materials also dealt primarily with doctrine, although training in morals and Christian living was a component.<sup>26</sup>

...

Edward Smithers also commented on the content of catechesis in the Early Church period. He explained that many new believers were given moral instruction because they had been previously pagan. Over time, the focus of pre-baptismal catechesis was on teaching the Nicene Creed and, in some communities, the Lord’s Prayer and the meaning of the sacraments—including baptism, chrism, and the Eucharist. He also noted, “Given the significant number of treatises and sermons devoted to catechesis in the patristic period, including manuals written to train and equip catechists, it is quite evident that teaching new believers both before and after baptism was a priority for the Early Church.”<sup>27</sup>

From the fourth to seventh centuries, the catechetical focus continued to change as infant baptism became more prevalent. Kevin Lawson explained that the rapid growth was a result of Christianity’s transition from a tolerated and sometimes persecuted religion to one of great favor within the Roman Empire. As infant baptisms increased, the opportunity for pre-baptismal instruction waned and as a result, more responsibility fell on parents for teaching their children

---

<sup>24</sup>Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition*, 41.

<sup>25</sup> Everett Ferguson, *The Early Church at Work and Worship: Catechesis, Baptism, Eschatology, and Martyrdom*, Vol. 2 (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2014), 18.

<sup>26</sup> Ferguson, *The Early Church at Work and Worship*, 18.

<sup>27</sup> Edward L. Smither, *Mission in the Early Church: Themes and Reflections* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 160.

the faith.<sup>28</sup> Lawson contended that as the early Christians moved toward a more solidified understanding of original sin, and infant baptism became preferred, the catechumenate entered into decline. Catechesis thrived, but it was now for teaching the faith after baptism as opposed to in preparation for it.<sup>29</sup>

The tumultuous Early Church required a strong emphasis on catechesis, even if its content varied. Teaching took place both before and after baptism through both formal and informal catechesis and was important for assimilation into the life of the church. Defined roles for parents in the catechetical process in the Early Church were glaringly absent from the literature. This was unexpected considering how the Bible emphasizes the role of parents in bringing up children in the faith.

...

*The Roman Catholic Church.* The nexus between baptism and catechesis is evident in the contemporary Roman Catholic confession. It also prescribes an understanding for the role of parents and the church community. For Roman Catholics, catechesis teaches doctrine with the intent to strengthen the catechumen's faith. It connects the catechumen to Christ and his Word.<sup>30</sup> Because God has given faith to those who are baptized, the Roman Catholic Church calls baptism a "sacrament of faith" citing Mark 16:16. They contend that this faith is "imperfect" and catechesis is required to nurture it. Their catechism states,

Baptism is the sacrament of faith. But faith needs the community of believers. It is only within the faith of the Church that each of the faithful can believe. The faith required for Baptism is not a perfect and mature faith, but a beginning that is called to develop. ... For all the baptized, children or adults, faith must grow after Baptism.<sup>31</sup>

-

They outline a role for parents, too. Their catechism states,

---

<sup>28</sup> Kevin E. Lawson, *Understanding Children's Spirituality: Theology, Research, and Practice* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 124.

<sup>29</sup> Lawson, *Understanding Children's Spirituality*, 126.

<sup>30</sup> Catholic Church, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church: Revised in accordance with the official Latin text promulgated by Pope John Paul II* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1997), 107.

<sup>31</sup> Catholic Church, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 319-320.

For the grace of Baptism to unfold, the parents' help is important. So too is the role of the *godfather* and *godmother*, who must be firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized on the road of Christian life. Their task is a truly ecclesial function (*officium*). The whole ecclesial community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism.<sup>32</sup>

Baptism, Confirmation, and the reception of the Lord's Supper constitute the initiation rites for the Roman Catholic Christian. Their catechism states, "The sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. For 'by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit.'"<sup>33</sup> They draw this conclusion from the ancient practices of anointing and the laying on of hands. The Roman Catholic Catechism states both, "confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace" and, "baptismal grace is a grace of free, unmerited election and does not need 'ratification' to become effective."<sup>34</sup> God desires that all grow in their faith in him and love toward others (1 Pet. 2:2, 2 Pet. 3:18). Since God has chosen his word to increase a person's faith, the catechetical relationship is of utmost importance for spiritual maturation.

...

#### *Lutheran Tradition*

According to Kevin Lawson, the responsibility for the instruction and spiritual nurture of children fell primarily to the parents instead of church leaders and this early understanding continued into and through the medieval period.<sup>35</sup> The church emphasized the role of parents even more in the late medieval period during the Reformation. Richard Osmer explained that the reformers objected to the Roman Catholic Church's tradition and hierarchy, which they felt kept laity out of the Bible and captive to the church's interpretation. In response, catechesis emerged during the Reformation as an empowering tool for the laity.<sup>36</sup> Catechesis was a way in which

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 320.

<sup>33</sup> Catholic Church, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 334-326.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 331.

<sup>35</sup> Lawson, *Understanding Children's Spirituality*, 128.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Robert Osmer, "Restructuring Confirmation," *Theology Today* 49, no. 1 (1992), 54.

laypersons could not only learn more about the teaching of Scripture, but also have an active participation in the life of the church.

It was through catechesis and, in particular, Martin Luther’s small and large catechisms that the Reformation finally took hold among the common people. **Charles Arand** wrote that Luther’s *Small Catechism* secured the revolution for the reformer. He wrote, **“Following its publication, the *Small Catechism* was the most used pedagogical, theological, and confessional text among Lutherans for the next 450 years.”**<sup>37</sup>

Luther, who wrote his *Small Catechism* to aid parents and teachers in passing down the basics of the Christian faith, understood it as his parental duty to teach the catechism to his children.<sup>38</sup> He also considered himself a lifelong student of it. He wrote, “I, too, am a theologian who has attained a fairly good practical knowledge and experience of Holy Scriptures through various dangers. But I do not so glory in this gift as not to join my children daily in prayerfully reciting the Catechism.”<sup>39</sup> Likewise, he commended the teaching of the catechism to pastors as a glorious work. He wrote, “Those should be regarded as the pick and as the best and most useful teachers who are able to drill the Catechism well. . . . One must necessarily forever hammer home these brief lessons to the common people.”<sup>40</sup>

Luther chastised pastors who did not appreciate catechetical sermons, but he also understood well that sermons alone were not the answer.<sup>41</sup> He remarked, “Ah, doctrinal sermons in the church do not edify young people. But quizzes at home, definitions in the Catechism, and questions concerning the confession of faith are of much greater benefit.” This task was no easier in Luther’s day than it is today. He continued, “They are, of course, troublesome; but they are very necessary.”<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Charles P. Arand, *That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther’s Catechisms* (Saint Louis, Mo.: Concordia Academic Press, 2000), 15.

