



# Child Baptism Guide

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This Child Baptism interactive guide is intended for use by parents with their children ages 6-12 years. Our goal is to equip parents to discern their child's belief in Jesus and understanding of the gospel in order to determine their readiness for baptism.

At the baptism interview, the child will have the opportunity to share their story and motivation to be baptized. The staff member and parents together will determine the child's understanding of the gospel, belief and confession of faith in the saving work of Jesus on the cross, and their understanding of baptism.

We are excited about walking through the baptism process with you and your child. As we begin this process, it is important to establish common language and define clear expectations.

We all have the same goal, and that is the spiritual well-being of your child. Discipleship is a community effort in many regards. We believe the scriptures teach that parents hold the role as primary discipler in the lives of their children. As the church, our hope and heart is to come alongside you to provide support and encouragement and to equip you as parents. We also want to partner with you in teaching the next generation about the words of the LORD.

It's easy to see the salvation of children and/or baptism through the lens of our own experience. While that can serve to give us some insight, we should be careful not to take our own testimony and experience and use that as a standard of measure for our children. Because the Lord calls each of us to Himself at different points and through different circumstances, it is important to recognize that only God knows the work He is doing in the heart of your child and it may look very different than your own. We should acknowledge that and work to establish a common biblical framework as we move forward. That is what we hope to accomplish through this Child Baptism Guide.

This guide is divided into three parts:

**Part 1 is information for you, the parent.** This section will help you begin to *establish a common biblical framework for baptism*, including the gospel story, what it means to be a Christian, how we are saved by putting our love and trust in Jesus, and why baptism is only for believers in Jesus Christ. This is followed by a WALK IT OUT activity to be done by you before having your child join you in working through the rest of the guide.

**Part 2 is for you, the parent, to read and discuss with your child.** This session is about *the gospel and salvation*. You will teach through the gospel, what it means to love and trust Jesus, and the nature of repentance. This will be followed by some WALK IT OUT activities to be done together.

**Part 3 is for you, the parent, to read and discuss with your child.** This session is about *the meaning and motivation for baptism*. You will teach what baptism is, what it does, as well as the right and wrong motivations for being baptized. This will be followed by some WALK IT OUT activities to be done together.

## **PART 1: PARENT INFORMATION**

### **THE GOSPEL**

When we talk about the gospel we mean the big story of God in which He is reconciling all things to Himself through Jesus. This story tells us that Jesus died for our sins and was raised from the dead. This had to occur because man is born in the hopeless state of sin - not just the fact that he sins, but that he has a heart condition called "sin" - with no access to God, completely deserving of wrath and separation from God forever. But, God sent His Son, fully God and fully man, to live a sinless life and to die in the place of sinners. Jesus took our sin and God's just anger toward both us and our sin. He took it on himself and died in our place. Jesus not only died for sin, but He was raised on the third day. His death, burial, and resurrection made a way for all who put their love and trust in him to be fully forgiven, freely and forever. There is no other way for sin to be forgiven apart from trust in Jesus. All those that come to Jesus, who put their love and trust in Him, forsaking their sin, are adopted into God's family and are called the children of God! Those who belong to Jesus love Him, and they have turned away from sin; they are no longer slaves to sin, but followers of Jesus.

### **ROLES IN BAPTISM**

The role of the CHURCH in the baptism process is to encourage and equip families as they disciple their children and to steward the ordinances. Baptism tells a story, gives a testimony, and provides the church with an opportunity to remember the gospel and celebrate God's work of salvation. We want to make sure that a true testimony is being presented. This guide is intended to provide a clear teaching on the gospel, as well as the meaning of and the right motivations for baptism. We will provide encouragement and support as you walk through the baptism process, and we will pray for you during this exciting season.

The role of the PARENT in the baptism process is to continue the discipleship of your child by teaching the scriptures, showing them what it means to follow Jesus, and covering them in prayer. Come into this process prayerfully and open-handed. Even if you have complete confidence in your child's profession of faith, there is no harm in engaging them with the gospel and examining it again. Read through this guide with your child and complete the activities following each teaching. The point of the activities is to help you draw out the heart of your child and discern where they are in terms of their understanding of the gospel and their belief and confession in the saving work of Jesus on the cross on his or her behalf. As always, cover your child in prayer during this time.

### **COMMON FRAMEWORK FOR BAPTISM**

At Bridgeway Church, we practice what is called "believer's" or "confessor's" baptism, which means we only baptize those who believe and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We do not practice infant baptism. We also practice baptism by immersion, which means a person is fully submerged in water and then raised up out of the water again.

Baptism is a demonstration of being united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It is NOT a saving act; it occurs after salvation as an act of obedience to Christ. It is a celebration of joining the community of believers. Baptism is for believers, and is symbolic of what has already happened in the heart of a believer. It is a picture of being washed clean from sin in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It is a public profession of faith in Christ. We believe that baptism is an event that should be understood and remembered, and ultimately only needs to be done once. There should always be seasons of growth and greater periods of maturity in the life of those who have trusted in the gospel. Believers don't need to be re-baptized each time they experience greater joy and sanctification. However, if you believe that your child's original experience was prior to truly trusting in Christ as Lord and Savior, you should pursue obedience in this area by leading them in being baptized now.

A person is ready to be baptized, regardless of age, when they come to saving faith in Jesus Christ, having placed their full confidence in the person and work of Jesus, trusting that His death paid the penalty for their sin and made a way for them to receive forgiveness and be adopted into the family of God. They must have acknowledged their guilt as a sinner, and having been grieved over their sin, they must have turned from it to follow Jesus through repentance. They must have readily received the grace and forgiveness available for those who believe and confessed Him as LORD over their life.

We must remember that the gospel is the same regardless of age. Even children need to recognize and acknowledge their sinfulness and understand their need for a Savior. There is no salvation apart from repentance and no repentance without knowing the need to turn from sin to follow Jesus.

