

INTRODUCTION

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Psalm 78 casts a multi-generational vision for the people of God. Asaph declares his intention to pass on to his children that which he and his generation learned from their fathers. By doing so, his children, in turn, can teach their children. “He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children” (Psalm 78:5-6).

The Bible teaches that children are “a heritage from the Lord” and that “the fruit of the womb is His reward” (Psalm 127:3). Each child is a gift from God. This makes parents stewards of God, entrusted with one (or more) of His greatest blessings. It also means that those who work with children are involved in a high calling.

The Truth and Grace Memory Books (TAG books) are designed to help parents, churches and children’s workers as they fulfill that calling. Three primary ingredients are found in each book.

TRUTH AND GRACE BOOK 3

First and foremost is the Word of God. Several passages have been carefully selected for memorization. All Scripture throughout the Scripture Memory section is in the English Standard Version. Key Bible verses as well as longer portions are designed to introduce children to the overall scope and purpose of God's creative, providential and redemptive activity. The student who completes all three books will memorize (among other texts) the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Lord's prayer, 1 Corinthians 13, various Psalms (including 119!), plus all the books of the Bible.

Why place such an emphasis on memorizing Scripture? Listen to the Psalmist's answer: "I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11). Furthermore, consider the great promise God makes in Isaiah 55:10–11: "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." God's Spirit uses the Scripture to speak to adults and children of all ages, calling them to faith in Christ and directing in the paths of real discipleship. Therefore, as a parent who prays for the salvation and spiritual growth of your child, you must be diligent in teaching him or her the Word of God.

INTRODUCTION

A second element in the workbook is a selection of sound Christian hymns to be learned and memorized. Many of these are familiar (such as the Doxology) and can be learned by very small children. Others are not so well-known but are profound in their communication of biblical truth. In all, more than 2 dozen great hymns of the faith are included.

A WORD ABOUT CATECHISMS

The third, and perhaps least familiar, ingredient are catechisms. A good catechism is a very effective tool in the hands of a dedicated parent or teacher. Each TAG book is built around a trustworthy, Baptist catechism. That term—"Baptist catechism"—may sound strange to many modern Baptists. They may think, as I did early in my life, that "catechism" is a Roman Catholic, Lutheran or, at best, Presbyterian word.

Of course, that simply is not true. "Catechize" is anglicized version of the Greek word, *katekeo*, which simply means "to teach." It appears, in various forms, several times in the Greek New Testament (it is translated as "taught" in Luke 1:4 and Acts 18:25).

Anyone, then, who has been taught has in some sense been catechized. But the word came to refer to a specific type of instruction early in church history. New Christians were taught the essentials of the faith by learning how to answer specific questions, which were eventually grouped

TRUTH AND GRACE BOOK 3

together and came to be referred to simply as a "catechism."

Tom Nettles has called the 16th-century Protestant Reformation the "golden age" of catechisms. In 1562 what is arguably the most influential one of all was published as the Heidelberg Catechism. Leading reformers, most notably Martin Luther and John Calvin, produced catechisms to teach both the essentials and distinctives of their faith. In the next century, the first modern Baptists followed suit.

Early Baptist leaders regarded catechetical instruction as a valuable method to teach both children and adults the doctrinal content of the Bible. Keach's Catechism (whose author, Benjamin Keach—a 17th-century English Baptist—modeled it after the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly) was widely used among Baptists in both England and America. Charles Spurgeon (19th-century English Baptist leader) revised it slightly and reissued it for use in the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

Early Southern Baptists freely employed catechisms. One of the first publications which the Sunday School Board produced was a catechism by James Boyce, founder and first President of Southern Seminary. John Broadus also wrote a catechism which was published by the board in the 19th century. Lottie Moon used a catechism in her missionary work in China.

The TAG Books stand firmly in this stream of Orthodox, Protestant and Baptist catechetical instruction. Each of the three books is based on a

INTRODUCTION

specific catechism. *The Baptist Catechism* is reproduced in the second book, and we use this original version of the catechism so that it matches *The Baptist Catechism* set to music (which can be purchased from Founders Ministries). A simpler, more elementary one, *A Catechism for Boys and Girls*, is used in the first and *The Heidelberg Catechism for Baptists* (which draws on *The Orthodox Catechism* of 1680) is used in the third.

A WORD TO PARENTS

Raising children in the 21st century is challenging, to say the least. The temptation on parents to merely get by is great. Sometimes moms and dads simply want to make it through with the fewest possible conflicts. When this attitude is adopted parents become passive and children learn to be manipulative and the result is that neither parents nor children are happy. Though tragic, it is sadly not uncommon to see Christian homes where parents have defaulted on the responsibilities that God has entrusted to them.

Teaching their children the Word of God is at the forefront of responsibilities for Christian parents. God specifically calls Christian parents to raise their children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). You cannot be passive and fulfill this responsibility to “bring them up” in the proper way. Prayer, discipline, godly example, and consistent, continuous, clear instruction are required.

TRUTH AND GRACE BOOK 3

The comprehensive nature of this responsibility is spelled out in Deuteronomy 6:4–6.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and 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.”

In the face of such a daunting responsibility I cannot overstate the value of a well-constructed catechism to help parents in this work. By learning such a catechism a child (or adult for that matter) will be introduced to the overall biblical scheme of salvation. Such discipline will frame the mind for receiving and understanding every part of the Bible. A good catechism trains a person to read the Bible theologically.

God places the responsibility for raising children squarely on the shoulders of their parents. It is not primarily the job of church leaders or the pastor. If you are a parent then recognizing and accepting this responsibility is one of the most important things you can do. If you do not invest your time and effort to teach your children about God, be assured someone else will. Your children will be disciplined by someone. They may get their ideas about God primarily from

INTRODUCTION

television, music or social media. If so, then they are likely to be taught that God, if He exists at all, is an irrelevant, indulgent being that is little more than a nice, kindly old man. If you do not teach your children truth and righteousness, be assured that there are a multitude of teachers in this world who would deceive them into thinking that truth is personal and morality is relative.

As a pastor I have spent my life teaching the church I serve to believe sound doctrine and to stand against the false teachers of our age whose views would destroy the souls of our young people. As a Christian you have every right to expect that the sermons and teaching heard in your church will reinforce the godly principles which you are trying to teach at home. But you have no right to expect your church to take the place of the home. God has given to parents the responsibility of teaching their children divine truth.

The *TAG* books have been designed to help you fulfill that assignment. The emphasis is on memorization. Some modern educators question the wisdom of teaching young children to memorize. Concern usually centers on the fear that the child is merely committing to memory meaningless words. This is a real danger—that we will be satisfied with hearing our children merely recite back to us words and sentences of which they have no understanding. That is why parents should carefully teach their children the material in these books. Personal understanding should always be the goal of our teaching. But