<sup>38</sup> Tappert, *Book of Concord*, 342.

<sup>39</sup> Plass, *What Luther Says*, 124.

<sup>40</sup> Plass, *What Luther Says*, 124-125.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

In the catechetical practices of Luther, he was not doing anything new. Arand concurred with other sources that the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer formed the foundation upon which the church had established catechesis since the fourth century. What was not widely accepted was how the church should deliver these teachings should to people.<sup>43</sup> Luther's catechism helped to guide catechetical methodology. Arand explained that these key texts of the faith appeared in many forms. The church taught these tenets using books, sermons, prayers, and pictures. Luther drew inspiration from all of these sources in the creation of his catechisms.<sup>44</sup> Ultimately, Luther's *Small Catechism* drove the message of the Reformation into the hearts and minds of the people.

Arand pointed out that the literacy rate throughout the Holy Roman Empire during the Reformation was about five percent. To combat this, reformers directed the catechisms to those that could read, the teachers and preachers of the day. The teachers and preachers were then encouraged to pass along the information orally. The catechism itself adopted this strategy. Luther wrote the catechism to be heard, rather than merely read.<sup>45</sup>

Luther emphasized cooperation between parish pastors and parents from the beginning of his reforms. Pastors were the first to learn the catechism to be equipped for catechizing youth.<sup>46</sup> Although Luther's immediate target audience may have been pastors, he considered the head of the household as the primary teacher. Arand explained that Luther's focus on the family was consistent with the concept of domestic catechization. That is, the church of the middle ages expected parents to teach their children the faith.<sup>47</sup>

Luther envisioned a person employing his catechetical method throughout his or her life. Instruction in the Christian faith did not end with a person's reception into the congregation or acceptance to the communion table.<sup>48</sup> A person progressed through catechesis by three broad stages.

---

<sup>43</sup> Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 57.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>45</sup> Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 92.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>48</sup> Tappert, *Book of Concord*, 359.

1. The first stage was for the catechumen to learn the text and basic tenets of the faith by heart. Memorization was key in Luther's method.
2. In the second stage, pastors led the catechumen to attach meaning and significance to words, phrases, and verses that he or she had memorized by rote.<sup>49</sup> Hence, the catechism is a list of questions and answers. The catechumen memorized the words only to learn what they meant later.
3. The final stage continued throughout the life of the Christian as they put the basics into practice. Luther himself, in the Large Catechism, set an example for others to follow. He wrote, "Every morning, and whenever else I have time, 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."<sup>50</sup>

...

During Luther's time, the sacrament of confirmation, as understood by Roman Catholics, had fallen completely out of use among Lutherans. In the early days of Lutheranism, there was an outright rejection and opposition to all things Roman Catholic. After Lutherans reduced the number of sacraments to Baptism, Confession, and the Lord's Supper, the previous sacrament of confirmation found no place in Lutheran congregations. In his book, *Confirmation in the Lutheran Church*, Arthur Repp explained that the reintroduction of the confirmation rite was slow and uneven and it occurred for several reasons. The major reason for the renewal of the rite of confirmation was to signify that one knew the basics of the faith and was prepared to receive the Lord's Supper.<sup>51</sup>

The prototypes to catechesis prior to the confirmation rite returning to the Lutheran tradition were ordinarily in the form of short catechetical sermons designed to instruct those who wished to partake in communion. Repp noted that pastors intended these sermons for the entire

---

<sup>49</sup> Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 100.

<sup>50</sup> Tappert, *Book of Concord*, 359.

<sup>51</sup> Arthur Repp, *Confirmation in the Lutheran Church*. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964). Kindle Electronic Edition, location 281 of 5643.

congregation, not just the youth. He added that the pastor would also read from the catechism during the service, before the Gospel reading, to familiarize the congregation with the text.<sup>52</sup>

One proponent of catechesis, and especially its connection to the rite of confirmation, was Martin Bucer. He became known as the “Father of Protestant Confirmation.”<sup>53</sup> John Brenner wrote that Bucer was very concerned with Christian discipline. In response to Anabaptists teaching that one must make a public profession of faith and “surrender to Christ,” Bucer influenced the rite of confirmation as a way to both honor infant baptism while also providing an opportunity for a Christian to profess his or her faith in Christ publically.<sup>54</sup>

Maxwell Johnson illustrated Bucer’s commitment to catechesis by citing a quote from a translation of Bucer’s 1551 *Censura*,

Such an occasion [bishop’s visit], when the churches are thus visited and renewed in the religion of Christ would be particularly suitable for the solemn administration of confirmation to those who had reached that stage in the catechizing of our faith. Such care on the part of bishops would go a long way to arouse the people to make progress in all true and effective knowledge of Christ. ... The last of this series of instruction is a warning that no-one is to be admitted to Holy Communion unless he has been confirmed. This instruction will be very wholesome if only those are confirmed who have confirmed the confession of their mouth with a manner of life consistent with it and from whose conduct it can be discerned that they make profession of their own faith and not another’s.<sup>55</sup>

Bucer represented many of his contemporaries who desired that Christians not merely undergo ceremonies but also learn and grow in their knowledge of Christ.

...

---

<sup>52</sup> Repp, *Confirmation in the Lutheran Church*, 318-319.

<sup>53</sup> Maxwell E. Johnson, *Sacraments and Worship: The Sources of Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 165.

<sup>54</sup> John M. Brenner, “A Brief Study of Confirmation: Historical Development, Theological Considerations, and Practical Implications” (paper presented at the Metro Conference, Pt. Washington, WI, November 18, 1996.), 7, accessed September 15, 2014, <https://www.lutheransonline.com/lo/673/FSLO-1310052673-111673.PDF>

<sup>55</sup> Johnson, *Sacraments and Worship*, 165.

In the late 1600s, the reformer Philipp Jakob Spener held catechesis instruction for children and adults. The regular addition of adults was fairly novel. Conrad Bergendoff explained that Spener’s practice of teaching the catechism to youth was for the purposes of converting them and leading them to make a public confession. Spener’s efforts revived the otherwise fading confirmation rite in many Lutheran churches.<sup>56</sup> He also gathered adults together for regular study of the Scriptures. For his efforts to invigorate the congregations to holy living, Spener would later become known as the “Father of Pietism.” Never a pietist himself, Spener had a profound role in reinstating the rite of confirmation in Lutheran churches. Bergendoff explained that congregations who believed the Bible was the sole authority for doctrine and life must have some process by which they can teach it to their children. He wrote, “In his program for reform Spener made the practice of instruction a regular preparation for Communion and the rite of confirmation a desirable one.”<sup>57</sup>

From Spener’s insistence on an educated Christian population, empowered by Luther’s reforms and catechisms, the Lutheran Church reinvented the rite of confirmation to be a time when a child could “confirm” that he or she had received faith during baptism. It was also an opportunity for a young Christian to profess an intent to continue in a lifelong process of catechesis.