Be careful using language like “ask Jesus to live in your heart.” If this is the language you use in your family, it is important to explore with your child to be sure they have a correct understanding. Ask simple questions such as “What does that mean?” to see what your child actually understands about trusting Jesus. Kids are concrete thinkers. Do they believe a miniature, physical man has come to live inside their hearts? Or do they mean that they love Jesus with all they are and have given their heart to him?

A person is ready to be baptized when they are able to articulate the gospel in an age-appropriate way. Along with the gospel, a person should be able to share their story or testimony about how the gospel has effected their life. A person should have a clear understanding of baptism and the right motivation for wanting to be baptized. Finally, a person is ready to be baptized when they actively display spiritual fruit or “evidences of faith” in their life, remembering that sanctification is a life-long process. Budding fruit is still fruit. We should not require mature fruit from a new believer, but should expect some fruit after salvation.

When looking for Fruits of the Spirit or “evidences of faith” in your child, rely on the Holy Spirit. It is He who is at work in your child, after all. Ask Him for wisdom and discernment as you observe your child, and explore the following questions. If you have a difficult time determining spiritual fruit in your child, ask other adults that are a part of your child’s life. Do they see “evidences of faith”?

- Does he have an affection for God and a desire to know Him personally?
- Does she show gratitude for salvation through Jesus?
- Is there a desire and eagerness to learn about the things of God and worship Him?
- Does he show obedience or a desire to obey the commands of God?
- Is there conviction and confession when she sins? How does she respond when she sins? Do you see evidence of conviction by the Holy Spirit leading to confession and repentance? Is she grieved when she sins, not out of fear of punishment, but out of love for God? Is she hard, indifferent, and unrepentant in sin? Do you see rebellion instead of repentance?
- Does he show growth in becoming more like Jesus? Is he bearing the Fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control? Do others recognize a change or growth in these fruits?
- Does she have a growing love for others?
- Does he willingly engage in prayer? Are his prayers from a heart of relationship to God? Listening to how your child prays can reveal a lot about how they relate to God.

It is important to remember that it is okay if your child is not ready to be baptized just yet. It does not mean that they are not saved, nor does it mean that they will not be saved in God’s perfect time. It also does not mean that you are failing in the area of discipling your child! Trust in God as you actively obey his call to disciple them, and He will bring the fruit.

At Bridgeway we believe that there are four important truths to remember when discipling your children:

- **Parents are neither Saviors nor Sanctifiers.** The work of salvation and sanctification belongs to God and God alone. Be patient as He works in them for their good and His glory. He is writing their story; you get to read along as he goes.
- **Parents are Pastors.** You have the honor of shepherding the children God has entrusted to you. You have the privilege of telling them about Jesus often, pointing them to the cross, leading and guiding them and making disciples.
- **Parenting requires modeling.** The best way to consistently tell your children about the gospel is to walk it out daily. Allow your children to see that you need Jesus’ grace and forgiveness as much as they do. Model confession, repentance, and receiving His forgiveness. Your example may be more powerful than your words.
- **Parent your child with the end in mind — to send.** Your child is the next generation of disciples called to make disciples. It may be scary to think of sending your child to the “mission field,” but what greater honor is there than to send your child to make disciples in obedience to the Great Commission? Remember that the mission field begins in your home, your neighborhood, your school, and your city.

Please invest time to pray for, study alongside, and sit with your child as you walk through the baptism process. Your willingness to set apart time will help them see that their spiritual life and well-being is a priority to you and to God.

You may feel intimidated by the prospect of having to help your child understand things that may still be a mystery to you. That's okay. While you bear the responsibility in this process, God is ultimately the author of your faith and theirs. Lean into the Holy Spirit, asking for help, wisdom, and discernment as you lead your child into an understanding of the gospel. Know and rely on the love that He has for you and for your child. Also, know that Bridgeway Family staff are available to help if you have any questions.

You might consider beginning this process by preparing and sharing your own testimony with your child. How did the gospel change your life? What was your old life like compared with the new?

### **RESOURCES TO CONSIDER:**

*"Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart"* by J.D. Greear addresses questions of salvation and assurance of faith.

*"Seeker"* by Dian Layton is a children's allegory telling the story of a boy who begins his journey of getting to know the King for himself as his faith moves from his parents' to becoming his own.

## **WALK IT OUT PART 1 - FOR PARENTS**

Take some time in the next few days to process all that we just covered, asking the Holy Spirit to ready your heart as you begin walking your child through the baptism process. There is no time expectation, so take your time and enjoy this milestone with your child.

**REFLECT** on the gospel: How did God save you? How has He faithfully sustained and strengthened your faith as you've walked with Him? How has He blessed you? Corrected you? Kept you?

**ASK** for help: God has given parents the primary joy and responsibility of discipling their children. No parent is perfect. Take time to confess any areas where you may have fallen short as a mom or dad. Ask God for help, protection and grace as you walk your child through the baptism process. Pray for the wisdom and discernment to draw out their heart and to see them as the Lord does. Invite your community to pray for you during this season as well.

**PRAY** for your child: Think about your child and the unique person they were created by God to be. Consider the conversations you've had about Jesus and what it means to trust Him. Pray for them – that they would both understand and believe the gospel. Ask God to encourage their hearts over the next few weeks.

## **PREPARING FOR PART 2 - WITH YOUR CHILD**

Gauge your child's understanding of the gospel by placing them in the following hypothetical situation:

You are at school, soccer, gym, etc. and one of your friends starts to ask you about Jesus. They've never been to church. They don't know anything about God. They ask you what you believe. What would you say?

Parent, think about using the following questions if the conversation gets stuck:

- Who is Jesus and what is He like?
- Why did He come to earth?
- Why did Jesus die?
- What happened when He died and what happened afterward?
- Why do you believe this?
- How do I go to heaven?
- What does it mean to be a child of God?
- How does someone become a child of God?

