

Preparing Your Child for

# BAPTISM & THE LORD'S TABLE

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A FOUR-WEEK DEVOTIONAL  
FOR PARENTS & CHILDREN



# CELEBRATING BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S TABLE<sup>1</sup>

This study begins with the assumption that parents and children are embarking on this journey together. Before we begin we want to say “Congratulations” to all of you! Children, learning about your faith and celebrating God’s work through Baptism and/or the Lord’s Table is an amazing thing - worth rejoicing over and even throwing a party over! (*We’ll let you talk with your parents about that!*) For parents, there is no doubt that you have longed for and prayed to see Christ formed in your children as Paul says in Galatians 4:19.

Before we get too far it is worth emphasizing that neither Baptism nor The Lord’s Table are just ‘cool’ things to do. Nor should children take part in these just because their friends are doing it. If the time isn’t right and you need to wait, there is no shame in that, and we want you to wait until the time is right for you.

## Should My Child Participate in Baptism or The Lord’s Table?

Parents, you may be asking this question. The first thing, and primary thing you should be thinking through is what you think it means for a person to be ‘saved’ (or ‘converted’). Foundationally, to be saved - or ‘converted’ - means to be ‘born again’ *by* the power of the Holy Spirit, *through* a life-changing understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is nothing less than a powerful working of the God of the Universe. Before you begin, ask yourself, “Do I think my child has been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit?”

1. **Has he/she given a convincing profession of faith in Jesus?**
2. **Is he/she showing fruit and evidence of conversion through obedience to and love for Jesus?**
3. **Does he/she understand, and can he/she articulate the significance of these sacraments?**

Secondly, as a general rule, we see Baptism and The Lord’s Table as two sides of the same coin. In some sense, both of these sacraments involve assessing the faith and conversion of a person. So if you are asking the question whether or not your child is professing credible faith to warrant participation in the Lord’s Table, then essentially you are asking whether or not your child is professing enough credible faith to do so through Baptism. To put it another way, the Lord’s Table is for those who have been baptized.

## Baptism and The Lord’s Table are Opportunities for Evangelism

Everyone needs to be confronted with the gospel. Even on a daily basis, professing believers in Christ need to be confronted with the message of Jesus Christ and repentance. With this said, even if these sacraments are not yet for your child, we hope that you will use the church’s recognition of them as an opportunity for evangelism.

For the Lord’s Table, Paul warns in scripture to refrain from partaking of it an unworthy manner lest anyone eat and drink judgment upon themselves. Quite frankly, many of our children are not ready for this. Yet this means that their refraining (combined with your prior conversation and explanation) can be a time of self-reflection, as well as potential space for the Holy Spirit to work them.

## A Message for Children

You’ve made a big decision to put your faith in Jesus and to symbolize it through these sacraments. This is not only a great thing that you will look back to the rest of your life, but it is something very serious and it is worth your time and investment. This workbook might take a bit of effort to go through, and at times feel like homework, but we hope that the time you spend with your parents will also be memorable. When you are done, you’ll be glad you invested in it. If at any point you struggle to put into words your thoughts, it’s okay to ask for help from your parents. This is not a test, and they are there to help you. In addition to all of this, we’d encourage you to write down your answers as this will help you and others process what God has done and is doing in your life.

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<sup>1</sup> The basic primary concepts and structure of this devotional were loosely adapted from *Covenant Discipleship Parent’s Handbook: The handbook for a new sort of Communicant’s Class* by Richard L. Burguet & J. Ed Eubanks, Jr.

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# HOW TO USE THIS MATERIAL

The following is a four-week devotional for you to work through with your child. Each week contains three devotionals (one per day), for three days/nights of the week selected at your discretion. If preferred, feel free to work through these at your own pace - in individual sittings or spread out - as long as you keep on pace with the four-week window. Because affirming your child's conversion is such a serious thing, 'cramming' and working through this material *'at the last minute'* is strongly discouraged.

