

God's Word will give rise to questions: "When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the Lord our God has commanded you?' then you shall say to your son, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. . .'" (Dt. 6:20ff).

To raise up a generation of godly offspring (Mal. 2:15), faithful parents should live faithful lives and recognize that they are catechizing their children in every moment. They should expect that their faithfulness will lead their children to wonder why they're so different from the world. They should be prepared to answer the questions that are raised by such faithful living. And when they fear that they are unprepared, they should devote themselves to the Scriptures and the Catechism, and they should seek the counsel of their pastor, who would love to help them learn to teach their children the faith.

It is not to the Sunday School teacher or the Confirmation instructor that God has given the responsibility of training up children in the way they should go (Prov. 22:6). But neither is it to them that God has given the promises and blessings attendant to teaching your children the faith: "The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; and he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice" (Prov. 23:24-25). Praise God that He has given this glorious work to parents and that He himself has promised to bless it! God grant us grace to gladly and diligently undertake this responsibility!

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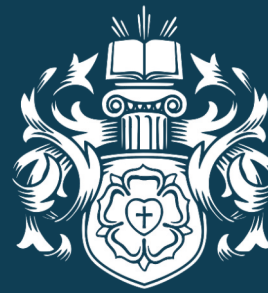
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TEACHING AT HOME

Not if, but how

BY REV. DAVID BUCHS

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*I*t has never been a question of *if*, but *how*.

The last several years, many parents have found themselves wondering *if* they should homeschool their children. Whether it was on account of Covid policies or Marxism or mere inefficiency, lots of folks who had never considered homeschooling started to wonder: should we? If we were to homeschool, how would we know if we succeeded? If we were to take full responsibility for the formation of our children into well-adjusted adults, would we be up for it?

Buried in all those questions is a faulty premise extraordinarily common in our day, which is hard to shake. The premise is that there's some question of *if*, when, in fact, it's only a question of *how*.

The idea that the home is not the primary place for child-rearing is strange and senseless. This is true even when children spend the majority of their time outside the home. When dad and mom choose to bus their kids to the neighborhood elementary school or to the local Lutheran school or to the classical academy in the next town over, that choice is made in the home. And it's a choice that teaches. It is that choice which sets the stage for everything that follows. That choice comes first, long before any instruction takes place in a classroom or any homework gets discussed around the dinner table. From the outset parents are teaching their children at home. That is why there's never been a question of *if* families should homeschool, but rather of *how*.

To be clear, this is not an article about homeschooling. It is an article about home catechesis. Entertain a thought experiment with me. Consider a typical

Lutheran parish in the Midwest. Worship is followed by Sunday School for the kids and Bible class for the adults. Maybe there's a weekday Bible Study, and on Wednesday afternoon during the school year there's Confirmation. Attendance is fairly dutiful, at least for Sunday School and Confirmation. In fact, even when families miss Sunday worship or don't stick around for Bible Class, they'll drop their kids off for Sunday School and consider Confirmation attendance non-negotiable.

Now suppose that one day Sunday School and Confirmation disappear. How would parents react? How would you react? "Well, that frees up some time on the calendar." "Wait! When are my kids going to get to socialize with other kids at church?" "How are my kids going to learn the Catechism? I had to memorize it. Somebody should make them memorize it too." "Who's going to teach my kids what to believe?"

Underlying the most likely reactions is a faulty premise. It's the idea that what goes on in Sunday School and Confirmation is a unique and churchy thing. It's the idea that learning the faith is something that happens in the classroom at the behest of the pastor. It's the strange and senseless idea that the home is not the primary place for catechesis. We belie that premise even in asking the question whether catechesis should take place at home or in the church. The reality is catechesis does take place at home. It's not a question of if, but how.

Consider the 3rd commandment. If parents make the Divine Service a priority, listen to the sermon, talk about it throughout the week, read the Bible, gather their family for devotions, and recite the Catechism often, then they do more to teach the 3rd commandment than if the pastor were to drill Luther's explanation and quiz the kids on it. On the other hand, if parents let sports or travel or laziness supplant the hearing of God's Word, if they are grumpy about going to church, if the Bible sits on the shelf untouched, and if knowing the Catechism by heart is too much work, how much drilling of Luther's explanation is needed to outweigh the example set by mom and dad?

Or consider the 6th commandment. If parents exhibit a chaste marriage, recognizing the mystery of Christ and the Church hidden therein, fulfilling gladly their responsibilities to one another and thanking God in their prayers for the gift of family, they do more to teach their kids the 6th commandment than if the pastor were to deliver a thorough and pious lecture on the theology of sex. Meanwhile, when parents bite and snap at each other, when they mock marriage, when they allow lewd and scandalous stuff in their homes via the TV, computer, and phone, when they hold up for admiration friends and relatives who might have worldly glamour, but who despise marriage, then how many awkward classroom discussions concerning fornication are needed to outweigh the example set by mom and dad?

Or consider, most importantly, the forgiveness of sins. If parents take sin seriously in their homes, if they warn their kids and portray God's wrath as real and terrible, if they console their kids with the Gospel, if they are contrite when they sin, if they ask for forgiveness themselves, if they express confidence in the means of grace, which deliver the forgiveness of sins, they do more to teach their kids about the doctrine of justification than if the pastor were to fill the whiteboard with cute drawings and memorable acronyms. Meanwhile, when sin is regarded lightly,

when sin goes unconfessed and unforgiven in the home, when the Gospel is never mentioned, when the death and resurrection of Jesus never come up in conversation, when parents are merciless and uncharitable in their dealings with the world, then they teach their kids that forgiveness is something you learn about at church, but it has no bearing on real life whatsoever.

It's not a question of if parents should catechize their children at home, it's a question of how they're doing it.

Moses taught the people of Israel to observe the Passover, and he knew that their observance would give way to catechesis: "When in time to come your son asks



you, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. . .'" (Ex. 13:14ff). Later, at the border of the Promised Land, Moses instructed the people to paste their lives over with God's commands: "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. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Dt. 6:6-9). Then, just as with the Passover, Moses anticipates that lives and homes so decorated with