

Ancient Paths for a Modern Countercultural Faith

The Need for Historic Creeds and Reformed Confessions & Catechisms

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1. What Are Catechisms, Creeds & Confessions?

Creeds, confessions, and catechisms are historic documents that articulate the core beliefs of the Christian faith, rooted in Scripture.

“All Christians engage in confessional synthesis; the difference is simply whether one adheres to a public confession, subject to public scrutiny, or a private confession that is, by its very nature, immune to such examination.” (Dr. Carl Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative*)

What is a catechism? (Questions & Answers)

A catechism is a series of short questions and answers about faith that are based on the Bible and easy to memorize.

- The Baptist Catechism for Boys and Girls

What is a Creed? (That is wrong, this is right)

A Creed is a precise statement affirming Biblical truth against heresy.

- The Apostle’s Creed (c.120–250 AD)
- The Nicene Creed (325–381 AD)

Modern Creeds (Statements/Declarations):

- Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978)
- Nashville Statement on Biblical Sexuality and Gender (2017)
- Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel (2018)
- The Niagara Declaration (2020)
- The Frankfurt Declaration of Christian & Civil Liberties (2022)

What is a Confession? (This we believe)

A Confession is a systematic statement of what we believe.

- Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689)

2. Why Are They Important?

They help us listen to the wisdom of centuries of godly men who came before us on how to faithfully interpret the core doctrines of God’s Word (see Proverbs 12:15).

“Creeds go directly against the grain of an antihistorical, antiauthoritarian age. They strike hard at the cherished notion of human autonomy and of the notion that I am exceptional, that the normal rules do not apply to me in the way they do to others.” (Trueman, *ibid.*)

3. The Biblical Case

“Follow *the pattern of the sound words* that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, *guard the good deposit* entrusted to you.” (2 Timothy 1:13–14)

“To claim to have no creed but the Bible, then, is problematic: *the Bible itself seems to demand that we have forms of sound words*, and that is what creeds are.” (Trueman, *ibid.*)

Early creedal forms in Scripture:

Philippians 2:5–10 (meant to be sung or memorized), 1 Corinthians 15:3 (early creedal formula), 1 Timothy 1:15 (concise doctrinal summary), 1 Timothy 3:16 (rhythmic confession), 2 Thessalonians 2:15 (hold to the traditions in oral or written form), Deuteronomy 6:4–9 (the Shema, Israel’s Creed).

4. The Historical Case

The Rule of Faith, articulated by early church figures like Ignatius, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, summarized essential beliefs. Other early Creedal formulas are the Didache (50–100), the Creed of Aristides of Athens (130), the Old Roman Symbol or Old Roman Creed (c. 215), the Apostles' Creed (120–250) and the Creed of Cyprian of Carthage (250). Later examples are the Nicene Creed (325) and the Chalcedonian Creed (451). Reformed Protestants wrote the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), the Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647), the 1689 Second London Baptist Confession of Faith, and Benjamin Keach's Catechism (1677).

Since the inception of the church, these tools have been used to define and defend orthodoxy.

5. The Practical Case

- A. Well-rounded Discipleship & Clarity:** Systematically explain all the major points of Christian doctrine, ensuring there are no major blind spots, and clearly define a church's positions.
- B. Unity & Culture:** Unites believers with a common confession shared throughout history. Catechisms reinforce this as a discipleship tool to teach shared doctrine. These can be powerful tools in building a robust and thick church culture.
- C. Catechesis & Family Worship:** "I am persuaded that the use of a good Catechism in all our families will be a great safeguard against the increasing errors of the times." (C.H. Spurgeon)
- D. Corporate Worship:** Reciting them weekly in worship, like the Nicene Creed, connects us to the historic church. Use it as a teaching moment to help congregants understand the significance and that we are joining in what centuries of Christians have confessed and died for.
- E. Apologetics:** Catechisms prepare Christians to give an answer for their faith (1 Peter 3:15).
- F. Guarding Against Error:** They help train a Christian community to be able to more easily spot error and recognize when things don't follow "the pattern of sound words."
- G. Spiritual Maturity:** Creeds and catechisms deepen our understanding over time, fostering growth. These tools give a congregation a solid foundation to build upon.

Practical Tips for Families:

- Use simplified versions like the Baptist Catechism for Boys and Girls.
- Incorporate one question per week into family devotions. Start early.
- Use songs or mnemonics, like those from Founders Press & Diana Batarseh, to aid memorization.
- Use the catechism question and answers to help your child understand concepts.

Practical Tips for Churches:

- Offer classes for parents on how to catechize their kids and how to do family worship.
- Provide study guides for parents to use at home.
- Incorporate catechism questions or parts of the Confession into sermons or teaching series.
- Encourage memorization, rewarding children who recite the catechism. Make a game out of it.

Questions & Notes

Recommended Resources

- The Creedal Imperative – Carl Trueman
- Family Shepherds – Voddie Baucham
- The Illustrated Catechism for Boys and Girls – Paul Cox
- The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith in Modern English – Founders Press
- Family Worship – Donald Witney
- Ask Me Whoo (songs) – Diana Batarseh
- The Church and Family Life Podcast