

Discipleship Plan

Establishing Novices in the Faith: Child to Young Man

1 John 2:12, 13c - Children, Knowers of God, Forgiven

12 I write to you, little children,

Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. ...

13c I write to you, little children,

Because you have known the Father.

What is a child in the faith (or a novice)?

A child in the faith is someone who is immature in the Reformed faith of any age (a novice¹) and needs to be protected for the ability to focus on (1) being nurtured for growth and (2) being established for stability.

Goal of Document:

- 1) Identify Novices / Children in the Faith
- 2) Instruct Novices how to see be established² in the foundations of the faith so that they will not be blown about by every wind of doctrine, but can start to build with stability.
- 3) Help Novices to move beyond immaturity so that they can be useful for themselves and for others.
- 4) Instruct those who want to nurture, guard, and see novices established in the foundations of the faith so that the novice can become “a young man in the faith” who is stable and not a source of chaos, but who instead can participate in the work as a fellow soldier and laborer alongside other saints.

Children in the faith understand:

- 1) Scripture is the Word of God.
- 2) They have broken God's law and deserve everlasting punishment.
- 3) Christ, the Son of God, lived perfectly to merit reward for believers and died on the cross to pay for the guilt debt of believers.
- 4) The redemption purchased by Christ applies to them because God gave them faith.
- 5) They need to grow in their understanding of doctrine and application of the law; turning more and more from unbelief and sin unto belief and righteousness.

¹ A neophyte - a new or immature member of the covenant community

² ONE could say “Confirmed”

Children in the faith are to be nurtured. They need:

- 1) Encouragement and support during the reformation process.
- 2) Clear, concise and consistent teaching in basic doctrines. They are small necked vessels that need to be taught in manageable pieces.
- 3) Patience with their ignorance.
 - a) More Basic to Less Basic
- 4) Gentle rebukes for their bad habits.
 - a) Focus on Camels primarily rather than Gnats.
- 5) To be invited to receive hospitality from house to house.
 - a) Teaching
 - b) Example & Enculturation
 - c) Participation in Family Worship
 - d) Relationship

Children in the faith are to be guarded. They need:

- 1) Examples and practice in applying more basic to less basic principles in arguments and life application.
- 2) To hear sound patterns of words in defense of the truth.
- 3) Simple explanations for false doctrines and practices to avoid.
- 4) Inclusion in church life and mission (intra-church service opportunities especially in a hospitality context).
- 5) To avoid heretical teaching until established in the faith and completed training as a “Child” in the faith.
 - a) To consume recommended Reformed resources
- 6) To avoid external facing service until established in the faith and completed training as a “Child” in the faith.

Resource & Scripture focus for children in the faith:

- 1) Bible, Psalter with help learning a few shorter Psalms and how to sing them for private and household worship, The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Church Covenant,
- 2) Genesis 1-9, John, Romans
- 3) Proverbs 1-9

Hebrews 6:1-2 - Axioms, Foundational things, Basic things

6 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles [axioms] of Christ, let us go on to perfection [maturity], not laying again the foundation of (1) repentance from dead works and of (2) faith toward God, 2 of (3) the doctrine of baptisms, of (4) laying on of hands, of (5) resurrection of the dead, and of (6) eternal judgment.

- 1) Repentance from dead works
 - a) Covenant of Works
 - b) Guilty for Adam
 - c) Guilt for Corruption of Nature (not glorifying God)
 - d) Guilty for particular sins of Omission & Commission
 - e) Inability to save self.

