



SOJOURN EAST

BAPTISM GUIDE

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BAPTISM OVERVIEW & PREPARATION GUIDE

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The gospel literally means “good news.” This good news is the central message of God’s salvation offered to humanity through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. All people are sinners, separated from God by their sin, and unable to save themselves. The gospel addresses this by revealing God’s plan for redeeming and reconciling humanity to Himself through Jesus.

At the heart of the gospel is the reality that Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth, lived a sinless life, and willingly died on the cross to bear the punishment for the sins of all people. His death is seen as the ultimate sacrifice, satisfying God’s justice while demonstrating His deep love for humanity. Romans 5:8 captures this by saying, “But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, demonstrating His victory over sin, death, and Satan. The resurrection is key because it confirms Jesus’ divine nature, His authority over life and death, and the promise of eternal life to those who believe in Him.

Salvation is a gift of God’s grace, received through faith alone in Jesus Christ. It is not earned by good works or human effort, but by trusting in Jesus as Lord and Savior (Ephesians 2:8-9). Through this faith, believers are forgiven, justified before God, and given eternal life.

The gospel also calls for a response as it invites us to repent (turn away from sin) and believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins. This faith is accompanied by a transformed life, as the Holy Spirit works within us to bring about spiritual growth and maturity.

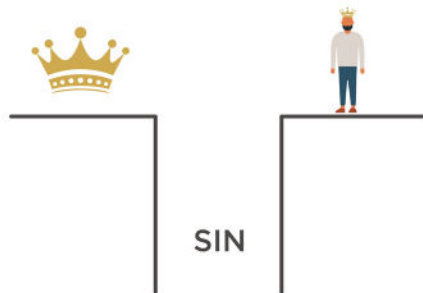




In the beginning, humanity dwelt in perfect union with God. We were made in the image of God, ruling and reigning in the world with purpose and wholeness. All was right and good. There was nothing missing and nothing broken.

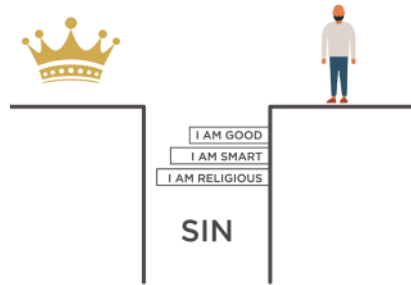
But it didn't last. Doubt and deceit emerged, and we wanted to be like God, defining right and wrong for ourselves.

We have rejected God as our king and the good life that he promises. We want to be king and call the shots in our own lives. The bible calls this sin and we are cut off and separated from God as a result. It is the ultimate betrayal and the consequence of sin is death.



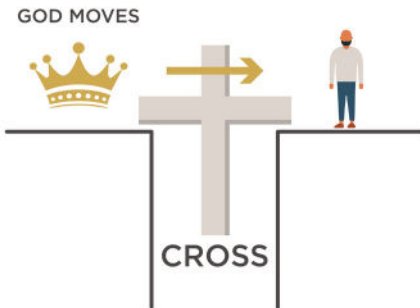
Deep down we know when life isn't working. The pain of being far away from God in a broken world shows us that something is wrong.

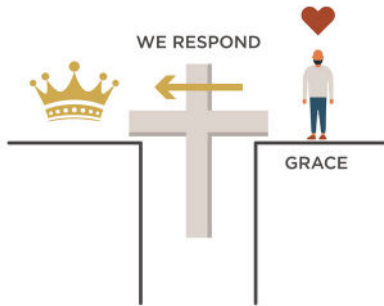
We try to be good and fix our lives. We swear off bad habits and get busy doing good deeds hoping they outweigh our mistakes. These become bridges we build to get ourselves back to God but nothing seems to be good enough and we always come up short. We can't pay for our crimes and put things right in our lives or in the world.



So, God comes to us in Jesus. Jesus was born on earth- fully God and fully man. He lived perfectly with God. He suffered painfully and shamefully on the cross to pay the punishment our sins deserve and to set us free and restore us to God's family.

Three days later Jesus rose from the dead and won victory over sin and death and then returned to the kingdom with God the Father. Consequently, we can be restored to life with God again.





