

Lesson #7: Be careful how you catechize.

No one can dispute that young children have an amazing ability to learn and memorize--often the quickest and easiest in their whole lives! Why not harness this skill for the sake of learning Bible truths?

Bible memory verses and catechisms are concise ways of putting a whole library of Bible truth in children's heads. While some people balk at the idea of helping children memorize concepts deeper than they can fully understand, others see the goal not so much as achieving full, immediate understanding in a young child today, but leaving it as a legacy in his head for the future. Many are the stories of conversions of even elderly people by truths memorized decades earlier in their childhood!

But on the other hand, don't exasperate your child! Yes, they may be little memory sponges, but you can harden their hearts and discourage them with the very truths you want them to love by forcing them to do too much, too soon...and in a format that just isn't appropriate or effective for them.

Remember: your point isn't just to check off the list that you taught these truths to your children. It's to try to make them stick in places where they will stay for years. Better to do less and do it well, than to think you've done it all and done it poorly or at the cost of a soft heart.

And don't forget: there is more than one way to skin a rabbit! Bible memory and catechism doesn't always have to take a recitation format. There are many Bible verses and catechism-like questions and answers put to song. There is now even a completely sung version of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. There are games you can play to help them learn, too. Look for things your kids love and ways they learn easily and try to harness them for your goal of feeding your kids with truth.

Lesson #7: Questions for You in Your Ministry Setting:

1. Do you emphasize the catechism of children at your church? Why or why not?
2. What blessings and what difficulties have your parents found in using catechisms with their children?
3. What resources have you found that help children who have difficulty with tradition forms of catechism?
4. How could you share with parents the benefits and the difficulties of catechizing their children?