...

According to Arthur Repp, Lutherans have taken several approaches to confirmation since its second advent. Six stand out among them, but they were not always mutually exclusive categories.

1. The first was “catechetical,” which was instruction for the Lord’s Supper.
2. The second was “hierarchical” which focused on a confession of faith indicating surrender to Christ and submission to the church.
3. Third was “sacramental,” which supported the implication that the Holy Spirit is given in the laying on of hands and stresses that confirmation confers a new or fuller church membership.

---

<sup>56</sup> Conrad Bergendoff, *The Church of the Lutheran Reformation* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), 155.

<sup>57</sup> Bergendoff, *The Church of the Lutheran Reformation*, 293.

4. Fourth was “traditional,” an approach to confirmation as a public confession of faith by children who have been instructed in the faith. This approach linked confirmation to baptism and not the Lord’s Supper.
5. The fifth was “pietistic,” which focused on confirmation as a renewal of the baptismal covenant with emphasis on conversion experience and regeneration.
6. The sixth approach was “rationalistic,” which considered the confirmation rite to be a coming of age celebration with emphasis on examination, ceremony, and sentimentalism.<sup>58</sup>

...

The Roman Catholic Church’s position on confirmation’s status as a sacrament changed over time. The sacrament of unction, the practice of laying on hands and anointing with oil, accompanied the confirmation rite into the Middle Ages. Eventually, the Roman Catholic Church considered it an official sacrament. Brenner, citing Luther’s *Babylonian Captivity*, wrote that Luther was against viewing confirmation as sacramental.

Luther said that it was “invented to adorn the office of bishops that they may not be entirely without work in the church.”<sup>59</sup> Luther objected to the pretense of confirmation but thought the rite might be useful if it were merely a ceremony to examine and mark a completion of catechesis. Brenner quoted Luther from a sermon on marriage published in 1522, “I would permit confirmation as long as it is understood that God knows nothing of it, and has said nothing about it, and that what the bishops’ claim for it is untrue. They mock our God when they say that it is one of God’s sacraments, for it is a purely human contrivance.”<sup>60</sup> In another sermon Luther said, “Confirmation should not be observed as the bishops desire it. Nevertheless, we do not find fault if every pastor examines the faith of the children to see whether it is good and sincere, lays hands on them, and confirms them.”<sup>61</sup> Brenner explained that Luther was always

---

<sup>58</sup> Arthur Christian Repp, *Confirmation in the Lutheran Church* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 21-55, 64-68.

<sup>59</sup> Brenner, “A Brief Study of Confirmation”, 5.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

more concerned about instruction in God’s Word and the sacraments than he was about particular rites or ceremonies.<sup>62</sup>

Arthur Repp wrote extensively about the variety of confirmation practices within the Lutheran church both in history and among congregations today. In his article, “The Theological Implications of Confirmation,” he explained that the lack of biblical command for confirmation allowed churches to employ a variety of different practices.<sup>63</sup> Writing in 1960, he criticized the inconsistencies between Lutheran congregations as the cause of much confusion regarding the role of confirmation and called for a reform of Lutheran confirmation practice. Repp’s view was that catechesis is necessary for the church to fulfill Jesus’ command to teach in Matthew 28:20. He also wrote that catechesis is a joint effort by the parents and the congregation.<sup>64</sup>

...

### **Catechesis in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod**

In 1842, C. F. W. Walther, the first president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod preached, “It is, of course, beyond dispute that, above all others, a pastor has the duty to lead souls to Christ. ... It is furthermore true that parents have a special responsibility to lead their children to Christ and raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”<sup>65</sup> Walther went on to proclaim that parents had a duty to introduce their children to tenets of the Christian faith at an early age. He described parents as pastors of the home. Arthur Repp also asserted that successful Christian education programs must gain the cooperation of the family.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>63</sup> Arthur Christian Repp, "Theological Implications of Confirmation," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 31, no. 4 1960), 165.

<sup>64</sup> Repp, “Theological Implications of Confirmation,” 172.

<sup>65</sup> C. F. W. Walther, "Bringing Souls to Christ: Every Christian’s Desire and Duty," *Missio Apostolica* 6, no. 1 1998), 6.

<sup>66</sup> Repp, *Confirmation in the Lutheran Church*, 3701-3702.

***NOTE: Now, I examined two major studies that I commend to you for getting a feel for attitudes toward confirmation and catechesis. These can be found online:***

Marvin Bergman, *What's Happening in LCMS Confirmation? A Summary Based on Nine Populations*, 2010.

Terry Dittmer, *A Study of Youth Confirmation and First Communion in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod*, (St. Louis: Board for Congregational Services, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1998.)

***NOTE: I further examined some historical perspectives of catechesis in the LCMS, including various methods. Plus, I researched contemporary practitioners of catechesis, both sacred and secular. For time, I have omitted those.***

***I also have data on my own field research in the LCMS, but I'll spare you that with a summary:***

The researcher discovered that both pastors and parents are looking for change in way Lutheran congregations conduct formal catechesis, or confirmation instruction, in the New England District. There were two overarching conclusions: 1) pastors are eager for parents to be not only active, but also proactive in catechizing their children in the faith and 2) parents feel overwhelmed and underequipped for the task. Most view catechesis as a lifelong process and the current method of catechesis and pre-confirmation evaluation lends itself to the concept that learning about one's faith is limited to a time and place. Pastors want to guide youth into a mature faith and parents want to prepare their children to be faithful disciples of Jesus, but neither are able to take on one-hundred percent of the responsibility.

The researcher identified a need for a catechetical model that addressed both the concerns of pastors and parents. It also needed to be didactically sound and implemented in a way that encouraged lifelong catechesis. Although no model or method will be universally acceptable, the researcher was confident that pastors and parents could take up this model and use it as a foundation for their own innovation in catechetical instruction.

...