“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

This is good news! God accepts us not because we have earned it or deserve it but because he loves us.

Jesus is inviting us to come into his kingdom and receive his love by trusting him. If sin is saying “no” to God, then trust is saying “yes” to Jesus. Will you say “yes” to Jesus?

“Because I live, you also will live.” (John 14:9). Jesus’ life, death and resurrection has implications for us today. When we receive the gift Jesus offers, life doesn’t have to be the same!

We have eternal life when we die, but also access to true life in the world. Through Jesus, we have unlimited access and intimacy with God the Father. We have purpose, meaning, true friendships, healing, forgiveness and peace.



You can say this to God: “Dear God, I trust you with my life. I’ve tried to rule your world as my own and be king of my own life. I’ve said no to you and I’m sorry. Thanks for sending Jesus to die so that I might have life to the full and life eternal. I trust Jesus as my king. I trust only him to save me and help me live with you. Amen.”

If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved. Romans 10:9.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is a meaningful, symbolic act of faith that marks a believer’s public declaration of a personal commitment to Christ, their obedience to His teachings, and their inclusion in the Christian community. We view it as an outward expression of an inward transformation that has already occurred through a person’s belief in Christ and acceptance of Him as Savior. Baptism is not a means of salvation, but rather an act of obedience following an individual’s decision to place their trust in Jesus.

Salvation comes by grace through faith, as stated in Ephesians 2:8-9, and not by works or religious rituals. Therefore, baptism is seen as a symbolic act that follows conversion, where a believer has already experienced spiritual regeneration through faith. It is an act of identifying with Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. The immersion into water symbolizes the believer’s death to their old sinful nature and a cleansing from sin, while being raised from the water signifies their new life in Christ and entering into Christ’s body- the church.

Baptism is practiced in obedience to Christ’s command in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), where He instructs His followers to “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” As such, baptism is accompanied by a formal profession of faith, in front of our congregation, marking the individual’s initiation into the Christian community and their commitment to a life of discipleship.



WHY GET BAPTIZED?

The act of baptism is a public declaration of faith, obedience to the commands of Christ, and a symbolic representation of profound spiritual truths. Below are several reasons why Christians should get baptized.

1. Following the Example of Christ

The Gospels record that Jesus Himself was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:13-17). Although Jesus was without sin, He chose to be baptized to “fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). By being baptized, Christians imitate Christ’s own submission and obedience to the Father’s will, affirming their desire to live a life that mirrors His example.

2. Obedience to Jesus’ Command

Jesus explicitly commanded His followers to be baptized. In the Great Commission, He instructed His disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). Baptism, in this sense, is not an optional or symbolic act for Christians; it is a direct command from Christ Himself. This command highlights the importance of obedience, and being baptized is an outward expression of that obedience and submission to Jesus as Lord.

3. Public Declaration of Faith

Baptism is a public declaration of one’s faith in Jesus Christ. Baptism serves as a public affirmation of this inward transformation, a visible proclamation that one has died to their old life of sin and been raised to new life in Christ. It is an outward testimony to the church community and the world that the individual has committed their life to following Jesus.



4. Symbol of Spiritual Cleansing

Baptism is a symbolic act that represents spiritual cleansing and renewal symbolizing the washing away of sin and the believer's purification by Christ's death, burial and resurrection. The immersion in water represents the believer's death to sin and burial with Christ, while coming up from the water symbolizes resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:4).

5. Identification with the Body of Christ

Through baptism, Christians also identify themselves with the broader body of believers—the church. Baptism is not only a personal act of faith but also an entry into the fellowship of the church. Baptism is a sign of inclusion in the family of God, marking a believer's official entry into the covenant community. As 1 Corinthians 12:13 states, “For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body.” Thus, baptism is a unifying act that joins believers to the universal church across time and geography.

6. Strengthening of Faith

Baptism can serve as a significant spiritual milestone in the life of a Christian. The act of publicly professing one's faith and submitting to God's command can deepen a believer's spiritual resolve. The event becomes a personal and communal reminder of God's work in their life, often leading to greater spiritual growth and a renewed sense of commitment to living out their faith daily.





