

DOWNTOWN CORNERSTONE CHURCH

# BAPTISM PRIMER

---

*We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself. The former is connected with entrance into the new covenant community, the latter with ongoing covenant renewal. Together they are simultaneously God's pledge to us, divinely ordained means of grace, our public vows of submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ, and anticipations of his return and of the consummation of all things.*

*We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer, in the name of the Father, and Son, and Spirit; to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership, and normally precedes participation in the Lord's Supper.*

- DCC Statement of Faith, XI. God's Sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper



**HOW TO USE THIS MATERIAL:**

This booklet is designed to give an overview of the theological convictions and practices of Downtown Cornerstone Church (DCC) on the topic of baptism. For those who wish to be baptized with DCC or simply desire to learn more about our beliefs, join one of our regular Foundations classes. As you read it, note any questions you have and be prepared to ask those questions during the class. We're looking forward to walking through this process with you!

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHAT IS BAPTISM?	4
IS BAPTISM MERELY A SYMBOL?	4
WHY SHOULD ONE BE BAPTIZED?	5
WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?	6
WHEN SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?	6
SHOULD A PERSON BE RE-BAPTIZED?	7
IMPROPER MOTIVATIONS FOR DELAYED BAPTISM:	7
HOW SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?	8
WHERE SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?	9
WHO CAN PERFORM BAPTISM?	9
WHAT IF I AM A CONVICTIONAL PAEDOBAPTIST?	9
APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS	11
APPENDIX B: FOR FURTHER STUDY	11
APPENDIX C: HOW WE BAPTIZE	12
APPENDIX D: CREDOBAPTISM VS. PAEDOBAPTISM	14
APPENDIX E: A PATHWAY FOR THOSE 'BAPTIZED' AS A BABY	17
APPENDIX F: CHILDREN, THE ORDINANCES, AND MEMBERSHIP	23

# WHAT IS BAPTISM?<sup>1</sup>

Baptism and communion (also known as the Lord's Supper) are the two ordinances<sup>2</sup> prescribed by our Lord Jesus Christ as visible symbols of invisible grace. They are tangible representations of the invisible realities of the gospel<sup>3</sup> and the Spirit's application of the gospel to our lives.

With both ordinances, believers have an opportunity to "remember" God's goodness and grace, especially as revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Both baptism and communion picture Christ's death and resurrection - and our participation in them - through union to Him in faith. As we enter into the waters, or watch another do so, we are reminded that Christ was crucified and raised from the dead and that we too have died to the old self in order to live for Christ.

What a person believes about baptism affects how they will perform the ordinance. Who should be baptized? When should they be baptized? How should they be baptized? All of these questions are answered as we reflect upon what baptism means.

Baptism is a church's act of affirming and portraying a believer's union with Christ by immersing him/her in water, and a believer's act of publicly committing him/herself to Christ and his people, thereby unifying a believer to the church and marking off him/her from the world.<sup>4</sup>

As a symbol, baptism displays a number of significant realities:

1. Jesus' death and resurrection
2. The disciple's living union with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection
3. Passing through the waters of judgment to safety, in Jesus
4. Being cleansed and washed of all sin, in Jesus
5. Rising to a new life, with a new family, with new promises and a new future, in Jesus

## IS BAPTISM MERELY A SYMBOL?

Within the Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries, the nature of the sacraments was fiercely debated, even between the Reformers. Without attempting to justify any particular position, it is important to assert that baptism is in some mysterious sense a "means of grace," in which God sanctifies and encourages His people. That said, it is important to bear in mind a few helpful truths regarding what baptism is not and does not do:

### 1. Baptism Does Not Save

---

<sup>1</sup> The initial shape of this primer was adapted from The Village Church: [thevillagechurch.net/events/baptism-class-outline/](http://thevillagechurch.net/events/baptism-class-outline/). Substantial revisions and additions throughout have been made over time relating to our specific convictions and practices at DCC. Any material not original to DCC is footnoted.

<sup>2</sup> Protestant theology has often chosen the term "ordinance" rather than "sacrament" in order to distance itself from the accompanying nuances of the Roman Catholic usage of that term. That said, if understood properly, either term is acceptable.

<sup>3</sup> Though there are various ways to describe the gospel (or "good news"), it centers on the provision of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as a substitute for our sins. Jesus lived a perfect life, was crucified, and was raised three days later. Through faith in Him, we are united to Him, forgiven our sin and reconciled to God.

<sup>4</sup> This definition is from Bobby Jamieson's *Understanding Baptism*.

Though grace is mysteriously mediated through the ordinance, it is *not* saving grace but rather sanctifying grace. We are more conformed to the image of Christ as we obey Him in the call to be baptized.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Baptism Is Not “Necessary” For Salvation

Without in any way diminishing the duty and delight of baptism for a believer, we must also warn against any thinking that suggests salvation is dependent upon baptism (as many cults suggest). The gospel offers salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.<sup>6</sup> While baptism is *not* necessary for salvation it *is* necessary if we are to be obedient to Jesus’ command.

## WHY SHOULD ONE BE BAPTIZED?

When we repent of our sin and place our trust in Jesus for salvation, we should be baptized. There are three primary reasons for followers of Jesus to be baptized:

1. To obey the commands of Christ.
2. To give evidence of genuine saving faith as a disciple of Christ.
3. To follow the example of Christ.

**MATTHEW 28:18-20** [18] “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**ACTS 2:37-41** [37] “Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ [38] And Peter said to them, ‘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. [39] For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’ [40] And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’ [41] So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”

**ACTS 22:16** “And now why do you wait? Rise and be *baptized* and wash away your sins, calling on his name.”

Baptism is not merely a responsibility but also a privilege. In baptism, we have the opportunity to demonstrate evidence of our trust in, and love for, our King. If we think of baptism as a burden, we have not properly understood the joy of following Christ in the call to be baptized. We should have a similar response as the Ethiopian eunuch who, when he believed the gospel, proclaimed, “*What prevents me from being baptized?*” It should be our joy, and we should eagerly anticipate our

---

<sup>5</sup> While 1 Peter 3 states, “baptism...saves you,” it is important to note the context and particularly Peter’s immediate clarification that it is not the water but the “appeal to God” which saves. This corresponds to passages such as Romans 10:13, which states that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” We appeal to God and call upon Him as an expression of faith. Baptism is a symbol of this faith which alone saves.

<sup>6</sup> John 3 states that unless a person is “born of water and the Spirit” he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Many point to this as evidence of the necessity of baptism. However, nothing in the context suggests that Jesus is speaking of baptism. Rather, He is alluding to the promise of the New Covenant in Ezekiel 36, which speaks of both “water” and “Spirit.” Therefore, Jesus is saying that “new birth” or “regeneration” is necessary for salvation, not baptism.

participation in the ordinance. While there are certain costs associated with baptism,<sup>7</sup> the reward of obedience is always worth it (e.g. peace, joy, confidence, assurance and more).

The desire to be baptized should be motivated by a desire to glorify God in faithful obedience. Any other motivation (e.g. to join a particular local church, to please a friend or family member, etc.) should not be the ultimate reason for seeking to be baptized.

## WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

If baptism points to the forgiveness of sins through the faith of a believer and their union with Christ, it follows that baptism would be only for those who personally trust in Jesus. As a church, we practice what is called “believer’s” or “confessor’s” baptism (sometimes referred to as credobaptism), which means we only baptize those who believe and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Reading through Acts, we find baptism explicitly related to repentance, receiving the Word, believing, and receiving the Holy Spirit. There is no explicit evidence to suggest that nonbelievers were baptized.

**ACTS 2:41** “So those who received his word were *baptized*, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”

**ACTS 8:12** “But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were *baptized*, both men and women.”

**GALATIANS 3:27** “For as many of you as were *baptized* into Christ have put on Christ.”

**ROMANS 6:3-4** [3] “Do you not know that all of us who have been *baptized* into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4] 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.”

## WHEN SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?

**ACTS 22:16** “And now why do you wait? Rise and be *baptized* and wash away your sins, calling on his name.”

As a person trusts Christ, he or she should be baptized. In all the accounts in the Scriptures, baptism follows very shortly after conversion. Christians, and the churches that baptize them, should not arbitrarily delay obedience to Jesus’ command to be baptized. However, because of baptism’s place in the life of the local church, there may be prudential steps taken before one is affirmed by a local church through baptism. Two areas of considerations impact the timing of baptism at DCC:

### 1. Baptism and Membership

Because baptism is an act of affirming one’s profession of faith and union with Christ as a member of Jesus’ church, baptism and membership should go hand in hand whenever possible. When we are baptized, we are baptized into God’s family, the local church. In baptism, we are committing ourselves to God and his people, and simultaneously others are committing to us as part of God’s family. Therefore, baptism is a requirement for membership with DCC, and for those wishing to be baptized, we ask that they be working towards membership with DCC.

---

<sup>7</sup> In certain cultures, those who are baptized open themselves up to public persecution. Even in our context, participants often face the ridicule of family and friends.