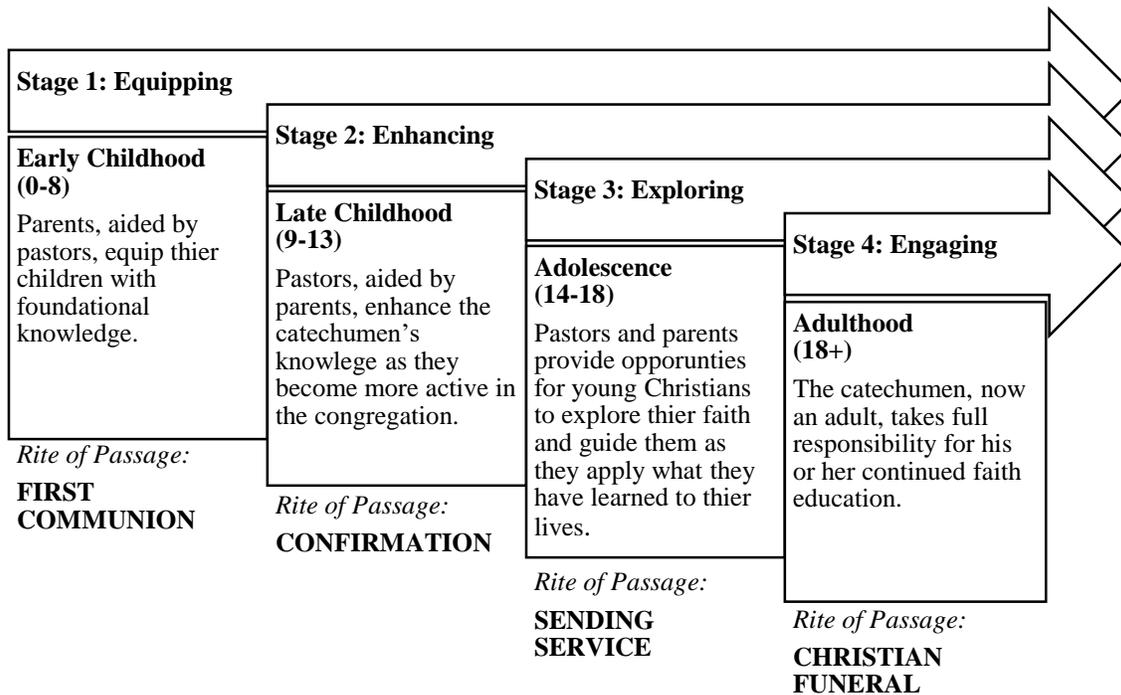
### **Summary of the Cooperative Catechesis Model**

To meet the needs of pastors and parents, the researcher designed a cooperative catechetical model that began in early childhood and progressed in four stages through adulthood. In this model, pastors and parents cooperatively guided the catechumen along the way in each stage until he or she entered the fourth stage and took on personal responsibility for his or her own faith education. In each of the first three stages, pastors and parents shared responsibility for catechesis to varying degrees. Each stage was associated with a range of ages roughly equivalent to the developmental ages of a child as he or she matured. The ages were only guidelines since catechumens progressed through the model individually and according to their own developmental needs. Parents, with guidance from their pastors, would be in the best position to know their children's cognitive, behavioral, and affective abilities. For that reason, the involvement of parents went beyond obedience to the fourth commandment "Honor your father and your mother," and was vitally necessary for the success of this model.

Because of the cultural importance rites of passage serve in recognizing developing maturity<sup>67</sup> and because various rites, such as confirmation and communion, have been in use by the church for centuries, the model recognized the progression of catechumens through each stage of with a rite of passage. The rites were first communion, confirmation, and a sending service. The last rite, the Christian funeral, was symbolic of the lifelong nature of catechesis.

---

<sup>67</sup> John W Santrock, *Children*. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2013), 498-499.



### Stage 1: Equipping (Early Childhood)

Parents have unparalleled access to their children in the early years of their development. A pastor, on the other hand, might have contact with a child perhaps once per week. Catechesis classes, during which an hour of instruction might take place over the course of the school year, gives a pastor a little over one day to convey the tenets of the faith to a child. Parents, with their unlimited access and the natural trust their children place in them, are in a unique position to begin the process of forming their children into faithful disciples of Jesus. This role of parents is consistent with God's command in Deuteronomy 6. Yet, a parent serving as the primary catechist for his or her children does not mean there is no role for pastors or congregations. Pastors teach parents who teach their children and the pastor, in turn, supports what children learn from their parents. This cooperative relationship undergirds catechesis as a whole.

The first stage of the researcher's cooperative catechesis model begins at birth, particularly at a child's baptism when God implants saving faith within him or her. The researcher found this consistent with the scriptural teaching that without faith people cannot accept God's wisdom. Saint Paul wrote, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are

spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). The researcher contended that teaching a person about a faith he or she did not possess would be futile. Godly catechesis, therefore, must build upon the faith God provided in baptism.

The researcher labeled the first stage “equipping” and designed it for the youngest of children. The focus of the equipping stage is to equip children with very basics of the faith. These basics serve as a foundation upon which further learning will take place. The primary catechists in the first stage are parents. Pastors serve in a supporting role through encouragement and providing appropriate teaching and resources. Once parents conclude that their child is ready to move on to the next stage, they consult with the pastor to discuss their options. As this point, the pastor will interview the child to determine if he or she is ready for further instruction about first communion. If so, the pastor then teaches the child about the meaning and use of the sacrament. After he or she completes this instruction, the pastor may admit them to the table. Stage one ends around age eight with the child participating in the Rite of First Communion.

### *Recommendations for Parents in Stage One*

#### **Ages 0 to 36 Months**

A complete study of how children grow and develop was far beyond the scope of this project. However, scientists and psychologists have made great strides in determining just how children learn. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), relationships are vitally important to development.<sup>68</sup> Many parents reported they did not feel as though they were able to teach their children, yet early childhood experts claim that providing a safe space for exploration is one way a parent can allow their children grow.<sup>69</sup> Infants from birth to nine months need and seek security most of all. Caring parents provide children a sense of security as they build relationships with them.<sup>70</sup> Security is the footing upon which an infant begins to explore. Between 8 and 18 months, infants gain the ability to move

---

<sup>68</sup> Carol Copple and Sue Bredekamp, eds., *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, (Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009), 53.

<sup>69</sup> Ann S. Epstein, *Me, You, Us: Social-Emotional Learning in Preschool*, (Ypsilanti, MI: Highscope Press, 2009), 153.

<sup>70</sup> Copple and Bredekamp, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, 54.

around and exploration becomes their primary focus.<sup>71</sup> These infants begin to develop language, physical, and cognitive abilities that parents can use to nurture strong bonds. Next comes the sense of identity that toddlers, ages 16 to 38 months, are prone to seek. The primary concern for a toddler is the discovery of who he or she is.<sup>72</sup>

Up to the point when a child is upright and toddling, the role of parents is to nurture the relationship they have with their child and ensure that he or she has a solid sense of security and sufficient freedom to explore his or her new world. They should introduce games, images, and other play activities that incorporate Christian and biblical themes. Parents should also begin praying for and with their children and reading to them from the Bible. Especially if one is a new parent, starting these routines of prayer and devotions early helps to set the tone for their family life.