As much as possible, let your child answer each question on his/her own. It's not wrong to help through the process; in fact, it is encouraged, since God is using *you* to form *their* faith. Yet, think of yourself as their 'guide' to helping them express what God had done in them. In other words, don't just give them the answers. It's okay if a child struggles to put into words this reality. However, if someone has been converted by the power of God, then he/she should be able to convey this.

Lastly, don't sell your child short. This material might seem like a lot, but a lot of parents expect too little of their children - *intellectually and spiritually* - in our current culture. God is powerful and transforms even children! Additionally, they are more capable than most give them credit for, and past generations of the church knew this. Patiently and consistently work through it with them, and be diligent in prayer that the Holy Spirit would use this material and your time together.

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# WEEK 1

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# DAY 1: JESUS AND REPENTANCE

Jesus is the center of the story for Christians. He is the King of the Universe, the only way to know God and the very being that created you! Also, being a Christian means that you, 1) understand what he did over 2000 years ago, and 2) know how to respond correctly.

▶ In your own words, how would you describe who Jesus is and what he did for you? Discuss with your parents.

▶ What do you know about the following in Jesus' life?

- Jesus' birth

- Jesus' miracles

- Jesus' teachings

- Jesus's death

▶ What happened after Jesus' death? How did Christians respond to this?

► The following verses address one of the primary messages of the bible and Jesus' message. This point summarizes how God wants people to respond to the Gospel. Look up the following verses and write down what they all have in common.

- Job 42:6
- Psalm 7:12
- Ezek. 18:30
- Matt. 3:2
- Matt. 4:17
- Mark 6:12
- Acts 2:38
- Acts 3:19
- Acts 17:30

► All of these verses speak of repenting from sin in order to be saved by God. What does 'repentance' mean? Discuss with your parents.

► How often should a Christian repent? Is this something that happens only once, or more? Discuss with your parents.

*"Repentance is not just saying 'sorry' or showing remorse for the bad things you have done in your life. Repentance is saying to God, 'Yes I am sorry, and to prove it I am going to turn away from the things I used to think and do that have upset and offended you.' True repentance happens when you turn away from your old life and promise to live a new life with God's help... Your promise to lead a new life must be matched by action."*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Preparing for Baptism: A Personal Diary* by Mez McConnell. pg. 19.

## DAY 2: WHAT IS FAITH, AND HOW DOES GOD USE IT?

- ▶ The Bible tells us that *faith* is what God uses to save us. Specifically, He uses our faith *in Jesus* to save us. But what is faith? In the Bible, Hebrews 11:1 tells us what that is. Copy this verse down.
- ▶ What does it mean to have faith? Re-write this verse in your own words and discuss what this means with your parents.
- ▶ In this chapter of the Bible, we read of a lot of people who had faith. Discuss with your parents three of the following people and what faith looked like in their lives.
- Abel (Gen 4:3-15)
  - Noah (Genesis 6:9-7:22)
  - Abraham (Gen 12:1-5, 15:1-6, 21:1-7, 22:1-19)
  - Joseph (Gen 50:24-26)
  - Moses (Exod. 2:11-15, 12:31-33, 12:1-16)
  - Joshua (Josh 5:13-6:27)
- ▶ Read Ephesians 2:8-9. Why is faith important for us? Discuss with your parents.



## **DAY 3: THE BIBLE IS GOD'S WORD.**

As Christians, we believe that the Bible is God's very word. Although He used humans to write it, in essence it is a compilation of his very words to us. In this sense, it can be thought of as a letter directly from the God of the universe to humans.

- ▶ What do you think Christians believe about the Bible? Talk with your parents and list out some of these.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ What does the Bible say about itself? Look up 3 of the following verses and put what you think they mean in your own words.
  - Lev. 1:1-17
  
  - Deut. 18:18-19, 31:9-13
  
  - Jer. 1:1-19
  
  - 2 Thess. 2:13
  
  - 2 Tim. 2:14-17
  
  - 2 Peter 3:16
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ Lastly, Jesus is not only God's Son, but He is God - the second person of the Trinity. Therefore, what he says about the Bible is very important. Look up the following verses and write in your own words what you think they mean.
  - Matt 5:18, 24:35
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - John 10:35

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# **WEEK 2**

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## DAY 1: HAVING A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

“Everyone is in a relationship with God. There is no one that you know, and no one in the world who does not have a relationship with God. However, not everyone has a *right* relationship with God. It’s likely that many of the people you know do not actually have a good, right relationship with God. Your relationship with God is important, and you should know whether or not it is a *right* or a *wrong* relationship.”<sup>3</sup>

▶ How do you know if you are in a *right* relationship with God or a *wrong* one? Discuss this question with your parents.