## 2. Children and Baptism

Because God is the one who regenerates a believer's heart, there is no minimum age given in the Scriptures for a child to profess a correct and genuine faith.<sup>8</sup> Children raised in faithful, believing Christian households may "grow up never knowing a time when they weren't embracing Jesus Christ freely offered in the gospel."<sup>9</sup> Yet, due to the nature of a child's dependent relationship with his/her parents, pastoral prudence is warranted in determining when a child's conversion is clear. As such, our position on children and baptism is as follows:

A young man or woman will be invited to baptism and, subsequently, the Lord's Supper<sup>10</sup> at DCC who has established a **credible profession of faith** in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, in both word and deed, proving a proper understanding and reverence of these ordinances, such that the **congregation can affirm** the genuineness of their faith over time, the church elders can administer the ordinances in good conscience, and the church can receive them into membership. **Believing parents** play an integral role in assessing a profession of faith, walking through this process, and ongoing discipleship within membership until the time when their connection to the church should be free and independent from parental direction. Every means of grace for the edification of members should be extended to the young disciple: the teaching and preaching of the Word, service, fellowship with the church, pastoral care, and church discipline. Some of the privileges and responsibilities of membership that require maturity according to Scripture or prudence should await adulthood (e.g. church offices and ministry lead roles).

See Appendix F for more information on this statement and our practice regarding children, membership, and the ordinances.

## SHOULD A PERSON BE RE-BAPTIZED?

For those who were sprinkled or immersed at an earlier age, it is important to understand that we should only be baptized once. If you trusted in Christ at that time, your baptism is valid and need not, indeed should not, be repeated. If, however, you experienced sprinkling with or immersion in water before being born again and trusting Christ, your experience was not baptism, and thus you should be baptized. *The question is therefore, "Was I truly trusting in Christ when I was baptized?"*

There should always be seasons of growth and greater periods of maturity in the life of those who have trusted in the gospel. Believers must not be re-baptized each time they experience greater joy and sanctification. However, if you believe that your original experience was prior to truly trusting in Christ as Lord and Savior, you should pursue obedience in this area by being baptized now.

## IMPROPER MOTIVATIONS FOR DELAYED BAPTISM:

### 1. Fear

One of the most common reasons for delaying baptism is fear, but such anxiety should not hinder our obedience. It is important to know that fearing obedience is a sin and thus should not to be passively accepted. Confronting sin is an

---

<sup>8</sup> While an exception, Luke 1:15 indicates that even infants can be regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Smallman, *How Our Children Come to Faith*, 21.

<sup>10</sup> Throughout the history of the church, baptism has been considered an initiation rite. That is, baptism celebrated one's entrance into the believing community. The Lord's Table, on the other hand, was the community meal open to all who declared their unity with the believing body through baptism. Thus, the church throughout history has held that baptism should precede one's participation in the Lord's Table. For this reason we ask parents to wait until their children are baptized before allowing them take communion.

essential aspect of discipleship, and a person's obedience in this area is an excellent way to begin the process of sanctification in the area of the fear of man.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Not Being “Good Enough”

Jesus came to save sinners, not those who are “good enough” for baptism. There will never be a time where a person will be “good enough” for baptism. Our right to enter the baptismal waters is grounded upon Christ's righteousness, not our own. If we have been united to Him, we should confidently draw near in obedience to His command and example.

## HOW SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?

Though other denominations and theological traditions baptize by pouring or sprinkling, DCC practices baptism by immersion.<sup>12</sup> We do so in light of the following considerations:

### 1. The Greek word βαπτίζω (*baptizo*) literally means to plunge, submerge or immerse.

Our English word *baptism* is a transliteration of the Greek *baptizo*. *Baptizo* was used in Greek literature to describe the act of immersing something in water or another liquid. It later became a technical term that referred specifically to the Christian ordinance of baptism.

### 2. The representation of union in Christ's death and resurrection is best expressed through immersion.

Whether buried below or above ground, the symbolism of burial is still that of being placed under something. Likewise, resurrection is accomplished by coming out of something (whether grave or tomb). Immersion best symbolizes this reality by actually placing the believer under the water and bringing them out.

In addition, it is interesting to note the use of water to symbolize judgment in the Scriptures (e.g. the flood of Genesis 6-7 and the destruction of Egypt in the Red Sea of Exodus 14). Thus, by passing through the waters of baptism, the believer expresses trust that God's judgment has been satisfied by Christ.

**COLOSSIANS 2:12** “Having been buried with him in *baptism*, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.”

**ROMANS 6:3-4** [3] “Do you not know that all of us who have been *baptized* into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 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.”

### 3. The surrounding context of baptisms in the Scriptures suggests baptism by immersion.

**MARK 1:5,10** [5]” And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being *baptized* by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins... [10] And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.”<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> An excellent resource on this topic is *When People are Big and God is Small* by Ed Welch.

<sup>12</sup> Except in those rare cases in which immersion is impossible or impractical. For example, baptism by sprinkling is certainly to be practiced in the case of a person who is physically unable to be immersed.

<sup>13</sup> The prepositions here are crucial. Verse 5 has the Greek *en*, not another preposition meaning beside or near. Verse 10 has *ek* not *apo* which would have been used for merely going away from the water.



**JOHN 3:23** “John also was *baptizing* at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized” . . .

**ACTS 8:38-39** [38] “And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he *baptized* him. [39] And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.” <sup>14</sup>

While we believe that baptism by immersion is the biblical model for baptism, we will accept members who have been baptized through other modes (i.e. sprinkling, pouring) provided that such baptism:

- Followed a believer’s conversion
- Was in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19)
- Was by another church professing the true gospel of salvation in Christ alone, through faith alone, and by grace alone.

Details of a believer’s baptism will be discussed as part of the membership process.

## WHERE SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?

Although there are no prescriptions in the Scriptures that specify a particular location for baptism, we prefer to practice the ordinance within the context of the gathered local church in order to corporately celebrate an individual’s act of obedience and submission. This preference is primarily due to the theological conviction that baptism is a sign of entrance into the family of God, seen and experienced most clearly in the local church, and therefore it seems most appropriate for this ordinance to be performed within the context of the gathered church whenever possible.

## WHO CAN PERFORM BAPTISM?

The Bible gives no prescription for the requirements of those who perform baptism. Contrary to some traditions, there seems to be no explicit biblical reason to restrict the duty to men who have been ordained to vocational ministry. However, since baptism is a sign of entrance into the family of God, seen and experienced most clearly in the local church, it does seem appropriate for this ordinance to be performed within the context of the gathered church whenever possible. Additionally, in order for the baptizee to have a right understanding of what is actually happening in baptism, it is right for the church to safeguard the ordinance and keep it from abuse. Lastly, in light that, it seems most appropriate for church leaders to administer baptism whenever possible. However, again, there is no explicit reason why the church may not designate other mature believers, as appropriate, to baptize new converts. <sup>15</sup>

## WHAT IF I AM A CONVICTIONAL PAEDOBAPTIST?

We believe, as stated above, that the Bible teaches clearly that baptism is intended for those who have placed a living trust in Jesus as a sign of belonging to God, and by extension, his people. Further, the NT assumes those in the local church have been baptized (Rom 6:1-4; Col 2:12). Therefore, our normal practice is to only admit baptized believers into membership, while encouraging those who underwent “baptism” as a baby to be baptized as a believer.

---

<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that this verse speaks of both Philip and the eunuch going down into and coming up out of the water, but the significance is found in the fact that they actually entered into the water which would have been unnecessary if baptizing by sprinkling or pouring. Surely the caravan would have had sufficient water for those modes had they been a preferable practice.

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter 49, “Baptism” of Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology* for more.

However, in rare cases, we will receive a convictional paedobaptist into membership. For those pursuing membership who were “baptized” as infants (whether by immersion, sprinkling, or pouring), we ask that they walk through a simple process to grow in their understanding of the biblical nature of baptism. This is not meant to push anyone away, but help each individual honor and walk in obedience to Jesus’ commands—especially his call to repent, believe, and be baptized (Acts 2:38). If after studying the scriptures an individual remains a convinced paedobaptist, the elders will consider receiving him/her into membership, in the spirit of charity on secondary (non-salvific) doctrines. Even while this is a secondary doctrine, because it impacts the governance of the church, convictional paedobaptists will be asked to not be divisive on the issue and will not be able to serve as elders.

See Appendix E -A Pathway For Those ‘Baptized’ As A Baby - for more background and details on our membership process for convictional paedobaptists.

## **THE PRACTICE OF DCC**

Because of our understanding of baptism detailed above, believers who wish to be baptized would do so in the normal course of membership (including the Foundations class, meeting with a pastor, and congregational vote of affirmation). This practice ensures that the one being baptized understands the gospel, baptism’s meaning, and the church’s practice - as well as allowing the pastors and congregation to affirm the testimony of the believer. Because baptism is the way in which someone publicly associates with Christ and His church, baptism is a prerequisite for membership. Once affirmed by the congregation, baptism(s) will be scheduled on the soonest Sunday gathering feasible.

## APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**CREDOBAPTISM:** the view that only those who have been regenerated and trust Christ as Lord and Savior should be baptized, also known as believer's or confessor's baptism

**PAEDOBAPTISM:** the view that infants of believing parents should be baptized

**IMMERSION:** a mode or form of baptism in which the baptizee is submerged under the water

**SPRINKLING:** a mode or form of baptism in which the baptizee is sprinkled with water, also known as effusion or pouring

**REGENERATED:** to be "born again," regeneration refers to the event in which God grants new life to His children, and they subsequently exercise faith and love toward Him

**JUSTIFICATION:** the term for the declaration of righteousness that God credits to our account. It is often distinguished from "sanctification"

**SANCTIFICATION:** a progressive work of God in which believers are continually conformed to the image of Jesus Christ

## APPENDIX B: FOR FURTHER STUDY

### RELEVANT PASSAGES IN THE SCRIPTURES:

- Matthew 3, 21, 28
- Mark 1, 6, 7, 10, 11, 16
- Luke 3, 7, 11, 12, 20
- John 1, 3, 4, 10
- Acts 1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 22
- Romans 6
- 1 Corinthians 1, 10, 12, 15
- Galatians 3
- Ephesians 4
- Colossians 2
- Hebrews 6, 9
- 1 Peter 3

### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

- DCC sermons on Baptism: <https://www.downtowncornerstone.org/topic/baptism/>
- *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, edited by Thomas R. Schreiner & Shawn D. Wright
- *Desiring God* baptism resources: <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/topic-index/baptism>

## APPENDIX C: HOW WE BAPTIZE

### PARTICIPATE IN A FOUNDATIONS CLASS

1. We ask those wishing to be baptized to participate in a foundations class (currently taught on a rotating basis). This 5-week class walks through what we believe (doctrine), why it's important to belong (membership), who we are (vision, mission, and values), why we are here (context), and how we function (leadership, ministries, partners, and finances).
2. After taking the class, we ask participants to submit a testimony of conversion in which we look particularly for evidences of grace and a proper understanding of the gospel. For instance, we want to make sure a person does not articulate that he or she was born a Christian or thinks that Christianity consists merely in moral improvement.

### PREPARE TO SHARE YOUR STORY

Your testimony is your account of how you came to know and follow Jesus, and how Jesus is continuing to unfold His story in your life. It can often include life events that helped shaped your view of God, but the crux or center of any testimony should always center around the Gospel, Christ's work on your behalf.

As you think about writing down your testimony, consider modeling it after Paul's conversion story to King Agrippa in Acts 26:4-23. In this section you will see that Paul's story includes:

#### I. Who he was before he met Jesus (vs. 4-11)

- What was your life like... what characterized you? How did you think of the Lord?  
"My family, friends, interests were..."  
"My most important value was..."  
"My religious background and attitude about Christ were..."

#### II. How he met Jesus (vs. 12-20)

- Describe the world around you that drove you to consider Christ, whether it was circumstances or time.  
"I was awakened to my need by (people, books, circumstances)..."  
"What I thought or noticed (about myself, God) at this point was..."
- Share the specific steps of how you became a Christian (e.g. scripture, word, person, church, etc.)  
"The aspects of the gospel that touched me were..."  
"I came to understand that Christ..."  
"I saw my need was..."
- Explain the gospel clearly. For example:  
#1 "I saw that I was a sinner fully deserving of God's wrath."  
#2 "But, I then understood that Jesus died in my place, bearing the wrath of God, on the cross for me."  
#3 "When I repented of my sin, turned from my old lifestyle, placed faith in Jesus' sacrifice, I was forgiven of all my sin, became a child of God and received the gift of eternal life."

#### III. How his life has changed after becoming a Christian. (vs. 21-23)

- What difference has Christ made in your life? In the way you act? Think? In the way others see you?
- Don't be afraid to share that you still have struggles, but how Christ helps you with these struggles.  
"What changed was..."  
"My desires now are..."  
"I'm now doing..."  
"A difficult area of obedience is..."

#### **IV. Conclude by sharing that you now know you have eternal life in Jesus (cf 1 John 5:11-13)**

##### **COMMON TESTIMONY TRAPS**

- “I don’t have an interesting testimony” - Since we were all enemies of God, there’s no such thing (Rom 5:8-10)
- “People won’t understand or they’ll misunderstand me” - Jesus understands you completely (John 10:20)
- Because we forget that Christ makes all things new, we can see our stories our identity, instead of remembering Jesus is now our identity (Col 3:3-4)
- Because we forget the Gospel, we can tend to make our stories religious (went to church, prayed the prayer, etc.) and not relational (God saved me) - (Luke 18:12-13)

##### **WRITE YOUR TESTIMONY**

We encourage everyone to write out their testimony in something you can share in 3-5 minutes. If you already have your testimony written, does it need updating? Does it follow a pattern that others can resonate with? Does it show the magnificence and beauty of Christ redeeming work in your life? Ask yourself, does my story paint a adequate picture of what Christ has saved me, and is saving me from, and who I now am in Him?

##### **BAPTISM SERVICES:**

1. Baptisms can occur as part of the regular Sunday gathering, or special gatherings of the church.<sup>16</sup> Your baptism is a profound display of God’s grace making it a great opportunity to invite friends, family, neighbors and/or coworkers to celebrate with you. This could be their first time hearing the gospel.
2. Participants are asked to personally share their testimonies if possible or, if unable, to have a friend or family member share for them.
3. After the testimony, the person performing the baptism will ask, “Do you confess and believe Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?” to which the baptizee will respond, “Yes” or “I do.”
4. The baptizer will then immerse and subsequently raise the baptizee out of the water while saying, “I baptize you, my (brother or sister) in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>17</sup> [Some will choose to also say, “Buried with Christ in baptism, raised to walk in newness of life” which is taken from Romans 6:4, “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.”]

##### **HELPFUL TIPS:**

1. Wear dark shorts and a dark shirt to maintain modesty.
2. Bring a change of clothes, towel and bag to hold your wet clothes after you change.
3. A row of seats will be reserved for everyone who is being baptized, but if you prefer to sit with visiting family and friends, ask them to save you a seat near the baptistery.
4. Arrive 30 minutes prior to the service where you are being baptized. You will receive an email the week before with further details on when and where to arrive.

---

<sup>16</sup> We should remember from the “Where Should a Person be Baptized?” section that this is a preference, though we would argue theologically defensible, and not a prescription.

<sup>17</sup> Following the formula of Matthew 28:19, we baptize using the Trinitarian confession. In Acts, the apostles typically baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ,” but this should not be viewed as differing in meaning from Matthew’s prescription. The context of Acts is concerned with testifying to the resurrection of Christ, and thus He is distinguished among the persons of the Trinity, but all that is true of the character (“name” often represents character in the Scriptures) of Christ is true of the Father and Spirit, as well.

## APPENDIX D: CREDOBAPTISM VS. PAEDOBAPTISM

As discussed in the section on “Who Should be Baptized?” DCC only baptizes those who profess to be believers in the person and work of Jesus Christ. However, not all denominations and traditions follow this practice. Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Lutheranism, Anglicanism and a number of mainline Protestant denominations practice infant baptism (called *paedobaptism* from the Greek *paidon* meaning infant or child). While all practice the same form, the underlying theologies of each are quite distinct. Without going into detail regarding each, we will look briefly at the two most common in our particular context, Roman Catholicism and Protestant paedobaptism (e.g. Lutheranism, Presbyterianism, Anglicanism, etc). For further study on this topic, see the recommended resources in Appendix #.

### ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Roman Catholicism teaches that all infants should be baptized at which time the child is regenerated or born again. In the case of infants, who are unable to exercise saving faith, the faith of the church is effective to remove original sin and bestow saving grace.

#### OUR RESPONSE:

The faith of another person will not substitute for a person’s own response to the gospel, and the baptismal waters hold no magical powers of regeneration. While God’s grace is certainly present in the waters, it is the grace of sanctification, *not* regeneration or justification.

The Roman Catholic understanding of baptism is precipitated upon the same system of works-righteousness which stands in utter contrast to the gospel of Jesus Christ. As Paul wrote in Galatians, a gospel of works is ultimately “another gospel” to be corrected or condemned.

### PROTESTANT PAEDOBAPTISM

Protestant paedobaptism is similar to Roman Catholic infant baptism *in form only*. According to Protestant theology, faith alone is the instrument in justification, and therefore saving grace is not bestowed in the waters. Therefore, those who practice infant baptism in the Protestant tradition are our brothers in the faith in regards to the essential elements of orthodox Christianity. Without diminishing our overwhelming agreement on the fundamentals of the faith with those who practice infant baptism, it is nevertheless important to highlight this area of disagreement.

Protestant paedobaptism prescribes baptism of adults who convert to Christianity but differs in practice from those who perform believer’s baptism by additionally prescribing infant baptism *for children of believing parents*. This view is founded upon three main arguments:

1. Infants were circumcised in the Old Covenant.
2. Baptism is the sign of the New Covenant as circumcision was the sign of the Old.
3. There is essential continuity between the Old and New Covenants.

This discussion centers on the degree of continuity between the Old and New Covenants.<sup>18</sup> Within the Old Covenant, Israel was commanded to circumcise their sons on the eighth day as a sign and seal of their being included within God’s covenant with the nation. Protestant paedobaptism interprets baptism as analogous to circumcision (using Colossians 2:11-12 as a reference) and thus teaches that the sign and seal should be performed for children of New Covenant believers, as well. As Acts 2:39 states, “the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off.”

#### OUR RESPONSE:

---

<sup>18</sup> In contrasting the Old and New Covenants, it is recognized that there was not simply one old covenant, but indeed various covenants appear throughout the context of Genesis through Malachi.