In every stage of catechesis, modeling is important. During the early childhood stage, it is especially so. According to the NAEYC, toddlers are fascinated with the daily activities they see adults doing. “They do the things they see the important people in their lives do, or at least they try.”<sup>73</sup> Once a child is in this toddler phase, the task of equipping them with Christian truths becomes more involved. Toddlers become interested in words, following simple instructions, and they are learning how to express themselves in meaningful ways. Toddlers also enjoy hearing stories, manipulating books, and engaging in imaginative play.<sup>74</sup> Parents should use an age-appropriate Bible or biblical storybook, which emphasizes the importance of reading the Scriptures. Dr. Ann Epstein wrote, “In addition to providing appropriate materials and varied activities for their young children, parents also serve as primary models of the kinds of adults they want their children to become.”<sup>75</sup> When children observe their mother and father praying together and engaging in devotional study, toddlers will naturally want to imitate that behavior. Likewise, at the same time parents begin to teach their children colors and letters, they can also teach them simple prayers and tell them about the wonders and mercy of God. Because modeling

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>73</sup> Copple and Bredekamp, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, 66.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>75</sup> Epstein, *Me, You, Us*, 153.

is so important for a developing child, parents should bring their children into worship from the onset. They should avoid segregating them within a “children’s church” or nursery.

### **Ages 3 to 5 Years**

Children between the ages of three and five begin to experience the world differently. During these ages, their self-awareness increases, relationships become more complex, and they wrestle with social and emotional issues of which they are now more aware.<sup>76</sup> These years are when a child develops his or her interest, attitude, and behavior toward learning.<sup>77</sup> The parents’ modeling of Christian behavior in the home through regular devotion and prayer are increasingly important. Children at these ages begin to develop “moral emotions” such as guilt and shame.<sup>78</sup> As they begin to recognize the difference between right and wrong, parents can use this as an opportunity to point to God as the ultimate authority for Christian behavior. Until about age seven, children view morality as heteronomous or equally applicable across all people. They do not consider the intentions of others, only consequences.<sup>79</sup> Parents can begin to teach their children not only about personal responsibility, but also about forgiveness from God and between Christians. When a parent connects confession and absolution to a child’s “I’m sorry” and bestows forgiveness with “I forgive you,” they are catechizing their children about the believer’s relationship with God. Young children already prize relationships with others, so teaching them about God’s relationship with his children makes sense. Again, the idea of healthy relationships is important. When a child has a positive relationship with his or her parents, he or she is far more likely to be willing to adopt their values and beliefs.<sup>80</sup>

Children aged three to five are also developing an ability to organize the world around them into meaningful categories.<sup>81</sup> According to the NAEYC, children start to develop reasoning, classification, memory, and other cognitive skills during early childhood and these

---

<sup>76</sup> Copple and Bredekamp, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, 120.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>79</sup> Santrock, *Children*, 294.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>81</sup> Copple and Bredekamp, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, 135.

mature with support. Parents support this development through cues, questions, and modeling.<sup>82</sup> It is important that children experience an organized environment, daily routine, and opportunities for them to plan and reflect on their own learning.<sup>83</sup> As children begin to show more abilities to conceptualize ideas, parents should consider introducing Luther's Small Catechism into their routine. Luther wrote his catechism in a questions and answers style, which lends itself well to children who are eager to ask and answer questions. It is also not too soon for parents to encourage their children to commit the Lord's Prayer, Apostles' Creed, and Ten Commandments to memory as they become able. Parents should not be concerned that the children do not know the underlying conceptual meanings behind the words they are memorizing. After all, in this first stage children merely receive the equipment they will need for later learning.

### **Ages 6 to 8 Years**

Children draw near to the end of the first stage at age eight. Between the ages of six and eight they learn to read. In addition to all the fun books children naturally enjoy, parents should introduce age-appropriate Christian books that contain good theology. Children will be pleased with owning their own Bible and reading from it to their parents. Parents will inspire their children to grow in faith by recognizing and rewarding this behavior. According to Ellen Galinsky, there are effective strategies parents can employ when introducing children to books. They can use books to start conversations, ask what and why questions, and encourage children to ask their own questions.<sup>84</sup> Children at this age are ready for thinking that is more critical and, if parents incorporate Christian thought into their conversations, their children's faith knowledge will grow.

Although these children are not quite able to understand highly complex or abstract ideas, they are getting close. At this stage of their development, they learn through experience and lessons rooted in concrete reality more than through direct instruction.<sup>85</sup> It is also around age

---

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>83</sup> Epstein, *Me, You, Us*, 154.

<sup>84</sup> Santrock, *Children*, 277.

<sup>85</sup> Copple and Bredekamp, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, 272.

seven that children are able to recognize that people can have different thoughts and beliefs than others.<sup>86</sup>

By age eight, children are aware of social norms and societal expectations.<sup>87</sup> Parents can encourage their children by ensuring they are fully participating in the worship practices and rituals of the church. With the assumption that children have been experiencing and observing their parents engaged in worship up to this point, they will be ready to move from mere imitation to full, but guided, participation.

Children aged six to eight have favorable opinions about authority and are eager to develop attachments to adults close to them.<sup>88</sup> At this age, it is important for parents to point to the pastor as a reliable authority figure, like the child's schoolteacher. Parents who demonstrate a respect for the church and its teachings and workers catechize their children to trust and appreciate them as well. This is important as in the next stage of the model pastors assume a more prominent role in the child's catechesis.

#### *Recommendations for Pastors in Stage One*

Pastors aid the parents in their duty to teach their children the faith by encouraging them and providing any necessary resources and training they may need. The primary way a pastor will equip parents is from a faithful proclamation of the Word in his preaching and teaching as well as rightly administering the sacraments. The pastor sets a faithful example to his congregation when he relies on the Scriptures and confessions to guide his teaching and practice.

Pastors know that the Small Catechism is an important resource for parents to use for teaching their children. Unfortunately, many parents have consulted their catechisms rarely, if at all, since they were in catechesis. Pastors should not assume that parents recognize the catechism as a resource. Likewise, pastors should not presume that because of its simplicity a parent would be able to use it effectively at home. Instead, there are many ways pastors might illustrate the importance of lifelong catechesis and the catechism as a valuable resource. First, they could incorporate selections from the Small Catechism in the Divine Service. This would help to keep the content fresh on people's minds. Second, the pastor could produce bulletin inserts or

---

<sup>86</sup> Santrock, *Children*, 274.

