

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.

Goals of Document:

- 1) Identify Novices¹ 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 grow, build, or 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 how to be useful in this process so that those who help can have the joy of seeing the novice become “a young man in the faith” who is stable rather than a source of chaos, and can participate in the work as a fellow soldier and laborer alongside other saints.

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

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

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 the elect.
- 4) The redemption purchased by Christ is applied to them by the Holy Spirit giving 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 Child in the Faith, a Novice, 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**, what they mean, and **how to sing them** for private and household worship, The Westminster **Shorter Catechism, Church Covenant**,
- 2) Focus Bible Reading and Meditation on: Genesis 1-9, John, Romans, Proverbs 1-9
- 3) Focus Psalm singing on **a few shorter Psalms** and **how to sing them** Like: 1, 2, 3, 4, 19, 23, 24, 25, 51, 93, 100, 110, 117, 119a, 127, 128, 133, 134

Hebrews 6:1-2 - Axioms, Foundational things, Basic things - 6:1 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: Guilty for Adam's sin, Guilty for Corruption of Nature (not believing and not glorifying God), Guilty for particular sins of Omission & Commission
- b) Inability to save self

2) Faith toward God

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

3) Doctrine of Baptisms

- a) Outward washings at times of entry into or renewal of Covenant Community symbolizing the removal of guilt, setting apart, & removal of corruption & then continued cleansing in sanctification.
 - i) Symbol of Objective Reality for Elect of Justification & Sanctification
 - ii) Symbol of Inward Reality of Regeneration & Sanctification

4) Doctrine of the Laying on of Hands

- a) Symbol of Transference - Ordination, Authority, & Power of Officers - Guilt Transference, Healing, Blessing

5) Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead

- a) Immortality of the Soul
- b) Resurrection of the Body

6) Everlasting Judgment

- a) Providential Judgments
 - i) Rewards, Punishments, Discipline, & Testing
- b) The Last Judgment
 - i) Justification & Condemnation
 - ii) Rewards & Punishments
 - (1) Good works and Evil Deeds Defined

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

- 1) **Scripture** - 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 any ability of man, or the ability of any other mere creature.
 - a) **Grace Defined** - Demerited Favor. Grace is a subcategory of favor, love. God's favor is His desire for the good of the object. God's favor is either merited or unmerited. Grace is unmerited, and more than that, Grace (mercy) is demerited.
 - b) **God is all powerful** - God not only can do whatever He wants, but He does do 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. All whom God desires the good of are those who God desires to save. All whom God desires to save He does save.
- 3) **Faith Alone** - We are connected to the work of Christ and His merit by the alone instrument³ of faith in Christ and not by works or any other instrument.
 - a) **Faith Defined** - Faith is understanding information, and thinking that the information is true. Faith and belief are the same thing.
 - b) **Saving Faith Defined** - Saving Faith is understanding the saving information and thinking that the saving information is true.
 - c) **The Content of Saving Faith** - The saving information is the Gospel. To believe the Gospel is to believe in Christ and *vice versa*.
 - d) **The Source of Saving Faith** - Faith in Christ is a gift from God.
- 4) **Christ Alone** - The only basis upon which we have standing before God is the full debt payment and perfective positive merit of Christ and not our own merit or the merit of any mere creature or any other besides Christ alone.
 - 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). Christ is the only mediator between God and Man.
 - b) 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 and not to any other. The Solas guard the goal of God in history of showing His glory, His attributes, especially His attributes of being both just and merciful.

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.

II) The Trinity

- 1) **“There is one definition of God, and there are three persons that meet that definition.”**
- 2) WSC 4-6
- 3) See Church Covenant Vow 3

III) The Covenants

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

- a) An eternal 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 mercy (redemption). They each agree to fulfill their individual roles in subsidiary covenants to be made with man in time.

2) The Covenant of Works

- a) A covenant between God & Adam; Adam represents all his posterity (descendants) by ordinary generation (normal way of having children). Adam owes God perfect obedience, he and his posterity will get life or death based on his obedience or disobedience.
- b) Adam is given the Creation Ordinances
 - i) Dominion; fill and subdue the earth; multiply
 - ii) Work & Sabbath; work 6 days, rest 1 day to worship 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

- 1) **“Christ has two natures, divine and human; two minds, divine and human; united by covenant as one legal person.”**
- 2) WSC 21-22
- 3) Church Covenant Vow 4

