

# FAQS

## Relationships

**Q** My parents wanted to give my husband and me an advance on our inheritance because we've always been very close, and they wanted to help us buy a house. Now my siblings are furious with us because we accepted the gift. What should we do?

**A** There are a number of issues inherent in your question that might benefit from some further insight through reflection and discussion within your family.

For example, does your assertion that you and your parents are “very close” mean that your siblings are “less close” to your parents? And if that is so, is that because of proximity, because of religious differences, or because there has been a rift created over time?

In other words, is the overriding dynamic of your family that you and your husband are “in” but that the rest of your siblings are “out”? If the incident you describe is simply the latest example of a pattern that is ingrained, it may be time to talk with a professional family therapist to help your relationships heal.

Also, it is interesting that the burden of anger from your siblings is against you, but not against your parents. Is it possible that you and your siblings are still in a relationship of emotional dependence on your parents? Young children often turn on each other with anger when they perceive that their parents favor a sibling at the expense of themselves. This “sibling rivalry” is common and understandable between children, but when it occurs between adults it may signal an unhealthy emotional dependence on the approval of their parents. For this, counseling can help too.

Neither of the above may be part of your family's problem. If the “advance on our inheritance” is an isolated incident of family disharmony, it should not be difficult to restore harmony.

First, consider having a discussion with your siblings individually to understand why they are upset. Listen with an open mind,

without becoming defensive, and reflect back to your siblings what you understand them to be concerned about.

Next, meet with your parents for a frank discussion about how they plan to share “the inheritance” among all their children. Encourage your parents to alter their plans to enhance fairness, if that should be necessary. Do reassure your parents that “the inheritance” is their money, and that they do not “owe” it to their children to give it to them. However, in the interest of family harmony, treating children equally is important. Communicate in a letter or in person to your siblings the results of your conversation with your parents.

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And lastly, have a celebration—a family picnic or other family get-together where you express three things: regret for any hurt feelings between you and your siblings, love to both your parents and your siblings, and hope that family harmony is now restored.

—Judy Cook

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## Church

**Q** My church rarely reads the Ten Commandments or any other Scripture in regard to our call to confession, as is ordinarily done in the CRC. We also don't have catechism teaching in either service on

**Sundays. We feel this is against CRC policy. What should be done about this?**

**A** There is no CRC policy indicating which passages should be used as a call to confession. Unfortunately, Synod 1928 adopted an order of worship that used the Ten Commandments as a teacher of sin. Though such use is occasionally appropriate and though there is a responsive reading on page 1016 of the *Psalter Hymnal* that uses the law this way, a 1930 synodical advisory committee, correctly reflecting the “Reformed use” of the law, said, “God presents his law to [his people] as the rule of life for a people thankful for their redemption” (*Acts of Synod 1930*, p. 166). That's why the Ten Commandments are in the third section of the Heidelberg Catechism (Gratitude), not in the first (Sin). Though Synod 1930 dropped the order of worship adopted two years earlier, the unwise practice of using the Ten Commandments primarily as a teacher of sin continued for decades.

Church Order Article 54b spells out the denomination's policy on Catechism preaching: “At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism, following its sequence.”

This is one of a number of Church Order details that synod should change. Not only is it widely ignored, but a growing number of congregations have only one Sunday service. In addition, pastors preach through the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Contemporary Testimony and present Reformed theology in other series and sermons. Naturally, pastors would do well to reference the Heidelberg Catechism when they present such teaching since many of us are well acquainted with it, and it is a wonderful teaching tool for the next generations.

—George Vander Weit

*George Vander Weit is a retired pastor in the Christian Reformed Church. ■*