

*Small Devotionals*

# Big Beliefs!

INTRODUCING YOUR

FAMILY



BIG

TRUTHS

||||| EDITED BY |||||

DAVID R. HELM

# Big Beliefs!

SMALL DEVOTIONALS INTRODUCING  
YOUR FAMILY TO BIG TRUTHS

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P U B L I S H I N G

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Finally, I want to acknowledge the children of Holy Trinity Church, Chicago—it is for your salvation that we gladly labor, counting it sweet joy!

David R. Helm  
Chicago, January 2016

# INTRODUCTION

## YESTERDAY

About 375 years ago in London, on July 1, 1643, a group of 150 men gathered at the request of the Long Parliament. What these men could not have known then was that they would meet together for five days a week over a period of more than four years. They owe their name, “The Westminster Divines,” to the place in which they labored: the Jerusalem Chamber of Westminster Abbey. The majority of the men were Puritan pastors, and they gathered in an effort to stave off a civil war. King Henry VII had declared himself, and not the pope of Rome, to be the head of the church. Therefore, Parliament commanded that this “assembly of divines” put forward, to their best understanding, the Bible’s teaching on Christian doctrine, discipline, and church government. What emerged after years of study, debate, and discourse was, in part, The Westminster Confession of Faith.

So influential was their work that the Princeton theologian B. B. Warfield said of it,

In these forms of words we possess the most complete, the most fully elaborated and carefully guarded, the most perfect, and the most vital expression that has ever been framed by the hand of man, of all that enters into what we call evangelical religion, and of all that must be safeguarded if evangelical religion is to persist in the world.<sup>1</sup>

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1. B. B. Warfield, *The Significance of the Westminster Standards as a Creed* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1898), 2.

## TODAY

One of the exalted privileges of the church is the opportunity to help young and eager minds to get an early grasp on Christian doctrine. At Holy Trinity Church in Chicago, we have a commitment to provide fresh gospel resources for our many young families who are attempting to instruct their children in the Christian faith. As evidence of this commitment, we have written and published *The Big Picture Devotional*,<sup>2</sup> a one-year family devotional that traces the plotline of the Bible. That work was our first attempt at teaching biblical theology to kids.

*Big Beliefs!* is a more recent attempt to teach theology systematically to young people. Written for children ages seven through twelve, the devotional guide traces the Westminster Confession of Faith, giving a brief overview of each of the Confession's thirty-three doctrinal headings one lesson at a time. The entire Westminster Confession of Faith is available at the back of the devotional for further study and exploration. If you desire to look more closely at any of the doctrines addressed in a lesson, just look up the parenthetical element that immediately follows the lesson's heading. The number or numbers listed there correspond to the chapter and paragraph numbers of the Confession's summary of that doctrine.

## TOMORROW

Most parents find that doing family devotions with any sense of regularity is difficult. For starters, many young parents never had devotions modeled in the home in which they grew up. On top of that, most parents feel overwhelmed at the notion of doing devotions on a daily basis. They miss a few days, lose heart, and give up. Take heart! *Big Beliefs!* is written to help parents succeed and to help children so that they can face

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2. David R. Helm, *The Big Picture Devotional* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).



## INTRODUCTION

tomorrow with courage and conviction. This book can be used in three easy steps:

1. *Commit. Big Beliefs!* only requires three family devotions a week, not seven!
2. *Read.* Simply read aloud to your children the short Bible reading for the day along with the brief devotional paragraph that unfolds the Christian doctrine for that lesson. If you want to refer to the Westminster Confession of Faith, the reference is included in parentheses after the title of the devotional for that day.
3. *Discuss.* Follow up your reading by asking your children the two “Interaction and Reflection” questions that are meant to spur healthy conversation about what you learned that day.