1. The Old Covenant community was primarily entered into physically (by birth), whereas the New Covenant is entered into spiritually (by rebirth – being “born again”).<sup>19</sup> Whereas Protestant paedobaptism prescribes baptism for those in *physical* infancy, credobaptism (believer’s baptism) insists upon the baptism of those in *spiritual* infancy, having been “born again” through the Holy Spirit.
2. The Old Covenant community was a mixed community composed of both believers and unbelievers (Romans 2:29, 9:6). The New Covenant community is technically a congregation of believers (Jeremiah 31:34).<sup>20</sup>
3. Though there is a great degree of continuity between the covenants, there is also substantial discontinuity. The Old Covenant consisted of shadows which pointed to the substance fulfilled in Christ (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1). We need to be careful about directly applying elements of the Old Covenant without recognizing the essential distinctions.
4. Passages such as Acts 2:39 do not affirm the paedobaptist position. The “promise” affirmed is the promise of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 1:4 and 2:33), and it is specifically applied to “everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” The fact that the promise is for “your children” should no more lead us to thinking that all children are covenant community members as the fact that it is for “all who are far off” should lead us to conclude that all people everywhere are. The passage teaches that the Holy Spirit will be given to all whom Christ calls to Himself, not that we should baptize children.
5. Lastly, rather than seeing Old Covenant circumcision as analogous to New Covenant baptism, it seems more appropriate to see Old Covenant circumcision as analogous to New Covenant *circumcision of the heart* by the Holy Spirit. As Paul states in Romans 2:29, “Circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit . . .” (see also Col 2:11) In this way, circumcision under the Old Covenant was the shadow, while circumcision of the heart by the Spirit under the New Covenant is the fulfillment.

## ACTS SURVEY

Our theological conviction regarding believer’s baptism is confirmed as we look in the book of Acts. Here are the baptisms in Acts and the descriptions given of those who were baptized.

### ACTS 2

In chapter 2, we find Peter preaching the word in the midst of the crowd gathered in Jerusalem at Pentecost. The crowd cries out in conviction, “Brothers, what shall we do?” to which Peter responds, “repent and be baptized.” In verse 41, we read that those who were baptized were *“those who received his word.”*

### ACTS 8

There are two accounts of baptism in chapter 8. The first occurs in response to the preaching of Philip (one of the seven selected in Acts 6 to assist the apostles) in Samaria. In verse 12, we read that many were baptized: *“When they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.”*

The second account again involves the ministry of Philip as he encounters the Ethiopian eunuch. After preaching Christ from Isaiah 53 to the eunuch, he requests baptism, and Philip obliges. The text itself does not specify the conditions for such baptism; although, some manuscripts record the eunuch stating, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

---

<sup>19</sup> Note the relationship between Jesus’ mention of “water” and “spirit” in John 3 in the context of being “born again” with the promise of “water” and “spirit” in the New Covenant prophecy of Ezekiel 36. See John Piper’s *Finally Alive* for a helpful theology of regeneration in general and for a discussion of its role in the fulfillment of the New Covenant in particular.

<sup>20</sup> This is not to deny that there are those who are unregenerate within the visible church but simply that the true community of the Church consists of those who have been born again to the living hope (1 Peter 1:3).

## **ACTS 9**

Chapter 9 contains the baptism of Paul *immediately after* his experience on the Damascus road. Within the context, we read that Ananias was specifically sent to minister to Paul that he might receive sight (having been blinded by the vision of Christ in 9:3-9) and “be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

## **ACTS 10**

The 10th chapter includes the baptism of Cornelius and, presumably, his household *following their belief in the gospel*. After Peter preached the gospel to those who were gathered, “the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.” Peter describes this as having “received the Holy Spirit.” When Peter recounts the experience to the church in Jerusalem, their interpretation of the event is that it evidenced that “God has granted repentance that leads to life.”

## **ACTS 16**

Like chapter 8, this chapter also includes two distinct accounts of baptisms. The first involves Lydia and her household. Though nothing is specifically stated about the condition of her household (see below “What About Household Baptisms?”), Lydia’s baptism is related to the reality that “the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul,” and her subsequent appeal is based upon her perceived faithfulness (16:15).

The second account in chapter 16 involves the jailer and his household, who heard the “word of the Lord” that was preached to them by Paul and Silas (vs. 32). As in the case of Lydia, no explicit mention is made as to the spiritual condition of the jailer’s household, but his own is specifically included as vs. 34 indicates that they rejoiced “that he had believed in God.”

## **ACTS 19**

The final account of baptism in the book of Acts is found in chapter 19. In this context, Paul discovers some “disciples” who had been baptized into John’s baptism of repentance but had not yet received the Holy Spirit. In response, Paul baptizes them, lays his hands on them, and they receive the Holy Spirit.

## **WHAT ABOUT HOUSEHOLD BAPTISMS?**

Though the explicit mention of the baptism of an entire household is only made in the two accounts in chapter 16, the narrative of Cornelius’ conversion probably implies the same. Proponents of infant baptism (paedobaptism) believe that such baptisms can be used as implicit justification for infant baptism. If households were baptized and if those households included infants, we have biblical evidence of paedobaptism. What are we to make of these claims? Here are a few thoughts:

First, it must be noted that the entire argument is founded upon the presumed presence of infants within the household. The text itself does not necessitate such a reading. There is no convincing evidence of infants in the households (though to be fair, there is no explicit statement otherwise either).

Second, the texts in question have clues which at least suggest that all who were baptized had been converted.

1. Acts 10 explicitly states that Cornelius “feared God *with* all his household.” In other words, all in his household were described as fearing God. Those who were baptized were those who “feared.”
2. Acts 16 describes the baptism of the jailer’s household. In verse 31, Paul or Silas says, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Surely this does not mean that if the jailer believed, his household would be saved as Protestant paedobaptists would agree. The best interpretation of this text is that those who believed would be saved and that those who were baptized were those who believed. In addition, the word is spoken to his entire household, (32) and his entire household rejoiced together (34).
3. Additionally, consider the relationship between 1 Corinthians 1:16, which states that Paul baptized “the household of Stephanas” and 1 Corinthians 16:15, which states that his “household” consisted of devoted converts.

## **SUMMARY**

While the timing and mode of baptism are not absolutely essential to the Christian faith, they are nonetheless important theological convictions that we hold firmly. We love and respect our Protestant brothers and sisters who disagree with believer’s baptism, but we believe and subsequently teach it as the biblical form of baptism.



## APPENDIX E: A PATHWAY FOR THOSE ‘BAPTIZED’ AS A BABY

We ask all who were “baptized” as infants by a bible-believing, gospel-centered church, to take some time to better understand the biblical nature of baptism before being admitted into membership. While baptism is not a first-order doctrinal issue, that does not mean it is unimportant. After all, Jesus commanded it. To not be baptized, is to be disobedient, even if unintentionally so. Therefore, it is the responsibility of his church to rightly administer this important ordinance and the responsibility of every Christian to rightly receive it.

To help foster better understanding of the biblical nature of baptism, we have created a simple pathway for those “baptized” as infants. This pathway is not meant to push anyone away, but help each individual honor and walk in obedience to Jesus’ commands--especially his call to repent, believe, and be *baptized* (Acts 2:38).

You might say we practice *credobaptism*<sup>21</sup> *with an asterisk*. Our normal practice is to only admit baptized believers into membership<sup>22</sup>, while encouraging those who underwent “baptism” as a baby to be properly baptized as a believer—the only kind of baptism we see in the Bible. However, in rare cases, as described below, we will receive a convictional paedobaptist<sup>23</sup> into membership.

### Four Common Groups

We have found that most people who were “baptized” as a baby fall into one of four groups:

**#1 You were “baptized” as an infant, but now recognize your need to be baptized as a believer.** After biblical study, you have chosen to embrace the doctrine of believers’ baptism and be baptized. If so, then we encourage you to move forward with baptism and skip this process.

**#2 You were “baptized” as an infant, but recognize you need to learn more about baptism.**

This is where most people begin. Perhaps you were brought up in a tradition that practices paedobaptism<sup>24</sup>, but have never explored the biblical nature of baptism yourself. In this case, we encourage you to search the scriptures, listen to the arguments on both sides, and make a personal decision based on the biblical witness. *This process is designed to help you do just that.* Obedience to Jesus is at stake, so this is not a peripheral issue.

**#3 You were “baptized” as an infant, and after study, remain a convictional paedobaptist.**

If this is you, in most cases, we encourage you to find a church that practices paedobaptism. However, that’s not because we don’t want you to be part of our church! We do. But, this is a significant issue and, over time, you may find it difficult to belong to a church that holds a different position. This will become even more pertinent should you have children.<sup>25</sup> However, if you continue to desire membership with DCC, which we hope you do, then we invite you to participate in the following pathway

**#4 You were baptized as an infant, but after study, remain undecided.**

Perhaps you have taken the time to study the doctrine of baptism, wrestle with the readings, sufficiently understood both arguments, yet remain undecided. If you walk through this process, yet remain undecided, the elders are willing to consider welcoming you under the same understanding as a convictional paedobaptist (#3 above), depending on the situation.

---

<sup>21</sup> Also known as “believer baptism”.

<sup>22</sup> This was the practice of the early church and the practice that was recovered during the Reformation.

<sup>23</sup> Also known as “infant baptism”.

<sup>24</sup> Such traditions include Presbyterianism, Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Methodism, Catholicism, and others.

<sup>25</sup> For example, paedobaptists believe a family is in sin if they *don’t* baptize their children, while credobaptists believe you are in sin if you *do*! We still love one another, of course, but this highlights the unique nature of this particular doctrine.

## Discipleship Pathway For Those Baptized As Infants

For those in the latter three categories, the elders ask each member candidate to work through the following materials and assignments to ensure you have a good grasp of the biblical nature of baptism. The goal of these readings and exercises is not to unnecessarily prolong or hinder someone's enthusiasm for joining the DCC family. Instead, our purpose is to intentionally help you navigate these important issues. As elders, we want to joyfully enter into this process with you as part of our stewardship before God to whom we are accountable.

