

An Important Message for Christian Parents

As I watch the news about the war in the Middle East and hear the reports of the soldiers wounded and killed in battle, my heart aches for the soldiers and their families. I have not suffered this kind of loss and can't imagine my children being in such grave danger.

And yet, our children face danger every day from an enemy many times more powerful every day, and enemy whose power of destruction is unmatched in all of history. His goal for our children is *infinitely* worse than anything a bullet or bomb could do to our fragile children. And he is targeting your children. This enemy, as you may have guessed, is the devil.

Over the past few months, we heard how important it is to outfit our soldiers with proper weapons, armor, and training to defend themselves and each other against the enemy, but what do we offer our children in their fight against one who will stop at nothing to kill our children's souls? Guns and "bunker busters" won't help our children. Only one weapon can defeat the devil: the Word of God. And the Word is plenty powerful to get the job done. But this weapon is useless without training in how to use it.

So, what kind of training do you give your children? You were trained in its use in confirmation class. If you've forgotten what you learned, the training manual, Luther's Small Catechism, is always available (and we have extra copies here if you need one), and by familiarizing yourself with its instructions, you will be better equipped to instruct your children.

When your children were Baptized, you made a promise to teach them the catechism. I am more than happy to help you in that endeavor, which is why I teach confirmation classes. As shepherd to you and your children, I will do whatever I can to protect you from the "roaring lion." But by no means can I do this job alone, nor can I do it all in the roughly 45 hours I have with them. They need constant training, practice, and sharpening of their skills and knowledge. The devil is counting on their ignorance—are you going to let him have your children?

Does this mean you'll have to be a "drill sergeant" sometimes? Sadly, yes. Our sinful flesh doesn't like anything that's for our own good, but if you know how to make change or take care of your finances, you understand that there was a point to those math classes you trudged through.

So how do you train your children to combat the devil, who will attack them whether they're prepared or not? Bring them to church and Sunday School to start. Pray with them. Read the Bible with them, and read it on your own to sharpen your own faith and set an example for your children. Take time to memorize—you won't always have time to look something up in the heat of battle. Review the *Small Catechism*, and take time to read the *Large Catechism*, too, which was written for adults. (If you need access to a Large Catechism, ask me.) Attend Bible Class while your children are in Sunday School or find other ways to be in the Word with others so you can grow from their insights.

If you haven't been the "always faithful" soldier of the cross, don't despair. Jesus was faithful on your behalf—all the way to the cross. He has forgiven you, and in through your Baptism, yesterday's sins are gone, and today is a new day with a fresh start. It's a new day for your children, too—a day the Lord has made. Rejoice and be glad that He has given you the victory.