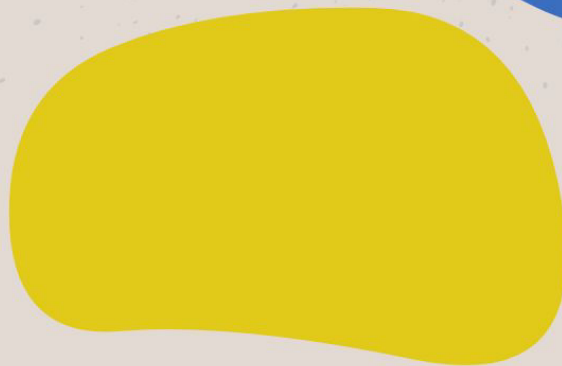
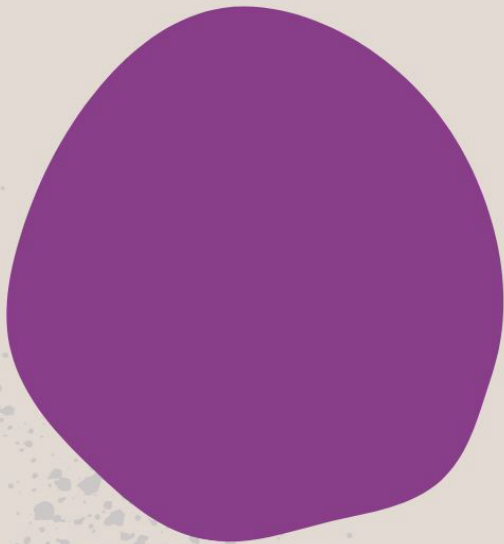




STEPPING STONES

Milestone 4

Baptism - Parent Guide





LETTER TO PARENTS

We are SO glad you have joined us today. Our goal is that you will be encouraged and equipped to answer any question your child may have about baptism.

By attending this class with your child, you are taking a big step towards obeying God's command to pass your faith to the next generation.

Your child is also taking significant steps. They will learn about knowing God and growing to become more like Him and what baptism means.

You have the privilege to be a part of this discipleship process.

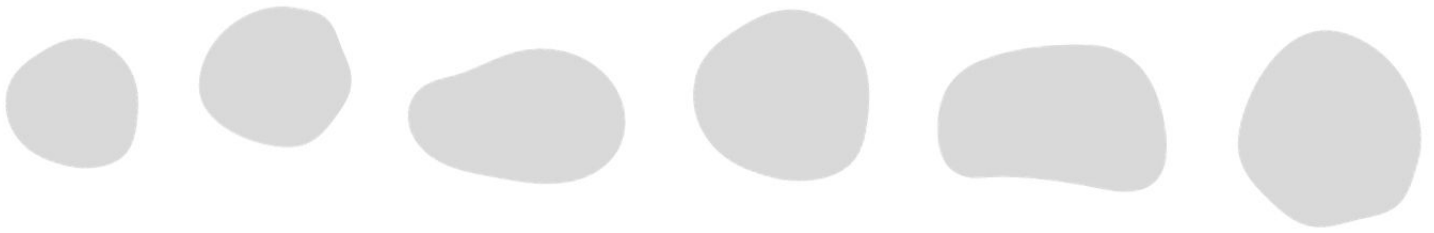
Remember:

- Pray for your child that they will grow to know Jesus each day.
- Don't expect your children to be perfect. They are still sinners.

This Baptism milestone introduces a vital element of the Christian life. The depth to which your child will apply these lessons depends largely on your encouragement as a parent. Make the most of this opportunity, and you will see its fruit for years!

During the class, we answer questions like...

- How can we be saved?
- Can I be sure of my salvation?
- What is baptism?
- Why should I be baptized?
- When should I be baptized?
- What happens during a baptism?



Your role will be to help your child follow along in their student guide. Help your child if they need help writing out their answers.

Your Parent Guide includes the questions for the Discussion times.

It will be your job to lead the group through the questions.

Don't worry! All of the answers are provided for you.

Read the questions to your group and allow them time to answer.

Read the rest of the material as well – or have an older student read it.

We are praying for you!

Equipping Fireflies, Inc.

"These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.

Impress them on your children.

*Talk about them when you sit at home, when you walk along the road,
when you lie down, and when you get up."*

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 [NIV].

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION #1

Suppose you are in a hospital dying of cancer.
I come to visit and say, "Let me take all of the cancer cells out of your body and put them into my body."



Questions:

- If that were possible, what would happen to me? [I would die].
- What would happen to you? [You would live].

I would die in your place. I would die instead of you.
Read this verse again:

*"God demonstrates His own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
Romans 5:8*

Read:

The Bible says that Jesus took our place.

- He paid the penalty we deserved (because of our sin).
- He took that penalty and put it on Himself.
- He died in our place. He paid our sin penalty.