## PART 2: PARENT AND CHILD - THE GOSPEL AND SALVATION

**The Gospel starts with God and GOD IS GOOD**



God is what is best for his children. And He has always been that way. Before there was anything else in the universe, there was God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And He was GOOD. Before anything else existed, God deserved glory. He deserved to be shown and enjoyed as the most valuable thing. Out of his goodness He created everything. He made the land. He poured the water on the earth. He flung the stars out into space. He put animals on the land, and fish in the sea. He put birds in the air, and on the sixth day He made mankind. He made the first man, Adam and the first woman, Eve. When God looked at all He had made, He called it very GOOD.

Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden, and everything was perfect. They were with God, and God had given them everything they needed. There was no death, no sin, and they were in a right relationship with God, which was their greatest need and the best thing for them.



**ADAM**

GOD was in the center of Adam of Eve's hearts. They showed him that He was the most valuable thing. They honored him as the most valuable thing and they enjoyed him as the most valuable thing.

But things did not stay that way. One day the serpent, who is Satan or the devil, came to Eve and pointed to the one tree that God had put off limits and told her that God was keeping good things from her. He told her that God didn't really love her or want what was best for her. He told her that if God really loved her then He would have let her have the fruit from that tree.

So Eve chose to believe the lie of the serpent rather than the truth of God. She took the fruit from the one tree that God had forbidden and she ate it. Then she gave some to her husband Adam who was with her, and he ate it too.

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, everything changed because sin had entered the world. Sin is anything we do, say, or think that displeases God. Usually, that looks like honoring and enjoying something other than God as the most valuable thing. When sin entered the world, things went bad all over the place. First, Adam traded his heart that had God at the center of it for a different heart. No longer did he honor and enjoy God as the most valuable thing.

Instead, he began to honor and enjoy himself as the most valuable thing. He was no longer clean and pure. Adam was dirty with sin. He was guilty, and "SELF" was at the center of his heart.



**ADAM**

**God is not just good, but GOD IS HOLY**



Adam and Eve knew that God was HOLY, so when they ate fruit from the tree and realized their guilt, they began to hide themselves. They had been naked and completely unashamed because they had nothing to be ashamed of, but now that they were sinful they were ashamed of themselves and wanted to hide. They sewed leaves together to make clothes, and later on, when they heard God coming, they hid themselves so that God couldn't find them. Hiding from God is a hard thing to do. When God came through the garden and called for Adam, he told God that he was hiding himself because he was naked. You see, Adam was already separating himself from God because he knew that God was completely perfect and separate from sin. Now that Adam had sinned, he could no longer be with God because of his sin and guilt.

God knew that Adam had eaten from the tree because nothing is hidden from God. He is omniscient, which means He knows everything. God sent Adam and Eve out of the garden. They could no longer be with God because of their sin. From that day forward, they lived with the knowledge that they could no longer be in a relationship with God, and they also knew that one day they would die as a punishment for their sin.

Adam and Eve left the garden and eventually had some kids. Those kids looked like Adam and Eve in some ways. Maybe they had similar hair color or similar skin tone. Maybe they had the same eye color and eye shape. But the one thing that was exactly like Adam and Eve was their sinful hearts.

Every person born from that time on was born with a heart condition called “sin.” Every person honored and enjoyed themselves as the most valuable thing instead of God.

Adam and Eve’s kids grew up and had kids, who grew up and had kids, who had kids, on and on and on... until we get to your grandparents, who had a kid - which is me, who had a kid - and that’s you! All the way from Adam’s children, to me, and to you - we have all been born with hearts filled with sin.

Because we are born with sinful hearts, we are separated from God, and we do sinful things. We are separated from God and guilty of sin. We have hearts with “SELF” at the center and we are completely filled with sin, like Adam.



**God is good and God is holy, but HE IS also JUST.**

# JUST

**God is right to punish sin.**

It is a good and right thing that God is JUST. Sin is bad and he should punish it. If God saw sin and evil and thought it was okay, then He wouldn't be good. He would be evil. If a police officer watched a man rob a bank and gave him a high five instead of taking him to jail, then that police officer would be a terrible police officer. In the same way, God punishes sin and He should punish sin. It is good news that He punishes sin. But it's also bad news because we are sinful and that means that we deserve to be punished for sin.

The Bible tells us that the punishment for sin is death. People die because of their guilt for sin. The punishment for sin is not just physical death, but also spiritual death, which is eternal punishment in hell. We are sinful. We do sinful things because we have sinful hearts and we deserve God's JUST punishment for sin, which is death and an eternity separated from Him in hell.

**God is good. He is what is best. He is Holy, completely perfect and separate from sin. He is Just. He is right to punish sin. But He also does what is best for His children because GOD IS LOVING.**



God knew the situation that we were in. He knew that we were sinful and were unable to do anything to clean ourselves up. We had this enemy called sin that we couldn't beat, because it was inside of us. We also had this enemy called death that we couldn't beat, because it was the right, JUST punishment for sin. God knew that we were unable to defeat those two enemies. So God, being LOVING, sent his Son Jesus to be born on the earth as a baby.

Jesus is completely God and completely human. So when God was there in the beginning, deserving worship, Jesus was there and He deserved worship too, because He is God. In the beginning, when God made the heavens and the earth, the birds, fish, and animals, Jesus was there making all the heavens and the earth, the birds, fish, and animals, because Jesus is God and has always been God. Remember that there is one God in three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And though Jesus was God, He was born on earth as a little baby boy. You probably already know this. This is the reason we celebrate Christmas. Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger. When Jesus was born, He had a heart that was unlike yours and mine and all the grandparents before us. He didn't have a heart like Adam because Jesus' father was God the Father! So Jesus had a heart like his father's heart. He had a heart with God in the center of it.