### Step 1: Read the DCC Baptism Primer.

### Step 2: Read all of the biblical passages on baptism in the New Testament.

Grab a journal and note themes/observations/questions as you read the following passages.

Ask questions like: *Who* is baptized? *What* is true of those getting baptized?

**Step 3: Read “Understanding Baptism” by Jamison and Leeman and write a brief reflection.** Be sure to describe any helpful observations or questions that arise as you read. If you would like to learn more about the continuity and discontinuity of the old and new covenants, a key issue that distinguishes paedobaptists from credobaptists, read “Baptism and the Relationship between Covenants” by Stephen Wellum in *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant*, edited by Schreiner and Wright. We also encourage you to listen to Pastor Adam's sermon *What is Baptism?* from *The Church sermon series*.

***\*\*If you have chosen to embrace credobaptism and be baptized you may skip the last step.\*\****

### Step 4: Write a brief summary of what you've learned about baptism.

After completing steps 1-3 please take a moment to reflect on how your baptism convictions are being shaped and why you have chosen to remain a convictional paedobaptist. *This is the most important step of this process.* Our goal for this pathway is not merely for you to “check the boxes” but to give you a genuine opportunity to hone your biblical convictions on this important sacrament. After all, this may be the only time in your life you embark on such a study. Therefore, in this reflection, we would like for you to summarize the biblical arguments for both the paedo and credo positions, along with your rationale for choosing to remain a paedobaptist. Satisfactory rationale must be *theological* in nature. For example, *unsatisfactory* reasons for not wishing to be baptized as a believer include:

- **“I don't want to upset my family.”** This is understandable. No one wishes to intentionally upset their family or convey any ingratitude for changing long-held family practices or expectations. But the purpose of baptism is to display your primary allegiance is to Jesus, above all other allegiances, even your family (Mt. 10:37; Lk. 14:26). It is profoundly honoring to Jesus to forsake an unbiblical, albeit well-intended practice, out of faith-filled obedience.
- **“It doesn't really matter.”** Amidst the historic debate on baptism, this is a tempting response. After all, godly men and women have landed on both sides. Who are we to question them? But, this doesn't do justice to the biblical witness. To be baptized is a command of Jesus, so it matters very much and merely dismissing it doesn't make it go away.
- **“The Bible isn't clear.”** Its true the Bible doesn't answer all of our questions about baptism. But, it is sufficiently clear. In other words, it tells us *enough*. Our role is not to withhold a decision until all is known, but to make the best decision we can with the revelation that God has provided.
- **“Both sides are right.”** If only that could be! The unique challenge of these two positions is that they *cannot* both be right at the same time. For example, children cannot both be counted among the new covenant people apart from faith (paedobaptists) and not be counted among the new covenant people (credobaptist) at the same time. These are contrary to one another.
- **“I've already followed Jesus for decades.”** Its not uncommon for people to come to a credobaptist conviction later in life, sometimes decades after first professing faith in Jesus. This creates a potentially awkward situation, but it doesn't have to be. Obedience to Jesus is always the best course of action, even if delayed. Such obedience honors Jesus and edifies the church.

- After you have completed your reflection of this study, send it the pastor who led your member interview and schedule another time to meet-up to discuss your next steps. Should you proceed with membership as a convictional paedobaptist we ask that you:
  - Agree to not be divisive, or influence others to the contrary on this issue.
  - Understand DCC will not baptize infants.
  - Understand a convictional paedobaptist cannot hold the office of elder
  - Understand admission into membership is not a recognition of the validity of infant baptism, but based on our desire to bridge the historic baptism divide (For more, read *Our Rationale*).

### **Our Rationale: Why This Pathway?**

You might wonder, “What’s the big deal, especially if salvation is not at stake in baptism?” The short answer is that God calls us to practice this sacrament *rightly*. The challenge, of course, is that today we are faced with two very different forms of baptism, credobaptism (believer baptism) and paedobaptism (infant baptism). Therefore, the purpose of this section is to describe how we have arrived at this practice.

*Paedobaptists* baptize infants of believing families because they hold that these children are part of the new covenant community apart from faith, though not in a saving way. In other words, there is a particular category of unbelievers that are seen to belong to God’s new covenant people, namely children of believing families, though they must still receive Christ by faith to be saved. Therefore, paedobaptists hold that it is a sin, even if unintentional, for believing families to *not* baptize their children.

*Credobaptists*, on the other hand, hold that while children of believing families have a special place in the life of God’s people, they are not part of the new covenant community *until* they receive Christ by faith. In other words, only those who receive Christ by faith belong to the new covenant, including children of believers. For this reason, credobaptists hold that is a sin, even if unintentional, *to* baptize unbelieving children.

Paedobaptists and credobaptists both believe that baptism is the new covenant sign, marking off an individual from the world to now belong to Jesus’ church. So, when paedobaptists baptize a child, they become a member of the church, even if certain benefits of membership (such as the Lord’s Supper, voting, or leadership) are withheld until a later time. Credobaptists are welcomed into membership in such churches, however, they are unable to be ordained into leadership. As such, they are usually encouraged to find a credobaptist church to join.

In the same way, when credobaptists baptize an individual, they too become a member of the church. For this reason, credobaptists ordinarily wait until a child has reached a level of maturity by which they can offer a credible profession of faith before baptizing them and welcoming them into membership. Paedobaptists are welcomed into membership in such churches, however, they are ordinarily asked to be baptized first (i.e. if they have not been baptized as a believer). If they are unwilling to get baptized, they are usually encouraged to find a paedobaptist church to join.

So, the root of the matter is, who is in the new covenant? Is it only those who profess faith (thus, credobaptism)? Or, is it those who profess faith *and* their children (thus, paedobaptism)? Paedobaptists will baptize believers and their infants, allowing them all into church membership. Credobaptists will only baptize believers, allowing only believers into membership, which necessarily excludes not-yet-believing children. Therein lies the issue.

Therefore, the aim of this pathway is to uphold the biblical beauty of believer baptism while seeking to play a small part in repairing the historic baptismal divide. Our primary concern is that by refusing church membership to convictional paedobaptists (as is the historic practice within Baptist churches), we fail to uphold the essence of God’s appointed purpose in baptism, which is to set apart those who are born again by faith in Christ as his new covenant people. In other words, by only permitting baptized believers into membership we are not only setting apart those who are born again but, within that group, those who are born again and hold credobaptist convictions.

The unintended consequence of not permitting convictional paedobaptists into membership is a denial of membership to those who are genuinely born again yet mistakenly hold different baptismal convictions due to this historic error. Are we right in withholding membership from those who appear to be genuinely born again, yet differ when it comes to the issue of baptism itself? The elders of DCC do not believe so.

#### WE MAY FALL INTO SIN EITHER WAY

Baptists are quick to point out that this issue is, in fact, not complicated. It is simply a matter of obedience. The question, they say, is whether one is willing to obey Jesus. At face value, the simplicity of this is appealing. But, the situation is not quite so clear.

Indeed, it is a serious thing to disobey Jesus' command to get baptized. We all agree with this. Jesus made it clear, "Go therefore and make disciples...baptizing them" (Mt. 28:19). To disobey Jesus is, by definition, a sin, making this a serious matter. The strength of this point alone seems to end the debate..

Yet, it is also a serious thing to deny a regenerate believer membership into Jesus' local church. It is very significant to tell someone they cannot belong to your church. To deny a regenerate Christian membership is a form of preemptive ex-communication. That is not an exaggeration.

Denial of church membership for those outside the church (or, ex-communication from within) should only be used: (1) in cases of significant unrepentant sin (Mt. 18:15f; 1 Cor 5:2f) or (2) unorthodox belief that would call into question the individual's faith (e.g. doctrines of the trinity, scripture, Christology, justification by faith, penal substitution, etc).

A Baptist would say "But, we don't have authority to permit people into membership that aren't baptized." But, is not the converse also true? Do we have authority to keep genuine faithful regenerate believers from membership if they differ on the definition of what baptism is (due to the prevalence of this historic error)?

We believe it is a sin to wrongly ex-commune (whether preemptively or otherwise) a genuine brother or sister in Christ without due warrant (warrant being unrepentant sin or unorthodox belief), and biblically speaking, differing baptismal convictions does not seem to rise to the level of due warrant.

So, we must ask: is there a way to avoid both the sin of wrongly administering/undervaluing baptism and, at the same time, wrongly preemptively ex-communicating Christians due to differing baptismal convictions? Is there no other way to accommodate for the historic error of paedobaptism other than by going our own ways? These are the questions driving this pathway.

The unfortunate side effect of the historic error of paedobaptism is that genuine born-again believers are unable to coexist within the context of church membership. This baptismal divide threatens our unity as believers. The sad outcome is that the very thing baptism is intended to symbolize—an individual's incorporation in the people of God as separate from the world—has created an additional separation between genuine born-again believers. This is tragic. Is there no way to bring about repair?

#### AN UNLIKELY, BUT HELPFUL, ILLUSTRATION

There is precedent for accommodating historic sinful error. For example, missionaries often encounter polygamous tribes. These tribes have been swept up into historical sinful error. Yet, when couples in such marriages embrace Jesus, those marriages are typically not split apart for the sake of upholding a monogamous heterosexual marriage (i.e. a biblical marriage) in order to qualify as members.

