Covenant Family Home Training Guide

Bruce C. Stewart
A guide recommended to parents for use in the home to help in rearing covenant children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord."

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."
Proverbs 22:6

Name of Child _________________________________
Date of Birth _________________________________
Date of Baptism _______________________________
Date of Public Profession of Faith ________________________

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Bruce C. Stewart

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INTRODUCTION

A covenant responsibility

This Guide for instruction is designed to assist Christian parents in their high calling of giving systematic and effective training to their children in the home.

Under the Covenant of Grace the children of believing parents are included with them in their covenant relationship with God. Infant baptism is administered as an acknowledgment of that covenant relationship. In addition to that promise claimed vows taken by the parents at the time of the baptism of their children show clearly the parents’ covenant responsibilities to provide for their children’s education as God enables them, to acquaint them with their lost condition and need of a Savior, to set before them a godly example, to use parental authority with firmness yet with love and tenderness, and to instruct them in the plan of salvation and the principles of our covenanted profession.

Both from history and from Scripture the home is shown to be the basic unit of Christian Education. While teaching in the church setting is also essential and Scriptural, its primary function is to supplement home training given by Christian parents. The Church School, with one or two hours of instruction each week—commendable as this may be, is not meant to be the only source of Christian Education. Christian parents in the home have this basic responsibility; and when the home and the church work together, tremendous opportunities for Christian growth and development may result.

While the major thrust of this booklet is upon the training which takes place at home, there will also be a strong emphasis upon the participation of the family in the life and worship of the local congregation of God’s people. The Scriptures call for all of the members of the family to attend the public worship services of their church each Lord’s Day. In addition, they are to seek opportunities for training, fellowship and service. The church supplements Christian nurture in the home, and the family develops and matures as it is vitally involved in the corporate life of the church.
Other very important aspect of training is the education which children receive in school during the week. In light of the increasing secularism and humanism that is infiltrating our public schools, parents are encouraged to consider prayerfully how they best can fulfill their responsibility to educate their children. While Christian schools undoubtedly cost additional expense and effort on the part of the parents, we highly recommend that they seriously be considered and supported.

Using this Guide

The Christian nurture of our children begins even before their birth, and our Lord continues to bless infants now even as He did when He was here on earth. Our prayers for them and love to them is a means God uses to develop our children even when they are very young. As they grow older, however, there is to be specific instruction and training. The goal of this Guide is to provide suggestions at each age level which will assist the parents. There is a sequence of daily Bible readings, verses of Scripture to be memorized, Catechism questions and answers to be learned, Psalms (both words and music) to be mastered, and books to be read and studied. Many of these activities may be integrated into Family Worship. Suggestions for conducting Family Worship are included in this booklet on page 3. Books recommended at one age level often will be appropriate for succeeding age levels as well.

Grade levels are divided into three-year sequences. At the beginning of each sequence are some suggestions to parents about common traits and aptitudes of children of that age group. Each child, however, must be treated as an individual with his own personal characteristics and talents. At the end of each three-year sequence are several books suggested to parents for study. A basic library for the Christian home is suggested on page 18. Books published or distributed by the Reformed Presbyterian Board of Education and Publication may be obtained by writing to the address given on the inside of the front cover.

The assignments in this Guide are not meant to be easy, but we believe them to be within the reach of children who have the encouragement of conscientious parents. They are to be seen not as a task to be endured, but as a joyful opportunity to be anticipated. This will depend on the attitude of the parents. These assignments should be considered only as minimum requirements for home training. Basically, it is our desire to show that there can be a Biblical standard of training for our children and youth, and it is our fervent prayer that God will develop in our children a true knowledge of Him and His Word, a sincere commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and a consistent Christian life.