He had a heart that honored and enjoyed God as the most valuable thing. And because Jesus had a right heart, he did right things. He lived His life perfectly. When God the Father looked at Jesus, He thought, "YES! I love him! That's just what a person is supposed to be like. He's perfect! I'm so pleased with him!"

When Jesus was a baby, He was perfect. He never sinned. Then He grew up into a little boy and He was perfect. He never sinned. Jesus got a little older and became a teenager and He never disobeyed, said the wrong thing, did the wrong thing, or thought the wrong thing. He was perfectly perfect, and God was perfectly pleased with Him.

Jesus grew into a man, and as a man He taught people about God. He showed people what God was doing in the world. He showed them what God loved and what displeased God. He healed the sick and freed people who were being attacked by demons. He loved people that no one else loved, and he was kind to the needy. He was perfect in every way and God was perfectly pleased with Him.

In fact, Jesus was so perfectly pleasing to God and completely sinless that He should have never died. He was the only man that didn't deserve the punishment for sin that we all deserve. But one day, Jesus did die. When Jesus was 33 years old, He was accused of doing some things that He didn't actually do and He was crucified. That means that men built a wooden cross and they nailed His hands and feet to the cross. Then they stood the cross up on its end and hung Him there just above the ground until He died. That is really sad, but something amazing happened on the cross when Jesus died.

When Jesus died on the cross, he wasn't dying because he deserved to die. He was dying because he, the righteous one, was suffering and dying for us, the unrighteous ones. He was paying the punishment that we deserved. He took on all the sins of the world and all our guilt for sins and all God's anger and punishment towards sin and then freely poured out his forgiveness on us, because he is LOVING. He makes a way for us to be reconciled to God.



After taking all that sin and punishment, Jesus died. His dead body was taken down off the cross and put into a tomb. After three days of being dead, Jesus got back up and stopped being dead. He resurrected from the dead.

It's important to understand something about Jesus' resurrection. When Jesus got up from the dead, it was not like what happens when someone's heart stops beating and a person rolls up in an ambulance and does CPR and then the person gets up and their heart starts beating again. The person who receives CPR and comes back to life is alive for a while, but that person is going to die again someday and stay dead. Jesus on the other hand, got up from the dead, never to die again. He came back to life because He had beaten death. Death was not as strong as Jesus and so Jesus stopped being dead and will never die again. That means that Jesus is alive today... right now! He is never going to die again!

So Jesus proved himself to be stronger than our two greatest enemies: sin and death. So in a fight between Jesus and sin, who always wins? JESUS! And in a fight against Jesus and death, who always wins? JESUS!

Not only is Jesus stronger than sin and death, not only is he still alive right now, but Jesus promised that one day He would come back to bring God's children, those that put their love and trust in Jesus, to live with God forever. In the same way that He rose to a new life, never to die again, He would give God's children the same sort of life, a life that never ends, together forever with God. God's children would live with God forever in freedom from sin and death and suffering.