Instead, breaking up such marriages is deemed unwise and unsafe for the women and children involved. It is often determined that the greater sin would be to break up the marriage, rather than to permit it to remain as is, even if

unbiblical. In other words, the typical practice is to accommodate the sinful historical error for the greater good, even while discipling toward God's better standard.

Therefore, frontier pastors are forced to take the long view and receive people in such marriages into membership, while discipling of the next generation toward God's standard. It is likely that men in such marriages will not qualify as elders within the church, but they will nonetheless qualify as members of the church, in light of the circumstances and the historical error they are swept up into. There is a correspondence here with baptism.

Paedobaptism is a historical, even if well-intended, error. We must account for this error, which has further divided Jesus' church, while discipling towards God's standard. Not doing so only continues the divide. Given what baptism symbolizes (believers set apart from the world in union with Christ), we believe the greater error is to further the divide rather than accommodate for it.

#### THE LETTER AND SPIRIT OF BAPTISM

It is helpful to recognize that there is both a letter and spirit to baptism (or, form and substance). The letter/form of baptism is that only regenerate believers should be baptized. But, the spirit/substance of baptism is to mark off God's new covenant people in real times and places.

Credobaptists get the letter/form of baptism right, and normally the spirit/substance. However, they miss the spirit when not permitting a regenerate convictional paedobaptist into membership. Why? Because the spirit of baptism is to mark off God's new covenant people, not those who are regenerate *and* aligned on baptismal convictions.

Paedobaptists, on the other hand, often get the spirit/substance of baptism right (by accepting both credo or paedo into membership)<sup>26</sup>, while normally missing the letter/form (by not practicing credobaptism, except in cases of adult conversions).

So, is there not a way forward that would enable us to uphold both the letter *and* spirit of baptism at the same time, *to the best of our ability*? Further, given the proliferation of the error of paedobaptism, shouldn't we make it a point of discipleship rather than a point of division, or simple parting of ways, with fellow regenerate brothers and sisters in Christ (and thus violating the spirit of baptism)?

#### A THIRD WAY: OPEN, CLOSED AND CLOSE

An analogy with the Lord's Supper may help. When it comes to the Lord's Supper there are a spectrum of views, ranging from open (anyone can participate), to closed (only baptized covenant members in good standing can participate), to somewhere in the middle (often called "close"). For example, those who practice a "close" (not "closed") view of the Lord's Supper, usually allow for convictional paedobaptists to participate. In such cases the table is fenced<sup>27</sup>, but they leave it up to the individual's conscience to determine whether they will participate.

If a modified view of the Lord's Supper is permitted within most Baptist churches, why not a modified view of membership--not open, not closed, but "close"? This is a valid question. A modified position could still uphold regenerate membership, but remain *slightly* open in order to account for the historic error of paedobaptism without allowing it to separate us from fellowship. After all, by *only* permitting credobaptists into membership, a couple inconsistencies are quietly introduced into a church's life.

---

<sup>26</sup> As credobaptists, we believe they also get the spirit wrong in administering baptism to unregenerate infants.

<sup>27</sup> To "fence" the Lord's Supper is to make clear it is only for those who have received Jesus by faith. Such genuine, living faith is usually evidenced by having been baptized and belonging to a Jesus-treasuring church.

First, if we only permit baptized believers into membership, how could we allow paedobaptists to take the Lord's Supper? If they are good enough for the Lord (in the Supper), are they not good enough for us (in membership)? This is an important question. If baptism is the initiating covenant sign, and the Supper the ongoing sign, why would we allow paedobaptists to participate in the Supper if we won't let them to belong as members?

Second, if we only permit baptized believers into membership, how can we allow visiting paedobaptists to preach (as many credobaptist churches do)? In other words, it is inconsistent to allow a paedobaptist from outside the church to preach but not be allowed to be a member of the church. That is like saying someone can serve as a temporary father of the family (in preaching), but is not permitted to be part of the family.

### **Our Practice: A Modified-CLOSE Membership**

Therefore, DCC follows a modified-close membership (not open, not closed, but *close*) that upholds regenerate church membership and credobaptism, while seeking to disciple paedobaptists into conformity with the NT teaching of believer baptism.

To do this we will:

#### **#1 Only teach and practice credobaptism.**

As a church, we teach that biblical baptism is believer baptism. This is expressed in our Statement of Faith and Elder Affirmations. We do not recognize paedobaptism as "baptism" nor practice it ourselves.

#### **#2 Offer this Pathway for those who have been "baptized" as babies.**

While not ideal, we believe that such a process:

- Upholds the beauty and dignity of believers' baptism.
- Enables us to uphold both the letter *and* spirit of baptism to a greater degree.
- Offers paedobaptists a discipleship pathway to more deeply consider this doctrine.
- Provides an off-ramp for convictional paedobaptists to consider a different church.
- Creates appropriate expectations for a convictional paedobaptist in the life of DCC.

## APPENDIX F: CHILDREN, THE ORDINANCES, AND MEMBERSHIP

### I. Introduction<sup>28</sup>

When a young man or woman turns from sin and places their faith in Jesus and His finished work for salvation, we have great cause to rejoice. Jesus proclaimed, “There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10). Our church, and the parents in our church, pray that there will be much rejoicing over the converted souls of the children in our midst. *With this prayer, we must also pray for wisdom to navigate our context.*

It can be easy for a child of Downtown Cornerstone Church (DCC) to affirm the basic truths of the gospel and profess a love for Jesus Christ. The children raised in our church families are taught that Jesus is to be exalted, trusted, and loved from an early age. They are encouraged to honor and esteem Him. They are also raised in a setting in which a public profession of faith does not lead to serious persecution or death. They may also know peers who are getting baptized and taking the Lord’s Supper.

At the same time, parents of professing children will face various, sometimes conflicting, thoughts. All parents will hope that their child’s desire for the ordinances is genuinely rooted in the new life given by the Holy Spirit. This could lead some parents to feel a sense of urgency for baptism as a way to encourage their child’s budding faith. Meanwhile, other parents may feel apprehensive about their child partaking in the ordinances and prefer a slower pace.

While the conversion of young people is a wonderful blessing, discerning conversion and shepherding young children who profess faith in Christ present genuine challenges for the elders and congregation. The Scripture does not offer a special process for discerning faith in children, thus the need to develop practices rooted in biblical prudence.

### II. Our Position

The following statement aims to apply the Word of God to our particular context in Seattle and describe our convictions about the administration of baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and church membership as it relates to children and adolescents. Our position on the baptism of children is as follows:

A young man or woman will be invited to baptism and, subsequently, the Lord’s Supper at DCC who has established a **credible profession of faith** in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, in both word and deed, proving a proper understanding and reverence of these ordinances, such that the **congregation can affirm** the genuineness of their faith over time, the church elders can administer the ordinances in good conscience, and the church can receive them into membership. **Believing parents** play an integral role in assessing a profession of faith, walking through this process, and ongoing discipleship within membership until the time when their connection to the church should be free and independent from parental direction.<sup>29</sup> Every means of grace for the edification of members should be extended to the young disciple: the teaching and preaching of the Word, service, fellowship with the church, pastoral care, and church discipline. Some of the privileges and responsibilities of membership that require maturity according to Scripture or prudence should await adulthood (e.g. church offices and ministry lead roles).

As you can see, this statement avoids setting a particular age for the administration of these ordinances but rather focuses the conversation on how we intend to shepherd children, parents, and our members through a mature conversation about how to rightly assess each child’s spiritual condition as it relates to this matter.

---

<sup>28</sup> This appendix was inspired, and expanded on, by similar resources from Hinson Baptist Church and Del Ray Baptist Church.

<sup>29</sup> Generally, in our society, this occurs around age 18.

The point here is not to challenge and cast doubt upon genuine professions of faith, but to establish a clear doctrine of regeneration from the Scripture in the life and practices of the church, and to emphasize the role of the church in affirming the faith of young people when receiving them into membership. What follows is an explanation of the statement above.

**A credible profession of faith** points to an expression of trust, repentance, and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, which is a work of the Holy Spirit not of themselves (Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Corinthians 10:9-10). This faith is birthed from belief in the biblical gospel, not social pressure. It is bound by godly conviction, not any other worldly motivation, including the desire to please parents, pastors, or friends.

This faith is tested, not assumed merely because of one's profession. The genuineness of the profession is not to be challenged or belittled but observed and confirmed so that no young man or woman should live under the deception of a false profession (Matthew 7:22-23, 13:3-8).

Where there is *true* new spiritual life, regeneration will progressively manifest itself. As with any person who will be baptized and invited to the Lord's Table, we must be *reasonably certain* that the child's profession of faith flows from a regenerate heart.

**Congregational affirmation of their faith** is essential because it is the congregation that is receiving them into the community as believers, as with adult members. The church must be able to affirm a profession on the grounds that an individual is regenerate and able to fulfill their biblical responsibilities as summarized in our member covenant. It is also important because the elders of the church are called by God to administer the ordinances in good conscience to its members "as those who will have to give an account" (Romans 14:23; Hebrews 13:17).

While it is true that an honest faith can ebb and flow in strength, and fruitful deeds can be much or little across seasons, there is a basic trajectory and perseverance of saving faith, which we must be able to confirm in the life of those who profess Christ. Discerning this, especially when the ordinances are being offered for the first time, requires great care.

