



BAPTISM & COMMUNION PARENT GUIDE

DEAR PARENT OR GUARDIAN:

“

As a church community, we seek to partner with parents and guardians as you shepherd your children toward Christ. This Baptism and Communion Parent Guide is intended to be a tool for you to help you engage your children in discussion and study about faith, baptism and communion to confirm both their understanding and interest in moving forward in a relationship with Christ.

Your children's interest in baptism and communion are great opportunities for discussions about faith. When our children are ready to follow Jesus and can articulate their faith they may be ready for baptism and communion.

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. Romans 6:4



SHOULD WE WAIT?

It is often normal for children to watch other children take communion or see a baptism and express a desire to themselves participate in these sacraments immediately afterward. We want to take this interest seriously in order to help guide children to trust Christ. If your child expresses a desire for communion or baptism without prompting or reminding, it is a good sign that the Holy Spirit is working in him or her and fueling their interest in baptism and communion. We hope this workbook will be a helpful tool for you and your child to assess readiness for baptism and communion.



WHAT IS THE PROCESS?

There is a 3-step process for both adults and children. We want to ensure the process addresses the developmental differences between children and adults. Therefore, we encourage youth to have an adult to guide them through the Baptism and Communion Workbook.

1. UNDERSTAND - Set aside time with your children to go through the Baptism and Communion Workbook. The idea is to expose them to the teachings of scripture and assist them in thinking through what it means for their own lives.
2. MEET - If your child seems ready to explore baptism, schedule a date and time for you and your child to meet with one of our pastors, preferably one that knows your child. At that meeting, your child will be asked to explain how and why he or she became a Christian and why he or she would like to be baptized. We want to help our children express their faith in their own words.
3. CELEBRATE - After the meeting with a pastor, if the parents and the pastor both feel comfortable pursuing baptism, you can schedule a time for baptism.

IS THERE A MINIMUM AGE?

Generally speaking, there is no minimum age. However, we believe puberty tends to be the time when our youth gain a greater appreciation and understanding of what communion and baptism symbolize. This does not mean communion and baptism can't be pursued at a younger age, but much of that is dependent on a child's ability to understand the truths of the gospel and the significance of the sacraments.

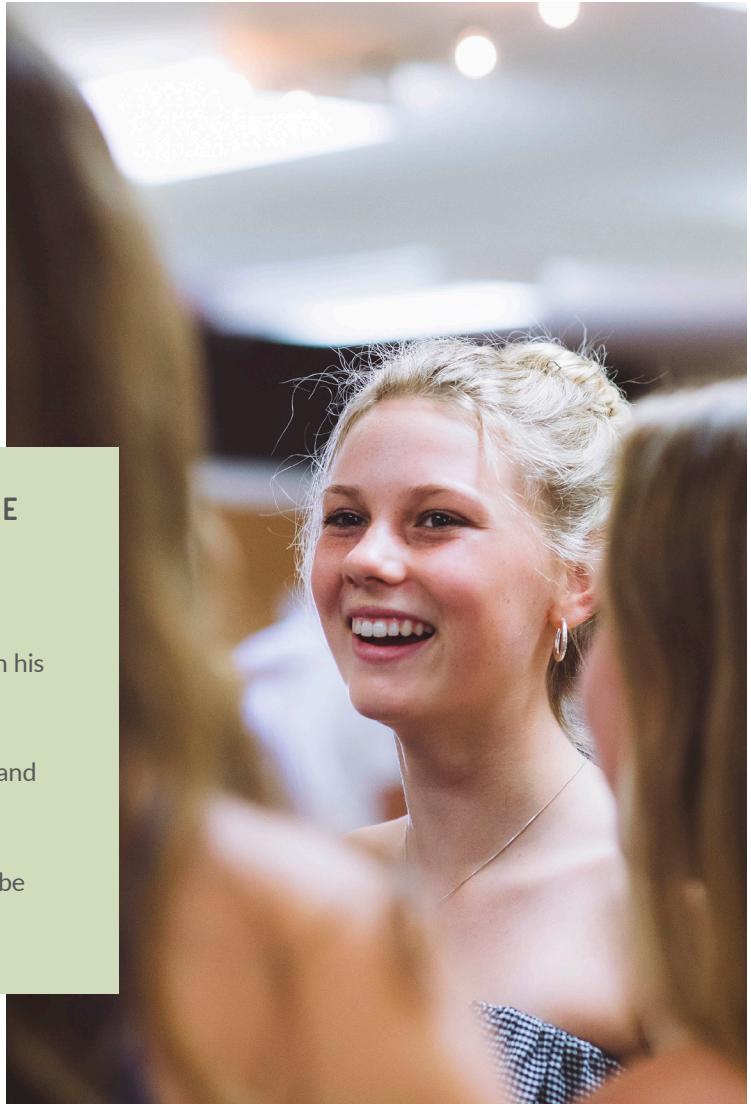
HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILD IS READY?