Some helps for Family Worship

Family Worship! Family Devotions! The Family Altar! Different names may be used, but the important thing is to gather each day as a family in the home to take time to worship God. Choose a time which can be scheduled regularly and is as free as possible from interruptions. Many families find that the time immediately following breakfast or dinner is best. While Christian parents are concerned that every activity of their family should glorify God, the daily times for Family Worship are a unique opportunity to train and develop the spiritual life of their children.

Family Worship should include three things:

1. Singing to God
2. Listening to God
3. Talking to God

Join together in praise. Sing from memory until everyone can read; then sing from a book of praise which leads the family to honor God. We recommend The Book of Psalms for Singing. (Board of Education and Publication, 800 Wood Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15221) Using motions to “act out” some of the Psalms makes the singing more appealing and significant for small children. Learning to sing parts adds to the harmony and joy of singing.

Join together in listening to what God has to say to your family by reading the Scriptures daily. When the children are young help them to become thoroughly familiar with the stories of the Bible. We recommend that these stories be read from sound Bible story books written for the age level of the child. (See recommendations on each page.) As the children begin to learn to read they should be encouraged not only to read the Bible story books themselves, but also to begin reading “verses in turn” from the Bible with the family. Help your family to become thoroughly familiar with the “story” of the Bible, namely God’s covenant to redeem a people for His name through Jesus Christ. As the children get older help them to become thoroughly familiar with particular books of the Bible, discussing the theme of each partic-
In addition to the verses suggested each year for memory, it may be helpful to learn a key verse or two from each book. (For example, Genesis 1:1, God's creation; Exodus 20:1-3, God's law given; Leviticus 17:11, blood atonement; Numbers 21:8, an Old Testament picture of Christ; Deuteronomy 6:4, the greatest commandment.) Such verses can be learned by drill or even by competition, but the purpose should always be to know what God's Word has to say about our redemption in Christ and how we are to live as His people from day to day. To this end children may be encouraged to act out Bible stories or to make a game of learning Bible truth such as, "I know a Bible character whose name begins with A," or "I'm thinking of something in the Old Testament that belongs to the mineral kingdom" ( Twenty questions approach).

Join together in expressing your desires to God in prayer. Praying for specific things helps to teach the children that God is there and that He deals with every part of life. Keep prayers short and to the point, encouraging each member of the family to participate as he is able. Before you pray it may be helpful to discuss what you should pray for. Show the importance of adoration, thanksgiving and confession as well as petition. Avoid preaching to other members of the family in prayer. Keep it God-centered.

It is important to keep the overall length of Family Worship geared to the children's attention span. If children raise questions, take time to discuss them. Help them to apply God's Word to their daily activities. Variety of order as well as variety of approach may help to maintain the continued interest of each member of the family. Pray that God will help you to plan Family Worship so that your family will anticipate it with joy.

Specific guides for Family Worship are available. We recommend The Family Altar (Back to God Hour, 6555 West College Drive, Palos Heights, IL 60463) and Encounter With God (Scripture Union, 1716 Spruce St., Philadelphia, PA 19103).

**FOR PRE-SCHOOLERS**

There is a very rapid development both physically and in interest and comprehension during the pre-school years. Extremely wiggly with a short attention span (3-7 minutes) at first, Pre-Schoolers like action stories, action Psalms, and are quite willing to have them over and over again. They are natural imitators and respond especially to pictures and other visual aids. Do not underestimate their ability to learn about God and His Word. Habits of attendance at church and church school should be established during these years.

**AGES 2-4**

**READ TO THE CHILD:**
- Marian's Favorite Bible Stories by Schooland (Eerdmans)
- The Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes by Taylor (Moody)

**MEMORIZE:**
- Verses: John 4:24
- John 4:31
- Ephesians 6:1
- John 14:6
- John 10:11

**Catechism for Young Children:** Answers to Questions 1-17

**Prayers:** "Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep"
- Mealtime Blessings (some variety—such as, "Dear God, Thank You for this food. In Jesus Name, Amen.")
- or "God is great, and God is good.
- And we thank Him for this food.
- By His hand we all are fed.
- Thank you, Lord, for daily bread.")
FIVE YEARS OF AGE