▶ In short, people who don’t know Jesus *do not* have a right relationship with God. Read Romans 1:18-31. What do these verses tell you about people who have wrong relationships with God?

▶ Read Genesis 3. This passage tells us about how the whole world fell into sin. How did people get this way?

▶ According to these verses, do you think you have a right relationship with God? Why or why not? Discuss with your parents.

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<sup>3</sup> Burguet & Eubanks, *Covenant Discipleship Parent’s Handbook*, p. 11.

## DAY 2: WHAT IS SIN AND WHAT DOES GOD THINK OF IT?

Human beings are sinful. This means that we have disobeyed Gods law, sinning against him and rejecting him as our king. Because of sin, you are not able to *always* do what is good and right on a daily basis. In other words, you and I sin every single day. Answer the following questions and discuss them with your parents.

▶ How do you think sin affects how we relate to God?

▶ Read Genesis 2:15-17. What did God command? What did he say would happen if Adam disobeyed?

▶ Read Genesis 3. What did Adam end up doing and what did God do as a result? What do you think would have happened to the rest of human history if God did not keep his word? Could we trust him?

▶ Read Romans 6:23. What are wages? What does this verse tell you about what you deserve? What does this verse tell you that you have earned?

## DAY 3: GOD IS MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS

The Bible says that all of us - including you - are sinful. Just like we saw in the last lesson, God is holy and just - meaning that he *has* to respond to sin in order to be faithful. This means that you and I deserve to be punished for eternity. That is scary!

However, God also loves his people and has a plan to give mercy and grace to them. This plan was accomplished by Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. This is amazing! You and I can be rescued by Jesus! Answer the following questions and discuss with your parents.

- ▶ Read Exodus 20:1-17. As best as you can, summarize these 10 Commandments with your parents. Have you broken any of these? If so, how? How should God respond to you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ Read John 3:16-18, and 36. How does God maintain both mercy and justice?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ Read John 5:24. What does this verse tell you about what Jesus offers?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ What is 'grace'? How do we see God's grace in Jesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ Talk about Jesus, and who he was with your parents. Tell them what you know about his life and death, and ask them what they know. Why was Jesus the only one who could provide salvation for us?

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# **WEEK 3**

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## DAY 1: THE COVENANT OF WORKS

As you probably know, God's plan to save mankind and creation began all the way back at the beginning of the Bible. This means that he has been prepping the stage for Jesus since Genesis. Moreover, in order to fully understand why God sent Jesus, we need to go back to the beginning again to look at what God's word says.

▶ Read Genesis 1:26-31. What things did God say man when he created him? Write in your own words each thing you He said.

▶ Read Genesis chapter 2. What you are reading about is the Garden of Eden - an "*almost*" perfect place without any sin. What do you learn about humans from this garden? What does this chapter say about Adam and his wife in the garden?

▶ What responsibilities did God give Adam and Eve in order to stay in relationship with him? What would happen if they didn't do these?

## DAY 2: THE COVENANT OF GRACE

- ▶ Adam and Eve did not do as God had commanded them, and they proved that they could not be perfect on their own. This test was finished. Yet, the good news is that God had another plan and it was fully based on grace! Before we go on any further, answer the following question and discuss your answer with your parents. What is grace?

- ▶ Grace involves two things. First, it means that you *don't* get something **you do deserve**. But second, it means that you *do* get something **you don't deserve**. To help you understand God's grace, fill in the following blanks.

*Because of my sin, I do deserve* \_\_\_\_\_.

*Because of God's grace, I don't deserve* \_\_\_\_\_.