Baptism and communion are for those who profess saving faith in Christ. So your main goal as a spiritual guardian is to teach your child the gospel, praying he or she comes to faith in Christ. Therefore, help your child gain an age-appropriate understanding of God's love and holiness, the problem with our sin, the gracious, saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross, and our call to respond to him in trust and obedience.

WHAT ARE SOME QUESTIONS THAT MAY HELP ME ASSESS MY CHILD'S LEVEL OF READINESS?

- Q. Does my child have an understanding of the central truths of Christianity? Could he or she articulate it in his or her own words?
- Q. Is he or she presently showing and expressing faith and trust in Christ alone for salvation?

If you can answer "Yes!" to these questions, then it may be time to begin a discussion about baptism.



NEXT STEPS FOR PARENTS

“

- Talk openly about the difference the gospel has made in your life and its power of salvation for all who believe.
- Be intentional about sharing the gospel in love and confidence for what Christ is already doing in your child's life.
- Pray daily that the Holy Spirit would give the gift of faith to your child and bless your family in faithful living.
- Gently shepherd your child toward making his or her own decision to follow Jesus.



“

God is sovereign and at work to save all who will come to him by faith. It is our privilege and desire to support you as you share your faith and hope with your child. In love and celebration,

The Pastors and Elders of SB Community Church

USING THE WORKBOOK

We recommend the following:

1. Work with your child to complete the workbook materials, knowing that the primary goal for this process is to understand the gospel and grow in faith.

Q. What is baptism? – This section begins with definitions to help frame what you will study.

Q. What does the Bible say? – This section covers relevant passages of scripture to help your child study and learn what God has to say about these topics.

 - It may be helpful for you to read the workbook and scripture passages prior to sitting down with your child.
 - There are passages to look up and suggested answers at the end. Help your child answer for themselves before you go to the answers. But it's okay for you to have the answers in mind to help point them in the right direction as needed.
 - Use this tool to help discern their level of understanding and readiness.
2. As a parent, ask follow up questions to ensure they understand what they are saying.
3. Whether or not your child is ready to be baptized, work through the material on communion with your child. Ask how the two sacraments are the same and how they are different.
4. Allow your child to speak for himself/herself. Gently affirm her as she articulates her faith in her own words. If she is ready to follow Jesus she can explain why she is committed to him in words that reflect cognitive understanding of the symbolism in the sacraments and why she is personally choosing to be Christ's disciple.
5. If you feel your child is not ready to make a commitment, affirm and bless him/her in where he/she is. Consider the benefit and celebration of waiting until your son or daughter is able to make his/her own decision apart from your family as a signpost of maturing, personal faith.
6. Pray patiently and expectantly for God's timing and gracious love to draw your child to faith in Christ.

BAPTISM AND COMMUNION WORKBOOK

As a church, we love to celebrate baptism and communion as the outward signs of what God has done and is doing in the hearts and lives of our people. Baptism and communion are the two “sacraments” of the church. Sacraments are rituals instituted by Christ to be practiced in the church as visible signs of an invisible saving grace. This workbook is designed to help you understand these sacraments and determine if it’s time to begin celebrating them with your church family.

Our process is broken up into three steps:

UNDERSTAND

We want all who celebrate the sacraments to have a good grasp on what they are doing and what the signs are symbolizing. To that end, you will find:

- A Study Guide to help you work through the relevant scriptures pertaining to baptism and communion.
- Frequently Asked Questions to help you better grasp some of the ways we as a church think about and celebrate these signs.
- Help with Next Steps including some questions to guide you in thinking about what God has done in your life and how to articulate it and move forward.