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

- 1) **God's Glory - God is the Good.** - The Good is the most valuable thing. The Good is the thing that you should only trade for but that you should never trade away. God is the Good. God is His attributes, His glory. God's glory, God, is the Good.
- 2) **God Glorifies Himself - God's Goal** of the Intra-Trinitarian Covenant in Creation & History - Creation & History exist to display the glory of God.
- 3) **Man Ought to Glorify God - Man's Individual Goal;** knowing God & Showing God - 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. This results in Joy & comes with Historical rewards & Last Judgement rewards.
- 4) **How man Possesses God** - The Knowledge of God - How man possesses God's attributes; How man possesses God's glory; How man Possesses God.
- 5) **Glorifying & Enjoying God vs Glorifying God without Enjoying Him - The Good Life vs The Bad Life-** A pattern of life defined by the Law of God is given to us to know how to obtain our own purpose and joy. We are to seek to know God and to show God by doing what God commands. Everything else is vain, wasteful, and foolish.⁴
- 6) **Men Ought to Glorify God - Man's Corporate Goal** - God's Plan to maximally display His glory - Creation is a stage. History is a play. The filling of the earth with the knowledge of the glory of God occurs in giving men knowledge & causing Cultural displays of the glory of God by the creation & maintenance of godly cultivation of nature & godly culture. If we seek to live well as individuals and organize into households, churches, and states under the authority of the Word of God, then the Church will manifest the Glory of her king (Jesus) as each part fills the purpose of functioning in the body.

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

VI) TULIP - Defending the Solas from Historical Heresies

- 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. We are in constant transgression of the Law of God because of unbelief.
- 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 on God). It is of His mere good pleasure, for His glory, that He chooses which angels He will uphold to be rewarded for their own righteousness and which men He will save in Christ and which angels & men He will condemn justly for sin.
- 3) **Limited Atonement** - Christ's work on the cross to redeem is a full satisfaction for those whom God intended to save - the elect. Everyone that Jesus came to save had a sin debt, and He paid for that sin debt in full on the cross only for His elect, and no one was paid for except for the elect.
 - a) If Christ died for all of the sins of all people 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 all people then no one is saved.
 - c) If Christ died for some of the sins of some people then no one is saved.
 - d) Only if Christ died to pay for all of the sins of some people can Scripture be true and anyone be saved.
- 4) **Irresistible Grace** - Grace is demerited favor. Favor is love, the desire for the good of the object. God does all that He pleases. If He desires the good of an object He desires to bring about the ultimate good of that object. For a sinner the good of that sinner would include the salvation of that person. If God desires to save a person, then He will accomplish that goal. We cannot stop or change His plans and He does not stop or change Himself; He is all powerful and unchanging. If He chooses us, He will effectually bring about our salvation. God's demerited favor is not based on anything in us or done by us.
- 5) **Perseverance (Preservation) of the Saints** - Whom God saves by giving the gift of faith God preserves by maintaining the faith He has given. God will complete the good work that He has started in a believer. He does not half build towers or start to fight only to give up. We cannot lose our faith, we will persevere in belief because He will preserve us in belief. We cannot lose our salvation. God promises to glorify all whom He justifies. Those who profess to believe and then fall away never really believed, or else they have not really fallen away.

VII) The Covenants with Man & Covenant Institutions

- 1) **Covenant of Works:**
 - a) Adam (Genesis 1-2 - **Individual & Household Established**)

- 2) **Covenant of Grace - Old Covenant:**
 - a) Adam (Genesis 3-6:8 - **Church Established**),
 - b) Noah (Genesis 6:9-9:29 - **State Established**),
 - c) Abraham (Genesis 15, 17),
 - d) Moses (Exodus 12, 20),
 - e) David (2 Samuel 7)

- 3) **Covenant of Grace - New Covenant:**
 - a) Christ (Jeremiah 31; Ezekiel 37)

VIII) The Outward & Ordinary Means of Grace

- 1) WSC 82-107
- 2) **Word** - focus on reading, meditating upon, hearing read & preached, & discussing the Word of God is the principle means of growth in grace (sanctification).
- 3) **Sacrament** - Baptism is a Covenanting with God and the church and helps to establish a place of mutual commitment to work through issues and have defined duties. The Lord's Supper is a Recovenanting of the same covenant that renews this covenant.
- 4) **Prayer** - Asking the Father for things we are commanded to ask, in the name of the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Spending time in prayer brings blessings as asked for and builds faith and a blessed dependence upon God.
- 5) **All Ordinances** - Every commandment from the Word when done in faith, for the glory of God is ordinarily used to build up our faith (sanctification) and generally results in blessing here and now and always results in blessing and reward at the great judgment.

