

COMMUNION

What is Communion?

Communion or “The Lord’s Supper” is the second ordinance or symbol in the Christian life. Unlike Baptism, which is a one-time event, Communion is a regularly practiced symbolic meal that reminds and proclaims Jesus death on the cross. The church practices this meal until Christ’s return.

“...the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this... in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” – 1 Cor. 11:23-26

It is far more likely that you will have to decide about your child’s readiness to take part in Communion before you decide about Baptism. The time will come when Communion is served and your family will be faced with whether or not your kids sitting beside you should take some bread and juice or not. What should we do?

A Believer’s Meal

One important aspect to understand about the Lord’s Supper is that it is **a meal for believers**. We may wonder, “Is my four year old who loves to sing songs to Jesus a true believer?” To that we may respond, “possibly” or “likely” or “maybe”. But we must caution ourselves about making official pronouncements about our child’s faith until that faith has had time to mature and grow. We know that a tree is planted by the waters if it blossoms and grows strong. We have confidence that our kids are saved when we see their faith blossom and grow. Therefore, we recommend the same waiting period for Communion that we suggested for baptism, until about 12 years old. We believe that far from discouraging children from faith, that this waiting period will heighten their anticipation and desire to make a personal commitment to Christ and will often provoke healthy conversations with your child about their faith.

During the childhood years we encourage you as a parent to continue to diligently teach your children the Gospel (Deut 6:4-9), be a Godly example for them to follow (Eph 6:1-3) and pray earnestly for your child’s salvation. We join you as a church in that mission. ~ **Central Kids Staff**



KIDS AND BAPTISM

There is no greater joy for a Christian parent than to see their children receive salvation through faith in Christ. There is no greater hope for parents than to know that their kids are safe in the arms of God. As Christian parents, we long for our children to experience a hope and a future in heaven with Jesus. We earnestly pray for the salvation of our kids and long for them to live a life knowing God and enjoying him forever. If your child has already accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior and they have asked Christ to forgive them of their sins, you may already be wondering about baptism. Furthermore, you may be wondering about the equally important ordinance of Communion and whether or not your child should partake of eating the bread and drinking the cup when the elements are passed around on a Sunday morning. The following Q&A's are meant to guide you through these scenarios.

What is Baptism?

Let's begin with the meaning of baptism. In short, baptism is an outward symbolic act of obedience that mirrors and marks an inward change of heart that has occurred in a follower of Christ. The NT Greek word "baptize" means "immerse". Therefore, people are baptized when they are immersed in water as a symbol of their new life in Christ. The actual action of baptism mirrors our death and burial with Christ and the washing away of our sins. Paul says, *"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."* (Rom 6:4) Believers in Christ are not saved through baptism, but baptism is an important step at the beginning of the Christian life as it marks our new journey with Jesus.

What is Believer's Baptism?

Since we define baptism this way, it follows that only those who have made a confession of faith in Christ and have repented of sin are eligible to be baptized. The New Testament consistently teaches that baptism was reserved for believers only. On the day of Pentecost, after Peter's sermon, we read that "Those who received the word were baptized" (Acts 2:41) and this pattern continues throughout the book of Acts. First comes faith and then baptism as the obedience that comes from faith. This means that we do not make a practice of infant or "paedo" baptism. While we believe in God's special care and security for those too young to express faith in Christ, we believe that child dedication is a more biblical practice (1 Sam 1:20-28) and we encourage only those who have exercised personal faith to be baptized.

How old should a child be to get baptized?

Of course, while we do not teach or practice infant baptism, questions arise about an acceptable age of children who might be eligible for baptism as believers. We may have questions like, "Should my five year old, who has accepted Jesus get baptized?"

This is an important question because on the one hand, we believe that children can be saved at a young age. Jesus said, *"Let the little children come to me... for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."* (Matt 19:14) We take this to mean that not only does Jesus embrace the little children, but that we as the body of Christ are called to bring our children to Jesus at as young an age as possible and teach them God's Word diligently (Deut 6:7).

On the other hand, we recognize that children develop differently and at different rates and pace. Many children are capable of understanding the Gospel and can exercise faith in Jesus personally at a very young age while other kids may take longer to more fully grasp the significance of God's creation, sin, the cross, the resurrection, repentance and faith. We believe that those children who can understand the Gospel and exercise faith are truly saved. One would guess that baptism should follow immediately. However, there are other considerations.

Cognitive Maturity

While we believe that a child might be truly saved at a young age, it is important for us to exercise caution with rushing too quickly into baptism. The question here is one of **cognitive maturity**. This means grasping both the Gospel and the meaning and significance of baptism. We also want to ensure that children are making a personal decision to follow Jesus and not simply doing so to please their parents or peers. Our recommendation at Central is that children wait until they are at least 12 years of age to be baptized. In Judaism, a boy becomes a "son of the law" at age 12. This is why Jesus was old enough to join his family for the Feast of Passover at the age of 12 (see Luke 2:41-52). This was a "rite of passage" for children in that time as they approached adulthood. We feel this is a helpful guide for us when determining a child's readiness for baptism.

Having said that, this is not a law but a guideline for us at Central. We resolve to treat each child on a "case by case" basis. If your child is under the age of 12 and desires baptism, please come and speak to the pastoral staff and we will discuss it further with you. We truly want to ensure that children can obey Jesus without delay while also respecting the process of child development.