SOJOURN EAST BAPTISM PROCESS

STEP #1

INFO + INTEREST

Attend Baptism info and interest meeting or reach out to the Connections Director or a pastor.

STEP #2

BAPTISM OVERVIEW

Work through the baptism overview and preparation guide. Pray. Evaluate and discern if you are ready.

STEP #3

PREPARE TESTIMONY & DISCUSS WITH A FRIEND

Prepare and write out your testimony. Discuss it with a friend or mentor for feedback and insight.

STEP #4

TESTIMONY INTERVIEW

Reach out to the Connections Director to schedule a date for your interview with a pastor to discuss your testimony.

STEP #5

CELEBRATE BAPTISM

With the Connections Director, schedule a date to celebrate your baptism. Invite family and friends to celebrate with you.



ARE YOU READY FOR BAPTISM?

If you think you are ready for baptism or would just like to get more information or take the next step, a pastor or ministry leader would love to connect with you! Below is the process for getting baptized at Sojourn East. There is no specific timeframe by which you must take all these steps. Rather they serve as benchmarks on your journey towards baptism. (see “*Sojourn East Baptism Process*” on the next page)

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Preparing and writing out your personal testimony is an important step of the baptism process. A personal testimony refers to an individual’s account of their personal experience with faith, particularly how they came to believe in Jesus Christ and the impact this faith has had on their life. It typically involves a narrative that includes several key components: the person’s life before encountering Christ, the moment or process of conversion (often referred to as being “born again” or “saved”), and how their life has changed since embracing their faith.

A personal testimony serves as a real-life example of the transformative power of the Gospel. Testimonies serve to encourage others, both believers and non-believers, by illustrating how faith in Christ can bring about redemption, hope, and purpose. The authenticity and personal nature of these stories often resonate deeply, making testimonies an integral part of our faith journeys.

There is no such thing as a bad testimony. Testimonies vary widely, ranging from dramatic stories of deliverance from addiction or crisis to more subtle, gradual realizations of faith. Regardless of the specifics, the focus is always on God’s grace and the transformative work of the Holy Spirit.



WRITING YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY

When preparing your testimony it helps to think about your faith journey in three stages. Consider the questions under each heading to help you clarify your story in each of these seasons of your life:

1. Your life before you met and said yes to Jesus.

- What was your life like before you encountered Jesus?
- How did you view God in this season of your life?
- In what ways were you rebelling against God?
- In what ways were you hurting others? Hurting yourself?
- What was most important to you? What were your values, struggles and mindset before you became a Christian?
- What was the greatest need in your life?

2. How/when you came to know Jesus and accept him as Lord.

- What events, conversations, or inner convictions led you to recognize your need for Jesus?
- What circumstances led you to put your faith in Jesus Christ? Was there a specific moment or was it a gradual process over time? Include details of what caused you to make the decision.
- How did you actually commit your life to Jesus? Think about the specific prayer, experience, or turning point where you gave your life to Christ.

3. Your new life after you accepted Jesus.

- What immediate changes did you notice in your life after accepting Christ? Did you feel peace, joy, conviction, or something else? Describe any noticeable emotional or behavioral shifts.
- How has your relationship with Jesus continued to shape your life? Consider how your faith has influenced your decisions, character, and relationships over time.
- How has your faith influenced the way you interact with others? Think about how your relationships, attitudes, and actions toward others have been transformed.



- What are some specific struggles or challenges you have faced since becoming a Christian, and how has God helped you? Be honest about ongoing challenges and how your faith has helped you overcome or endure them.
- What Bible verses or Christian teachings have been most meaningful to you? Include specific scriptures or teachings that have impacted your journey.

When do we have baptisms?

Baptism Sundays

At least twice a year we have “Baptism Sundays” to celebrate baptisms together as a church. These Baptism Sundays will be preceded by a Baptism informational meeting to explain our church’s policies and process for baptism. We hope that these Sundays will encourage those considering baptism to take the next step as well as raise awareness of baptism’s importance in the life of our church.

Ad Hoc Baptisms

We also welcome baptisms to occur throughout the year and don’t want the timing of Baptism Sundays to prohibit anyone from being baptized. Therefore, we can arrange for a baptism to occur during almost any Sunday morning service with a few days advanced notice.