**So God is good and holy, just and loving, and GOD IS also MERCIFUL**

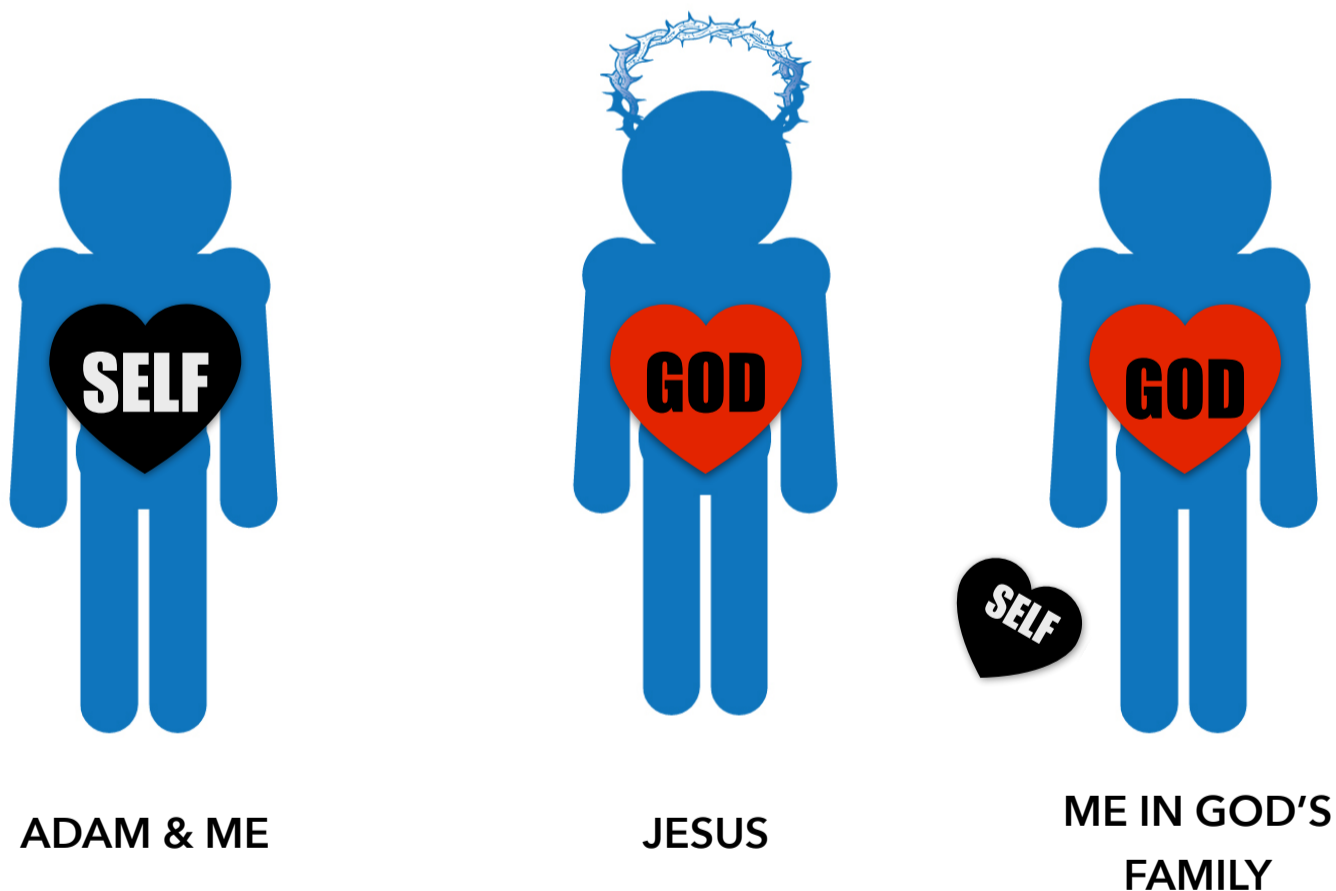


God is merciful. He does not give HIS CHILDREN the punishment they deserve. Jesus takes our sin and the punishment for our sin if we are children of God.

So here's the big question - who are the Children of God? The children of God are all the people that put their love and trust in Jesus. They are adopted into God's family and become heirs with Christ. God is MERCIFUL and does not give HIS CHILDREN the punishment they deserve. But there are people who are NOT God's children and God gives them the punishment that they do deserve.

So this is an important question. How do you enter into God's family? What does it mean to put your love and trust in Jesus? How do you become a child of God? We are all born outside of God's family. Remember that we are born with a heart that has "SELF" at the center and not "GOD." But Jesus died on the cross to bring us to God. We can be brought into his family. Those who are adopted into his family are those who put their love and trust in Jesus.

What happens when we've put our love and trust in Jesus and are adopted into His family as His child? The first thing that happens is that God takes our old heart that looked like the first man, Adam, and he gives us a new heart that looks like Jesus' heart. Jesus becomes our brother, and that means that we are heirs to the Kingdom of God. When we've received this new heart, we will begin to honor and enjoy God as the most valuable thing. The more we get to know Him the more we will love to honor and enjoy Him! We will want to pray. We will want to read the Bible to get to know Him better. We will want to worship and praise Him. We will want to obey Him. We do these things, not because we have to or because there are rules that tell us to, but because we really want to. When we enjoy God as the most valuable thing, it will affect the way we spend our time and live our lives. God becomes the center of our hearts.



You may be asking what it means to put your love and trust in Jesus. The Bible uses the word REPENTANCE to talk about this. Repentance is when we confess our sinfulness and turn away from it to follow Jesus, because we see that God is more valuable than anything in the whole world. He is the very best for us. This doesn't mean that God's children never sin again or make mistakes, but it does mean that they are moving in a new direction with their lives. They continue to look more and more like Jesus as they walk in repentance and obedience to God, and grow to love the things He loves and dislike the things that He dislikes.

So a child of God LOVES Jesus so much that they turn away from "SELF" and put "GOD" at the center of their lives. God's children also TRUST Jesus. They have confidence that Jesus really is completely God and completely human. They believe that they themselves are sinners, not just because they have made mistakes and have sinned, but because they, like all humans ever since Adam, were born with a heart condition called SIN. God's children believe that because of this, they deserve God's right and just punishment and that they are unable to make up for their sin on their own. God's children believe that Jesus took their sin on Himself when He died on the cross, and He paid the penalty so that they could be forgiven of their sin. God's children believe that Jesus resurrected from the dead never to die again, and that they have received the promise of eternal life forever with God.

God's children believe that God is pleased with them, and He IS perfectly pleased with them. And He will always be perfectly pleased with them. God's children know that God is not pleased with them because of anything that they have done, but that God is pleased with them because when God looks at them He sees Jesus, rather than their sin.

That is the good news of the gospel! Jesus Christ, the righteous one, died for us, the unrighteous ones to bring us to God. We receive this free gift of GRACE by putting our love and trust in Jesus!

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#### **RESOURCES TO CONSIDER:**

*"The Garden The Curtain and the Cross"* by Carl Laferton

*"The Biggest Story"* by Kevin DeYoung

*Jesus, Sin and You* (Video Message illustration): [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Z\\_SMrnEial](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Z_SMrnEial)

## **WALK IT OUT PART 2 - WITH YOUR CHILD**

Here are a series of bedtime conversations and prayers based on the **5 attributes talked about in the GOSPEL AND SALVATION story**. Spread them out over several days to allow your child time to think and process through each attribute. Praying with your child is incredibly important. We learn to pray by praying with others. In addition to helping your child learn what prayer is, this is an opportunity for you to hear them pray. Listening to the prayers of your child can tell you a lot about what they believe and how they are relating to God. Are their prayers forced? Are they simply repeating what they have heard you or others say in prayer? Are their prayers sincere? What do you hear about their heart?

**God is GOOD - He is what is best.** Talk with your child about what it means for God to be good. Do they believe that God is what is best? Why? Pray and have your child pray, praising God for being good, for creating a world that is good, and for showing us His goodness.

**God is HOLY - He is completely perfect and separated from sin.** Talk with your child about what it means for God to be completely perfect and separated from sin. How would they describe sin? Where do they see it in their lives? How do they feel about their sin? Pray, and have your child pray, praising God for being holy, unlike anything else, completely perfect and wonderful. This is also a good time to talk about the ongoing need for confession, repentance, and receiving forgiveness. Be honest with your child about your ongoing need for His forgiveness, and allow them to hear you talk to God about your sin.

**God is JUST - He is right to punish sin.** Talk with your child about what it means for God to be just. Why is it right for God to punish sin? Give them more examples of right punishments for breaking laws. What is the punishment for sin? Is there anything we can do to make our sin right? Can we just stop sinning if we try hard enough? How do you feel about God being just? Pray and have your child pray, praising God that He is just and right in punishing sin.