READ TO THE CHILD:
- Marian's Big Book of Bible Stories by Schoolland (Eerdmans)
- I Learn About the Bible by Nystrom (Creation House)
- Angels and Me by Nystrom (Creation House)
- A Child's Garden of Bible Stories by Gross (Concordia)

READ FOR HIMSELF: (May need help)
- I Learn to Read About Jesus (Standard)
- Learning to Read from the Bible Primers by Beers (Zondervan)
- May I Help You?
- Do You Love Me?
- Do You Know My Friend?
- Will You Come With Me?

MEMORIZE:
- Catechism for Young Children: Answers to Questions 18-25
- Psalms: 121A, vs. 1-4, At Mealtimes: Psalm 34A, v. 3, 1A, vs. 1-6, 147A, vs. 2, 3

BOOKS FOR PARENTS OF PRE-SCHOOLERS
- Promise and Deliverance Vols. I-IV by DeGraaf (Paideia)
- Withhold Not Correction by Ray (Baker)
- Dare to Discipline by Dobson (Revel)
- Understanding the Pupil, Part I-The Pre-School Child by Soderholm (Baker)
- Little Folded Hands by Johsmann (Concordia)
- Children are Wet Cement by Ortland (Revel)

(Most of these books will have continuing relevance as the child gets older.)

FOR GRADES 1 - 3

During these years the child learns to read for himself and begins to have a sense of responsibility for his own conduct. He learns to make decisions on the basis of Christian (or non-Christian) teaching and principles. Physically, he grows less than in previous years, but existing skills and characteristics are stabilize and perfected. He thrives on noise and action, so dramatic presentation of Bible stories and truth is in order. This is a time when memorizing comes easily and patterns of study are established. Regular family attendance at Church and Church School is extremely important.

FIRST GRADE

READ TO THE CHILD:
- A Child's Garden of Bible Stories by Gross (Concordia)
- My Picture Story Bible by Korfker (Zondervan)
- My Favorite Story Book by VandeHeist (Paideia)
- Muffin Family Series by Beers (Moody)

READ:
- I Read About God's Love by Ferntile (Standard)
- Learning to Read from the Bible Readers by Beers (Zondervan)
- God is My Helper
- God is My Friend
- Arch Books (Concordia)
- Happy Day Books (Standard)

MEMORIZE:
- Catechism for Young Children: Answers to Questions 26-50
- Psalms: 122A, vs. 1-3, At Mealtimes: Psalm 107A, v. 6, 46C, vs. 1-3, 4A, v. 8

The names of the Twelve Disciples (Matthew 10:2-4)
SECOND GRADE

READ TO THE CHILD:
A Child's Garden of Bible Stories by Gross (Concordia)
My Picture Story Bible by Korfier (Zondervan)
Leading Little Ones to God by Schoolcraft (Eerdmans)
Susie's Babies by Clarkson (Eerdmans)
A Gaggle of Green Geese by Beers (Moody)
(and other books in this series by Beers)

MEMORIZE:
Scriptures: Revelation 3:20
I Timothy 1:15
Psalm 8:1-9
John 15:1-11
Review verses from previous years.
The Books of the New Testament
Psalms:
15, vs. 1-3
25C, vs. 7-9
40A, vs. 1-4
At mealtimes: Psalm 111A: v. 5

READ:
I Read About God's Gifts by Ferntile (Standard)
Learning to Read from the Bible Readers by Beers (Zondervan)
Jesus is My Guide
Jesus is My Teacher
Leaves and Fishes by Hunt et al (Herald)
(Depending on the child's ability he or she may be able to read from
some of the books recommended to be read to the child, yet even
though he masters reading very quickly, there is still great value in
the parent reading to the child.)