- 2) Faith toward God
 - a) Definition of God
 - b) Trinity
 - c) Intra-Trinitarian Covenant
 - d) Incarnation
 - e) Covenant of Grace
 - f) 5 Solas - Belief in the Word & Belief in the Gospel
 - g) TULIP - Defends Salvation by Grace Alone

- 3) Doctrine of baptisms
 - a) Outward washings about entry into Covenant Community & then continued cleansing
 - b) Objective Reality of Justification & Sanctification
 - c) Inward reality of Regeneration & Sanctification

- 4) Doctrine of the laying on of hands
 - a) Symbol of Transference
 - b) Ordination, Authority, & Power of Officers & Church Courts & Conflict
 - c) Guilt Transference
 - d) Healing
 - e) Blessing

- 5) Doctrine of the resurrection of the dead
 - a) Immortality of the Soul
 - b) Resurrection of the Body

- 6) Everlasting Judgment
 - a) The Last Judgment
 - i) Justification & Condemnation
 - ii) Rewards & Punishments
 - b) Providential Judgments
 - i) Rewards, Punishments, Discipline, & Testing

D) The Five Solas – Gospel Basics - Distinction between Protestants & Romanists

- 1) **Scripture Alone** - The Scripture is the only infallible authority for all of faith (doctrine, what to believe) and all of life (practice, what to do).

- 2) **Grace Alone** - Salvation is effectually caused by the grace of God alone and not by anything in man, his ability, or the ability of any other mere creature.
 - a) Grace Defined - Demerited Favor. We deserve punishment and get reward.
 - b) God saves us out of His own good pleasure out of His mercy. Nothing about us is the motive for God giving us salvation.
 - c) God does everything He wants. If He wants to save a person He does. God's Grace causes our salvation to happen and necessarily brings about conversion.

- 3) **Faith Alone** - We are connected to the work of Christ and His merit by the instrument³ of faith in Christ and not by works or any other instrument.
 - a) Faith Defined - Understanding the content, and thinking the content is true. Faith and belief are the same thing.
 - b) Saving Faith is understanding the saving contenting and thinking the saving content is true.
 - c) The saving Content is the Gospel, that is to say, Christ. To believe the Gospel is to believe Christ. To believe Christ is to believe the Gospel.
 - d) Faith is a gift of God, not a good work. This reserves all glory for our salvation to Him.

³ An instrument is a tool or a method of implementation - in a contract the instrument of forming a contract could be spoken words with a hand shake, just spoken words, a written document with signatures, or many other forms. Faith is the alone instrument of Justification.

- 4) **Christ Alone** - The only basis upon which we have standing before God is the debt payment and positive merit of Christ and not our own merit or the merit of any other besides Christ.
 - a) Christ's work to pay for the debts owed for sin (full satisfaction) and fulfill the law (perfect righteousness) in our place (substitution) is the sole meritorious basis of our justification (His work as a mediator earned our good standing).
 - b) Christ is the only mediator between God and Man.
 - c) Christ's person and work is the object of saving faith.
 - i) We need to understand who He claims to be and what He claims to do, and we need to think that these claims are true.
 - ii) This faith is a gift from God and we cannot create it or sustain it in ourselves.

- 5) **Glory to God Alone** - Soli Deo Gloria - The plan of redemption is designed to give the glory to God as both just and merciful.

II) The Trinity- "There is one definition of God, and there are three persons that meet that definition."

- 1) WSC 4-6
- 2) Church Covenant Vow 3

III) The Covenants

1) The Intra-Trinitarian Covenant (Covenant of Redemption)

- a) A covenant between the members of the trinity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; each will fulfill a role to glorify the others and Himself through creation, providence, justice, and redemption. They agree to fulfill their roles in their covenant with man.

2) The Covenant of Works

- a) A covenant between God & Adam; Adam represents all his posterity (descendants) from ordinary generation. Adam owes God perfect obedience, he and his posterity will get life or death based on his obedience or failure.
- b) Adam is given the Creation Ordinances
 - i) Dominion—fill and subdue the earth and multiply
 - ii) Work & Sabbath—6 days to work, 1 day of rest to God
 - iii) Household—established with marriage

3) The Covenant of Grace

- a) A covenant between God the Father & the Lord Jesus Christ; Christ represents all the elect. Christ will glorify the Father by taking to Himself a human nature and submitting perfectly to the Father under the Law in order to redeem His elect.

IV) The Incarnation - “Christ has two natures, divine and human; two minds, divine and human; united by covenant as one legal person.