Three days later, Jesus came back to life to prove that sin and death had been defeated and that His claims to be God were true.

He has provided a way for us to be with Him forever.
That is not only good news. It is GREAT news!



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION #2

Why do we need Jesus? [Everyone has sinned, and sin separates us from God].

Why did Jesus die on the cross? [To make a way for us to be right with God].

What happens when you trust in Jesus to save you? [Our sins are forgiven, we receive eternal life, and we will live with God forever in heaven].

Do you believe that Jesus died for you and paid for all of your sins?

Praying a special prayer doesn't save you any more than going to church or being a good person. Praying is just talking to God. But if you trust in Jesus to save you, you might like to tell Him by praying.

You could pray something like this.

Dear God,
I know that I am a sinner, and I am separated from You because of my sin.
I believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins.
Thank you for your promise of salvation.
Help me to live in a way that pleases You until I go to live with you forever in heaven.
In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Is praying to God a "good work"? [Yes].

Will praying a prayer save you? [No].



Praying a prayer isn't what saves you. So, it doesn't matter if you pray or if you pray and mess up the words. You don't have to pray the prayer over and over.

All God asks of us is to BELIEVE. If you believe, then you are saved!!

NOTE:

If your child has believed, that's great! You can write their name and the date on their Faith Certificate to remind them of their trust in Jesus.

If they are still not sure, don't pressure them. Continue to talk about it together after the class when the opportunity arises. Ask your child to tell you when they believe.



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION #3

Read Acts 8:26-27. Look up the verses in your Bible and read them together. Stop to answer the questions in between.

What did the angel tell Philip to do? [Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza].

Who did Philip meet on the way? [An Ethiopian eunuch, an important official].

Why had the Ethiopian official traveled to Jerusalem? [to worship].

Read Acts 8:28-29.

What was the official reading? [The book of Isaiah in the Old Testament].

When they first met, the official was reading from the book of Isaiah in the Old Testament. These verses had been written more than 700 years before.

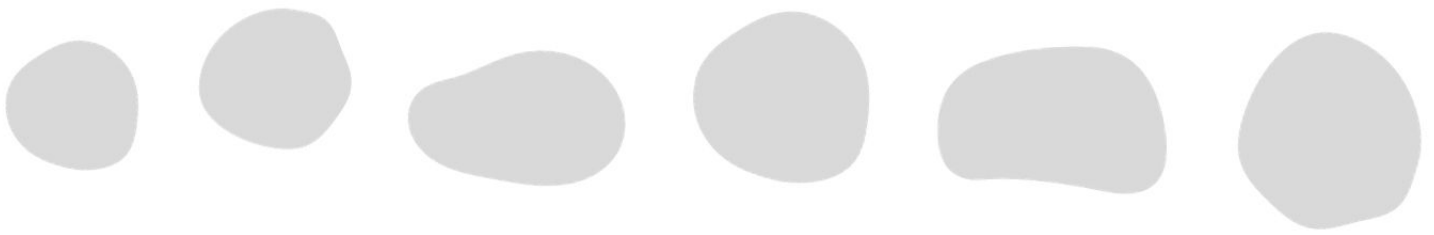
What did the Holy Spirit tell Philip to do? [Go to the chariot].

Read Acts 8:30-33 [Quoting Isaiah 53:7,8].

Who do you think Isaiah was talking about? [Jesus].

Read Acts 8:34-35

What did the official ask Philip? [He wanted to know who Isaiah was talking about].



What good news do you think Philip shared with the official? [That Jesus died on the cross for our sins].

Did the official DO anything after hearing the good news? [No – he just believed].

How long did he wait before being baptized? [He was baptized immediately after he believed].

The first thing God asks of us after we trust in Him is to be baptized. Baptism is a public way to show others we have trusted in Jesus. It tells other people that we have trusted in Jesus to save us.

Join back together as a group, and share your answers.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION #4

Talk about these questions in your small group.

1. What does the wedding ring illustration teach us? [It's a way to show everyone that I'm married! It's an outward picture of something that has already happened].
2. What does the sports team jersey illustration teach us about baptism? [We are telling everyone that we are on God's Team].
3. Why should you get baptized? [Because Jesus did, and He told us to].
4. What does it show everyone? [That I have trusted in Jesus and want to live for Him].
5. What does "going under the water" and "coming back up" represent? [Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection].





THOUGHT QUESTIONS

Often, we think that we need to “DO” something to be saved. For example, you might have been told to pray a prayer or raise your hand. But the Bible says that we only need to “Believe.”

This makes it difficult to know if someone has genuinely understood and believed the gospel message because it all happens internally. It is even more difficult with children. The temptation is to press for a response, but this often results in a child telling us what we want to hear.

Ask the following questions, being careful not to pressure the child.

How do you know if you are ready to be baptized?

The answer to that question depends on you.

Have you trusted in Jesus to save you?