THIRD GRADE

DAILY BIBLE READING:
Child's Story Bible Reader (RP Board of Education and Publica-
tion) This reader suggests short readings from Scripture each day
which are correlated with the Child's Story Bible. This reading
may still be done in connection with Family Worship, yet at some
point the child should be encouraged to begin his own personal
devotions. Bible reading in successive years will be suggested from
that perspective.

MEMORIZE:
Scriptures: John 5:24
John 10:9
Psalm 121:1-8
Matthew 5:1-16
Psalm 34B, v. 4
Psalm 119B, vs. 1-4
Psalm 136A, vs. 1, 13
Psalm 51D, vs. 1-4

READ:
Bible Adventures by Ferntile (Standard)
Child's Story Bible by Vos (Eerdmans)
How Young Fu Saved a Bible by Huston (RP Board of Ed. and
Pub.)

BOOKS FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN
GRADES 1-3

Understanding the Pupil, Part II—The Primary and Junior
Child by Solderholm (Baker)
Honey for a Child's Heart by Hunt (Zondervan)
What Is Christian Education? by Vos (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)
How to Really Love Your Child by Campbell (Victor)
During these years the child is at the threshold of curiosity and wants to know why things happen. While he can take some responsibility, he also needs guidelines and prodding to get the job done. He can memorize very well, and appreciates competition with and approval of his age group. He is also quite responsive to adult approval and guidance. He has reached an age when he can think seriously, form good (or bad) habits, and is not too young to confess faith in Christ. Parents are well reminded of their vows to pray with and for their children, and to attend the services of the Church with them.

FOURTH GRADE

**DAILY BIBLE READING:**
Child's Story Bible Reader (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)

**MEMORIZE:**
- Scriptures: Mark 10:45, 1 John 5:4, 5, John 3:14-18, Matthew 2:1-10
- Review verses from previous years.
- Westminster Shorter Catechism: Questions and Answers: 1-38
- Psalms: 135B, vs. 1-3; At mealtimes: Psalm 128A, vs. 1-4; 43, vs. 1-5; 44A, vs. 1-3

**READ:**
- Child's Story Bible by Vos (Eerdmans)
- Two Spies on a Rooftop by Radius (Baker)
- Meet John Calvin by Shaw (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)
- Bible Heroes by Fsertile (Standard)
- The Narnia Chronicles by Lewis (MacMillan)

**FIFTH GRADE**

**DAILY BIBLE READING:**
Child's Story Bible Reader (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)

**MEMORIZE:**
- Review verses from previous years.
- Westminster Shorter Catechism: Questions and Answers: 1-52
- Psalms: 19A, vs. 1-4, At mealtimes: Psalm 146A, vs. 5, 7
- 19B, vs. 5-9, 67A, vs. 1-3

**READ:**
- Covenanter History by Elliott (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)
- The Beggars' Bible by Vernon (Herald)
- Child's Story Bible by Vos (Eerdmans)
- Story Bible for Older Children by DeVries (Paideia)
- Vol. 1, Old Testament
- Journey Through the Night Vol. 1-4 by DeVries (Paideia)

**SIXTH GRADE**

**DAILY BIBLE READING:**
Child's Story Bible Reader (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)

**MEMORIZE:**
- Scriptures: Isaiah 55:6-11, Ephesians 2:8, 9, Romans 8:12-18, Genesis 8:20-22, Romans 8:26-39
- Review verses from previous years.
- Westminster Shorter Catechism: Questions and Answers: 1-69
- Psalms: 148, vs. 1-5, At mealtimes: Psalm 80B, vs. 8, 51E, vs. 5-7, 119M, vs. 1, 2

**READ:**
- Child's Story Bible by Vos (Eerdmans)
- Story Bible for Older Children by DeVries (Paideia)
A Wrinkle in Time by L'Engle (Dell)
(and other books by Madeline L'Engle)
The Adventures of Captain Al Scabbard by Crabb (Moody)