While we do not desire to cause anxiety or despair in the soul of a young person, we do believe their faith must be of the kind that perseveres through the tempests of social scorn and the waves of youthful passion. This happens over time and typically includes testing outside the safe harbors of family and friends who have rightly rewarded and praised their expressions of belief. We believe a young person's faith can be encouraged and guided, while at the same time observed and tested for a season that does not yet include partaking of the ordinances and membership.

**The engagement of faithful member parent(s) is critical** in the process of encouraging the faith of both children and adolescents. Parents have a unique ability to testify to the presence of genuine repentance as a pattern of life since they see their children's faith lived out each day. They also are in a prime position to teach children the meaning of baptism and the Lord's Supper and prepare them for membership in the church community.

Parents should be willing to patiently observe the spiritual growth of their children until that day when the church can be called upon to affirm their faith, celebrate their rebirth, and wholeheartedly invite them to the ordinances of the church and the responsibilities of membership without serious concern for their spiritual condition.

We will assess occasions where a young man or woman of *unbelieving* parents seeks baptism, the Lord's Supper, and membership at DCC on a case-by-case basis.

When a young person has been baptized and received the Lord's Supper at another church *before* coming to DCC, the elders will consider their request to become a member with prudence and care. The prior church may have exercised great wisdom



and diligence in the teaching and administration of the ordinances, or perhaps it did not. The young person may give clear indications of regeneration and a clear understanding of the ordinances, or perhaps not. The elders will need to consider these circumstances before inviting the young person to the Lord's Supper and membership with DCC, which we also consider for adults wishing to become members (i.e. membership is affirmed by *our* congregation, not other congregations).

### III. Questions for Parents to Consider

With this in mind, we offer the following questions and considerations for parents and their children:<sup>30</sup>

**1. How long has it been since your child professed faith in Jesus Christ, and what kinds of transformation have you witnessed in his or her life?**

Regeneration shows itself in both subtle and substantial changes to attitude and action. Parents have a unique advantage in observing these changes. At the same time, discerning the difference between a child maturing *socially* and maturing *spiritually* requires much prayer and patience. We ask parents to consider these issues and discuss with the elders how they are processing them.

**2. Have you had the opportunity to see your child deal with sin, suffering, and relationships in a qualitatively different way over time?**

As you stand back, love your son or daughter, and watch him or her live before God and others, are you seeing new patterns of thought, attitude, and action as evidence of a transformed heart? Do you see godly sorrow for sin (2 Corinthians 7:10-11)? Do you see a new eagerness to repent, forgive, and grow?

**3. Do you see your child pursuing the Lord Jesus Christ and communion with God through His Word, prayer, and other means without being heavily pushed and externally motivated?**

We all need encouragement from other Christians to walk faithfully with Jesus. Your son or daughter will as well. There is a difference, however, between needing encouragement and needing consistent pressure or constant prodding to open the Bible, seek God in prayer, or consider eternal things. Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and church membership require a personal, ongoing commitment to live faithfully before God with the primary power coming from the Holy Spirit within (Philippians 2:12-13).

**4. Have members of the church had the opportunity to witness the outworking of genuine faith and God's power in the life of your child? Are they ready to affirm faith and receive your child into membership?**

Paul was able to say this to the Thessalonians: "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you because our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1 Thessalonians 1:4-5). The report of their faith spread through all the churches because, "they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1:9). Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy could affirm the faith of the Thessalonian Christians and so could many others saints, because they loved the brothers, turned from idolatry, and served God in a culture where such commitment was very costly. What is the testimony of your child among their peers and among other members?

**5. Does your child have a biblical, clear understanding of the meaning of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and what it means for someone to partake rightly of those ordinances, as well as what it means to abuse them?**

A young person does not need to be a theological expert before they can step into the waters of baptism or share in the Lord's Supper, but they must be able to understand what they are doing. To be baptized, a young person must be able to testify of their "good conscience" that comes through their union with Jesus' death and resurrection (Romans 6:4; 1 Peter 3:21).

---

<sup>30</sup> It is worth noting that the same criteria are used for everyone, regardless of age.

To take the Lord's Supper, they must also be able to "examine themselves" and "discern the body" so they do not "eat and drink judgment on themselves" (1 Corinthians 11:27-30). Again, we do not think that a young believer must fully grasp these truths to be saved, but the New Testament does assume a person will understand these basic realities before they partake of the ordinances.

We encourage parents to use the church's celebration of baptism and the Lord's Supper as an opportunity to discuss with their children the gospel realities they are witnessing, and how they should be thinking about their application in their own lives. The elders are willing and able to give guidance in this important part of family discipleship.

**6. To what degree is your child ready to assume the responsibilities of church membership at DCC, including an informed willingness to participate in church matters and exercise church discipline when needed?**

Membership in a local church involves various privileges and responsibilities. These responsibilities go far beyond mere administrative elements of the church. Membership responsibilities are the very essence of the spiritual life and health of a local congregation. A young person seeking membership at DCC will need to be prepared to receive ministry from and minister to the other members of the church. For example, does your child understand the basic meaning of DCC's [Membership Covenant](#) and are they prepared to uphold it?

We stress that we do not believe a child's salvation rests on their understanding of ordinances or church membership. It is that very fact that gives us great encouragement to be wise in the way we administer these elements. Because there is no saving grace given through baptism, the Lord's Supper, or church membership we are happy to evaluate each of the children under our care and recommend adequate time, potentially years, after an initial profession of faith to sufficiently answer these questions before offering the ordinances and encouraging membership.

At the time this statement was composed, the elders of DCC had families that together consisted of twenty children, most under the age of 16. We share this to make clear that this statement is not birthed out of an ivory tower, but from men who are facing these considerations in their own lives. Much prayer, study, and discussion occurred over the development of this position. If nothing else, this should encourage parents with disagreeing positions to develop their own convictions with a similar posture and not out of hasty responsiveness.

#### **IV. Relevant Convictions**

The following are relevant and brief explanations of the biblical convictions that shape the position described herein:

1. **Baptism** is (i) a public profession of repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ which signifies cleansing, forgiveness, union with Christ, new life in Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and new creation; (ii) a church's formal affirmation of an individual's union with Christ and Christ's body, the Church. Thus, the issue of obedience is both for the individual and the church. The individual must present a credible profession of faith, and the church is responsible for discerning the credibility of the individual's profession. *In summary: baptism is conditioned by two matters: a willing, believing individual and an informed, believing community.* (Matt. 28:18-20, Acts 2:37-39, 2 Cor. 5:17, Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 3:18, Rom. 6:3-6, Gal. 3:25-29)
2. **Christian wisdom.** We understand that the consideration of an appropriate point for a believer to be baptized is not a matter of simple obedience on an issue clearly settled by Scripture, but rather is a matter of Christian wisdom and prudence.
3. **Membership accompanies baptism.** Throughout the history of the church, membership normatively accompanies baptism. The Bible never envisions baptized Christians living apart from membership to a local church (except on the

missionary frontier, as with the Ethiopian eunuch). Church membership is an expression of faithfully following Jesus and the Lord's Supper is an ordinance, like baptism, of the church. Neither baptism nor the Lord's Supper were intended to be separated from each other or from the authority exercised by the church.

4. **Regenerate church membership.** A local church's membership should be composed of Christians who have credible professions of faith and who have been baptized as believers.
5. **Christian children.** We believe that God saves young people, old people, and all people who profess faith in Christ without distinction. Colossians 3:20 and Ephesians 6:1 address children as being part of those respective churches. Age is not an obstacle for God. Many in our church share a testimony of coming to faith as children. While God saves people of all ages, we do recognize the unique challenge of discerning faith in a child from a believing family versus in a child from an unbelieving family.
6. **Encouraging children.** As a church and as families, we want to affirm, encourage, and nurture children and youth in their desire to follow Jesus.
7. **Maturity informs credibility.** Jesus encourages a simple childlike trust in Him. However, the immaturity of a child presents an added challenge in assessing the credibility of a profession of faith of a young person who is "in process" by virtue of their individual development. The elders must be careful to charitably discern the activity of grace dethroning the dominant power of sin in order to assess whether the "old man" is being put off and the "new man" is being put on (Col 3:9-10). Inquiry will be made, over time, to see whether sin is put to death and the child is becoming progressively more godly, which is evidence of living faith. The credibility of a profession of faith becomes more evident to the church after an individual has experienced the tug of the world, the flesh, and the devil, but has decided, despite these allurements, to follow Christ.
8. **Sometimes it's better to wait.** Waiting to baptize is sometimes the only course of action for charitably determining, as much as is humanly possible, the credibility of a child's profession of faith in Christ. Discernable signs of a child's genuine conversion often become clearer as the child grows and shows the fruit of a changed heart, rather than mere obedience to, or desire for acceptance from, his or her parents. Baptizing children apart from discerning observation invites the unwarranted risks of providing false affirmation and the introduction of spiritual deadness into the assembly of saints. Thus, patiently waiting and continuing to nurture children in the fear and admonition of the Lord is often the wisest course of action.

## **V. Process For a Young Person to be Baptized**

*Optional class: "What Will We Do? Helping Parents and Kids Assess Living Faith"*

Parents and children will be invited to participate in a class specifically designed to help understand, assess, and nurture living faith in their children. Though optional, it's a great starting place for focused conversation about following Jesus.