<sup>87</sup> Copple and Bredekamp, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, 269.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

handouts with selected readings from the catechism and the Scriptures that would provide families with a head start to that week's devotional planning. Third, pastors could host a special class designed to refresh parents with the basic tenets of the faith. This class should also serve to educate parents on how they might employ the catechism at home. Since under this model catechesis begins at birth, the pastor should offer the class regularly. If he and his congregation are technology savvy, he may consider social media, email, and other means to connect the catechism regularly to the lives of his parishioners.

Concordia Publishing House and others offer many age appropriate resources pastors can select to help parents with home devotions and catechesis. Parents would welcome a curated resource list prepared by the pastor. If feasible, the congregation should consider purchasing selected resources as gifts to new parents. Additionally, Lutheran pastors are also more than capable of dedicating time to writing resources for their congregations themselves. This practice is time consuming, but a valuable way to personalize resources for the ever-changing needs of a modern parish.

#### *Evaluation and Rite of Passage*

Because children mature at different rates, pastors and parents should take care to evaluate them when their knowledge and behavior suggest they are ready. The key to this catechesis model is an individualized approach that respects each child's unique development timeline. When a parent believes that his or her child is ready to move from the equipping stage into the enhancing stage, he or she contacts the pastor for a discussion of the options.

At the request of parents, pastors engage candidates in an informal dialogue to determine to what extent the child understands his or her faith. In this informal and friendly discussion, the pastor will ensure children are at a level deemed appropriate by the congregational community. Pastors and parents should expect children to be able to confess belief in God and in Jesus. They should be able to convey the importance of the Bible and the benefits of prayer. At a minimum, candidates should have committed to memory the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed. Memorizing these first three of the chief parts of the Small Catechism are essential since in the next stage the pastor and parents will work to give meaning to the words.

Should the interview with the child prove satisfactory, the pastor would then instruct him or her in the meaning and use of the Lord's Supper. Pastors can accomplish this through

individual instruction or in a classroom setting. This instruction should cover at least the following six aspects:

That through the Lord's Supper, the Lord:

1. Offers and conveys the forgiveness of sins.
2. Offers the truly present body and blood of Christ.
3. Strengthens faith.
4. Imparts power for Christian Living.
5. Is an act of thankful adoration.
6. Is a celebration of Christian fellowship.<sup>89</sup>

Once the pastor is satisfied with the child's understanding of the Lord's Supper, he would invite him or her to participate in the Sacrament of the Altar. The pastor may choose to welcome children to the table individually through the Rite of First Communion at various times throughout the year or in larger groups as the church calendar and number of candidates permit.

Permitting children as young as eight to partake in the Lord's Supper might be new to many LCMS congregations, as most are admitted only after confirmation.<sup>90</sup> The pastor should take care to teach his congregation the importance and validity of this practice.

---

<sup>89</sup> Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper*, (St. Louis: Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1983), 9-10.

<sup>90</sup> Bergman, *What's Happening in LCMS Confirmation?*, 35.

**Table 6.1: Stage One of the Cooperative Catechesis Model**

<p><b>STAGE 1: EQUIPPING</b> Early Childhood (Infant to age 8)</p>		
<p><i>Primary Focus:</i> Establishing the foundations of faith as a structure around which to teach. <b>Parents serve as primary catechists, aided by the congregation.</b></p>		
<p><b>Parents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish daily prayer and devotion routines early.</li> <li>• Encourage children with age appropriate Christian media.</li> <li>• Give children their own Bible and Small Catechism.</li> <li>• Model a Christian ethos in daily life, including daily devotions and prayer.</li> <li>• Attend worship and Bible study regularly.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pastors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proclaim the Word in its purity and administer the sacraments rightly.</li> <li>• Integrate readings from the Small Catechism (and confessions) into the Divine Service.</li> <li>• Ensure parents are knowledgeable about the tenets of the faith.</li> <li>• Train parents in the use of the Small Catechism.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Goals for Catechumens</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know there is a God who created all things and loves them.</li> <li>• Know that Jesus is God and saves them.</li> <li>• Develop a prayer and devotion routine.</li> <li>• Explore the Bible and the Small Catechism with their parents.</li> <li>• Commit to memory the 10 Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer.</li> </ul>
<p><b>EVALUATION</b></p>		<p><b>RITE OF PASSAGE</b></p>
<p>At the request of parents, pastors engage candidates in dialogue to ensure they understand the significance, benefits and dangers, and fellowship issues regarding the Sacrament of the Altar prior to admission to the table.</p>		<p><b>Rite of First Communion</b> <i>The child is to be admitted to the table when he or she is ready as determined by an evaluation and according to the will of his or her parents.</i></p>

**Stage 2: Enhancing (Late Childhood)**

The late childhood, or pre-adolescence, years are a time of great developmental growth for children. They are maturing in their ability to process information, communicate, and make social and emotional connections with others.

The second stage of the researcher’s cooperative catechesis model begins at around age nine following a child’s participation in the Rite of First Communion. The researcher labeled the second stage “enhancing” since it is during this stage that catechist will enhance much of the memorized material the child learned in stage one with more meaning. During this enhancing stage, pastors now serve as the primary catechists as parents provide a support role. During this stage, a pastor might employ the traditional two or three-year catechesis program or work one-on-one with children as his time and abilities permit. Parents support the pastor’s efforts by becoming active participants in the catechesis program. The focus of the pastoral instruction will be encouraging students to build relationships with fellow catechumens, explore the tenets of the faith with critical thinking, and participate in real-life experiences that would

deepen their faith. Once a child completes the requisite classes, or the pastor is comfortable that he or she were eligible, the pastor will examine the child to determine his or her readiness for the Rite of Confirmation. The examination at this stage includes another dialogue between catechumens, the pastor, and his or her parents. Catechumens then make a public declaration of faith to the congregation prior to completing this stage at around age 13 with the Rite of Confirmation.

### *Recommendations for Parents in Stage Two*

During this stage, the pastor takes upon himself the primary task of providing instruction to the child. Parents, however, still have much to contribute. Children during these late childhood years have an increased ability for critical and creative thinking.<sup>91</sup> Parents should take advantage of this developmental maturity by having discussions with their children about what they are learning in catechesis class. Parents should also be more open about their own thoughts, joys, and struggles as they live as Christians. Parental openness will encourage children to be reflective about their faith questions as well. Parents will not have all the answers, but they will have the pastor as a resource. When parents point to the Scriptures, the church, and its workers as resources, they are teaching their children about importance of the community of faith.

Children experience in these late childhood years an increase in long-term memory.<sup>92</sup> Parents should support the teaching of the pastor by reviewing memory work and helping their children associate the concepts they learn in class to the words of the catechism and Scripture they have memorized.