BOOKS FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN GRADES 4-6
Understanding the Pupil—Part II: The Primary and Junior Child by Soderholm (Baker)
Honey for a Child's Heart by Hunt (Zondervan)
The Strong Willed Child by Dobson (Tyndale)
I Wonder—Answers to Questions Children Ask by Jahsmann (Concordia)

FOR GRADES 7 - 9

During these years the young person begins the delightful but painful transition from childhood to adulthood. He needs to develop independence but within certain bounds. This is a period of physical growth spurt with attendant awkwardness and insecurity. Yet it is also a time of decisions, initiative, and social development. Family influence is vital to spiritual growth; if parents are indifferent, the Junior High young person may easily take the line of least resistance to be like his non-Christian acquaintances. It is in this age group that many Covenant children make a public profession of faith in Christ. It is wise to encourage them to become actively involved in the youth program of the church.

SEVENTH GRADE

DAILY BIBLE READING:
Daily Bible Reader No. 1 (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.) (This is the first of a three-year program which will read through the Bible completely in three years.)

MEMORIZE:
Scriptures: Genesis 12:1-4, Genesis 17:1-8
Isaiah 57:20, 21
Philippians 4:4, 7
Romans 5:1-8
Westminster Shorter Catechism: Questions and Answers: 1-107
Psalms: 24C, vs. 1-5
146A, vs. 1-4

READ:
Call of the Wild by London (MacMillan)
Johnny Tremain by Forbes (Houghton)
The Hobbit by Lewis (MacMillan)
Trilogy of the Ring by Tolkein
Space Trilogy by Lewis (MacMillan)

STUDY:
God's Providence—God's Covenants (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)

EIGHTH GRADE

DAILY BIBLE READING:
Daily Bible Reader No. 2 (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)

MEMORIZE:
Scriptures: Isaiah 57:20, 21, Isaiah 53:1-12
Philippians 2:5-13, 1 Corinthians 10:13

Westminster Shorter Catechism: Questions and Answers: 1-107
Psalms: 92A, vs. 1-3
146A, vs. 1-7
103 A, vs. 1-4
READ:
Torchbearers of the Truth by Horne (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)
He Gathers the Lambs by Lambregtse (Paideia)
Wreck of the Mary Deare by Hammon-Innes (Westminster)
Little Britches by Moody (Norton)

STUDY:
Studies in the Shorter Catechism by Settle (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)

NINTH GRADE

DAILY BIBLE READING:
Daily Bible Reader No. 3 (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)

MEMORIZE:

Westminster Shorter Catechism: Review Questions and Answers 1-107

Psalms: 78A, vs. 1-3 At mealtimes: Psalm 78C, vs. 10,11 145C, vs. 9-13 29A, vs. 1-6

READ:
Fox's Book of Martyrs (Zondervan)
Through Gates of Splendor by Elliott (Harper)
Beginning Book of Doctrine by Hendricksen (Baker)

STUDY:
Studies in the Shorter Catechism by Settle (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)

BOOKS FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN
IN GRADES 7-9

Understanding the Pupil, Part III—The Adolescent by Solderholm (Baker)
Preparing for Adolescence by Dobson (Vision House)
Honey for a Child's Heart by Hunt (Zondervan)

FOR GRADES 10-12

During these years the young person is an adult physically and psychologically, yet he lacks in maturity and experience. He will be critical, increasingly independent and self-assured, yet he still responds to understanding and responsibility and love. He will be primarily concerned with his age group approval, but is still open to wise parental guidance and counsel. Doubts should be faced, not submerged. Questions should be discussed as objectively as possible bringing God's Word to bear upon them, and encouraging him to arrive at answers through study of the Word, and confidence in its message. Service as well as attendance should be encouraged in the church. Sharing his faith with his peers will be one indication of growing spiritual maturity.