- 1) WSC 21-22
- 2) Church Covenant Vow 4

V) The Good, the Goal, Good for Man & the Doxological Focus

- 1) The Good is the most valuable thing. The Good is the thing that you should only trade for but that you never trade away.
- 2) God is the Good.
- 3) The display of the glory of God - God’s Goal of the Intra-Trinitarian Covenant in Creation & History
- 4) The filling of the earth with the knowledge of the glory of God - TGod’s Plan to maximally display His glory & Man’s Corporate Goal
- 5) The possession of God by knowing God and thus possessing the glory of God and spreading the possession and exhibition of the glory of God - Man’s Individual Goal; knowing God & showing God
- 6) The Knowledge of God - How man possesses God’s attributes; How man possesses God’s glory; How man Possesses God.
- 7) The Good life - Seek to know God and show God by doing what God commands.⁴

VI) TULIP

- 1) **Total Depravity** - We are sinful from conception, corrupted in our whole nature and every part. We have no ability to do any good in ourselves.
- 2) **Unconditional Election & Reprobation** - There is nothing in man, not even his faith, that causes God to choose him for salvation (no conditions we meet). There are no conditions on God that require Him to save anyone (no imposed conditions). It is of His mere good pleasure that He chooses whom He will save in Christ and whom He will condemn justly for sin.

⁴ The Regulative Principle of Life - Glorify God by the appointed means to the exclusion of all else.

- 3) **Limited Atonement** - Christ's work on the cross to save is perfect and complete. Everyone that He came to save is truly and completely saved, and no one is saved that He did not come to save.
 - a) If Christ died for all of the sins of everyone then everyone would be saved and the Bible would contradict itself and thus be a false Gospel.
 - b) If Christ died for some of the sins of everyone then no one is saved.
 - c) If Christ died for some of the sins of some then no one is saved.
 - d) Only if Christ died to pay for all of the sins of some people can anyone be saved.
- 4) **Irresistible Grace** - God does all that He pleases. If He desires to save a person, He will accomplish that goal. His demerited favor is not based on anything in us and therefore it cannot be lost by anything we do. We cannot resist His plans. If He chooses us, He will effectually bring about our salvation.
- 5) **Preservation of the Saints** - God will complete the good work that He has started in a believer. We cannot lose our salvation. Those who profess to believe and then fall away never really believed or have not really fallen away.

VII) The Covenant Institutions

- 1) Covenant of Works - Adam
- 2) Covenant of Grace - Old Covenant - Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David
- 3) Covenant of Grace - New Covenant - Christ
- 4) Gen 1-9
 - a) Individual - Gen 1-2
 - b) Household - Gen 1-2
 - c) Church - Gen 3-6:8
 - d) State - Gen 6:9-9:29

VIII) The Law - Summarized in the 2 Great Commandments & the 10 Commandments, explained in the WSC with the Triple Obligation

- 1) WSC 39-81
- 2) Love God with all your being (mind, soul, heart, strength)
- 3) Love your neighbor as yourself
- 4) First table of the Law teaches us how to love God:
 - a) No other gods – What to serve & worship.
 - b) No idols – How to serve & worship.
 - c) Don't take the Lord's name in vain – With what attitude to serve & worship.
 - d) Remember the Sabbath - When to serve & worship.

- 5) Second table of the Law teaches us how to love our neighbor:
 - a) Honor your father and mother – respect, affection, and duty toward legitimate authority in various spheres.
 - b) Don't murder – protect life of self & neighbor, protect peace & well-being.
 - c) Do not commit adultery – lawful and moderate use of pleasures, modesty, chaste thoughts, propriety speech and behavior
 - d) Do not steal – property rights
 - e) Do not bear false witness against your neighbor – Do not lie. Promote the truth. Guard your reputation and the reputations of others.
 - f) Do not covet – Be content with the possession of GOD and what He has given to you. Seek to improve your condition by lawful means. Seek the good for each other. Seek the good together. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep.
- 6) Triple obligation of obedience:
 - a) God is the Lord over all creation. He created it by the word of His power, He owns it, He has the right to do with it as He pleases. Everyone owes Him that recognition.
 - b) God is our covenant God. He has a special claim on the lives of Christian households because He has entered into a covenant with us.
 - c) God is our Redeemer. God has saved us by His grace and we owe Him obedience and affection out of gratitude for our redemption.
- 7) 3 Definitions
 - a) Whole Counsel of God
 - b) Old Testament
 - c) Commands
- 8) 3 Uses
 - a) Mirror
 - b) Chain
 - c) Lamp
- 9) 3 Types
 - a) Moral
 - b) Civil
 - c) Ceremonial
- 10) 3 Levels
 - a) General Commands - Heads of Doctrine
 - b) Case Laws - If ..., Then ...
 - c) Approved or Disapproved Examples