Baptism Age

The age at which a believer is to be baptized is not directly addressed in Scripture. Considering an appropriate age for a young believer to be baptized is a matter of wisdom and prudence. It is necessary and reasonable to consider the candidates maturity and readiness, and this can get very difficult to discern in children. If a child expresses a desire to be baptized, he/she is invited to participate in a Baptism Class with their parents. This class covers foundational topics such as the gospel,



salvation and baptism, culminating in the child writing their personal testimony as part of their preparation for baptism. Upon completing the class, an elder will meet with the child and parents to discuss next steps regarding baptism.

Communion: Does someone need to be baptized to take communion?

We allow individuals (and families) to participate in communion based on their own conscience. However, we do emphasize that communion is for Christians only. We do not require anyone to be a member of our church in order to participate in communion.

Baptism and Membership

A person must be baptized in order to become a member of Sojourn East. Our membership covenant states “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.”

What if someone was baptized at another church or not in a church context?

If someone was baptized at another church or not in a church context, we would not expect them to be baptized again at Sojourn East.



Resources For Parents & Children

Here are five conversations to process together based on the five movements of the gospel illustrated earlier in this guide.

1. God is the good king – His way of life is best.

Talk with your child about what it means for God to be the good king. Do they believe that God's way is what is best? Why? Pray together, praising God for being good, for creating a world that is good and for showing us His goodness.

2. We are sinful. Our sin separates us from God.

Talk with your child about what it means for God to be completely perfect and separate from sin. How would they describe sin? Where do they see it in their lives? What is the difference between sin and sins? How do they feel about their sin? Pray, and have your child pray with you, praising God for being holy – unlike anyone or anything else, completely perfect, and wonderful. Encourage your child to confess the specific sins they see in their hearts.

3. Our good works can't save us.

Talk with your child about what it means for God to be just. Why is it right for God to punish sin? What is the punishment for sin? Is there anything we can do to make our sin right or just stop sinning? Are you tempted to think that being good, being smart, or doing churchy things can bring you close to God? Pray together, praising God that He is just and right in punishing sin.

4. Only Jesus saves us.

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 that matter? How does the death and resurrection of Jesus show that God is loving – that He does what is best?



Pray together, praising God for doing what is best and giving His son to die in the place of guilty, undeserving sinners.

5. God is gracious. He saves sinners even when they do not deserve it.

Talk with your child about what it means for God to be gracious. 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 is adopted as a child of God? When you hear someone say “love and trust Jesus,” what do you think that means? How would you define grace? What does it mean to believe and trust in Him? Have you trusted Jesus? Tell me about that.

As you patiently observe where your children are on their faith journey consider the following questions to discern if your child demonstrates the following evidences of faith:

1. Conviction about sin.

Is your child grieved when she sins, not out of a fear of punishment, but out of a love for God? Or is there hardness? Indifference? Unrepentant rebellion? Does your child see that he has sinned against both God and others? Is there a willingness to admit wrongs, apologize, ask for forgiveness, and forgive others when necessary? Does your child confess to God as well as you?

2. Understanding of the gospel.

Does your child understand that she cannot save herself? Does he understand that his sin deserves death and punishment? Does your child understand that Jesus died as a substitute for her sins? Does your child understand that he is saved only by God’s grace and not because of any good within herself or good behaviors?



3. New life and desire for God.

Does your child demonstrate a genuine desire to learn about God and worship him? Does he pray or read the Scriptures on his own initiative? In listening to your child pray, do you hear them relating to God from a heart that knows Him? Does your child show a desire to obey God's commands? Does she demonstrate spiritual fruit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control, humility, service)? Are these things evident to others? Are they growing in these areas?