TENTH GRADE

DAILY BIBLE READING:
Daily Bible Reader No. 1 (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)

MEMORIZE:

Review verses from previous years.
ELEVENTH GRADE

DAILY BIBLE READING:
Daily Bible Reader No. 2 (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)

MEMORIZE:
 Scriptures:
- Philippians 4:13
- John 1:1-14
- Colossians 3:1-4
- II Timothy 1:12
- Colossians 3:12-17

Westminster Shorter Catechism: Review Questions and Answers, 1-107
Psalms: 91A, vs. 1-4
139A, vs. 1-4, 13
132B, vs. 7-11

READ:
Pilgrim’s Progress by Bunyan (Zondervan)
Teen-Ager, Your Church is for You by Reiss (Concordia)
(and other books by Reiss)
Young Only Once by Naramore (Zondervan)
Phantastes/Lilith by MacDonald (Eerdmans)

STUDY:
The Westminster Confession of Faith and
The Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Chapters 1-11 (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)
Understanding Biblical Doctrine, by Nickerson (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)

BOOKS FOR PARENTS OF TEEN-AGERS
How to Disciple Your Children by Henrickson (Victor)
How to Really Love Your Teenager by Campbell (Victor)
The Westminster Confession: A Study Manual by Williamson (Presbyterian and Reformed)
Why Believe? (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)

TWELFTH GRADE

DAILY BIBLE READING:
Daily Bible Reader No. 3 (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)

MEMORIZE:
 Scriptures:
- II Corinthians 9:8
- Romans 1:16, 17
- Matthew 6:19-34
- Romans 10:9, 10
- I John 3:1-3
- Romans 12:1, 2

Review verses from previous years.

Westminster Shorter Catechism: Review Questions and Answers, 1-107
Psalms: 127A, vs. 1-4
118C, vs. 10-17
113A, vs. 1-5

READ:
A Christian Manifesto by Schaeffer (Crossway)
The Mark of the Christian by Schaeffer (Inter-Varsity)
How to Decide What’s Really Important by B essenr (Regal)
Men of the Covenant by Smellie (Banner of Truth)
The Man of Geneva by Johnson (Banner of Truth)

STUDY:
The Westminster Confession of Faith and
The Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Chapters 23-33 (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.)
SUGGESTED BASIC LIBRARY
FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS

Next to the Bible itself, the most highly recommended book in this Guide for the Christian home is THE BOOK OF PSALMS FOR SINGING (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.).

Also of tremendous help for reference and study is THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (includes Westminster Confession of Faith and Westminster Shorter Catechism) (RP Board of Ed. and Pub.).

In addition, most of the following books will be available from your Christian bookseller. While needs and interests are different, the order below is generally one of priority.

1. A good study Bible with helps such as a concordance and maps. A good example is the Thompson Chain Reference Bible (B.B. Kirkbride).
2. Several modern translations of the Bible. The New American Standard Bible and the New International Version are highly recommended as well as the New King James Bible.
3. Several good one-volume commentaries such as The New Bible Commentary (Eerdmans), Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible (Zondervan) or Halley's Bible Handbook (Zondervan).
4. A good Bible dictionary such as The New Bible Dictionary (Eerdmans) or David Dictionary of the Bible (Baker).
5. Good books on the Christian home such as Christian Living in the Home by Adams (Baker) and Learning to Be A Family by McDonald (Tyndale) and Family Problems and Predicaments: How to Respond by Walter (Tyndale).
6. Good books on the Reformed faith such as the Reformed Doctrine of Predestination by Bovon (Baker) and The Five Points of Calvinism by Steele and Thomas (Presbyterian and Reformed).
7. Encyclopedic reference works like Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible (Eerdmans); The Victor Handbook of Bible Knowledge (Victor); and The Bible Almanac by Packer, Tenney and White (Nelson).

In addition, you will want to secure books about family fun and games, Christian biography, your own denominational standards, history and development, and books dealing in greater depth with individual books of the Bible and specific issues your family is facing. There is a wealth of excellent books available today, but choose wisely to make good books available in your home. Your own example of reading and the books you provide will be a great incentive to your family.