MEET

Schedule a time to meet with a pastor. This meeting is intended to be an encouraging opportunity to rejoice in what God has done in your life! It will provide time to:

- Discuss the workbook and any questions you may have.
- Share stories of God’s work in your life!
- Discuss the nuts and bolts of celebrating your baptism on a Sunday.

For those learning about communion, we would also invite you to connect with a pastor if you have any questions.

CELEBRATE

Personal declaration of faith honors our Lord, encourages the family of God and creates a personal marker for yourself as you celebrate and publicly acknowledge what God has done for you by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

- For those being baptized, schedule a time to celebrate this sacrament on a Sunday.
- We celebrate communion weekly in our services.

UNDERSTANDING BAPTISM

“ ”

What is Baptism?

The word “baptism” comes from the Greek word baptisto, which means “to dip” or “to immerse.” Baptism (along with communion) is one of the “sacraments” of the church. Sacraments are rituals instituted by Christ to be practiced in the church as visible signs of an invisible saving grace. Baptism is an act of obedience to Christ. It is for those who identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Baptism is a new believer’s public declaration of personal faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

What Does the Bible Say?

In this section, you will be guided through several passages of scripture relating to baptism. We invite you to pray and ask God to speak to you through his Holy Spirit as you study his word. We have provided some answers to each question at the end, but our hope is that you will investigate these for yourselves first, and then consult the suggested answers provided.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M READY?*

1. What do the following verses teach us about baptism?

Matthew 3:13-17

Matthew 28:18-20

Mark 1:9-11

2. What do these verses say about the symbolism of baptism?

Romans 6:1-5

Acts 22:16

John 3:5

Titus 3:5

3. What does baptism have to do with being part of a church?

Acts 2:41

Galatians 3:26-28

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

Ephesians 4:1-6

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

- Q. Why don't we practice infant baptism?

A. We don't baptize infants who are not old enough to understand the truths of the gospel and the significance of baptism. We believe that baptism is a celebration and declaration of a person's faith in Christ and decision to follow him as a disciple. We understand that for many people who grew up in different faith traditions, this can be cause for uncertainty and questions. Our pastors and elders would be more than happy to discuss this with you.

- Q. Should I be baptized again if I've been baptized before?

A. Once you've been baptized, the answer is generally, "No." A person should be re-baptized if they have studied the scriptures and believe their previous baptism to have been unbiblical.

- Q. What if I received believer's baptism, but it wasn't a meaningful experience to me personally and I want to be baptized again now?

A. Again, the answer is no. The Bible does not teach that baptism is a way of rededicating your life to the Lord or as a response to a particularly emotional experience of God. So, if you have trusted Jesus as your savior and have made a public profession of your faith in baptism, then you never again need to be baptized.



Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. John 3:5

***Suggested Answers:**

1. What do the following verses teach us about baptism?
Baptism is an act of obedience to Jesus's command, and follows his example.
2. What do these verses say about the symbolism of baptism? *Baptism is like a picture—it symbolizes Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, and a believer's identification with those truths. In other words, when you first trust in Jesus, you "die" to the old life and are raised again to new life through the power of Jesus that now works inside of you. When you go under the water and come back up, you are reenacting the way Jesus died and was raised again on the third day. It also symbolizes the washing and cleansing from sin that you received when you put your trust in Jesus.*

3. What does baptism have to do with being part of a church? *It is a symbol of our entrance into the body of Christ, the Church. Baptism brings us together with the whole Christian family, both at SBCC and all around the world. Jesus' followers have been doing this since the very beginning! The sacrament of baptism is intended as a one-time public testimony of faith in Christ. It is a significant celebration and marker of faith for the new believer who commits his or her life to follow Christ and live for him. By participating in the sacrament of baptism one is vowing before God and the church to live for Christ. To come forward to be baptized is, therefore, a weighty decision that reflects personal understanding of the significance of this vow.*

66

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNION

What is Communion?

Communion is an ongoing celebration in the church. Believers who trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior profess their faith, their ongoing spiritual need and gratitude for Christ by participating in this sacrament. The name communion conveys our union with Christ and our unity with one another experienced in this shared meal. The Lord's Supper, another name for communion, conveys that this meal was prepared by Jesus as a gift to us. The Eucharist, yet another name for communion, comes from the Greek word for thanksgiving. Communion is then our celebratory, spiritual-thanksgiving meal.