PARENT FAQ:

1. What if my child is expressing faith in Christ? How can I encourage their faith?

- Continue to teach your children God's law and commands, which the Holy Spirit uses to bring conviction of sin (Deuteronomy 6).
- Teach your children God's promises and speak plainly about their need to repent from sin and trust Christ (Acts 2:38-39).
- Model and teach honesty and openness with the Lord in prayer in the midst of all situations (Lamentations 2:19ff).
- Encourage your children to exercise disciplines such as prayer, Bible reading, and Bible memorization (Psalm 119:9-11; 144:12).
- Include your children in both family and corporate worship gatherings (Exodus 12:26; 13:9, 14-16). A person's presence and participation in a Christian worship service can be a catalyst for helping them grow to understand the gospel (Psalm 8:2; 102:18; 1 Corinthians 14:24-25).
- Don't rush your children to be baptized if you feel they are not ready. Do not feel you have failed as a parent because you do not see fruit. Trust that God will work according to his own timetable (Philippians 1:6).
- Ask for help. God has put us in community together so that we can help one another.
- Recognize that children are easily deceived and manipulated



(Ephesians 4:14), and, just like adults, they may be tempted to find assurance in things they can manipulate—their own knowledge, emotional experiences, prayers, or good works. Discourage children from finding assurance in such things and encourage them to trust Jesus alone.

- Do not be skeptical about a child's sincerity. Although we want to be careful not to give a child a false sense of security, neither do we want to unwittingly discourage children from believing that God can grant them saving faith as a child.
- Trust God to work in the hearts of his children to bring them to himself through faith, in his time and in his ways. Your responsibility is to faithfully teach the gospel to them and model it in your life and leave the results to the Lord (Philippians 1:6). We can trust that the Holy Spirit will assure those who are truly changed (Rom 8:16).

2. What if I have older children or teenagers, but they are not receptive to spiritual things? What should I do?

- Pray for your children's salvation. Salvation is God's work. Do not be afraid to ask God to give your children saving faith (Matthew 6:7-11). Pray that the Holy Spirit will use your teaching, correction and love to show your kids God's holiness as well as their own sin and guilt (2 Kings 22; Romans 7:7-9). Pray that he will make your child's conscience tender and ready to hear the gospel (Galatians 4:1-5).
- Talk to them about the benefits of obeying God and living with wisdom (Proverbs 3:13-18; 8:12-21; Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 1:8-9; 6:20-23; 7:1-3; 24:13-14; Ephesians 6:1-3).
- Lovingly warn your children that failing to trust and obey God results in death and hell (Proverbs 12:1-2; 13:1; 15:32-33; 19:20, 27-29; 23:12; Luke 12:4-5).
- Assure your children that Jesus offers forgiveness of sins and joy to those who trust him (Romans 5:8).
- Remember mercy when correcting or disciplining your children. Repent and ask your children for forgiveness when you fail to be merciful (Psalm 39:10-11; Proverbs 13:24; 29:15; 1 Timothy 3:16;



Ephesians 6:4; Psalm 6:1-2; 38:1; 39:11; Isaiah 53:4-5; Romans 5:8).

3. What if my child was baptized at another church before our family came to Sojourn?

- If a child was baptized as a believer at another church before coming to Sojourn, we will not ask that this child be baptized again.

4. What if I am convinced that my child is not ready for baptism and church membership, but he is feeling peer-pressure because he sees friends being baptized or taking communion?

- Ask questions. Peer-pressure provides an excellent opportunity for parents to talk with their children about the gospel, baptism, and communion. Ask your children, “Why do you want to be baptized?” “Do you only want to be baptized because your friend was baptized?” “What do you understand baptism to mean?” Asking probing questions will help you, as the shepherds of your home, to understand your child’s heart.
- Be honest. If you are convinced that your child is not embracing the gospel, talk honestly with them about errors in their understanding or sin in their life. Encourage them to repent from sins or submit to the Bible’s teaching and pray with them for God’s help.
- Make waiting positive. Instead of only focusing on why your child shouldn’t partake, focus on your eager anticipation that they will partake. If you can do so truthfully, let your child know how you have seen the Lord’s work in their lives, and how you look for them to grow. Encourage them to continue trusting Christ. Children in whom the Spirit is at work will be aware of their sins. Do not encourage children to be introspective and worried about their faults. Point them to Christ and assure them of your confidence that since he has begun a good work in them, he will finish it (Philippians 1:6).





SOJOURN EAST

OUR MISSION

Sojourn East exists to guide people into the fullness of life that Jesus offers.