- ▶ Read John 3:16-17 and John 10:17-18. What do these sets of verses say about God's plan for the redemption of man?

- ▶ Because of God's power and his plan to save his people, grace is possible. As soon as Adam and Eve disobeyed God, humans fell and everything went wrong. But this means that God's grace was ready to be displayed! Look back over the 'Heroes of the Faith' list from week 1, day 2. How was God's grace at work in the lives of these people? (Pick 3 people to talk about with your parents).

- ▶ Read Romans 3:23-24. What do you think the words 'justified,' and 'redemption' mean? Discuss with your parents.



## DAY 3: JESUS IS OUR SALVATION

- ▶ In week 1 we said that, “Jesus is the center of the story for Christians. He is the King of the Universe, the only way to know God and the very being that created you! Also, being a Christian means that you, 1) understand what he did over 2000 years ago, and 2) know how to respond correctly.”

Even though you talked about this then, Jesus is so important that you do as much as you can to know him and know about him. Answer the following questions<sup>4</sup> and discuss with your parents.

- *Who is Jesus, and why was it important that He never sinned?*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - *Why was Jesus’ death necessary?*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - *How does Jesus’ death and resurrection accomplish our salvation?*
- ▶ The Bible tells us that the only way we can receive this gift from Jesus is by the power of the Holy Spirit. Read John 3:3-8. What do you think it means to be ‘born again.’
- ▶ How do you know if this has happened in your life?

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<sup>4</sup> The basic questions are borrowed from *Established in the Faith*

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# **WEEK 4**

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## DAY 1: THE CHURCH

Today we are going to talk about the church. This might sound like an odd thing to talk about at this point, but the Bible makes it clear that we should have a good understanding of the church and what God is up to there in order to approach baptism or the Lord's Table.

- ▶ Talk with your parents about what you think the church is? Is it a building, or an organization? Or is it more? Let's look to the Bible and see what it says about the church.

- ▶ Recall what we learned about 'the Heroes of the Faith' in Hebrews chapter 11. What does 12:1 say about these people? What does this teach you about the church you currently attend?

- ▶ Briefly read 1 Corinthians 1:2-3, Galatians 1:2-3, and Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18, 3:1, 7, 14. These are all written to specific, individual churches. What does that teach you about 'who' and 'what' is God's church?

## DAY 2: BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S TABLE

Neither Baptism nor The Lord's Table does anything to save us. But that does not mean that they are not important. Jesus commanded that his followers observe both of these sacraments. These sacraments are symbols used to affirm and remind God's children of their salvation.

► Being baptized indicates that you are a follower of Jesus and are committed to seeking him throughout your life. Look up the following verses and answer the question 'Why should I be baptized?'

- Matt. 28:19
- Acts 2:38
- Acts 8:12
- Acts 8:36
- Rom. 6:4

► In addition to baptism, God has given his children The Lord's Table as a visual reminder of our dependence on Jesus and his life, death and resurrection. Throughout the years, Christians have also called the Lord's Table 'communion.' Read Exodus 12:5-13. As best as you can, retell the story of the Passover to your parents. What did the Passover meal teach God's people in the Old Testament?

► Read Matthew 26:26-29. This is where we read of Jesus' Last Supper, which is what we recognize in Communion. How does The Lord's Table replace the Old Testament Passover today?

► Read John 6:48-58 and 1 Corinthians 11:17-26. What do the wine and bread stand for in communion? Why do Christians continue to take communion today? Discuss this with your parents.

## DAY 3: YOUR TESTIMONY AND TELLING OTHERS ABOUT JESUS

When a person is saved and comes into a personal relationship with God, a significant thing happens in their life. The very power that created the universe lives inside a person and changes their life. If this is true, then that means a person should be able to say something about it for the purpose of telling others. This 'Story' about how God has worked in a Christian's life is called a 'Testimony.'

All Christians have a testimony. If a person knows Jesus and has been adopted as his child, then he/she has something to say about it. This account is a story about how a person came to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Do you have a testimony? Last week we discussed how to know if you are a Christian, which means that if you know Jesus then you have a testimony!