**God is LOVING - He does what is best.** Talk with your child about what it means for God to be loving. What has God done to show the love He has for His children? Read Romans 5:6-8 together as you talk about these questions. Why did Jesus have to die? What happened to sin when Jesus died? What happened after he died? Why does it matter? How does the death and resurrection of Jesus show that God is loving - that He does what is best? Pray and have your child pray, praising God for doing what is best and giving His son to die in the place of guilty, undeserving sinners.

**God is MERCIFUL - He does not give sinners the punishment they deserve for sin.** Talk with your child about what it means for God to be merciful. As a sinner, what do you deserve from God? What do we need? What happened to the anger and punishment you deserve? Did it just go away? Who receives forgiveness for their sin and who is adopted as a child of God? Did you deserve it? When you hear someone say "love and trust Jesus," what do you think that means? What does it mean to love Jesus? What does it mean to believe and trust Him? Have you trusted Jesus? Tell me about that. Pray and have your child pray, praising God and giving thanks that He is merciful and does not give sinners the punishment they deserve for sin, but instead gives forgiveness and eternal life to those who believe.

## **PREPARING FOR PART 3 - WITH YOUR CHILD**

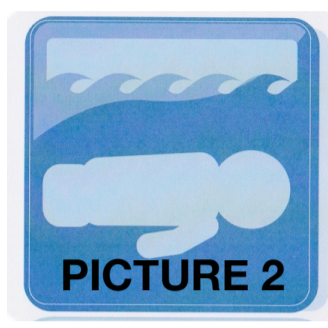
Talk with your child about these three questions in order to gauge their understanding of and motivation for baptism before starting Part 3:

1. What does baptism mean? What is it for?
2. Why do people get baptized?
3. Why do you want to be baptized?

You can also have your child draw a picture of baptism as you talk or before you talk through these three questions.

### **PART 3: PARENT AND CHILD - THE MEANING AND MOTIVATION FOR BAPTISM**

Before beginning, cut out the three baptism pictures and the six label cards found on the last pages of this guide. You will also need a pen and 3 small pieces of paper. On one piece of paper, write “Jesus,” and on the other, write your name. Leave the 3rd blank until you are directed to ask your child if they’d like to write their name on it. Lay out the pictures in this order:



Remember that we have been talking about the GOSPEL STORY, which is God’s Big Story of bringing us back to Himself through His Son Jesus. We’ve discussed these things:

**God is GOOD** - He is what is best for His children. We are sinful, not only because we sin, but because we are born with a heart condition called sin.

**God is HOLY and JUST** - He is completely perfect and separate from sin, and He is right to punish sin. We deserve the punishment for sin, which is death and separation from God forever.

**God is LOVING** - He does what is best for His children. God sent Jesus to die and take the punishment for sin. Jesus came and took both the sin of God’s children and all of God’s anger toward sin.

**God is MERCIFUL** - He doesn’t give His children the punishment they deserve. Instead of punishing them, he gives a new heart to all who would turn away from sin to love and trust Jesus in repentance. God adopts them into His family.

We also talked about what it means to be a **CHILD OF GOD**. If you are a child of God, you know and believe that you are *guilty of sin*, not just because of sinful actions, but because you have a *heart sickness called sin*. Your heart had “SELF” at the center instead of “GOD.” You understand that because you are a sinner and God is holy and just that you *deserve the punishment for sin*, which is *death and separation from Him*. You know and believe that Jesus *died and rose from the dead*, and that His death was the punishment for your sin. You understand that you can’t do enough to earn God’s approval and your *only hope is Jesus*.

A child of God will *repent of sin*, which means you *confess* your sin and *turn away* from it *to follow Jesus*. Being a child of God doesn’t mean you will never sin again while you are on earth. What it does mean is that when you sin, you are quick to tell God, turn away from it, and follow Jesus because you trust Jesus is better than sin.

A child of God is eager to *show honor to God, enjoy Him as the most valuable thing*, and live a life of *love and obedience* to God’s good commands to *love God and love others*.

Because a child of God is eager to be obedient to the commands of God and the example that Jesus gave, it is important to be baptized. Let’s talk about BAPTISM: What is it? Who is it for? What does it mean? And what are the right reasons to be baptized?

## What is Baptism?

Baptism is when someone stands in water, goes fully underneath the water, and then comes back up.

Baptism is a SYMBOL. A symbol is something that stands for something else. A wedding ring is a symbol of marriage. When a man and a woman get married, they make a promise to God and to each other. After making those promises, they put a ring on each other's finger. That ring isn't what makes them married, but it is a symbol of their love and commitment to one another. Baptism is a symbol that shows that a person has trusted Jesus and has been united with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection.

Baptism is a celebration of JOINING THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS. You are celebrating with other brothers and sisters in Christ that you belong to the family of God, which is called the church.

BAPTISM IS NOT WHAT SAVES YOU FROM SIN AND DEATH, but it is something you do after you have trusted in Jesus. Being baptized is not what washes away your sins or gives you a new heart. You are saved by turning away from sin to love, trust, and follow Jesus. You are saved by God's grace and by faith alone.

## What does Baptism do? What does it mean? What story does it tell?

Place the piece of paper that you wrote the name "Jesus" on just below the first baptism picture. And place the paper with your name underneath it. This will guide where you place the light blue colored labels and dark blue colored labels.

Baptism shows us something about Jesus. It mirrors the DEATH, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION of Jesus.

(Have your child place the darker blue labels "Jesus Alive," "Jesus Dead and Buried," "Jesus Raised" under the appropriate pictures as you read.)

**Picture 1:** When a person is standing in the water, it represents JESUS ALIVE. Jesus came as a man and lived among us. He never sinned and had no sin in his heart.

(Place "JESUS ALIVE" label under the first picture.)

**Picture 2:** The picture of the person all the way under the water represents Jesus when He DIED on the cross for sin and was BURIED. Remember that Jesus really died. He stopped breathing. His heart stopped beating. He really died, and He was buried in a tomb. When someone is baptized and goes completely under the water, it is a symbol of trusting Jesus' death in their place.