IX) The Law - Summarized in the 2 Great Commandments & the 10 Commandments, the Triple Obligation, Definitions, Uses, Types, & Levels

- 1) WSC 39-81
- 2) **The Greatest Commandment** - Love God with all your being (mind, soul, heart, strength) - **The First Table** of the Law teaches us how to love God:
 - a) **1st Commandment** - No other gods – What to serve & worship.
 - b) **2nd Commandment** - No idols – How to serve & worship.
 - c) **3rd Commandment** - Don't take the Lord's name in vain – With what attitude to serve & worship.
 - d) **4th Commandment** - Remember the Sabbath - When to serve & worship.
- 3) **The Second Greatest Commandment** - Love your neighbor as yourself - **The Second Table** of the Law teaches us how to love our neighbor:
 - a) **5th Commandment** - Honor your father and mother – respect, affection, and duty toward legitimate authority in various spheres.
 - b) **6th Commandment** - Don't murder – protect life of self & neighbor, protect peace & well-being.
 - c) **7th Commandment** - Do not commit adultery – lawful and moderate use of pleasures, modesty, chaste thoughts, propitious speech and behavior
 - d) **8th Commandment** - Do not steal – property rights
 - e) **9th Commandment** - Do not bear false witness against your neighbor – Do not lie. Promote the truth. Guard your reputation and the reputations of others.
 - f) **10th Commandment** - 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.
- 4) **The Triple Obligation** of obedience from the preface to the Ten Commandments:
 - 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.

- 5) The **3 Definitions** of “Law” - the word “Law” is used in at least these three ways in the Bible:
 - a) Law as - The **Whole Counsel** of God
 - b) Law as - The **Old Testament**
 - c) Law as - The **Commands** / The Covenant of Works

- 6) The **3 Uses** of the Law
 - a) **Mirror** - The Law shows us the justice of God & our guilt & need of a savior
 - b) **Chain** - The Law restrains the external expressions of sin even in the unregenerate to limit harms that would be caused by outbursts of evil.
 - c) **Lamp** - The Law lights the path to show the regenerate the way that he should go.

- 7) The **3 Types** of Law
 - a) **Moral** - The Law written without corruption on the heart of Adam, and that is suppressed in the heart of fallen man. Summarized by the Two Great Commandments and expanded upon by the 10 Commandments.
 - b) **Civil** - The Law about the Administration of the State of Israel. The Civil Law is ended with the ending of the State of Israel, but communicates principles of Justice that are applicable in all nations and civil states.
 - c) **Ceremonial** - Rituals and symbols used to (1) point forward to Christ as types and shadows or (2) elucidate various moral duties.

- 8) The **3 Levels** of Law
 - a) **General Commands** - Heads of Doctrine⁵
 - b) **Case Laws** - “If ..., Then ...”⁶
 - c) Approved or Disapproved **Examples**

X) Conflict Resolution

- 1) **3 Steps of Matthew 18:**
 - a) 1:1,
 - b) with witnesses,
 - c) church council

⁵ Apodictic Law

⁶ Casuistic Law

2) **4 G's** defining the goal & focus, but also the process of Conflict Resolution:

a) **Glorify God,**

- i) The Goal & Focus to seek in all conflict
- ii) Think in such a way as to keep your eye on the glory of God in the midst of the conflict.
- iii) Behave in such a way as to give honor to God while you are in conflict.
- iv) Consider the **5 Acceptable Conclusions** and determine if Conflict is best or not.

b) **Get the log out,**

- i) What did you do to contribute to the conflict?
 - (1) If you have areas of sin that need to be confessed, then do so early.
 - (2) Do not make up things to apologize about.
- ii) If you know you have sinned in the process, then start by Biblically repenting by giving a **7 A Apology**
- iii) For self (normally do not share) - if no sin on your part is evident at least consider how you could have dealt better with the situation.

c) **Gently rebuke,**

- i) **Establish Charges** - (Law - find the most clear way that the charge violates the law of God) Are the charges demonstrably sin if the charges are true? If not, then the charges are unlawful and repentance cannot be lawfully demanded.
- ii) **Evidence** - (Events) Why do you think the charges are true? Are you applying Biblical standards of evidence?
- iii) **Verdict** - is the charged party guilty? (confession or evidentiary standard). This should influence what wrongs are **Admitted**.
- iv) **Sentencing** - define lawful consequences and allow victim to choose a consequence within that range. This should inform what **Accepting Consequences** means.

d) **Go and be reconciled**

- i) Repentance of Sin by those who have confessed to have sinned or who have been shown to have sinned - **7 A Apology**
- ii) Forgiveness for sin repented of - **4 Promises of Forgiveness**
- iii) Lawful Resolution of all offenses - **5 Acceptable Conclusions** have been met

3) **7 A's of a Biblical apology:**

- a) Preliminary to the apology
 - i) **Address** everyone involved,
- b) During the Apology
 - i) **Avoid** wormy words,
- c) The Substance of the Apology
 - i) **Admit** wrong doing specifically,
 - ii) **Acknowledge** harms caused,
 - iii) **Accept** the consequences,
 - iv) **Alter**⁷ sinful attitudes, words, and behaviors, (what to put off and what to put on)
 - v) **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 **dwelling 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) **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.