► What is your testimony? Discuss with your parents the following topics:

a) Why do you need salvation?

b) When did you first understand this need?

c) What have you done in response to this need?

d) What are you doing to grow in your walk with Jesus?

► It is helpful to write your testimony down in some form so that you can remind yourself of God's work and so you can tell your story to others. Your testimony does not need to follow a format, nor does it have to look like a paper you would write in school (it does not need to have proper grammar). Your testimony can even be bullet-point notes for you know. What is important is that you know how to tell others how you came to know Jesus and how to tell others about his life, death and resurrection.

As best as you can, work with your parents to write out your testimony. If you have an opportunity, pray about telling it to someone this week.

# MY TESTIMONY

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# NEXT STEPS

## For Children Seeking Baptism

After completing this material, parents should contact the front office of Peninsula Community Chapel to set up an interview with a pastor or elder. Please email the front office at [office@pccyorktown.com](mailto:office@pccyorktown.com) to move forward.

The questions required for baptism at PCC are as follows. Each person being baptized should be able to answer these without qualification.

1. **Do you recognize that you're a sinner in need of a savior and are you trusting in Jesus Christ by faith as your savior?**
2. **Do you recognize Jesus as the Lord of your life and commit to live for Him and His glory?**
3. **Do you commit yourself to His body, the church? Do you recognize His church as being your spiritual family and commit yourself to being a part of a gospel-preaching church wherever the Lord may take you in this life?**

## For Children Approaching The Lord's Table

At PCC, we generally maintain<sup>5</sup> that participation in the Lord's Table is left to the individual's conscience as he or she responds to the table's fencing prior to its administration in each instance. For children, this decision will be left to the discretion of their parents. However, if parents would like to meet with an elder or pastor for help confirming their decision, they may contact the front office at [office@pccyorktown.com](mailto:office@pccyorktown.com) to set up a meeting.

For any questions regarding either of these situation, please email Edward Murray at [emurray@pccyorktown.com](mailto:emurray@pccyorktown.com).

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<sup>5</sup> Exceptions to this would be cases of church discipline where the elders have given expressed prohibition (*cf. Constitution Article III: The Fellowship, & Article IX: Church Discipline, Sections B and C*).

# APPENDIX I

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## Two Views on Child Participation in Sacraments<sup>6</sup>

Before moving forward, it is worth revisiting the chapel's position on Baptism (from Article II, Section B, Para. 11 of *Constitution*; Section 1 of *Doctrines with Scriptural Latitude*) and the Lord's Table:

### **Baptism (Art. II, Sect. B.11 *Constitution*; Sect. 1 *Doctrines with Scriptural Latitude*)**

*In fulfilling the purposes of Peninsula Community Chapel, the following distinctive emphases are maintained - (#11) At PCC, we maintain that Baptism is not essential for salvation. Moreover, we will show tolerance toward the individual's mode of baptism, not making this an issue for either fellowship or membership. PCC will practice believer's baptism and immersion.*

### **The Lord's Table (Lord's Table Worksheet)**

*The Lord's Table is an outward, corporate act done to picture and remind us of what God does inside of us throughout our Christian life. It does not save us. By consuming the elements, the believer takes in the body and blood of Christ in a spiritual sense, declaring their faith in and dependence upon Jesus Christ's sacrificial death for their sins. Consuming the elements also serves as a memorial of Jesus' death and as a way of proclaiming his death until he returns. The Lord's Table is not for perfect people. It is for sinners who through repentance and faith have trusted in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Those who do not yet know Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and those who are currently living in conscious, unrepentant sin should not participate in the table.*

When it comes to child participation in the sacraments, there are *two general views* within credo-Baptist practicing churches that should be considered regarding the timing of baptizing *professing* children. These two views are:

- 1. Withholding baptism and communion from children until they reach a level of maturity that is independent of their parents in matters relating to God and the church.**
- 2. Immediate participation in baptism and communion for believing children, who are recognized as church members with limited responsibilities.**

