

SOJOURNKIDS

ASK class

SUNDAY, MARCH 21 & 28, 11:15AM
AT THE MIDTOWN CAMPUS

Learn about baptism for children at Sojourn Gathered



At Sojourn, we make it the highest priority to care for you—both parents and children.

This is particularly the case when it comes to a child’s spiritual life. We want to encourage you kids to place your faith in Christ and have a faith that continues to grow as you grow up. We are also passionate about the beautiful symbols Jesus Christ has given to his church in baptism and the Lord’s Table. It is a great privilege to discuss these matters with you—both parents and kids—and it is our desire to sit and talk through these matters with you. This class is designed to answer the most common questions about baptism and church membership. But we know that we can’t anticipate every question. So, at the end of each section, we’ll have a time where you can ask anything. Please feel the freedom to do so. After all, this is the “ask class.”

The first section of this class deals with baptism and the second section deals with the matter of church membership:

PART 1: BAPTISM

EXERCISE #1: One of your friends comes up to you and says, ‘Why do you want to be baptized?’ What would you say?

Question #1: Who can be baptized?

Since Baptism is a symbol of beginning the Christian life, we should only baptize **people who have been made alive by the gospel**. They must give a **spoken witness** to faith and trust in Jesus Christ and have a life which shows **evidence** that **gospel change** has taken place.

Acts 2:38

“Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Matthew 28:18 -20

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you. See, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

Questions #2: What is baptism?

1. Being **dipped** into **water**.

Matthew 3:16

“When Jesus was baptized, *he came up out of the water.*”

The Didache, part 7

“The procedure for baptizing is as follows. After repeating all that has been said, immerse in running water “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” If no running water is available, immerse in ordinary water. This should be cold if possible; otherwise warm.”



2. A symbol of **death** and **resurrection**. A picture of Christ's death and resurrection for us, and a picture of our death to the old way of living and resurrection to the new way of living.

Romans 6:3-11

"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? **Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.** For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also."

3. A symbol of **cleansing** from **sin**

Act 22:16

"And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name."

4. A symbol of **entering** into the **Christ's body—the church**.

1 Corinthians 12:12,13

"For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."

5. **An act of obedience** for the individual and the church.

Acts 2:38

"Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Matthew 28:18 -20

"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you. See, I am with you always, even to the end of the age'."

6. A **declaration** of **faith**

Romans 6:12-13

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

Question #3: What is Sojourn's baptism and church membership process for kids?

1. Parents and seeking children are invited to take part in an *Ask Class*. In this class, Sojourn leaders clearly present the gospel, explain Sojourn's philosophy on childhood baptism and church membership, and give parents and kid an opportunity to ask questions. Parents are asked to study the materials in this document along with the attached reader.
2. Over a period of time, the seeking child should be observed by his or her parents to assure that evidence, understanding, maturity, and independent thinking are observed. We strongly suggest waiting until age 12 to present a child for baptism.
3. The child should work on his own to prepare a written testimony. The aim of giving a personal testimony is for the child to tell about how God's grace has been at work in his life so that the cross of Christ may be proclaimed and the faith of the gathered community may be encouraged and challenged.

A few things for kids to remember when writing their story...

- Keep it focused on Christ, the cross and on God's initiative and grace—God focused as opposed to self-focused.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you, so that the most important and helpful aspects of your gospel story will be shared clearly. Believe that God will empower you through his Spirit to be a witness to His good grace (Acts 1:8)
 - Be brief—**2/3 of a page, single-spaced, 12 pt. font!** Your testimony isn't every life event. It is a simplified version of life before Christ, receiving of the Gospel, and life after.
 - Don't exaggerate your experiences. If you have any question about the appropriateness, ask a Sojourn leader or your parent.
 - Use bible terms, but explain them in plain language—like you are talking to a friend.
4. When a child's parents are convinced that the Holy Spirit has done a transforming work in a child's life and the child has prepared a written testimony, the child will meet for an interview (or series of interviews) with a member of Sojourn's pastoral leadership. The purpose of this interview is to discern whether the child understands and has embraced the gospel.
 5. If the pastors are convinced that a child has given evidence of a genuine conversion, the child will be baptized and accepted into the fellowship and discipline of the church. The child, under the authority of his or her parents, will be without voting responsibilities until the age of eighteen.
 6. At the age of eighteen, the child will attend Sojourn's membership classes and interview with an elder. The voting responsibilities given to adult members will only be exercised after the completion of this interview.

Questions #4: Why should I give a testimony?