⁷ This is a commitment to alter not a waiting for some period to show alteration

XI) Church Authority - Basic Powers of the Church

- 1) **Call** - to Assemble or to Appear
- 2) **Teach** - You judge the teaching and men over 20 ask questions or raise objections.
- 3) **Worship** - You judge and participate in right worship or protest false worship.
- 4) **The Keys** - Admission & Censures - The council admits new members and disciplines members by rebukes and suspension after a public trial. The council and the men together cast out in two distinct votes after a public trial.
- 5) **Set Apart Officers with Authority for Service & Order** - The church must nominate, test, elect, and ordain elders and deacons to exercise public office and censure and remove such as fail to perform necessary duties or uphold qualification.
- 6) **Standardization & Execution of Ministry** - The church must organize the members to work together to serve the Lord and each other and must standardize and drill in this execution.
- 7) **Receive & Control Tithes & Gifts** - Manage and dispose of the tithes at the direction of the officers and of gifts as accepted or at the direction of the officers.
- 8) **The 3 Church Money Uses:**
 - a) **Officer Pay,**
 - b) Costs of **Equipping the church** with necessary resources to efficiently and lawfully perform ministry (building, books, psalters, and other needful tools), and
 - c) costs of **Mercy Ministry.**

XII) Community - Building Strong Relationships in the Church in God's way in order to work together to glorify God

- 1) **Fellowship** - working together toward a common goal
- 2) **2 Types of Breaking Bread** (Acts 2); Lord's Supper & Hospitality house to house
 - a) Assembly / Church as **Covenant Community** in OT, NT with **Sacraments as Covenantal Acts**
 - b) **Hospitality from house to house** - frequent having and accepting hospitality is necessary to keep relationships powerful - Hospitality is to encourage Fellowship. Hospitality should be focused on trying to encourage (or requiring) fellowship. Fellowship is useful activity (work) to advance the goal of the glory of God.
- 3) **The Communion of the Saints** - Our Spiritual Giftings and material goods are gifts to us from God for service to glorify God - They are to be used in Public service in the church and state, fellowship in general, hospitality, and generosity.
- 4) **Ministry to Focus on Patriarch** - Officers focus on developing heads of house to then focus on developing their own households.
- 5) **Patriarch to Focus on working with wife to govern the Household well** - the man of the house is to work with his wife to lead the household. He is the head of the house. She is his second in command.
- 6) **Sabbath**; a sign that God owns all of our time; morning and evening Public Worship to help us to use the sabbath well. One positive impact is that it will force you to track time better. This is God's design.
- 7) **Tithe**; giving first fruits to God, 10% of pretax income as a sign that God owns all of our property. One positive impact is that it will force you to track your earnings and spending better. This is God's design.

XIII) The Rhythm of the Christian Life: Building Christian Culture & Habits - Daily Work, Family Service, Secret Worship, Family Worship, Christian Education, Public Service

- 1) Household to seek to give a **Heritage of Wisdom & Wealth** to the next generation
- 2) **Daily bread** - Spiritual & Material
- 3) **Man of the House** holds the offices of:
 - a) Master, - everyone put to useful daily work; law, rewards, & penalties
 - b) Husband, - Lead the wife, wash her with the word, Live with her with knowledge, love, faithfulness
 - c) Father - Word & Rod - Prophet, Priest, King
- 4) **Woman of the House** holds the offices of:
 - a) Mistress, - everyone put to useful daily work; law, rewards, & penalties
 - b) Wife, - Respect, Honor, & Help the husband, Win without a word, love, faithfulness, obedience
 - c) Mother - Word & Rod - Prophetess, Priestess, Queen
- 5) **Deuteronomy 6** - Word applied to all jurisdictions and all things within those jurisdictions, set times of teaching and “by the way teaching”
- 6) **Christian Education** - Do not give your children to the public school system before they are able to even come to the Lord’s Table or send troops to battle before they are trained to be soldiers.
- 7) **Secret Private Worship** - Private Worship
 - a) Word
 - b) Prayer
 - c) Psalm
 - d) Vows
 - e) Thanksgiving
 - f) Fasting
- 8) **Family Private Worship** - Family Worship - Household
 - a) Word
 - b) Prayer
 - c) Psalm
 - d) Oaths & Vows
 - e) Thanksgiving
 - f) Fasting
- 9) **Lead the family into public service** - the household serves in the church by taking responsibility to serve as a household under the officers.