## **Position #1: Withholding**

The arguments for withholding baptism and communion from children until they reach a level of maturity that is independent of their parents in matters relating to God and the church are as follows:

1. Children, just like adults, are sinful, and they are in need of Jesus' saving work (Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12-21).
2. Children can be saved. Christ invites children to come to him (1 Samuel 1-3; Psalm 22:9-10; 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 34-35; Jeremiah 1:5-8; Luke 1:15; Luke 18:16), and he uses children as examples of the humility necessary for those who wish to enter Jesus' kingdom (Matthew 11:25; 18:2-4; 19:13-14; Mark 10:15-16; Luke 10:21; 18:14-16).
3. Baptism and communion should be given immediately when one's confession of faith is publicly credible. For adults, this means living in the community of faith for a time and being examined by the elders and larger community who watch for an authentic trust in Christ that is independent of others.
4. It is not clear in the New Testament that children were ever baptized or that we should expect they should be (e.g., Acts 4:4, 32; 5:6, 12-14; 6:1; 8:1-3, 12; 9:2; 10:24, 33, 44-48; 12:13). All followers of Christ described in the New Testament are baptized as adults, who are actively participating in church life.
5. A child's faith is primarily nurtured by his or her parents (Ephesians 6:4)—primarily the father, who provides pastoral direction to his child. The New Testament teaching that children must obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20) implies that children relate to God and the church primarily through their parents, and they are not on independent standing before God (see also 1 Corinthians 7:14).

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<sup>6</sup> This resource is part of a booklet published by Holman and Kennedy entitled *Childhood Baptism and Church Membership: A Position and Policy for Sojourn Community Church*.



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6. Moreover, children are easily deceived. They require the constant supervision and care of parental authority (Proverbs 22:15; Ephesians 4:14-15; 1 Corinthians 13:11).
  7. Due to immaturity, children have had little chance to express their trust in Christ independently from their parents. For example, they have had few opportunities to choose between Christ and their peers in a deep way. They cannot make a publicly credible confession.
  8. Therefore, baptism and communion should be withheld from children until they reach a level of maturity that is independent of their parents.
  9. Moreover, baptism and communion are inseparable from active membership and participation in the local church. So, children should be excluded from church membership as well.
  10. God's saving grace is not given through baptism and communion. So, there is no danger to the child in waiting. In fact, waiting can increase the honor associated with this event as well as allow time for the child's discipline and faith to grow.

### **“Withholding” At Its Worst**

In its attempt to judge the faithfulness of each individual's testimony by the fruits of that person's life (Matthew 7:16; 1 John 4:1ff; James 2), the church begins to emphasize good works as a means of self-assessment. Tender children (and adults), in whom the Spirit is at work, may be discouraged by their continuing sinfulness and lack of apparent fruit. A well-intentioned policy may become a stumbling block that encourages these children to have a fearful and introspective view of their spiritual lives. Parents may be discouraged as well, and “withholding” could become an excuse for them to lower their expectations and put off training their children in spiritual things. The adolescent period may be prolonged and filled with many failures. If this occurs, God will judge the church's teachers for being stumbling blocks to the little ones in their care (Matthew 18:6).

### **“Withholding” At Its Best**

The church welcomes young adults into its membership with the confidence that they have demonstrated evidence of change and new life throughout their adolescent years. These young people demonstrate a deep understanding of the Christian faith without confusion, and they gladly look forward to their public confession and baptism. Once joining the church, these adult believers have fond memories of their baptism as a significant event and rite of passage. In the process, the church's reputation and leadership is protected from those who are Christians in name only.

### **Resources for Parents:**

- ▶ Dever, Mark E. “Who Should Be Baptized? At What Age Should Believers Be Baptized?” Sermon at the Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, D.C., on Sunday, April 21, 2002.
- ▶ Elliff, Jim. *How Children Come to Faith in Christ*. Audio cassettes. Little Rock, AR: Family Life, 1994. MP3s available at *Christian Communicators Online*, [www.ccwonline.org](http://www.ccwonline.org).
- ▶ \_\_\_\_\_. “Childhood Conversion.” Available at *Christian Communicators Online*, [www.biblehub.com/sermons/auth/spurgeon/children\\_brought\\_to\\_christ\\_and\\_not\\_to\\_the\\_font.htm](http://www.biblehub.com/sermons/auth/spurgeon/children_brought_to_christ_and_not_to_the_font.htm). Published in 1997.