The moral reasoning of children from age seven to ten is transitioning from heteronomous to an autonomous morality. An autonomous morality is the ability to see that rules and laws vary among people and groups. At age ten, they begin to judge intentions of actors in addition to consequences.<sup>93</sup> In catechesis class, children will be learning about God's Law summarized in the Ten Commandments and the concepts of Law and Gospel. By attending class with their children, parents will not only grow in their own knowledge of these important Christian beliefs but they will be able to put the concepts into practice at home.

---

<sup>91</sup> Santrock, *Children*, 384.

<sup>92</sup> Santrock, *Children*, 384.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

Like in school, catechesis class presents a child with multiple opportunities to grow in their faith and achieve goals. A child's relationship with his or her teacher and parents is linked to his or her ability to be an achiever. Parents can help by setting short-term goals for their children and assist them in understanding priorities and keeping organized.<sup>94</sup>

Parents should also continue to bring their children to worship and make sure they participate in the Sunday school program. Not only does this model positive Christian behavior for their children, but also it communicates to the child that his or her parents find these practices important. Parents should also attend worship with their children and attend a Bible study themselves. When parents drop off their children for worship or Sunday school without attending themselves they are teaching that church activities are not important to them, or are only for children. As acknowledged by most of the parents the researcher interviewed, "If it is important to the parents, it will be important to their children."

#### *Recommendations for Pastors in Stage Two*

Catechesis classes should include parents, and pastors should expect congregational participation by catechumens and parents. The pastor should begin the catechetical year with a special workshop or class for parents to refresh their knowledge of the basics. During this class, the pastor can give the parents the expectations of catechesis and solicit their support in reviewing the material at home. During this workshop, the pastor can also provide resources parents can use during this stage. The pastor should invite parents to attend the classes with their children as essential to the success of the program.

The researcher previously conceded that this project would not produce a new catechetical curriculum. Nevertheless, pastors should take care to use materials that are doctrinally sound, but also engaging to children of this age. Multimedia, web-based activities, and the use of new technologies might be useful for communicating to children that the ideas may be old, but they remain relevant. Pastors could encourage children to install a Bible application and the Small Catechism on their cell phones or tablets, if they have them, and permit their use in class.

Pastors should give catechumens opportunities for service inside and outside of the congregation. For instance, in addition to acolyte duties that are typical of catechesis programs,

---

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 385.

include these children as lectors, ushers, greeters, or other roles the congregation may have. Pastors should ensure that catechumens serve their community as well. Whether they participate in mission trips or servant events, volunteering at the local food bank, or assisting at the nursing home, catechumens can put their faith into action and discuss what they have learned with one another.

*Evaluation and Rite of Passage in Stage Two*

Once a child has completed the formal classes and his or her parents also believe he or she is ready for confirmation, they enter into another informal dialogue with the pastor. This time, parents and the elders are also included. In this conversation, the pastor asks the child questions to determine to what extent they have matured in their faith since the beginning of the stage. Parents have the opportunity at this time to report on the child's progress at home. If the pastor determines that the child has progressed enough to be confirmed, the child is then asked to complete a project that demonstrates his or her confession of faith. This may be as simple as a written declaration of faith or a complex service project. The abilities of the child and the number of confirmands will influence the options available. The child then transitions from stage two to stage three by participating in the Rite of Confirmation.

**Table 6.2: Stage Two of the Cooperative Catechesis Model**

<p><b>STAGE 2: ENHANCING</b> Late Childhood (Ages 9-13)</p>		
<p><i>Primary Focus:</i> Building upon pre-established foundations to provide context and meaning. <b>The congregation serves as a primary catechist, aided by the parents.</b></p>		
<p><b>Parents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue all stage 1 efforts.</li> <li>• Attend a special class designed for parents.</li> <li>• Attend catechesis classes alongside of their children.</li> <li>• Discuss with their children what they are learning in catechesis.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pastors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue all stage 1 efforts.</li> <li>• Discuss with parents the expectations of the catechesis program.</li> <li>• Hold a workshop for parents to refresh their knowledge and provide them resources.</li> <li>• Teach structured classes with varied teaching methods.</li> <li>• Facilitate supervised service opportunities and allow children to reflect on their experiences.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Goals for Catechumens</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn concepts behind memorized words.</li> <li>• Think creatively and critically about their faith.</li> <li>• Increased participation in the life of the congregation.</li> <li>• Experiential learning through service opportunities.</li> <li>• Public declaration of faith or project.</li> </ul>
•	•	•
<b>EVALUATION</b>		<b>RITE OF PASSAGE</b>
<p>Pastors and parents engage candidates in dialogue to ensure they are growing in the faith and progressing sufficiently in both knowledge and maturity to transition to the next stage. This, according to the standards set forth by the local congregation.</p>		<p>Rite of Confirmation <i>The child becomes a communicant member of the congregation and begins to take on more responsibility in life and worship of the faith community.</i></p>

**Stage 3: Exploring (Adolescence)**

Undoubtedly, adolescence is a difficult developmental stage. However, it need not be a difficult stage for catechesis. By stage three, children have been participating in communion and now are communicant members of the congregation. Children enter the exploring stage after confirmation around the age of 14. The researcher called this stage “exploring” because these teenagers have been catechized enough to begin exploring their faith more deeply. As communicants, the congregation expects teenagers to be fully active in the life of the faith community and participating in a youth group and attending Bible study. Pastors and parents share catechetical duties equally during this stage. While parents continue their in-home teaching efforts, the pastor offers specific classes designed especially for adolescents preparing for a Christian life as adults. The pastor will teach the child apologetics, how to study the Scriptures at greater depth, and the doctrine of vocation. The pastor will also introduce the wider breadth of

the Lutheran confessions as a resource. The child transitions out of this stage at the age of legal maturity.

*Recommendations for Parents and Pastors in Stage Three*

**Ages 14 to 18 Years**

Parents often fear the adolescent years because of the many negative stereotypes that accompany teens pushing boundaries and navigating hormonal changes. However, this challenging of boundaries is important as they move toward accepting parental values.<sup>95</sup> In part, teenagers want to discover for themselves what to believe. While parents and pastors should not construe this as permission to endorse other religions or heterodox confessions, dealing with an adolescent's curiosity about other faith expressions from a Christian perspective can be helpful. Adolescents express their emerging adulthood in five key ways: "identity exploration, instability, being self-focused, feeling in-between, and experiencing possibility to transform one's life."<sup>96</sup> As with all Christians, a teenager's identity in Christ is paramount over all others. These formative years are idea for pastors and parents to help respond to a teenager's angst and doubts with Jesus' love for them.

Teenagers are also struggling with issues of sexuality in a hypersexualized world. It would be presumptuous to expect that the simple lesson they received on the sixth commandment when they were eleven will cover every issue sexual they face as maturing Christians. In traditional catechesis, adolescents do not receive formal instruction during these formative years. Instead, pastors and parents often leave these teens to work out their struggles with faith and sense of identity alone. Adolescence presents parents and pastors many opportunities to inculcate Christian values and beliefs.