Yes	Not Sure	No
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If you were to die tonight, are you sure that you would go to heaven?

Yes	Not Sure	No
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If the answer to both questions is “Yes,” then you are ready to be baptized. Talk to your parents about why you would like to be baptized.



MY SALVATION STORY

Note to Parents:

Spend some time this week helping your child write their Salvation Story. It will help them to think through what they believe and if they are ready to be baptized.

Help them to think through the following three questions.

1. What was it like before you became a Christian? How did you learn about Jesus?
2. How did you become a Christian? When and where were you?
3. How has knowing Jesus changed you?



THE GOSPEL OUTLINE

BAD NEWS

1. We Have All Sinned.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23 [NIV].

2. Sin Results in Death.

"For the WAGES of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23 [NIV].

GOOD NEWS

1. Jesus Died for Us.

"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8 [NIV].

2. Do you Believe This?

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever BELIEVES in Him will not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16 [NIV].



Presenting the Gospel to Children

We would all agree that the primary reason for children's ministry is to see them trust in Christ and grow in their relationship with Him. I can't think of a more important consideration than communicating the gospel clearly and effectively. Here are some important things to remember.

1. Keep It Simple

When teaching children about the gospel, we need to keep it simple. Always use familiar words, and avoid confusing "religious" and "churchy" vocabulary. As adults, we tend to overcomplicate things, and too often, we make the good news confusing to kids.

We haven't prepared beforehand, so we aren't sure what to say when the opportunity arises. So, we say it in different ways, hoping to communicate well using other terms and phrases. The problem is that we end up making it sound complex and involved. The gospel is not complicated. We need to keep it simple.

It is essential to communicate the gospel in a way that children will understand. The goal is simply accepting God's gift of eternal life because of what Jesus did for them on the cross. Young children generally believe what they are told without questioning whether it is true, so we must be careful to keep our message simple and clear!

We must also remember that children think concretely. We need to explain concepts in a way that ties into their concrete experience and avoid analogies and symbolic language. Avoid the abstract and ambiguous and remain as literal as possible.



2. Keep It Free

Another way that we confuse the gospel is by adding additional actions to our presentation. For example, we might ask children to fill out a card, raise their hands, or "walk forward." These "appeals" are no doubt well-intentioned, but they only serve to confuse.

The Bible tells us that the only requirement is "belief."

*"For God so love the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever BELIEVES in Him has eternal life."
John 3:16 (NIV).*

When we add these other actions to belief, it can lead to false professions of faith.

- "I was saved when I walked forward at church."
- "I became a Christian when I raised my hand."

These public actions can also result in responses from children who want to please their teachers or copy their friends.

Neither of these are desirable responses. We are not trying to get children to DO something. We are trying to help them **understand** the gospel and believe it is true. The key to calling forth a faith response is not to appeal to the **will** but to the **understanding**. The battle is for the mind, not the will.

*"The god of this age has blinded the **minds** of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ. . . "
2 Corinthians 4:4 [NIV, emphasis mine]*

We are trying to PERSUADE them that Jesus paid the price for ALL their sins. NOTHING more is required. He did it ALL!



3. Keep It Biblical

I have heard these phrases many times from people presenting the gospel.

1. "Pray the prayer."
2. "Ask Jesus to be your Lord and Savior."
3. "Ask Jesus to "come into their heart."

The problem is that none of them are in the Bible.

- The Bible never says we need to pray to become a Christian.
- The Bible doesn't ever say to ask Jesus to be your Lord and Savior. Besides, Jesus is already "Lord." He couldn't save us unless He were Lord.
- Jesus doesn't want to come into your sinful heart. He wants to give you a new heart!

Or perhaps you were told that you needed to "repent" or turn from your sins? What does that mean? Do we have to promise never to cheat, steal, or lie again? Do we have to stop sinning?

Repentance is something we spend our entire Christian life trying to do. God isn't interested in any promises on our part to reform our lives. He wants to give us a new life when we simply believe His promise!

Many people have undoubtedly been saved despite an unclear or flawed gospel presentation, but surely, it is better to strive to be biblically clear.

"Children's ministry is full of formulas for the plan of salvation. Each of them is well-intentioned. However, the Bible doesn't give us a formula. The Bible does not say there are four steps, or ABCs, or any other recipe. Formulas might be helpful to the presenter, but they can be dangerous to a child . . . "

Larry Fowler



Our enemy, Satan, is engaging in an all-out war for the hearts and minds of this generation. He knows that if he can destroy children, he can rule the world. What better way to do that than by confusing our children with an unclear gospel message?

His goal is to steal, kill, and destroy. We don't need to add fuel to the fire by confusing the message and unwittingly assisting him as he "blinds the minds" of those we are trying to reach.

While God can use any presentation, we must be clear. Surely, that is the desire of our hearts! Let's be clear as we strive to reach the most receptive generation with the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

"In the race to a child's heart, the first one there wins"

George Barna