IX) The Outward & Ordinary Means of Grace

- 1) Word
- 2) Sacrament
- 3) Prayer
- 4) All Ordinances
- 5) WSC 82-107

X) Conflict Resolution–Matthew 18

- 1) 3 Steps:
 - a) 1:1,
 - b) with witnesses,
 - c) church council
- 2) 4 G's:
 - a) Glorify God,
 - b) get the log out,
 - c) gently rebuke,
 - d) go and be reconciled
- 3) 7 A's of a Biblical apology:
 - a) Address everyone involved,
 - b) Avoid wormy words,
 - c) Admit wrong doing specifically,
 - d) Acknowledge harms caused,
 - e) Accept the consequences,
 - f) Alter⁵ sinful attitudes, words, and behaviors,
 - g) Ask for forgiveness
- 4) 4 Promises of Forgiveness:
 - a) I will restore our fellowship as brothers in Christ (and other relationships if appropriate) and I will not allow this issue to prevent us from doing our duties to each other,
 - b) I will not dwell on this incident without a duty to do so,
 - c) I will not bring this up again to you without a duty to do so,
 - d) I will not bring this up again to others without a duty to do so.

⁵ This is a commitment to alter not a waiting for some period to show alteration

- 5) 5 Acceptable Conclusions on any point of offense:
 - a) Choosing to interpret ambiguities charitably.
 - b) Choosing to overlook things that you think are clear but minor offenses.
 - c) Choosing to Accept a Just defense resulting in charitable interpretation.
 - d) Choosing to Accept external repentance.
 - e) Choosing to escalate to the next level of Matthew 18 until resolution by either (a) reconciliation or (b) removal from the fellowship ends the friendship unless and until the guilty party repents.

XI) Church Authority

- 1) Call to Appear or Assemble
- 2) Teach - you judge
- 3) Worship - you judge and participate or protest
- 4) Censures - rebuke, suspend, cast out
- 5) Officers for order - elders, deacons
- 6) Ministry - working together to serve
- 7) Money Uses - Officers, Equipment, Mercy
- 8) Tithe & Gifts

XII) Weekly Public Worship, Frequent Hospitality, The Communion of the Saints, Fellowship, & The Tithe

- 1) Sabbath; morning and evening worship
- 2) Assembly/church as covenant community in OT, NT
- 3) 2 types of breaking bread; Lord's Supper and hospitality
- 4) Hospitality from house to house - frequent having and accepting - useful
- 5) The communion of the saints - gifts and goods for service
- 6) Fellowship - working together
- 7) Tithe - giving first fruits to God, 10% of pretax income

XIII) Daily Work, Family Service, & Secret & Family Worship

- 1) Heritage of Wisdom & Wealth
- 2) Daily bread - Spiritual & Material
- 3) Deuteronomy 6 - Word applied to all things, set times of teaching and by the way teaching
- 4) Master, Husband, Father & Mistress, Wife, Mother - everyone put to useful work
- 5) Secret Private worship
 - a) Word
 - b) Prayer
 - c) Psalm
 - d) Vows
 - e) Thanksgiving
 - f) Fasting
- 6) Family private worship
 - a) Word
 - b) Prayer
 - c) Psalm
 - d) Oaths & Vows
 - e) Thanksgiving
 - f) Fasting