- **For God's glory.** To tell about how God's grace has been at work in his life so that the cross of Christ may be proclaimed.
- **For evangelism.** You are a witness to the reality of God to change your life. This is more important than your achievements.
- **For the building up of Christ's church.** To encourage and challenge the faith of the gathered church community.

Question #5: How old must I be to be baptized?

1. Sojourn strongly recommends that parents wait until their child is at least twelve years old before presenting them for a baptism interview. Please note that this is a recommendation and not a mandate. Children will be interviewed, and their readiness for baptism considered on a case-by-case basis. Sojourn's leadership is seeking biblical faithfulness in these matters.
 - We recognize that the New Testament example is for baptism upon a valid profession of faith. Therefore, baptism ought to follow conversion immediately upon the appearance of discernable signs of conversion. Time, however, is sometimes the only course of action for determining, as much as is humanly possible, the validity of a child's profession of faith in Christ. It is for this reason, that we strongly advise parents to wait. Discernable signs of a child's genuine conversion often become clearer as the child grows and shows the fruit of a changed heart.
 - Throughout the history of the church—for the past 2,000 years—people have traditionally waited for baptism to celebrate communion. Given this, Sojourn's pastoral leadership also advises parents not to allow their children to participate in communion until after they have been baptized.
2. Conversion is God's work in the believer. It is not simply a decision on the believer's part. What evidences or signs of conversion should a parent look for in their child before presenting him or her for baptism?
 - *Conviction* is the work of the Holy Spirit, who uses God's laws and commands to bring sin and the necessity of trusting Christ home to the child's conscience (2 Kings 22; Romans 7:7-9). Does your child demonstrate sorrow and remorse about his or her sin? Does your child recognize that he has sinned against God and not just against others? Does your child confess her sins to God and ask for his mercy without your prompting? Does your child demonstrate commitment to Christ in the midst of strong temptation to disobey?
 - *Revelation* is the work of the Holy Spirit by which he reveals the thoughts of God to people so that a person may obtain a true understanding of Christ and

- his word (John 10:26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16). Does your child understand that she is a sinner and cannot save herself? Does your child understand that his sins deserve death and punishment in hell? Does your child understand that Jesus died as a substitute for his sins? Does your child understand that she is saved only by God's grace and not because of any good within herself? Does your child demonstrate an understanding of the Scriptures when they are taught or is your child confused by the Scriptures?
- *Regeneration* is the work of the Holy Spirit, who gives life to a dead soul, and produces a credible profession of repentance and faith (John 3; Romans 6; 10:9-10) as well as a new valuing of the Scriptures (John 6:45). Does your child demonstrate a genuine interest in spiritual things? Does your child pray or read the Scriptures on their own initiative? What sins have your children repented of? Does your child desire to talk with you about the Scriptures? How does your child demonstrate that he trusts Jesus? Does your child demonstrate a genuine desire to tell others about Jesus?
3. Neither *sorrow over sin* nor *interest in spiritual things* alone is sufficient evidence of a regenerate heart or the work of the Spirit (Acts 8:9-25; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Hebrews 12:17).

Questions #6: Why wait until age 12?

We are open to baptizing younger children but strongly encourage parents to wait until at least age twelve. Since baptism precedes church membership it follows that a decision to delay participation in the ordinances is a decision to delay church membership as well. There are at least three things for which to wait.

1. **Wait for Evidence.** Several factors might lead a child to demonstrate sorrow over sin or an interest in spiritual things. However, permitting a child to participate in the ordinances and become a church member without seeing tested evidence of conviction, revelation, and new life is dangerous and risks giving the child a false assurance of his salvation. Does your child demonstrate these evidences? Is this a tested change or a temporary fear about hell and God's judgment? Is this a true conversion or merely a desire to please parents? Is there true evidence or a desire to imitate friends/siblings?
2. **Wait for Understanding.** Young children are concrete thinkers. It is a temptation even for adults to think that the ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Table) are God's means of communicating saving grace. As a result, some trust participation in the ordinances for salvation rather than trusting Christ's work on the cross. Does your child clearly understand the gospel and the meaning of the ordinances? Does your child desire baptism because a friend/sibling has been baptized? Would your child be tempted to think that participation in baptism or communion contributes to his salvation?

3. **Wait for Maturity and Independent Thinking.** It is not uncommon for those who were baptized during their pre-teen years to feel a need to be "re-baptized" when they are older. Memories of the first decade of our lives are often fuzzy at best. Even if we do remember a decision or an event like baptism, we usually cannot recall any reasoning behind the decision or event. Once a young person has the capacity for reasoning and for more independent thinking, they are more likely to embrace the decisions and commitments they make as their own. Our hope is that as a child waits there will be a growing sense of anticipation as they look forward to following the Lord in obedience. Is your child old enough that this will be a significant event for him? Will she be able to recall the reasoning behind his decision?