(Place "JESUS DEAD AND BURIED" label under the second picture and move the handwritten paper with "Jesus" underneath that label.)

**Picture 3:** But, three days later, He ROSE FROM THE DEAD! The last picture helps us understand that Jesus rose and is alive today. When someone comes up out of the water, it is a symbol of Jesus' RESURRECTION - His victory over both sin and death.

(Place "JESUS RAISED" label under the third picture and move the handwritten paper with "Jesus" underneath that label.)

Baptism also shows what has happened in the heart of a believer.

(Have your child place the lighter blue labels "Alive to Sin," "Dead to Sin," and "Alive to Christ" under the pictures as you read on.) Use yourself as an example by moving the label with your name, instead of "Jesus" to explain how baptism shows what has happened in your heart as a believer when you turn away from sin and trust in Jesus.

**Picture 1:** Just like you, I was born ALIVE TO SIN. My heart was sick with sin. I wanted to show honor and enjoy mySELF as the most valuable thing. I lived in sin and did not love God.

(Place "ALIVE TO SIN" label under "JESUS ALIVE" label and keep the handwritten paper with your name under that label.)

**Picture 2:** When I was (age you came to faith), God showed me that my heart was sick with sin and he made me aware that I deserved punishment for sin and separation from God forever. He showed me I was a sinner and needed to be rescued. God opened my heart to love and trust Jesus. I didn't want to follow sin anymore. I wanted to follow Jesus and be adopted into God's family to love, honor, and obey Him all my days. My life was DEAD TO SIN when God saved me. He saved me because He loved me, not because of anything good I had done.

(Place "DEAD TO SIN" label under "JESUS DEAD AND BURIED" and move the handwritten paper with your name underneath that label.)

**Picture 3:** God made me ALIVE TO CHRIST by giving me a new heart that had GOD at the center of it. Since then I have been growing in my love for Jesus, and God has been teaching me what it looks like to show honor and enjoy Him as the most valuable thing. I am no longer sentenced to death but have been given a new life in Jesus.

(Place "ALIVE TO CHRIST" label under "JESUS RAISED" and move the handwritten paper with your name underneath that label.)

### **Let's Review.**

1. Baptism is a symbol.
2. It shows us about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.
3. It also shows us what has happened in the heart of a believer when they trust in Jesus.
4. Baptism is a celebration of joining the community of believers.
5. Baptism is not what saves you or washes away your sin.

### **Who should be Baptized?**

1. Children of God
2. Those who have REPENTED - Remember repent means to confess sin and turn away from it to follow Jesus. They BELIEVE that Jesus is Lord and that they are forgiven of their sin. They TRUST that he died on the cross to take the punishment they deserved, and they have committed to FOLLOW HIM FOREVER.
3. Those who understand what baptism means and want to do it for the right reasons

### **Why should we be baptized?**

When we obey God, we want to do the right thing for the right reason. God cares about the heart. Our motivation is the reason we want to do something. It is a word that has to do with our hearts, our desire, and our will. The reason you want to do something is very important. Doing the right thing for the wrong reason is not what pleases God. This is especially true when it comes to obeying God's commands. He wants us to obey Him, of course. But, he wants us to obey with a heart of faith and love. It is important to do the right thing for the right reason. The heart and the actions need to match. It is important that we pay attention to our hearts and figure out what our motivations are so that we can do the right thing for the right reason.

#### **Right Reasons to be Baptized:**

- I want to honor God by obeying Jesus' instructions.
- I want to follow Jesus' example.
- I want to show others in the church that I am a follower of Jesus, so they can celebrate what God has done and praise Him with me.

#### **Wrong Reasons to be Baptized:**

- I'm afraid I won't go to heaven if I don't get baptized.
- I'm afraid God will be mad at me if I don't get baptized.

- My mom and dad want me to, and I want them to be happy and proud of me.
- My friends and siblings have been baptized, and I want to be like them.
- I want to be the center of attention. I want people to think I'm important.
- I like being in the water and think it would be fun to swim at church.
- I want to brag about being baptized to my friends and feel like I'm better than they are.

Now that we've talked about what baptism is, who should be baptized, and what the right reasons are for being baptized, would you like to put your name on a piece of paper like I did and tell me your story as you move your name through the three baptism pictures? I can help you if you'd like.

**Next Steps:** If you would like to continue with the Baptism process feeling somewhat confident of your child's profession of faith, their understanding, and motivation for baptism, then do the final **WALK IT OUT ACTIVITIES**, then email a member of the Bridgeway Family Team ([bwkids@bridgewaychurch.com](mailto:bwkids@bridgewaychurch.com)). They will set up a time to do an interview with you and your child.

### WALK IT OUT PART 3 - WITH YOUR CHILD

Take some time this week to process the information you presented to your child. Using the pictures and prompts below, help your child review what baptism shows about Jesus and a child of God. Fill in the blanks.

**What does Baptism show us about Jesus' life?**



Jesus was \_\_\_\_\_



Then He died for \_\_\_\_\_



Then He \_\_\_\_\_



A child of God was alive to \_\_\_\_\_



Then he died to \_\_\_\_\_



Now he is alive to \_\_\_\_\_

## **PREPARING FOR A BAPTISM INTERVIEW - WITH YOUR CHILD**

### **Writing Out a Christian Testimony**

Help your child write out their testimony, using the pictures and prompts if you find that helpful. Feel the freedom to help them express what they understand and believe, but make sure that the testimony is in the words of your child and is an expression of what they have experienced and believe. We want them to express not just the facts of salvation but how they have been changed by it. We want them to share their life change experience.