What does the Bible say?*

In this section, you will be guided through one of the clearest passages in scripture relating to communion. We invite you to pray and ask God to speak to you through his Holy Spirit as you study his word. We have provided some answers to each question at the end, but our hope is that you will investigate these for yourselves first, and then consult the suggested answers provided.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

1. Who is communion for?

Look again at verses 23-26. Who is Paul addressing? And who is Jesus addressing?

2. What does communion symbolize?

3. What is the purpose of communion?

Look again at verses 24-26. What do we do when we celebrate it? (For more on this, see also Matt. 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20)

4. How do we prepare for communion?

Look again at verses 28-29. What are we to examine and discern?



***Suggested answers:**

1. Who is communion for? *Communion is for all people who trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. We come forward together to participate in God's grace for us. It is a communal meal. We are not taking credit for what we do by coming forward; rather, we celebrate and honor what Christ did and accomplished for us on the cross.*
2. What does communion symbolize? *The bread symbolizes his body and the wine symbolizes his blood, which were given for the forgiveness of our sins. By eating and drinking, we declare our need for the gift of his sacrifice for us.*
3. What is the purpose of communion? *Jesus instructs us to remember and proclaim him through communion, and to continue to do this until he returns again.*
4. How do we prepare for communion? *We must examine ourselves before participating in communion. This meal should not be celebrated without thought to whether or not we believe. Additionally, we can confess our sins, our need for God, and our participation in his Body, the Church.*

WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN BAPTISM AND COMMUNION?

Both are sacraments: gifts of Christ to be celebrated by those who believe and have been born again into new life in him. Both declare our need for and trust in his death and resurrection on our behalf. Both are acts of obedience, symbolizing our union with Christ and commitment to him. Both are outward symbols of an inward work God has done in us.

Baptism is a personalized and public profession of faith that symbolizes death to the old life and being raised to new life in Christ. Christ calls each of us as individuals to be baptized only once. A personal vow made in baptism before God and his church reflects one's faith, personal commitment and inner gratitude for grace and hope found only in Christ.

Communion also celebrates our faith in Christ and symbolizes our ongoing and daily need for him at work in our hearts. Christ calls his church to frequently participate in communion together in remembrance of his saving work on the cross. Communion reminds us of his ongoing grace and forgiveness in our lives as individuals and together as his church family.

Given the significance of both sacraments and the symbolism of each, we believe it makes sense for baptism to logically come before communion. If you have questions about this please speak with a pastor or elder. We want to be supportive and helpful to you and any questions you may have.

Consider what you believe and have learned from the Bible Does this accurately describe you?

1. Because Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior, I want to be his disciple. The Holy Spirit gives me the desire and ability to do this.
2. I need a savior. I have a fallen, sin nature that keeps me from relationship with God. I cannot earn his love.
3. The good news is that God is loving, all-powerful, just and holy and he freely offers me justification, adoption and hope in his Son, Jesus.
4. All of Scripture points to Jesus as my needed Lord and Savior through his perfect sacrifice, death and resurrection. Jesus is both fully God and fully man. He saves all who love, obey and trust him.
5. My faith is a gift from God. I express my gratitude and faith by living for Christ.
6. I understand baptism and communion as public expressions of my desire to keep growing in my faith and honoring Jesus Christ with my life.

NEXT STEPS



We hope that this workbook has helped you reflect on important questions like:

- What does faith in Jesus Christ mean to you?
- Why do you want to publicly identify with Christ and his church?
- What benefit do you see in your baptism?
- How has God encouraged you or changed your life so far?

If you would like to be baptized, please contact a pastor at SBCC to schedule a meeting to discuss this and celebrate what God has done in your life! If you feel you are not ready, that is fine and we respect where you are. We don't ever want you to feel rushed into the sacraments. We do want to encourage you to try to understand and articulate what may be holding you back from baptism or communion. Please know we are here to help and support you.



THANK YOU

Thank you for walking through this educational workbook on the sacraments of baptism and communion. This is a just an aid to get you thinking about next steps in your faith walk. Ask friends and family to share their faith stories with you. Share yours, too. We are all blessed by talking through what it means to follow after Jesus and live for him. So let's talk soon!

Blessings to you from your SBCC pastors and elders.