*Part One*

*God's  
Word*

## Lesson 1

# THE HOLY SCRIPTURE

### 1 THE RECORD OF REVELATION (1.1) *1 John 1:1-4*

Abraham Lincoln was one of the greatest presidents our nation has ever known. How much do you know about this man? Where was he born? Was he short or tall? Did he have a wife and children? What was one of the greatest things he accomplished as president? How did he die? Did you ever meet Abraham Lincoln? Do you know anyone who ever met or saw him? The answer to these last two questions is no, because President Lincoln died more than 150 years ago. The only way we can know anything about him is because people who knew him and saw him recorded what they heard and saw in books and other written records. The same thing is true if you want to know about God. In the Bible, you can read about all the things that God did for his people thousands of years ago. As we begin our study through *Big Beliefs!*, remember: the Bible is the only way we can learn about God, ourselves, and God's plan of salvation.

### INTERACTION REFLECTION

- In the coming lessons we will be learning exciting stuff about Christian doctrine using the Westminster Confession of Faith. The writers of the Confession began by answering the question “What is the Bible?” Why do you think they started with the

Bible rather than God or people? (*The Bible is where we need to go to learn the answers to other questions.*)

- Take a moment to pray—ask God to reveal great things to you as we study the Bible.

## 2 THE GUIDE TO SALVATION (1.5–7)

### *Psalm 19*

What kind of book would you read to learn how to make a pizza? (A cookbook.) What kind of book would you use if you wanted to learn the meaning of a new word? (A dictionary.) Every book has a purpose, and some of our favorite books are the ones that tell an exciting story, like *The Hobbit* or *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. What about the Bible? What should we expect to find when we open and read it? Although there are many exciting stories (but no recipes), the primary purpose of the Bible is to teach us about God and his plan of salvation for the world. In the Bible, we read amazing stories about what God did in the past with his people. Best of all, we learn that God sent his Son, Jesus, to save us, and we discover how the good news about Jesus spread to the whole world.

So far we have learned two very important things: first, the Bible is the book that we read to learn about God, and second, it is the book that teaches us about God's plan of salvation.

### INTERACTION REFLECTION

- We are going to see two ideas come up again and again in the Westminster Confession of Faith: God is King and Ruler over all (the supremacy of God over all things) and God gets the praise when we are saved (his glory to be received by our salvation). How have these two ideas already been hinted at in these first two devotionals?

- If we didn't have the Bible, how much would we really know about God's being King and Ruler over all and his glorious plan of salvation?

### 3 LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD (1.4)

*Deuteronomy 6:1–9*

Did you know that some scientists spend entire days just listening? They use very expensive equipment that allows them to listen to radio waves coming from other parts of the universe. What they hear may one day be used to help other scientists to make important discoveries. As Christians, we believe that we are to listen very closely to what God says in the Bible. We believe that God has spoken to us in the words of the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God. We can be thankful that God has given us his Word, because it reveals everything that God wants us to know about how to live as his people in this world. If you want to know who God is, who we are, and how we come to know God, then pay close attention to the Bible.

#### INTERACTION REFLECTION

- We have been learning about the Bible. We have discovered how important it is and why we should be thankful to have it. Do you think there is any other book quite like the Bible? What are some questions that you or I might have about life that the Bible can answer?
- If you have small children, today is a good day to sing a song like “The B-I-B-L-E” or “Jesus Loves Me.”

Take 33  
KEY THEOLOGICAL  
CONCEPTS

Select 1  
WESTMINSTER CONFESSION  
OF FAITH

Blend in 3  
WEEKLY READINGS

(Season  WITH Scripture & discussion questions)

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IN 99 brief family devotional servings

As parents, we have the wonderful privilege of watching our children start to grasp the precious truths of Scripture. *Big Beliefs!* breaks these truths into manageable portions for family instruction, helping your children to grow in the knowledge of vital Christian teachings.

*“Big Beliefs!* is a great book: (1) it’s faithful, telling children the truth about God, his Word, and what his people must believe; (2) it’s substantive, not dumbing down doctrine to present it to children; and (3) it’s realistic, providing language, illustrations, and lesson length that will work for real families who have real children.”

**STARR MEADE**, Author, *Training Hearts, Teaching Minds: Family Devotions Based on the Shorter Catechism*

“A family devotional teaching the most important truths in the world in simple bite-size chunks with up-to-date illustrations and stimulating questions. Why didn’t someone think of this before? I commend this excellent resource to all Christian families.”

**DAVID MURRAY**, Pastor, Grand Rapids Free Reformed Church

  
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