

TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT BAPTISM AND COMMUNION

Note To Parents

Thank you for being actively involved in your child's development. The Bible tells us that "*Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.*" (Luke 2:52) All children need to develop mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially. This lesson has been designed to help you lead your child in his spiritual growth. It may be used as a devotional guide for families to use at home.

Scripture Texts

Matthew 26: 26-29; 28: 18-20; Mark 1: 9-11; Romans 6: 3-7; 1 Corinthians 11: 23-29

Memory Verse

"Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Matt. 28:20

Suggestion: You may want to have a small bowl of water, a piece of bread and a small cup of grape juice ready for your kids to see while you teach this lesson.

Dictionary

Help your child look up the word *ordinance* in the dictionary and read it out loud. Point out that an ordinance is a law or command given by a government or person in authority that we are to obey.

Teaching God's Word

Jesus, who has all authority in heaven and on earth, gave His disciples two ordinances to be practiced by the church: Baptism and Communion.

Baptism:

Before Jesus began His ministry, He asked John to baptize Him in the Jordan River. After He rose from the dead, Jesus told His disciples to go everywhere, teaching everyone about Him and baptizing them in water. To baptize means "to dip or put under water." When a person is baptized, he is dipped under the water. Jesus was baptized in a river. Some people are baptized in a pool, lake or in the ocean. Our church uses a large tank that holds water called a baptistery. The place really doesn't matter, only that the water is deep enough to completely cover the person being baptized.

Every Christian should be baptized. The most important reason for this is that Jesus commands it and has set an example for us to follow. Baptism is also an important way that we tell the world we are Christ followers. Baptism does not save us. Water cannot wash away our sins (the wrong things we have done). Baptism is a picture to us and others of what has already happened in our hearts and lives. When we are baptized, we go down under the water showing that our old life is dead and our sins have been buried or forgiven. When we come up out of the water, it reminds us that our sins have been washed away and that we are a new person, living a new life in Christ.

Since Baptism is a picture of having been saved, it doesn't make sense for a baby or someone who hasn't been saved to be baptized. The Bible says we must understand and agree with God that we are sinners and that Jesus died to take the penalty for our sins. We must then repent, or turn away from our sins, and pray asking God to forgive us and to become part of His family. Only then should we be baptized.

Communion:

Just before Jesus was arrested and crucified, He had a last supper or meal with His disciples. That night all the Jews were celebrating the Feast of Passover, a celebration that focuses on remembering how God brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. The last plague God brought on Pharaoh and

the Egyptians was the death of the firstborn son in every Egyptian family. God told the Israelites to put the blood of a perfect lamb on the door frames of their homes so that when the death angel came to kill the firstborn, he would see this blood and “pass over” their homes leaving all the people inside safe. Jesus wanted to show His disciples that just as a lamb had to die so the Israelites would be saved from the death angel, He too would have to die so we could be saved from our sins and have eternal life in heaven.

In that first Communion service, also called the Lord’s Supper, Jesus took bread, prayed, broke it, and gave it to His disciples. He told them to eat the bread as a way to remember that His body was broken for them. Then he took a cup of grape juice. After praying over it, He passed it to His disciples. He told them all to drink some to remember that His blood was shed for the forgiveness of sins. He said, *“Do this...in remembrance of me.”* As Jesus’ followers we are told to keep on having Communion until He comes again.

When we celebrate Communion, we remember two things:

1. We look back to Jesus’ death on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.
2. We look ahead to the wonderful day when Jesus will return to take us to be with Him in heaven forever.

Communion is also a time for us to ask God to inspect or examine our hearts. It is wrong to take Communion if we have unconfessed sin in our lives (I Corinthians 11:27, 28).. Paul tells us that we should pray before we take Communion and ask Jesus to show us any sin in our lives. If there is sin, we should confess it, ask Jesus to forgive us and He will make us clean again.

Applying God’s Word

Our memory verse (Matthew 28:20) reminds us that Jesus wants us to obey His commandments. *To obey everything* means to do all that Jesus told us to do. Are you part of God’s family? If your answer is yes, have you been baptized? If you have asked Jesus to be your Savior, you should be baptized and participate in Communion when your parents think you are ready.

Parents: When is a child ready?

Sometimes parents push children into an early commitment to Christ or encourage their child to consider baptism before they are ready. To the question, “When are they ready?” there are as many answers as there are children. This is because each child is ready at a different time. Even children in the same household may be quite different, as any parent will readily tell you. Frequently a sign of readiness is when they initiate questions about baptism. Even then it may be best to see what has prompted the questions. Often a friend is going to be baptized and the child will want to do what his friend is doing. We should not discourage any child from coming to Jesus (Mark 10: 13-16), but we should make sure that the child understands what is involved and is doing it because it is his choice and not just because his friends are being baptized or he is under any pressure.

As a church, we believe that putting off baptism or communion until a child shows a keen interest will only increase the value of the experience for the child. There is no set age of course, but we would encourage him to wait until he is at least 9 or 10. This is only a guide. However, it is very important that the child not only be able to articulate his understanding of baptism or communion but also demonstrate a heart attitude that is genuine and motivated by his love for the Lord. As parents, be praying for the Lord to give you wisdom and discernment as you lead your child. If you determine that there is a sincere interest in being baptized, please contact the church office to schedule an appointment or fill out the form in the bulletin and indicate “Baptism.”