PART 2: MEMBERSHIP

Exercise #2: A friend asks you, "Why should I join any church? What's the difference? Can't I be just as involved without being a member?" What would you say?

Question #1: What is the church?

The church is the gathering of God's new people. These people are worshipers, family, missionaries, servants, and learners.

1. All Christians are members of the **universal gathering of God's people.**

***Romans 12:4-5** For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

***Ephesians 4:4-6** There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

2. The Bible assumes Christians are also members of a **local gatherings.**

"the church of God at..."

Question #2: What are two important marks of the church?

1. **Leaders** are appointed in the church.

Christians are instructed to **obey** and **submit** to their **leaders.** (Hebrews 13:17)

2. The Bible teaches the importance of **church discipline.**

Matthew 18:15-17

*"And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that the mouth of two or three witnesses may confirm every fact. **And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.**"*

1 Corinthians 5:12

"For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves."

Question #3: What can I expect from my church leaders?

1. We commit to lovingly care for you and seek your growth in Christ (Hebrews

- 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12).
2. We commit to provide teaching, preaching and counsel from the Scriptures (Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:17-18).
 3. We commit that this teaching will include the whole counsel of God's Word (Acts 20:27-28).
 4. We commit to helping you in times of need (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35, James 2:14-17).
 5. We covenant that your elders and deacons (when they are recognized) will meet the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-13 and 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4).
 6. We covenant to pray for you regularly, particularly when you are sick (James 5:14).
 7. We covenant to be on guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28-31).
 8. We covenant to exercise church discipline when necessary (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1).
 9. We covenant to help you become equipped to serve Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13).
 10. We covenant to seek God's will for our church community to the best of our ability as we study the Scriptures and follow the Spirit (Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:1-5).
 11. We covenant to set an example and join you in fulfilling the duties of church membership (1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12).

Question #4: What is expected from me as a member?

We expect you to sign a **covenant** where you commit to the following. A covenant is a **serious promise**. You must take it seriously? The covenant explains what **you** can expect from the **church** as well as what the **church** can expect from **you**.

So, this covenant is a promise that the church is making to you and that you are making the church.

1. **You must be a person made alive by Christ.** I am a Christian who has been saved from my sins by the grace of Jesus Christ. I have been baptized to give testimony of my identification with the body of Christ and obedience to the Scriptures.
2. **You must be willing to submit to church leaders—the leaders of our church family.** I have read and understood the Sojourn doctrinal statement and by-laws and agree to not be divisive to its teaching and content. I also understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace (Hebrews 13:7, 17; Ephesians 4:1-3).
3. **You promise to be a worshiper.** I will endeavor to maintain a close relationship with the Lord through regular personal Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of the other spiritual disciplines. My journey in Christ will be evident through my regular participation in the corporate worship services, and involvement in a community group (Psalm 119:97, 105; Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25).

4. **You promise to give of your time, talent, and resources.** I will strive to properly manage the resources God has given me, including my time, body, gifts and talents, attitudes, finances and possessions (Ephesians 5:15-18; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:1-16; Galatians 5:22-26; Proverbs 3:9-10). This includes regular giving to Sojourn that is sacrificial and cheerful (2 Corinthians 8-9).
5. **You promise to be a missionary.** I commit myself to the Sojourn church family and agree to aid in fulfilling its missional purpose to bring the gospel to Louisville. I recognize that this will be accomplished by pursuing Sojourn's vision and core values.
6. **You promise to be a servant.** I commit to using the spiritual gift(s) God has given me for the building up of the church, both at Sojourn and universally (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-31).
7. **You promise to be a family member.** I covenant to practice the humility and sacrificial attitude of Christ by considering the needs of others (Philippians 2:1-11; 1 Corinthians 13:4-5), not gossiping (Proverbs 16:28, Matthew 18: 15-17), and seeking spiritual friendships (Proverbs 17:17).
8. **You promise to submit to correction and church discipline if necessary.** I covenant to follow the biblical procedures of church discipline and submit myself to informal discipline as I strive to live out the gospel in community and formal discipline if the need should ever arise (Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1-5). If I withdraw from membership while the subject of pending disciplinary action according to Matthew 18:15-17, I expressly consent and submit to the elders' continuing authority to complete the disciplinary process set forth in our church by-laws."
9. **You promise to be a submissive learner.** I covenant to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Q & A