ALIVE TO \_\_\_\_\_. Before Jesus saved me, I was \_\_\_\_\_

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DEAD TO \_\_\_\_\_. I came to love and trust Jesus when \_\_\_\_\_

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ALIVE TO \_\_\_\_\_. After trusting Jesus, I am \_\_\_\_\_

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Your child's testimony should include the following elements:

- What did I need to be saved from?
- What was my life like before Jesus?
- Why did I need to be saved?
- How did God solve this problem?
- How has my life changed since loving and trusting in Jesus?
- What do I hope this story of salvation and baptism accomplishes as I share and celebrate with the church?

Bring this testimony to your Baptism interview. We are excited to meet with you and your child and share in the story of Jesus' work in their life!

Many times a child that has been raised in a Christian home will know all the right answers but lack the experience of coming to a heart knowledge that produces affection for Jesus. If this is where you feel your child is, it's okay! Continue praying for them, discipling them, modeling the gospel to them through your own life, and trust God and His timing. You can return to this guide at any time in the future and process further with your child. You are doing a great job, and God is pleased with you!

## **Family Baptism FAQs**

**Q:** *Why would my child not be ready for baptism?*

**A:** Your child is not ready for baptism if he/she is not a believer, cannot articulate the gospel, does not bear spiritual fruit, does not understand the ordinance of baptism or if he/she wants to be baptized out of incorrect motivations.

**Q:** *Who can baptize my child?*

**A:** Any believer in Christ who has obeyed the ordinance of baptism can baptize your child. Many times at Bridgeway, a parent, guardian, grandparent, or close friend will baptize a child, but any of the Bridgeway Pastors would be happy and honored to baptize your child, as well.

**Q:** *What if a parent disagrees with the Family Ministry pastoral team about the child's readiness for baptism?*

**A:** It may happen from time to time that a child's parent disagrees with the pastor about the child's readiness for baptism. When this happens, a few things should be kept in mind. First, both the parents and the pastor have the same goal in mind: the spiritual well-being of the child. Secondly, while parents and churches have the same goal, they do not have the same responsibilities. Parents are primarily responsible for diligently teaching their children God's words, works, and worth. Parents are the primary disciplers of their children. The church, on the other hand, is primarily responsible for stewarding the ordinances. For these reasons, if the Family Ministry pastor team believes that a child is unready for baptism, the child will not be baptized at the church at that time even if the parent believes that the child is ready.

**Q:** *Is there harm in a child getting baptized at an early age and then later realizing they weren't ready, namely that they weren't truly saved when they were baptized?*

**A:** Baptism conveys a message to both observers of the ordinance and to the participants. For the observers, baptism is a proclamation by the one being baptized that he/she is taking part in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It proclaims the work that has taken place in that person's life by the power of the gospel. For the one being baptized, the act of baptism communicates to that individual that the church believes that the individual is a genuine believer and should be taking part in baptism. Ultimately, the harm in a child being baptized before he/she is ready - namely that they were not truly a believer when they were baptized - is that the baptism is a false testimony. It is a false testimony to the observers and it is a false testimony to the one being baptized.

When a child gets baptized before being ready, there are two scenarios that can play out. In the first scenario, the child gets baptized before being ready and later comes to a true saving faith. After reaching true saving faith, this individual gets baptized for a second time. The harm in this scenario is that it includes a time when the baptized individual gave false testimony to the baptism observers and the church gave false testimony to the one being baptized. This person may feel they should avoid a legitimate baptism out of a desire to honor the original baptizing experience. The second scenario that can play out is that the child gets baptized prematurely and never comes to a true saving faith. This could actually provide an unbelieving child (or parent) a false assurance of salvation, as if the baptism actually held some power to save the child apart from the saving work of Jesus on the cross. For these reasons, we suggest that if there are questions about the sincerity of a child's conversion to wait, pray, watch, and return to the conversation when they are a little bit older or when there is very clear evidence of salvation through their actions, behaviors, and desires.

**Q:** *My child has already been baptized once, but we believe it was premature and they did not truly have a relationship with Jesus. Can they be re-baptized at Bridgeway?*

**A:** If your child was baptized for the wrong reasons and has never truly experienced the peace of God and the power of forgiveness until this time, being baptized again is a reasonable option. Your child should be able to clarify why they feel their initial baptism was not genuine. We should be careful to not mistake sudden spiritual growth for a "second" conversion experience. Baptism follows justification (being declared righteous in God's eyes). Your sanctification (becoming what you have already been declared) will be accompanied by doubts, trials, and pitfalls. We should not get baptized every time we experience victory over sin or become more excited about life in Jesus. When you find yourself more like Jesus today than yesterday, then God is merely fulfilling His promise to conform you into the image of Christ. This is cause for celebration and worship but not another baptism.

**Q:** *What do I do after my child has completed this book?*

**A:** If, upon completion of this Child Baptism Guide, you and your child feel that they are truly ready to be baptized, contact one of the Bridgeway Family pastoral staff by emailing [\*\*bwkids@bridgewaychurch.com\*\*](mailto:bwkids@bridgewaychurch.com). A staff member will contact you to schedule an interview with you and your child.

If, upon completion of the Child Baptism Guide, you or your child do not feel that they are quite ready yet, it is okay! Keep pastoring your child, remembering that only God can save them in His perfect time. Trust Him to bring them to salvation and don't rush a decision from them. Continue discipling them in intentional times of study of God's word, prayer, and worship. Continue looking for gospel moments to point them to Jesus. Continue living a life of repentance, which is the gospel, in front of your child, repenting often and receiving the gift of forgiveness while modeling growth in Christ through spiritual disciplines.

Cut these PICTURES out to be used in the exercise on Part 3 - Meaning and Motivation for Baptism.



Cut these DARK BLUE labels out to be used in the exercise on Part 3 - Meaning and Motivation for Baptism.

**JESUS  
ALIVE**

**JESUS  
RAISED**

**JESUS  
DEAD AND  
BURIED**

Cut these LIGHT BLUE labels out to be used in the exercise on Part 3 - Meaning and Motivation for Baptism.