### **#1 Meet with a pastor.**

The general process for being baptized, whether as a young person or an adult is the same. However, before taking Foundations, we believe it is wise for the young person to set-up a meeting with a pastor, ideally at their initiative, to discuss their desire to be baptized and understanding of what it means to follow Jesus.

### **#2 Take Foundations.**

Foundations covers the essentials of the gospel, the importance of baptism, along with a basic introduction to the role of the local church in our discipleship. We recommend the young person take this class with a parent, another trusted DCC member, or a youth leader/mentor.

### #3 Membership interview.

Upon completion of Foundations, the young person would complete a member application and reach out for an interview in conjunction with his or her adult mentor. We ask that parents not participate in the membership interview, but the young person is welcome to invite another member of the church to accompany them if desired. Separating the child from the parent for the membership interview demonstrates, in a small way, the free choice and independence of the child in making a life-long commitment to Christ and his church.

### #4 Congregational Affirmation, Baptism, and Membership.

Should the elders recommend the young person for membership and the congregation affirm, the child shall be baptized and accepted as a member. All members, regardless of age, are encouraged in all the privileges and responsibilities of full church membership as expressed in DCC's [Constitution](#).

## VI. Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Are the doctrines of “believers’ baptism”, “regenerate church membership”, and “believers partaking of the Lord’s supper” new doctrines?

No. These are historical practices rooted in the Scriptures.

### 2. Why does this statement matter?

There are four main reasons we consider this type of statement to be of utmost importance.

**(i) For the good of the children.** Each young person has a personal responsibility before God to respond to Him through faith in Christ. This statement, and its applications, are aimed at shepherding their soul through the early days of considering Christ’s call. While it is true that some may experience anxiety or discouragement by being encouraged to wait, we also think that hastiness can lead to deeper anxiety and discouragement in later days. Our churches have been marked in recent times by many “re-baptisms” of people who thought they were converted at a young age, but later discerned they were not. We find good reason from Scripture and church history to suggest that patience and careful discernment in this area serve the souls of young people.

**(ii) For the good of the parents.** Any parent who loves God and their children should prayerfully consider this topic. No parent is exempt from their need for assistance in knowing how to shepherd young people toward God, so this statement seeks to prescribe appropriate encouragements, cautions, and corrections to enable parents to better lead and love the children under their care. By helping parents know what questions to ask, what issues to consider, and how better to engage their children in spiritual leadership, we think parents will be better able to lead their children with Christ-honoring care.

**(iii) For the good of the church.** We desire our church to think clearly about conversion and regeneration. We believe this document, and the conversations that will result because of it, will be used by God to help us more deeply consider and delight in the glories of salvation. We do not think this approach places the topic of conversion too high for our young ones to grasp but rather holds it high before all of us so that we are equally humbled before God’s gracious gift of new life through His Son.

**(iv) For the glory of God.** By highly valuing God’s work in conversion, and encouraging a church culture of humble thoughtfulness, we believe God is greatly honored. Avoiding both skepticism and carelessness toward one another brings pleasure to God and helps each of us look to Him as our full and final hope.

### 3. Why are we addressing this now?

As elders who are charged by God to lead His church, we recognize that it is pastoral negligence to adopt a “whatever” position on this important topic. God has providentially blessed our congregation with many children, and we recognize that helping parents train their children is part of our responsibility before God. We pray fervently that God will continue to add

children to our midst and convert each one of them. In hopeful preparation for that work, we submit this statement to aid the conversation of how we as elders intend to shepherd children and parents in the days ahead.

#### **4. How much influence do parents have in determining whether or not a young person will be baptized, invited to partake in the Lord's Supper, and received into membership DCC?**

Parents are given the charge by God to instruct, model, evangelize, and disciple their children (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21). Parents are given great influence over their children as the primary authorities in their lives. But when it comes to baptism, the Lord's Supper, and membership, we believe God has given these to the church (cf. Matthew 16:18-19). What that means is that Jesus has given the church authority to baptize people as disciples of Jesus, to invite people to the Lord's Supper, and to receive them into membership. No one baptizes himself or herself or serves themselves the Supper. Rather, these ordinances are given to them by Jesus through a local church that is overseen by elders the congregation elects and submits to (Hebrews 13:17). Parents' input will be greatly valued as part of the process, but in the end, the elders and the congregation must make the decision as to whether any person, including young professing children, are ready to be baptized and offered the Lord's Supper.

#### **5. As a parent, what should I do if my believing son or daughter professes faith in Jesus and wants to be baptized and take the Lord's Supper at DCC?**

You should "celebrate with them and rejoice that they are professing to trust in Jesus!"<sup>31</sup> This is great news! Encourage your child in this and call them to continue growing in grace along with you. Explain that a disciple of Jesus shows the genuineness of their faith in their life. You will be helping your child to know and follow Jesus and look for fruit. From there see the *Process For A Young Person to be Baptized* above. If, after a time of observation, you believe you are seeing fruit in alignment with a credible profession, encourage your child to take the next step and ask for a meeting with an elder. Of course, if you are unsure about what to do next, please reach out to an elder for counsel.

### **VII. Our Prayer**

What a stewardship God has given to his church! We have been entrusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven to discern credible professions of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether an adult or child comes to us desiring to be baptized, we pray that God would give us wisdom, humility, and charity. We pray that children would be nurtured in the fear and admonition of the Lord in our church family and in their families at home. Ultimately, we entrust ourselves to the all-wise God who has ordained families (1 Cor 7:14ff) and the church for the spiritual good of children (Eph 6:1-4). *Soli Deo gloria.*

### **VIII. Help for Assessing a Credible Profession of Faith**

#### **I. 10 EVIDENCES OF CONVERSION<sup>32</sup>**

The following lists some of the fruits that are in keeping with genuine repentance and saving faith:

1. **Change:** "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old has passed away; behold, the new things have come" 2 Cor 5:17.
2. **Godly Sorrow:** Godly grief "produces a repentance that leads to without regret leading to salvation" 2 Cor 7:10.
3. **Repentance:** A fruit of faith that leads to change in one's views, values, goals, and ways toward God away from sin.
4. **Fruit:** Deeds in "keeping with repentance" Matt 3:8.
5. **Godly Affections:** The new birth results in a deep and abiding affection for the things of God as opposed to the things of the world, 1 John 2:10; 3:10, 16-18.

---

<sup>31</sup> See "Practice Charity, Pursue Credibility: How to Respond to a Child's Profession of Faith" by Caleb Greggson and Sam Emadi

<sup>32</sup> Drawn from *Do Not Hinder Them* by Justin Peters, Chapter 4, "Looking for Fruit: How to Know When Salvation Has Come", pgs 67-78.

6. **Steadfastness in Persecution:** The child of God will remain faithful to Christ through persecution, though imperfectly, 1 Cor 4:12.
7. **Hunger for the Word:** “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.” 1 Pet 2:2-3
8. **Increasing Discernment:** Rather than being slaves to a depraved mind (Rom 1:24-32) a Christian’s mind is being transformed, growing in discernment of what is good, acceptable, and perfect, Rom 12:2.
9. **Love for the Church:** “We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death” 1 John 3:14.
10. **Obedience:** “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me” Jn 14:21.

## II. QUESTIONS FOR THE YOUNG PROFESSOR<sup>33</sup>

A loving and faithful elder will ask the young professor many critical and penetrating questions. He is seeking to discern if this young soul understands the heart of the Gospel. He is looking for a transformation of life. The following are examples of the kinds of questions asked of a young person. Questions should be asked in a way that is pastoral rather than overbearing, overwhelming, or intimidating. If the conversation becomes overbearing, overwhelming, or intimidating, it is a good sign that inquiry with the young person should be spread out over multiple meetings or that his profession is not yet discernible.

1. What is a Christian? How does one become a Christian?
2. What is the Gospel? Why do you need Christ? What did He do for sinners? Why did He do that?
3. Could God have just forgiven us? Why? Why did God the Father punish His Son?
4. What was Christ doing on the cross? What payment was He making?
5. Who are the only two persons who can pay for one’s sins? If we pay for them, how long will it take?
6. When do you believe you first trusted in Jesus?
7. What specific sins do you need Him to pay for? How do you feel about your sins?
8. Which sins in your life have made you most aware of your need for Jesus?
9. After you realize you have sinned, what do you do and when does it occur? Do you say anything to God?
10. Do you pray? What are your prayers like?
11. Do you read the Bible? What’s that like? What do you get out of your Bible reading?
12. What people has God used the most to show you your need for Christ?
13. Do you believe that your life is changing? In what ways is your life changing?
14. Has your attitude and behavior changed toward your *siblings*? In what ways?
15. How has your relationship changed with your *parents*? Are you more obedient than you used to be? How?
16. How do you feel about gathering with the *church*?
17. Do you ever get anything out of the sermons?
18. Do you ever feel that God is talking to you in the sermons? Could you give an example?
19. Do you ever find yourself praying during a sermon because of what you have just heard? Example?
20. Are there any sermons or lessons that God especially used to convict you of sin?
21. What verses of Scripture give you the most hope and comfort? Why do they give you comfort?
22. Do you want to be baptized? If so, why?
23. If your parents or your pastors feel it is too soon for you to be baptized, how will you feel about it?
24. When you see someone taking the Lord’s Supper, do you desire to be doing it with them? Why is that?
25. What sins do you presently struggle with the most?
26. Do your friends know that you are a Christian?

---

<sup>33</sup> Adapted from *Forbid Them Not*, by Ted Christman, pgs 22-23.