## **Position #2: Immediate Participation**

The arguments for immediate participation in baptism and communion for believing children who are also recognized as church members with limited responsibilities are as follows:

1. Children, just like adults, are sinful, and they are in need of Jesus' saving work (Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12-21).
2. Children can be saved. Christ invites children to come to him (1 Samuel 1-3; Psalm 22:9-10; 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 34-35; Jeremiah 1:5-8; Luke 1:15; Luke 18:16), and he uses children as examples of the humility necessary for those who wish to enter Jesus' kingdom (Matthew 11:25; 18:2-4; 19:13-14; Mark 10:15-16; Luke 10:21; 18:14-16).
3. Believing children should be welcomed into the church through baptism. The NT authors addressed these children as members within the church (Ephesians 6:1 "in the Lord;" Colossians 3:20), and we should as well.
4. The New Testament knows nothing of un-baptized followers of Christ. If a child is a believer, he or she is a disciple. If a child is a disciple, then Christ commands that this child participate in baptism and communion (Matthew 28:18-10).
5. Baptism and communion are intended for every member of Christ's church. They are ways of experiencing and remembering God's goodness and the gracious gifts that he has lavished on his people. None of Jesus' gracious gifts—worship, teaching, preaching, community, pastoral care, communion, or even church discipline— should be withheld from young followers of Christ.
6. In his pastoral epistles, Paul limits the position of elder to men (1 Timothy 2:11-12; 3:2). Moreover, the term "elder" itself suggests that the attainment of age and experience is required for one to exercise this role in the church (though Timothy should not be considered to be too young—4:12). Paul also sets an age limit (age 60) for widows who can receive support from the church (5:9). In the spirit of these limitations, it is suggested that church leadership roles and responsibilities that call for a certain level of maturity should be withheld from children until they reach that level. In other words, believing children are full-fledged members of the church that have limited responsibilities until they reach a level of independence from their parents. Until that time, their primary responsibility *in the Lord* is to obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1).

## **"Immediate Participation" At Its Worst**

The social pressure on the church's leadership may lead them to confirm the salvation of children at a very young age. Teachers and parents may pressure children for quick decisions without waiting for understanding about what it means to turn away from sins and truly trust in Jesus. False assurances may be given to some children. As these children grow, their Christianity is shown to lack credibility, and this damages the church's public reputation as well as its witness to the gospel. As loving shepherds of the church, the elders are responsible to confront any professed believer (adult or child) whose life is not lived in accord with his confession (2 Tim 4:1-5; Heb 13:17). Therefore, if a baptized child continues in sin without repenting, the elders will have to take corrective measures. The goal in any "church discipline" situation is restoration, and our hope is that any correction from Sojourn's elders would augment parents' discipline. The worst case scenario would occur if the elders were at odds with the parents.

## **“Immediate Participation” At Its Best**

The church teaches parents that salvation is a work of God and not merely a decision by the believer. Children, like adults, show understanding and evidence of believing faith before the church accepts them for baptism. Christ’s goodness, love, and gracious mercy are taught to children. The church receives believing children into its membership and corporate worship gatherings with confidence and glad hearts—knowing that their faith is made strong by Christ. The children, encouraged to obey their parents, read their Bibles, and talk to God in prayer, grow in wisdom and grace even as they grow in stature.

### **Resources for Parents:**

- ▶ Christman, Ted. *Forbid Them Not: Rethinking the Baptism and Church Membership of Children and Young People* (booklet). Owensboro, KY: Heritage Baptist Church.
- ▶ Spurgeon, Charles H. “Children Brought to Christ, and Not to the Font.” Sermon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, on Sunday, July 24, 1864. Available at *The Spurgeon Archive*, [www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0581.htm](http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0581.htm).



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