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The
Westminster Confession Of Faith
Study Book







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Westminster Confession Of Faith
Study Book

A Study Guide for Churches



Joseph A. Pipa Jr.

CHRISTIAN FOCUS





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INTRODUCTION

The work of discipleship is a lost art in many of our modern Churches. This work, however, is commended by scripture both in precept and by example. The Psalmist lays out the work of family and generational discipleship in Ps. 78:1-6 – a work commanded in the law, Deut. 6:7 and 11:19-21. Paul commends this work to Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:1, 2. The Bible is replete with examples: Moses and Joshua; Elijah and Elisha; the school of the prophets; Christ and the disciples (Mark tells us that He chose them in order that they might be with Him 3:14. In addition to qualifying them to bear witness, Jesus was training them.); and Paul with his band of traveling evangelists.

Unfortunately in our day the work of discipleship is not being practiced in many churches. Such neglect (clearly in violation of Scripture) will only result in the harm of God's people and to the detriment of God's church.

The content of discipleship is quite broad: the doctrines and practice of the Christian faith; pre-marital and marital counseling; preparation for child rearing; managing a household; preparation for the ministry, the eldership, and the diaconate. It includes the work of parents with children and older (spiritually) men and women with younger (spiritually) men and women (2 Tim. 2:1, 2; Titus 2:3-5). It is a work that may be done one on one; couple with couple; or one person with a group.

I have written this material to train Christians in the basic doctrines and practices of biblical Christianity. The study is a series of inductive Bible studies keyed to the





The Westminster Confession of Faith Study Guide

Westminster Standards. (I have added the Three Forms of Unity so people in churches holding to these standards may adapt the material.)

The material is suitable for a number of different applications. It is designed to be used in one on one or in couple on couple relationships. I chose the word relationship deliberately. The best discipleship takes place in a relationship. Normally the study should take place in a context of prayer and mutual accountability. In the Teacher's Guide I suggest methods of accountability. I suggest meeting twice a month for a least an hour per session.

We have used the material on a number of occasions as the formative Bible study for a group of people meeting to begin a Church. (I know of four congregations that began using this material.) The study enables everybody to understand and own the doctrines and practices; thus the group is on the same page. Meanwhile, through the discussion, a doctrinal and personal cohesiveness develops within the group, which is essential to their continuing together to form a congregation.

The material has been used effectively as part of the training of men to serve as elders or deacons. We have used it as well in Sunday school classes and in men's and women's Bible Study groups in order to train people in the congregation and to equip a larger number to use the material to disciple others.

It may be used a number of ways with young people. One man used it with his Senior High Youth Group. It could be used as part of a curriculum in Home Schooling or in Christian Schools. It is a good tool to use in Campus ministry.

The first part is the student book. The student will need to use a notebook to write his answers. We also provide a teacher's guide, which gives brief answers for each question and suggestions for accountability. In preparing the lesson the student should first read the assigned sections from the Westminster Standards or the Three Forms of Unity. The student then should do the topical Bible study. One can complete a lesson in one and a half to two hours. Memorization assignments enable the student to memorize





Introduction

some foundational passages of Scripture and a portion of the Shorter Catechism. (One could substitute appropriate questions and answers from the Heidelberg Catechism.)

The teacher or mentor then meets with student(s) or class and leads a discussion of the lesson. In discipleship relationships the people should pray together and the teacher/mentor will share how he or she has dealt with the various situations and practices discussed. The teacher/mentor holds the student accountable to complete the lesson and the memory work and helps the student work out plans to deal with the various applicatory elements of the material. In the situation where there is no teacher/mentor, a person may use both the student book and the teacher's guide to complete the material.

I recommend the Harmony of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, compiled by Dr. Morton H. Smith and published by Southern Presbyterian Press (the publishing arm of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary) or Reformed Confessions Harmonized, compiled by Joel Beeke and Sinclair Ferguson and published by Baker Books.

In the back of the book there is a teacher's guide, a Personal Information Sheet and a Bible and Sermon Record Keeper. There are also appendices with the full text of the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger Catechism, the Shorter Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt.