At home, parents should continue to be open and honest with their teenagers about the struggles of sin and reconciling God's will for their lives with the temptations of the world. Parents should include biblical teachings as they discuss with their teenagers' issues surrounding drugs, God's gift of sex, and the hazards of interpersonal relationships. During adolescence, teenagers are becoming better at making good decisions, but without life experience, they have

---

<sup>95</sup> Santrock, *Children*, 451.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 451.

trouble weighing all the consequences.<sup>97</sup> This is where parental support and the good relationship developed over the years become key.

In the church, pastors should offer classes that directly address the daily lives of adolescent believers. Biblical studies on substance abuse, sexuality, pornography, and other teen issues are key. It is important that the pastor focus on topics that will help catechize this emerging adult for life outside of his or her parents' home. As maturing believers enter college or the workforce, they will face pressures to conform to the expectations of society and abandon godly teaching. In fact, they are likely already facing those challenges in high school. This is why this stage of catechesis is about preparing teenagers to think theologically rather than simply giving them the answers.

In to think theologically, three key topics emerge as important: apologetics, study of the Scriptures, and the doctrine of vocation. By teaching the teen about apologetics, the pastor gives them the tools to defend his or her faith when necessary. It helps them fulfill the command, “[Be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Pet 3:15). Teaching adolescents how to study the Bible in more depth and how to use Bible study resources, allows them to explore their faith on their own. Finally, the doctrine of vocation teaches them that they serve God by serving their neighbor in whatever station of life in which they find themselves. Adolescents are self-serving and guidance in this area would go a long way to helping them navigate adulthood as a godly man or woman.

#### *Evaluation and Rite of Passage in Stage Three*

There is no evaluation for this stage since stage four is adulthood. Generally, the child leaving the congregation to enter college, the military, or the work force marks progression from stage three to stage four. The pastor might use a rite such as the Rite of Sending and Godspeed to celebrate the transition. Some may not leave the congregation, but set down roots locally, in which event they would “age out” of stage three into stage four.

---

<sup>97</sup> Santrock, *Children*, 460-461.

**Table 6.3: Stage Three of the Cooperative Catechesis Model**

<b>STAGE 3: EXPLORING</b>		
Adolescence (Ages 14-18)		
<i>Primary Focus:</i> Refining and solidifying beliefs to equip the believer to defend his or her faith. <b>Parents and congregations share equally the duty to catechize.</b>		
<b>Parents</b>	<b>Pastors</b>	<b>Goals for Catechumens</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue all stage 1 and 2 efforts.</li> <li>• Address teenager issues and concerns seriously from a biblical perspective.</li> <li>• Help teenagers see their self-worth and identity in Christ.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue all stage 1 and 2 efforts.</li> <li>• Focus on forming teens to think theologically.</li> <li>• Teach apologetics, Bible study methods, and the doctrine of vocation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full participation in the life of the congregation.</li> <li>• Participation in Youth Group.</li> <li>• Attendance in Bible study.</li> <li>• Apologetics</li> <li>• Deeper Self-Study of the Bible</li> <li>• Doctrine of Vocation</li> </ul>
<b>EVALUATION</b>		<b>RITE OF PASSAGE</b>
<i>No Evaluation</i> Students transition into the next stage when they leave the parish or reach the age of legal maturity.		Rite of Farewell and Godspeed (for those leaving the congregation) or another appropriate rite.

**Stage 4: Engaging (Adulthood)**

The primary motivation behind this model is to provide guidelines for pastors and parents to work cooperatively to catechize their children in the faith. However, since catechesis is a lifelong endeavor it is important that believers enter adulthood with the understanding that they are far from done growing in faith and knowledge. The researcher added this fourth stage to the model to illustrate this fact. Pastors and parents continue to provide support and resources for the now adult believer as they always have, but the relationship will change. The person will take on complete responsibility for engaging the Scriptures and making themselves available to worship and God’s means of grace.

The goals for the believer in this stage are simple. The man or woman now is a full participant in the life of the congregation. He or she engages the world through his or her many vocations informed by his or her faith. If God blesses this person with children, he or she then continues the catechetical model with them.

The rite of passage for exiting this stage is the Christian funeral. Provided Jesus does not return first, this symbolic rite of passage emphasizes that a person never ceases learning and growing in his or her faith.

Parents will continue to love and support their children. They should also continue to be role models demonstrating a Christian marriage and faithfulness at different stages of life. Pastors should support young adults by making sure they address their specific needs in sermons

and Christian education. The pastor should also be prepared to provide resources and care for whatever journey this person takes. For instance, the pastor should consider how he would minister to this man or woman if he or she enters the work force, heads off to college, or joins the military.

**Table 6.4: Stage Four of the Cooperative Catechesis Model**

<b>STAGE 4: ENGAGING</b>		
Adulthood (Ages 18+)		
<i>Primary Focus:</i> Growing in faith toward God and love toward neighbor as he or she continues to be catechized by his or her active participation in the community of believers.		
<b>Person becomes wholly responsible for his or her own lifelong catechesis.</b>		
<b>Parents</b>	<b>Pastors</b>	<b>Goals for Catechumens</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to be role models for their Christian children.</li> <li>• Serve as resources as their children encounter the joys and difficulties of life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to proclaim the Word in its purity and administer the sacraments rightly.</li> <li>• Offer sound Christian education in the parish.</li> <li>• Help young adults find roles inside or outside of the church through which to engage their faith.</li> <li>• Provide resources specific to the person’s life journey.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued participation in the life of the congregation.</li> <li>• Begin the catechetical process with their own children.</li> </ul>
<b>EVALUATION</b>		<b>RITE OF PASSAGE</b>
<i>No evaluation.</i>		Rite of Christian Funeral

..

### Conclusion

This cooperative catechesis model is appropriate for the Christian family and dedicated pastor who wish to train up disciples of Jesus Christ. Yet, there are limitations. For instance, the teaching in this model is cumulative. It assumes that a person begins the process in stage one as a young child and continues until the last stage. Some provisions need to be made for those who enter or leave the congregation at different times. In the same way, the catechesis of those who come to faith later in life as teenagers or adults may not fit perfectly into this model. Additionally, as with anything new in the church, it is improbable that a pastor could implement this model over the course of a few months. It may take the pastor many years of teaching before the congregation would accept or understand the rationale behind this model. Variables like local traditions, aversion to early communion, and unmotivated parents might call for extended discussions. The researcher highly recommends that pastors use this model as a foundation or inspiration for creating their own cooperative catechesis program.