The word Catechism means ‘to teach orally’. Catechisms are a question and answer method of teaching. They have been used throughout church history and increased in use around the time of the Reformation.

Catechisms can be used to teach children sound doctrine, to teach new believers, as devotionals or as study guides. Throughout history, many catechisms have been written. There are many catechisms available and many commentaries on those catechisms. You can view some of these resources at reformers.com.au.

However, for this Reformers Recommends post we would like to focus on just four types of catechism and some resources that can help you use them in your family worship. For some further reading as to the importance and the ‘how to’ of catechizing children, see ‘Rediscovering Catechism’ by Donald Van Dyken or ‘Catechizing Our Children’ by Terry Johnson.

**THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM**

*“From the Lips of Little Ones”* by Jeff Kingswood contains 73 weeks worth of guided daily family devotions addressing one or two questions from the Westminster Shorter Catechism each week. The daily devotions are focused around God’s word. Each day you will read a passage of the bible and Jeff has provided notes on where to lead the discussion in order to highlight the bible teaching about the catechism question of the week.

*“Training Hearts, Teaching Minds”* by Starr Meade is probably more suited to an older audience - perhaps a family with children aged 10+ - although families with younger children will still benefit greatly. Each question of the Westminster Catechism has 6 days worth of guided family devotions. These devotions are a little more in-depth including at times several different passages of scripture.

*The Shorter Catechism Activity Book* by Marianne Ross is full of puzzles that give the answers to the questions of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Suitable for primary school age children, this will particularly appeal to children who enjoy puzzles and logic games.

**THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM**

*“Comforting Hearts, Teaching Minds”* by Starr Meade is a similar layout to Training Hearts, Teaching Minds and is likely appropriate for children aged 10+ as well. The Heidelberg Catechism is divided up into 52 Lord’s Days and Starr provides 6-12 short guided devotions for each of these.

Truth & Grace Memory Book 3 - Described further below, this workbook also takes children through the Heidelberg Catechism.

**BAPTIST CATECHISMS**

*“Teaching Truth, Training Hearts”* by Thomas J. Nettles. Baptists have historically had a love for catechisms and have written many over the years. Founders Press have collated seven of the best of these into a great volume called *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts* that will provide a large resource base for family devotions and for catechizing children.

**Truth & Grace Memory Books, edited by Thomas Ascol**

*Book 1* is for children age 2 to 8 and contains a historic baptist catechism called *A Catechism for Boys and Girls*. There are also suggested Scripture memory, and hymns that serve to strengthen children to love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength.

*Book 2* is for ages 9 to 12 and contains *The Shorter Catechism: A Baptist Version* along with suggested Scripture memory and hymns.

*Book 3* is for ages 13 to 16 and contains *The Heidelberg Catechism: A Baptist Edition*. This book also has suggested scripture memory and hymns.

**THE NEW CITY CATECHISM**

Last on our list is *“The New City Catechism”* which is a new catechism brought out by Redeemer Presbyterian - Timothy Keller’s church. This catechism was not written in order to bring something new but instead it was written in the hope of bringing the church back to the old practice of catechesis. The New City Catechism has some great features including visual representations, guides as to the response the catechism questions should invoke and highlighted sections that are perfect for younger children to memorise.

*“The New City Catechism Devotional”* is suitable for private devotions as well as family devotions. It contains an explanation of each catechism question along with commentary from a theologian (including Calvin, Spurgeon, Keller and others).

Families with young children could just use the catechism with the recommended text and those with older children would benefit from considering the commentary provided in the devotional.